

SABBATH SCHOOL DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2025

Dr. Colin Thorne

Brother Chairman, honourable officer of the Inter-American Division, esteemed leaders of the Caribbean Union Conference, field leaders of the Caribbean Union, designated delegates, colleagues, brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church viewing this Session, I greet you in the wonderful name of our great leader, Jesus Christ!

Since James White organized the first Sabbath School department in 1853 in Rochester, New York, the world church has adapted and implemented this divine method of effectively teaching and instructing believers and non-believers in the Scriptures.

The Jethro method of small group organization has also helped the church in its developmental path of spiritual discipleship, evangelism, conservation, socialization, and Bible study throughout the years, enabling it to become a stable and sustainable church.

However, observational research has shown that the Sabbath Schools in the East Caribbean Conference in the 21st century are gradually drifting away from the small group methodology and are practicing the large class methodology of debating the study of the lesson with an emphasis on who knows more than whom.

This has invariably created issues for the Sabbath School in lack of attendance, participation, and discipling. The atmosphere in Sabbath School has become more an environment of Biblical dominance rather than an environment of Biblical learning, which may have contributed to a reduction in attendance, among other things.

According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual 2022*, page 103, "The Sabbath School is the primary religious education program of the Church, with four purposes: study of the Scripture, fellowship, community outreach, and world mission emphasis."

Ellen G. White in the book *Ministry of Healing*, page 149, says: "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes..." From the book *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pages 10, 61, she also says: "The Sabbath School should be one of the greatest instrumentalities, and the most effectual, in bringing souls to Christ." "The object of Sabbath School work should be the ingathering of souls."

Therefore, the department endeavoured to address four fundamental pillars that could reform and RESET the church:

- 1. Conservation**
- 2. Discipleship**

3. Care

4. Bible study

We believe a strong foundation produces a strong building. So, once we have a strong and stable church foundation, we will have a strong and stable church.

The department, therefore, introduced the Sabbath School Ministry Driven Plan.

What is the Sabbath School Ministry Driven Plan?

It is a comprehensive plan that seeks to address some of the church's deficiencies and needs within the East Caribbean Conference. It restructures and RESETS the Sabbath School to its former purpose and effectiveness. It is an internal and external ministry plan that impacts both membership and community.

- It is a way of using small group methodology to organize your Sabbath School classes.
- It encourages members to have ministries within each class.
- Sabbath School Classes are grouped in tens (10's) for optimum participation.

The 10 Ministries for each class are:

- Discussion Leader
- Outreach Coordinator
- Care Coordinator
- Social Coordinator
- Lesson Connect Coordinator
- Secretary
- Investment Coordinator
- Prayer Coordinator
- Visitor Connect Coordinator
- Missing Member Coordinator

To facilitate such an initiative, we developed 4 steps:

1. Organization of a Conference Sabbath School Council;
2. Organize district Sabbath School Committees;
3. Conduct face-to-face and online workshops on both Islands;
4. Organize in-reach and out-reach activities that involve the membership.

ASSESSMENT OF INITIATIVE:

Each church was introduced to the Sabbath School Ministry Driven Plan through training programs in person and online. Each head superintendent was given documentation to share with the Sabbath Schools, most pastors were trained in the plan, and Conference Sabbath School Council members have conducted training programs to facilitate the plan.

About half of the Sabbath Schools in the Conference tried implementing the plan but received resistance from members, facilitators, and some lay leaders of the local congregation. However, about four churches implemented the Sabbath School Ministry Driven plan and are seeing benefits. This plan is long-term and not a quick fix.

TABLE 1: SABBATH SCHOOL TRAINING

INSTITUTION	2024	2023
General Conference	1	
Inter-American Division	1	2
Caribbean Union Conference	2	2
East Caribbean Conference	20	13
TOTAL	24	17

During 2023 & 2024, the department's emphasis was on training and equipping its officers. We engaged the Sabbath School directors from the Inter-American Division, Dr. Samuel Telemaque, the Caribbean Union Conference, Sis. Debbie Felix and the East Caribbean Council members who facilitated training and provided adequate resource material for Sabbath School officers.

