I love my GROW Group
I didn't know what to expect concerning who would show up to any of the Contagious Adventist groups. Every semester, there will be groups led by the Pastoral Staff with a specific curriculum for those ready for the next step in their Discipleship Training. I lead one of these. I'm becoming acquainted with people more quickly than I would have without this group bringing us together every week. I keep these fellow members close to my heart. Our content is great but even more meaningful is the sharing of our spiritual experiences.

As a leader, I've organized GROW Groups where 25 plus people have shown up and others where I've sat waiting, staring at an empty bowl of fruit punch. These events were all teaching moments. Groups are ways to transform our church community, despite potential set backs or challenges.

What ensures that a GROW Group is successful? Here are 5 factors to consider.

**Syllabus:** At the beginning of the semester when leaders sign their groups up, they are are strongly encouraged to have a syllabus. It doesn't have be a play by play of your meetings yet, but having a list of the weekly sub-topics will give a GROW Group a greater chance for success. The start of the next semester is a couple of months away but it's not too early to start praying about your syllabus and a theme you'd like to explore with others.

**Subject:** Speaking of themes, make sure that the subject matter that you'll be focusing on aligns with what the group seeks to accomplish. Choose a subject that intrigues you or an activity that you are passionate about and makes you excited enough to spend 10 to 12 weeks on.

**Season:** Determine a time that will most likely work with the people you are aiming to reach. Students' schedules are unpredictable and they tend to be more free on the weekends, yet many have been able to squeeze some time between classes or in the evening. More importantly, determine a time when you will be mostly "present" for the people who will join your group.

There will be times, for reasons unknown to us, when it is simply the wrong "season" to launch a certain subject or syllabus. I decided one year to start a
prayer group, however everyone seemed to busy for it. The following year, I started over and it grew larger than I expected and blessed many families.

**Sharing:** Announce that you are planning to start a GROW Group. Enthusiastically talk about it and raise some interest. Send out personal and informal invitations to individuals you'd like to know better or go on a spiritual adventure with.

**Surprise:** While planning matters, leave room for God's surprise. Stay humble. Give God permission to bring to your group whomever He wants and ask Him to lead people to you who will need most what you are offering.

And finally, if at first you don't succeed, try again. First evaluate and improve on your syllabus, subject, season, sharing and willingness to be surprised by God.

Blessed growing, joyful grouping.

*by Sabine Vatel, Discipleship and GROW Group Pastor*
Bearers of Sunshine

Homebound Ministry visits are a very important part of the ministry here at PMC. The visiting team ministers to over 70 homes all over Berrien County and beyond each month. We sit and visit with them, sometimes bringing food and other gifts to brighten their days. Many of the people that we visit are lonely and just need someone to talk to. We organize holiday parties and Sabbath dinners for them, which they truly enjoy.

Contrary to what the name would lead you to believe, We do not only visit those who are homebound or staying in assisted living. There are many others we visit who are simply lonely and in need of company.

Knobby Mauro, one of our volunteers, has recently started to reach out to even more people. Knobby visits some of the members of the Methodist church here in Berrien Springs. The Homebound Ministry is here to touch the lives of anyone who needs a little sunshine.

We visit many homes and while we would love to visit even more, it would be hard to do so until our team expands in numbers. If you feel God calling you to spread some of your sunshine with others through the Homebound Ministry, please contact Norita Lachica: kycel44@netscape.net

as told to Rebecca Coleman by Norita Lachica, Homebound Ministry Director
Young Leaders Speak Out

I guess we shouldn’t have been surprised that last Sabbath afternoon’s panel/audience conversation about race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist church in America was a standing-room only event (here at Andrews University). The conversation was candid, but the spirit that prevailed was both healthy and essential to any future change in our national church. . . read more

by Dwight Nelson, Lead Pastor

Prayer Time for Baptismal Interests

Announcing a special weekly prayer time here at PMC to pray for our Bible study and baptismal interests here in the community. PMC set goal for 125 baptisms in 2015. This number largely reflects the requests that have been made on the Connect Cards each Sabbath. The prayer group will meet on Friday mornings from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the counseling room next to the Sanctuary. We invite you to come pray with us as we seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit here in Berrien Springs and Andrews University.

For further questions, contact Tabitha Umali: tabitha.umali@pmchurch.org or 269-340-2031