

Chapter Two

District Director

Today people question the need for Single Adult Ministries. Considered by some as a passing fad of the 1970s and 1980s, churches tend to overlook the single adult population. Admittedly, there will be a larger number of single adults in metropolitan areas; however, single adults will be found in all locations, particularly in North America.

Single adults comprise over 40 percent of the adult population 18 years of age and over. They also account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. This group includes those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed. There is a growing group of single parents where the parent has never married. An increasing number of children are being placed with their fathers as the primary caregiver. The church must recognize the ministry needed by these groups of people and accept the ministry opportunities they offer.

Divorce is a reality that affects families within the church and community. Death comes each day—often without time to prepare. In these times of crisis, the church must be ready to minister. We minister better with a plan prepared before these crises occur. Many people are willing to minister to those in need, but feel inadequate. The needs for compassion, support, love, and a listening ear are always there. We need to realize these needs continue weeks and months after the actual crisis. The need for ministry is often long-term.

Kay Collier-Slone in *Single in the Church*, states there is a great need for the church at large to recognize that:

- Singleness is not a victim state.
- Singleness is not necessarily a temporary state.
- Singleness is not a lesser state.
- Singleness is not a threatening state.
- Singleness is a growing state.
- Singleness is not going away.
- Single adults go wherever they find a religious body which recognizes their needs—even if they have to go outside their own denomination.¹

A quick look at the reference information and you recognize the above as a dated statement. Yet, its message continues to apply to single

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adults today. Remember that single adults account for over 50 percent of the unchurched population. With this statistic in mind, one of the responsibilities of Single Adult Ministries is to educate the church regarding the issues, concerns, and needs of single adults. For many church leaders, singleness is not part of their experiences. Therefore, we, as Single Adult Ministries leaders, must educate them. One means of accomplishing this goal is to encourage single adults to form personal friendships with senior pastors and church leaders. Growing friendships will result in better understanding each other's perspective.

Your role as district director includes giving support and guidance to local directors. Share with them information from *Solo Perspective*. Your role also includes educating pastors and other leaders.

Plan some activities for your district. These include retreats, banquets, and social activities. Consider some seminars or workshops to educate pastors and church leaders. Your district's size determines how often and where the events are held. Some districts repeat activities in different locations or use zone activities. Other districts are compact enough to provide frequent activities for the entire district at one time.

Single Adult Ministries Philosophy

We believe that single adults are important in God's eyes and are vital in His kingdom. We believe that singleness is a viable lifestyle and that God provides grace for living life as a Christian single adult.

Single Adult Ministries Purpose

The purpose of Single Adult Ministries is to:

- Minister to the unique needs of single adults through specific ministries such as divorce recovery, grief recovery, and single-parent family ministries.
- Equip single adults with the skills for living productive lives.
- Assist single adults during times of crises.
- Encourage ministry to others through involvement in the local congregation, service projects to the community, and mission trips.
- Integrate single adults into the total church program by using their gifts, talents, and abilities.

Single Adult Ministries Mission

The mission of Single Adult Ministries is to encourage Christians, to prepare them to share the good news of the Gospel, and to introduce others to Jesus Christ.

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Single Adult Ministries Core Values

1. Salvation: Developing and maintaining an ever-growing relationship with Jesus Christ
2. Ministry: Using spiritual gifts through ministry
3. Growth: Fostering a community that facilitates spiritual formation
4. Relationships: Developing relationships with members of the church congregation
5. Christian Living: Encouraging single adults as they live the Christian single adult lifestyle
6. Education: Educating the church community regarding the Christian single adult lifestyle

Single Adult Ministries Logo

One—a word that describes single adults. One person to make the decisions. One person to complete the household chores. One person to plan for the future. Yet one is a whole number and it is more than half of two.

One by one single adults come to our churches and ministries seeking to find acceptance, to learn more about Jesus, the single adult Leader of Christianity, to



recover from divorce or the death of a spouse, and to form a network of friends. One by one, but together, these individuals have many gifts, talents, and abilities waiting to be used by the church. Together, they realize that they share many life experiences and that there's comfort, encouragement, and hope.

Single adults also seek incorporation into the local community of believers. Yet specific ministries and addressing unique single adult issues require time designed for single adults. These gatherings should not preclude single adults from experiencing worship, fellowship, learning, and encouragement from the entire congregation.

