

# Philosophy and Objectives

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## Pathfinder Philosophy

Training and saving young people is one of the most important missions of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Scientists tell us that children's brain patterns are formed by the time they reach twelve years of age. This means that during their early, formative years it is crucial that they be taught good habits. Centuries ago the Scriptures recorded, "Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (*Proverbs 22: 6*) This is more than a cliché—it is now a proven fact.

The church must accept an increased responsibility in influencing the child for Christ because of the breakdown of social structures. Within the Adventist church the divorce rate is no different from the general public. In one out of every 5 Adventist homes the spouse is not an Adventist. This means that in those families there is only one parent to provide the encouragement and incentive needed to lead the children to Christ. Even in two-parent homes both parents often work away from home, spending little time with the children. This reduces the effectiveness of the home influence and adds to the responsibilities of the church.

Only about 50 percent of Adventist children in Grades 1-8 are attending church school, and in some conferences the percentage is less. The church is challenged to nurture these children from Adventist homes who are attending public school. Pathfinderism has the potential to meet their needs.

## Pathfinder Objectives

The Pathfinder club, a church-centered recreational-spiritual program, is designed for both boys and girls, grades 5 to 10 (ages 10 to 15). The program offers action, adventure, challenge and group activities that produce team spirit and loyalty to the church.

One of the Pathfinder Clubs' basic purposes is to fulfill the Elijah message of Malachi in which the "hearts of the parents are turned toward their children and the hearts of the children are turned to their parents." As parents and church members work, worship and play together with the Pathfinders, the so-called generation gap disappears in a bond of common experience. Children learn best by example; the whole Pathfinder philosophy is built on this idea. It is important, then, that spiritually committed, dedicated leaders of high principles be chosen to work with the Pathfinders.

The ideals and objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist church must be made attractive through an activity program which appeals to this restless age and so, much of the Pathfinder club program is physical action.

The Pathfinder club provides a key step in the educational program of the church for it provides the opportunity to take children out of a classroom setting into outdoor adventure.

The Pathfinder objectives require that Pathfinder leaders:

- 1. Help Pathfinders to understand that the church loves, cares for and appreciates them and needs them in its total program.**
- 2. Show Pathfinders what God has planned for their lives.**
- 3. Train Pathfinders for missionary service.** Teach them that witnessing about God to others is not a once a week activity. It is a daily way of life, and it can be focused through such activities as Voice of Junior Youth evangelism, Halloween Treat-Instead-of-a-Trick programs, Ingathering, singing bands, and community service projects.

**4. Work for the salvation of each individual Pathfinder.**

Seventy percent of all Adventist children who eventually become members of the church make their decision before the age of 14.

“Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion.” (*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 400.)

**5. Develop the Pathfinder’s appreciation for nature and a concern for the environment.**

“In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air, and have well-regulated employment and amusement.” (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 83.)

During campouts, nature activities, and studying for nature honors, Pathfinders learn firsthand about the creative power of God. The study of nature develops a fellowship with the Creator-God.

**6. Teach Pathfinders specific skills and hobbies that will make their life meaningful and will occupy their time profitably.** Pathfinders like to make things out of wood, plastic, steel, clay, felt, yarn and other materials. It brings them great satisfaction to put together an engine that runs, or a radio that plays. Pathfinder clubs should encourage this through AY/Pathfinder honor classes.

**7. Help keep Pathfinders physically fit.** “An understanding of the philosophy of health is a safeguard against many of the evils that are continually increasing... (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 138.)

“The children need to be instructed in regard to their own bodies... Show them that if they violate the laws of their being they must pay the penalty by suffering disease.”

“Recklessness in regard to bodily health tends to recklessness in moral character.” (*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, pp. 536, 537.)

“Whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character.” “Health should be as faithfully guarded as the character. A knowledge of physiology and hygiene should be the basis of all educational effort.” (*Education*, p. 195.)

Pathfinders should be given an opportunity to sign the Temperance Pledge, determining never to use drugs, alcohol, tobacco or any other thing that is harmful to their health. They need to learn that to deny appetite increases strength and stamina for the emergencies of life. By so doing they present their bodies as a living sacrifice to the Creator.

**8. Give opportunities for the development of leadership.**

The Pathfinder club is a democratic organization where members learn to work together and share in leadership responsibility. They learn discipline, obedience, resourcefulness, patriotism and the processes of group dynamics.

The aims of Pathfinding do not include trying to cast every boy and girl into one mold. Rather they encourage each Pathfinder to develop to the best of his/her capacity. The Pathfinder club program should not be planned solely by adults in a staff meeting, Pathfinder should be included in both the planning and the execution of those plans.

**9. Develop a balanced physical, mental, social and spiritual life.**

Luke 2:52 says: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” “True education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure unto eternal life.” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 330.)

Leaders should be concerned that there is harmonious development of each Pathfinder to assure that they become a good citizen of this world and the world to come.