We also conducted a 'Teacher's Certification Program', of which about 95 facilitators completed the course and are awaiting certificates of completion.

TABLE II: SABBATH SCHOOL REPORTS

ISLAND	2024	2023
BARBADOS	33	33
DOMINICA	14	4

TOTAL	47	37
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We extend appreciation to the superintendents who submitted the Sabbath School reports. The Table above shows an increase in reporting, and we are optimistic that 2025 will show a further rise in Sabbath School reporting.

CARE DAY:

A day to visit all members of the extension division with gifts of love, and to seek out all missing members of the Sabbath School.

IN MEMORIAM:

The Apostle John, in the book of *Revelation 14:13*, stated, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yea saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

We cherish the memory of those who have given tirelessly to the service of God and the service of the church. As their families mourn their death, we grieve also with them; yet with the hope and expectation of seeing them around the throne of God and joining them in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

- 1. Sis. Sonia Wickham – Greens SDA Church**
- 2. Sis. Ivis Griffith – Workmans SDA Church**

APPRECIATION:

I want to give my God thanks and appreciation for managing my life and my decisions as I executed decisions relevant to the Sabbath School department.

To my beloved wife, Jan, for her love, support, encouragement, and prayers through some difficult and challenging times. Her support has never waned but has remained constant throughout the years.

To my wonderful adult children, Colin Jr. and Janise, who have grown into some fine young people and have always been there to support and keep THEIR dad relevant, I say thank you and I love you guys.

To the ECC Sabbath School Council: Sis. Iradelle Alleyne, Sis. Kisha Barrie, Sis. Kennesha Barry, Sis. Angela Wyllie, Sis. Nazarene Bardouille, Bro. Barney Boyce, Sis. Michelle Ward, Sis. Dora Colaire and Sis. Joan Lavia, thank you for your support and willingness to be members of the council.

Thank you to Dr. Samuel Telemaque, director of the Inter-American Division, my CARU Director, Sis. Debbie Felix and her administrative assistant, Sis. Sheryl Liverpool, for your support, advice, and training in the Sabbath School.

Thank you to all who have supported and hosted the Sabbath School Teacher's Forum: Pastor Sheldon Brome, Pastor Alvin Lucas, Pastor Bernard Prescott, Dr. Mark Brathwaite, Pastor Roosevelt Haynes, Pastor Jason Peters, Pastor Jason Reid, Pastor Charles Gittens, Pastor Lester Joseph, Pastor Albert Matthew, Sis. Angela Skeete, Sis. Cecile Connell, Elder James Howell, Elder Felix Leslie, and others.

To all the Sabbath School Officers in the East Caribbean Conference, it has been a wonderful experience training and interacting with you. Thank you for your prayers and support.

To my Administrators, thank you for your guidance and support during these challenging and changing times. May God pour out his bountiful blessings upon you as you navigate the work in the East Caribbean Conference.

Thank you to my wonderful, hard-working secretary, Amanda Parris, for managing the department on a daily basis and for keeping me updated on all Sabbath School-related matters. I am convinced that God will bless you immeasurably.

My brothers and sisters, as we watch and listen to negative news daily, it is evident that the Bible is still true, that the love of many shall become cold and indifferent towards each other. But I encourage you today to let us lift our gaze beyond the negativity and fear that looms low upon this earth, or as the former President of the United States, Barack Obama, advised in one of his speeches, to "Choose hope over fear. See the future not as out of control, but as something we can shape for the better through concerted and collected effort." With God leading His church, there is no fear of the future but the bright hope of a triumphant end of sin and a glorious beginning with Jesus Christ in glory.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve, and may God continue to be with you in the selection of our future Conference leaders.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.