

The little Sabbath School that could

Dear Something Else,

How does a person even begin to thank you for what you have done for me? I can think of no reason my misfortune would matter to anybody. Especially something as “minor” as vandalism—it wasn’t life-threatening or anything “important.” To think anyone would care about that was so unbelievable.

Dear friends,

Thank you for coming to the rescue of this school in Pakistan. What joy you’ve brought to the school personnel.

Something Else,

That’s what you guys really are. The prayers, food, visits, the long card, and phone calls kept us both going—knowing that you were behind us in spirit and in love. Don’t know what we would do without our Sabbath school class. You’re such an important part of our lives.

Four years ago a Sabbath school was born. It was conceived under the best family planning conditions and held two mission

statements for life: “The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Cor. 4:20, NIV) and “Christianity is always intensely practical” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 200).¹

The church bulletin depicts the one-hour class as “pointing toward Christ, and propelled by five ministries: Prayer. Time. Money. Study. Social.” In the beginning about 20 people showed up—now 50 or more attend.

Each class is divided into three 20-minute sections, with the first designated for prayer, where a roller coaster of laughter and grieving rolls along.

Time, social, and money ministries take up the next 20 minutes. An ongoing time ministry is the monthly operation—buying food, cooking, serving, cleaning up—of a soup

kitchen downtown. Other time ministries are helping people move, cleaning out a burned house, or setting up a free lemonade stand on a hiker/biker trail. Social ministries may be a Friday night campfire, picnic potluck, or game night. The final 20-minute section is an interactive Bible study.

Money ministries is perhaps the most cutting-edge ministry. While also supporting local Sabbath school expense, it operates under five premises² with 65 projects completed, totaling nearly US\$20,000 (see a sampling in the center box). “I give more in Sabbath school than I ever have before,” says one member, “because I know it’s going to something worthwhile.”

When a single mother didn’t show up for class one Sabbath, during prayer time it was announced that her car had “died” on Thursday and that she was in danger of losing her child-care business as a result. The class took up an instant offering and made pledges, the total reaching US\$875. The next day a car was bought. On Monday it was licensed. On Tuesday she had her business back.

This information is mentioned here as a

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1. \$350 to center for abused women
 4. \$40 to young couple for Thanksgiving
 10. \$150 for electric/heat bills and grocery certificates for local family
 12. \$80 to Union College students for two coats and a pair of slacks
 15. \$194 for toys to Romanian orphanage
 22. \$782 for Christmas for four local families
 34. \$220 to international student traveling home after 11 years
 35. \$300 to victims of Grand Forks, North Dakota, flood
 53. \$1,200 to build six \$200 churches in Peru
 57. \$500 to send five Union College students to eXcite 98
 59. \$120 to buy sweat suits for local people burned out of their home
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spark of courage and hope for those who are like-minded, who desire their Christianity “intensely practical.” Adapt the ideas yourself. Anyway, I understand that this approach has made Sabbath School inspiring and “unmissable” for many members. I know it has for me.

1. Too often, the members thought, Sabbath school is more talk than power, and intensely impractical.

2. “A. Money ministry is a participatory process—it’s the members’ money, not the leaders’. B. Acts 2—we give first priority to the needs presented by our class members. C. Projects from outside the class need to have a class sponsor to be seriously considered. D. Limited, short-term financial help is what we offer to anyone in need. E. Prayer for God’s leading is what we prefer to do before giving.”

—Chris Blake