Manual Revised

Recent funding of Mission Lifeguard by the North American Division included printing a revised manual for those who implement reaching out to missing young people.

While content has few changes, the appearance changed dramatically with color photos and a new cover.

The manual explains Mission Lifeguard in detail, including specific instructions for SPOTTERS and LIFEGUARDS. It intends to move people to action; not merely reading. This 94-page document includes these chapter titles:

- Announcing Mission Lifeguard
- On the Lookout for Spotters
- Lifeguards to the Rescue
- Who’s Going Under?
- Making Rescue a Reality
- Swim Team on the Scene
- From Swimmer to Lifeguard
- The Best Beaches in the World
- Moving from LIFE to ABUNDANT LIFE
- SCUBA Certification—the Next Step!

How can you get your copy? It's free when you sign up to be a SPOTTER or LIFEGUARD at www.MissionLifeguard.org or you can purchase the manual online at AdventSource for $9.95 (http://www.adventsource.org/as30/cart.aspx).

Youth Director James Black came up with this idea and brought youth ministry leaders to his office to flesh it out in greater detail. He asked Steve Case to write the manual. Associate Youth Director Manny Cruz oversaw the design and layout. James and Manny have been sharing this over the past several years. Now others can start doing the same.

Get your copy of the Mission Lifeguard manual. Start saving lives!

How Long Does It Take?

How long will it take to phone every pastor in the North American Division? With more than 4,000 pastors and 5,000+ churches, could this be done in a day? Perhaps dialing everyone simultaneously with a pre-recorded message would be the most efficient way to make these contacts to ask about missing young people. Perhaps.

But how would you respond to an automated voice mail message, welcoming you back to the church? Exactly! So we have chosen the much longer approach of making a personal phone call. This includes talking and also listening. We aren’t looking simply for data—number of people or names to add or subtract from rosters. We’re looking for people. That means pastors, church leaders, those who will be SPOTTERS, those who will be LIFEGUARDS, and those who are missing. Yes, it takes time.

That's the way it goes in a church, too. You can send out a form letter to those who are missing and quit when the letter gets returned with no forwarding address. You can also quit after sending the letter without any other follow up, such as a phone call. We think it’s much better to make it personal when reaching out to others. That takes time.

Each church in the North American Division is being called. We’re following the organizational structure in place with the nine unions and the various conferences within each union. Calls target one conference per union, so we’re actively contacting in all nine unions. When we complete one conference in a union, we’ll move to another one. Conference and union youth directors will be updated to let them know which churches are reaching out to missing young people. The youth director is the central contact person for SPOTTERS and LIFEGUARDS who sign up. The Mission Lifeguard website serves as another resource spot, as does the Facebook page “Mission Lifeguard.”

Don’t want to wait for your church to get called? Then, sign up right now at www.MissionLifeguard.org. Time, perseverance, commitment, and most importantly, the power of God are needed. Welcome to Mission Lifeguard!
What to Look for in a SPOTTER

Can just anyone be a SPOTTER? Probably, but that's not necessarily the best approach to take. A SPOTTER is someone who knows who is missing, and, more importantly, has a passion to reach out to them. This person might pray mightily and have a real heart for those missing, but still feel at a loss about what to do or how to dialogue with a missing person.

The person who is organized, able to develop a plan, collect information, and prod people to action makes an effective SPOTTER. Record-keeping can be done on something as simple as a napkin, or as sophisticated as a computerized spreadsheet. Sample forms can be found on the Mission Lifeguard website as a starting point for keeping records. Instead of just talking, the SPOTTER takes action, beginning with a list of missing people and how to contact them.

The SPOTTER keeps LIFEGUARDS and the congregation updated on the progress of reaching missing young people. This can be through reports in front of church, bulletin announcements, church website, and phone calls. The SPOTTER keeps track of how to contact the missing people, and records what happens when contacts are made.

The SPOTTER works in tandem with the LIFEGUARD, providing information, prayer support, encouragement, and accountability. The SPOTTER and LIFEGUARD report results to the church. They prepare members to celebrate when a missing person returns. They have been made and also when a missing person returns. They prepare members to celebrate when contact information about the church.

Who will be a SPOTTER at your church? You? Another person? The church clerk? An older member who seems to know everyone? A young person who can get contact information about peers? Maybe it’s the mom or dad of the young person? Think of a SPOTTER for your church. Maybe you can have more than one!

What to Look for in a LIFEGUARD

The LIFEGUARD makes contact with the missing person. This happens after prayerful study of available information and asking God to give insight and direction for how to best reach the missing person. Getting contact information is one thing, but actually making contact requires more than our best skills. We need God!

Should contact be made by phone? Voice or text? Casual or focused conversation? In person or from a distance? At home or work or school or elsewhere? Talk more or listen more? Pray together or play together?

This doesn’t work like a formula; the LIFEGUARD needs to gather information, make a plan, then place one’s self in full reliance on Holy Spirit promptings. While the outcome remains unknown, the LIFEGUARD enters each encounter with humility, confidence, interest, awareness, and reliance.

Being a “people-person” and easily conversant can certainly be helpful skills. But they aren’t adequate for the task. The LIFEGUARD serves as the ears, mouth, eyes, plus the hands-and-feet of God. Is the missing person angry? Busy? Uninterested? In tune with God elsewhere? Bored? Distracted? Searching? Alone? Content? Doubting? After gathering information from the SPOTTER and praying together, the LIFEGUARD follows a plan to contact the missing person.

During contact, the LIFEGUARD should communicate the following things:

1. You are missed
2. What's going on? (listen; a lot)
3. I'm inviting you back to church

Go with the Spirit’s impressions. You might need to absorb anger and bitterness from something in the past. Perhaps the missing person has a spiritual vitality you don’t see in your own congregation. Maybe the person feels guilty about returning at this time—possibly for good reasons. Where is the missing person in relation to God? To the church? To you? Don’t feel like everything needs to be tied off neatly in one encounter. This is life. This is real. Expect it to be messy or complicated.

After making contact, the LIFEGUARD reports back to the SPOTTER and they decide what the next step will be. This includes informing the congregation, and probably will result in another contact with the same missing person. Rarely are relationships formed or repaired through one point of contact. But this can be a start.

The LIFEGUARD also needs persistence and prayer. And praise can follow.