Single adults come individually. Together they help complete the Body of Christ in local congregations around the world.

What Is Single Adult Ministries?

This question was asked of a group of Single Adult Ministries' leaders and resulted in a lengthy discussion. The following conclusions

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were drawn. First, the nature of Single Adult Ministries is multi-faceted. Second, the range of individuals under the umbrella of Single Adult Ministries includes all adults, creating many challenges. And third, single adults include those who are divorced, never-married, and widowed—adding another dimension to the ministry.

SAM is ministry to all individuals without a spouse. The operative word in Single Adult Ministries is *adult*. This includes any single adult with an interest in the programs and ministry of SAM. Some are as young as eighteen, while others over eighty attend SAM events. Age is not a defining factor in SAM; interests, needs, and concerns lead people to SAM.

Single Adult Ministries will include a variety of ministries and programs. These include Divorce Recovery, Grief Recovery, Single-parent Family Ministries, and Remarriage Preparations, to name a few. Stepfamilies are an emerging area of ministry as these families seek to form a healthy family unit that doesn't fit the traditional family models.

District Single Adult Ministries Director Job Description

The responsibilities of the district Single Adult Ministries director are:

1. To become acquainted with the resources available through the Single Adult Ministries office.
 2. To serve as a resource person to the local Single Adult Ministries director.
 3. To share information received from the General Coordinator of Single Adult Ministries with the local directors.
 4. To inform the Adult Ministries Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board about the opportunities and responsibilities of ministry to single adults.
 5. To provide single adults on the district opportunities for ministry, such as involvement in children's camp, Work and Witness for new churches, etc.
 6. To identify a single adult in each local church to assist in publicizing and following up district and general Single Adult Ministries activities.
 7. To form, if possible, a council to assist in planning and implementing various programs.
 8. To encourage and assist the implementation of Single Adult Ministries in each local church.
 9. To serve on and be responsible to the Adult Council of the Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International Board.
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10. To report at each meeting of the Adult Council planned activities and summaries of previous activities.
11. To promote and publicize district and general activities through district newsletters.
12. To develop, if possible, a single adult newsletter to promote better communication on the district.
13. To share ideas and concerns with the general coordinator of Single Adult Ministries.
14. To enlist the help and support of local single adult leaders.

Making Single Adult Ministries Work on your District

Refer to the philosophy, purpose, and mission for Single Adult Ministries. Use these statements as a basis for developing similar statements for your district. You are free to modify them to reflect the uniqueness of the district. Developing these statements provides a standard when planning events and activities for the district. They offer guidelines to keep the ministry focused. Periodically review and modify the statements as goals are achieved and new needs identified.

SAM addresses many needs. Some will be social, others focus on spiritual growth and development, and others respond to emotional needs. All of these are legitimate and require attention.

Single adults gravitate toward churches that minister to their spiritual needs and offer ministry opportunities. These same individuals often will travel to socialize with other single adults and to form a network of friends that understand and share common challenges and experiences. Dr. Jerry Porter, General Superintendent, reminds us that something “electrifying happens when single adults gather to worship their Leader—who was also a single adult.” The sense of community reminds Christian single adults they are not alone—either as single adults or as Christians.

District gatherings may be more vital to persons from the smaller churches and those who live in communities with fewer single adults than large urban areas. For these individuals, the opportunity to mingle with other single adults breaks the sense of isolation and leads to encouraging networks and friendships—many that last for years.

As the result of district events and friendships, some pastors and church leaders may experience qualms about single adults leaving smaller churches to attend larger churches that offer more single adult activities and ministries. Based on experience and conversations with individuals reflective of this scenario, they continue to attend the church that provides

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spiritual nourishment and ministry involvement.

Identify churches that have some level of Single Adult Ministry and the leaders. Attempt to identify a single adult contact person in each congregation. These individuals will assist in promoting events and distributing information to the single adults in local churches. When possible, develop a newsletter. Include in the district newsletter information from *Single Purpose*, the Single Adult Ministries' web-based newsletter at [AMC](#), Adult Ministries Connection, and information gathered from resources available through the Single Adult Ministries office and your own sources.

Capitalize on district events to promote Single Adult Ministries. Create a display that makes resources available, announces upcoming events, and uses various forms of technology to display pictures from past activities. Present workshops at Sunday School Conventions. Plan one-day seminars that educate pastors regarding Single Adult Ministries. Encourage pastors' attendance by offering CEU (Continuing Education Units).

Attend and report to the District Adult Ministries Council. Become an active member and encourage single adults to attend all district events. Present the district's philosophy, purpose, and mission statements. Work to develop a district resource library, drawing from the Single Adult Ministries Annotated Bibliography for suggestions.

Single Adult Ministries District Council

The purpose of a District Single Adult Ministries Council is to involve more people in the planning process, to give representation from various sized churches and locations, and to provide ownership of district programs. The job of a district director is too large for one person to handle effectively.

Determine the most effective means of representation. This may be by zones or a selection from small, medium, and large churches as well as urban, suburban, and rural areas. Include the divorced, never-married, widowed, and single parent. Submit the names to the District Adult Ministries Director for approval. The district Adult Ministries Director is an ex-officio member of the council.

Elect a treasurer from the council to handle all finances. SAM is not a money-making organization, yet it should be self-supporting.

Can Every Church on My District Have Single Adult Ministries?

What an excellent question! While every church on your district may not have an organized Single Adult Ministries program, each church must minister to single adults. Because of size, location, and population, SAM will vary from church to church.

Consider that almost one-half of the adult population, defined as those over 18, is single. Single adults comprise over 50 percent of the unchurched population. Can any church that wishes to grow neglect this segment?

Single Adult Ministries includes divorced and widowed persons along with those who have never-married. Sometimes it is necessary to remind people that the divorced and widowed are single. It soon becomes obvious that the needs and interests cover a wide variety of topics. Sometimes, the divorced and widowed face grief issues. Single parents struggle with a new life-style and often a reduced income. Never-married persons wonder what their role in the church is as the “traditional family” is elevated to a high position.

Young single adults, 24-35, often don’t view themselves as single adults. They just aren’t married yet. Somewhere in the mid-thirties, they begin to consider that singleness may be a longer-term lifestyle than originally thought. The number of women choosing to adopt or to use medical technology to have a child is growing. It is not our responsibility to judge the validity of their choices; it is our responsibility to show Jesus’ love to them and their children.

Single-parent families offer the church opportunities to invest in the lives of children as role models. All children, whether from a single-parent home or not, need the attention, support, and prayers of many adults. Today’s society exposes children to issues most of us faced when our coping skills were more developed.

It is true that every church on your district may not have an organized SAM program. It is most important that each church minister to single adults. This may include referring them to programs in other churches. Many single adults choose to attend a smaller church where they minister in various responsibilities. They also are actively involved in Single Adult Ministries in another church. Remember single adults attend church where their needs are met.

Common Myths about Single Adults

Effective ministry starts with education rather than programming. It is often necessary to take an honest look at the stereotypes and misconceptions held by the congregation that may limit the effectiveness of ministry to single adults. Some myths still exist today—even with the growing acceptance of singleness.

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Single adults have more money than couples. It is more accurate to say, “Single adults have more discretionary use of their money. That is, there is only one person making decisions regarding expenditures.” The flip side of that statement is that there is only one person to earn the income. Options to increase money are limited, typically involving cut-backs or getting a second (perhaps third) job. Some single adults, especially single parents and retired persons, live at or below the poverty level.

Single adults have more time than couples. All of us have 24 hours in the day. It is true that some single adults exercise control over how time is spent—particularly those without children or whose active parenting days are passed. Couples share household chores. Single adults complete the same chores without assistance.

There is something wrong or single adults would get married. Many Christian single adults are single by default. That is they have established and maintained dating standards that limit the dating pool. Limiting dating partners to Christians is one example. Other qualifiers only serve to narrow the field. Rather than questioning the sexual orientation or thinking something is wrong, these individuals need to be encouraged, applauded, and affirmed.

Single men are not capable of taking care of themselves. Perhaps in the past this was a realistic assessment. However, today’s men share household chores—regardless of their marital status. Some men grew up in homes where they learned at an early age to care for themselves by doing their laundry and preparing meals.

Single adults are sexually frustrated and more prone to engage in deviant sexual behavior. According to *Single Adult Passages*, single adults listed sexuality issues fifth as a problem area. Today’s society causes all individuals to face sexual temptations.

Marriage is God’s highest calling for all men and women. Actually, God’s highest calling is to live Spirit-filled lives. Our Christianity is based on the death and resurrection of a single adult, Jesus. Another single adult, Paul, wrote much of the New Testament. A quick historical review of many of the Church of the Nazarene colleges and universities include single adults who dedicated their lives to these institutions. Remove the single adults from responsibilities in local congregations and some would need assistance in many areas.

All single adults are lonely. Single adults do not have the corner on the loneliness market. It is an issue that everyone faces at various times. Some single adults have learned to turn their loneliness into aloneness and solitude with God. However, all people long for community and belonging. God created us as social beings.

Realities about Single Adult Ministries

There are some realities about SAM that leaders must face.

Understanding these unique aspects of the ministry help leaders avoid frustration.

1. *Some single adults are transient.* Freedom and mobility are often listed high as advantages of singleness. Some companies recognize the cost effectiveness of transferring a single person as opposed to a family. Other single adults maintain steady places of residence, employment, and church involvement. Some younger single adults move as a result of changes in roommates or economic status.

2. *There is no perfect SAM group.* It is impossible for one group to meet all the needs of single adults. Some groups find the niche to be recovery programs, for issues of death or divorce. Others develop ministries to single-parent families. Some attract college age and career age single adults. Find your niche and develop it.

Does this mean single adults will leave your church to attend another one? No, if their spiritual needs are met within the congregation, many will stay. Some will attend larger groups for fellowships and other reasons. Yet, the local church provides them with a place to minister.

3. *Much of the work of SAM is a healing ministry.* Many single adults come to churches in times of crises, such as death or divorce. Other single adults need emotional and spiritual healing. These result from experiences as well as grieving the loss of hopes and dreams. Many need to see themselves as God does—forgiven and cleansed. SAM must help develop wholeness to provide new hopes and dreams.

4. *SAM is not a one-person job.* Single adults are not overgrown teens needing to have every minute planned and supervised. Single adults must feel ownership of the programs and ministries if they are to succeed. Many handle responsible jobs during the week and then struggle with the lack of responsibility for the ministry. As Christians, we are not called to be the “Lone Ranger.”

5. *SAM requires planning.* A strong program requires advance organization and planning. One single adult leader recommends a year’s worth of planning, promotion, and prayer before beginning a new ministry.

6. *Some use SAM as a safe place to play the dating game.* While this is not the objective of SAM, facing this reality helps when members marry. It may be necessary to confront some individuals regarding improper behavior since some attend various groups with dating as a primary goal.

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Ministry to Single-parent Families

James 1:27 states, “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows [single-parent families] in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*”

Single parents, with children under the age of 18, number almost 20 million or 10 percent of all adults over 18 years of age. Mothers are the primary caregiver in over 16 million of these homes while fathers provide primary care in slightly more than 3 million.

One of the easiest means of ministry to single-parent families is to provide a group that meets on Sunday mornings. This eliminates the need for childcare since children are involved in other ministries of the church. Theresa McKenna, a leader in ministry to single-parent families, suggests that if the issue of childcare is not addressed, you may as well not discuss single-parent family ministries.

For single-parent families formed as a result of divorce, it is important to involve the children in an intentional healing experience. Frequently, the children feel responsible for the breakup of their parents’ marriage and they need assistance in discovering it was not their fault.

McKenna offers the following suggestions for ministry to single-parent families:

- ✓ Connect single-parent families with two-parent families. This provides opportunity for children to see what a two-parent family looks like.
- ✓ Understand the increasing importance of Single-parent Family Ministries. Single parents head one-third of families, yet 95 percent of these families do not attend church.
- ✓ Realize it is an outreach ministry. A major responsibility will be increasing awareness of the needs of single-parent families and how to minister to them effectively.
- ✓ Remind single parents that God loves their families, too.
- ✓ Encourage them in their roles as single parents.

Additional suggestions include:

- ✓ Establishing an emergency fund to help with needs not met through other resources.
 - ✓ Setting up scholarship funds to help single parents attend unaffordable church activities and training.
 - ✓ Providing occasional time-out for single parents by planning an activity for the children.
 - ✓ Identifying individuals within the local congregation to assist
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with basic maintenance and other household needs.

- ✓ Implementing a mentoring program to provide role models.

How to Approach a Potential Volunteer²

Many leaders shy away from inviting people to volunteer, because they are never quite sure how to make the request in the most favorable way. It's not difficult—but it does require forethought and a belief that what you're asking the volunteer to do is a worthwhile task.

Here are some phrases that don't belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:

“I know you're busy, but...”

“Would you mind doing a little thing for our program?”

“We're desperate for new people to help us. We really need you to say yes.”

“Could you at all possibly do this?”

“We can't find anybody else to do it...”

Here are some simple, clear phrases that do belong in an invitation to a potential volunteer:

“We are looking for someone with real gifts in this area for this responsibility.”

“Do you have interests in this area?”

“How can we help you contribute your many talents to Single Adult Ministries?”

“By observing you, it seems to me you are gifted in this area...”

When issuing an invitation, never apologize. Bad example: “I can guess that you are too busy to help us, but I'd like to ask anyway...” By apologizing, you communicate that potential volunteers have something else more important in which to invest their time, or that what you're asking them to do is not worthwhile. Make your invitation to volunteers positive, simple, and straightforward.

Three things volunteers want to know:

1. Is it meaningful? Does it fulfill God's plan? Will I have a sense of significance?
2. Will I have authority and structure? What is the chain of command? Will I have the freedom to get things done?
3. What about training? Will someone help me learn to do what I've been asked to do?

Remember to care for the individuals you ask to volunteer, whether they say “yes” or “no” to your request. God's love can reach through your willingness to listen, support, and understand those with whom you min-

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ister. Your willingness to form a relationship with the volunteers and to appreciate their work and family situations may strengthen and empower them for future service in transforming ways.

Analysis of Your District**Notes**

1. How many churches on the district have Single Adult Ministries?

2. What size churches make up your district? How many churches have attendance of

<input type="checkbox"/> under 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-99	<input type="checkbox"/> 100-199
<input type="checkbox"/> 200-299	<input type="checkbox"/> 300-499	<input type="checkbox"/> 500-699
<input type="checkbox"/> 700-999	<input type="checkbox"/> 1000-2500	<input type="checkbox"/> 2500+

3. What does your district do now to minister to single adults?

4. Have you discussed the need for Single Adult Ministries with the district Adult Ministries and Sunday School Ministries directors?

5. What are the needs of the single adults on your district?

6. How can District Single Adult Ministries help meet the needs?

7. What do you think the single adults on your district want?

8. What can you discover from the daily newspaper and other magazines about the needs of single adults?

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Leadership Team Brainstorming Session ³

1. Who will you invite to serve on the leadership team for Single Adult Ministries? Do these people represent a broad cross section of the single adults on the district? Do you have a reason for inviting each one?

2. Who will facilitate the leadership team's brainstorming sessions?

3. What is the proposed agenda (purpose) of the leadership team?

4. When and where will the sessions take place?

Brainstorming Sessions Results⁴**Notes**

What purpose statement did the leadership team develop for Single Adult Ministries?

What two to four areas of Single Adult Ministries did the leadership team target? In what order were they prioritized?

Have you updated the Adult Ministries Council about the leadership team session results? What feedback did you receive?

The Next Step: Who will be part of the leadership core for the first event of your Single Adult Ministries?

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NotesQuality Program Checklist⁵

Meeting Room or Location

- Clean and well-lit
- Adequate number of chairs and tables
- Easy to find
- Adequate instructions in publicity for finding the location
- Enough parking
- Location clearly marked with signs

Greeters

- Adequate number
- Arrive early
- Sufficient instructions or training on how to be a greeter
- Registration table
- Name tags and pens available
- Literature about Single Adult Ministries and the church in general available
- Newcomers not embarrassed by too much attention

Actual Event

- Provided what was promised in the publicity
- Began on time
- Ended on time
- All program's needs (flip charts and markers, overhead projector, handouts, etc.) set up prior to the meeting
- Program details fulfilled
- Child care offered safely and sufficiently
- Refreshments plentiful and appropriate

Other special needs or circumstances

Your overall rating of this event

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What could be done to improve this event in the future?

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- 1 Kay Collier-Slone, *Single in the Church*, (New York: The Alban Institute, 1992), p. 88-89.
 - 2 Adapted with permission from Sue Nilson.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Ibid.
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