

ACS PHILOSOPHY

The mission of ACS is to serve the community in Christ's name (General Conference Sabbath School, 2008). This means serving the whole person, a concept known as holistic ministry. The word holistic comes from the Greek word *holos*, which implies that all the properties of a given system (biological, chemical, social, economic, mental, spiritual, etc.) cannot be determined or explained by the sum of its component parts alone (Liddell & Scott, 1968). Instead, the system as a whole determines in an important way how the parts behave. It also takes into account the root word *shalom* (peace, well-being, welfare, salute, prosperity, safe, health, perfect, whole, full, just), indicating that God wants us to have a complete, safe, peaceful, perfect, whole, full life. In fact, it is the most important covenant that God made with His children—keeping the covenant relationship is our duty and responsibility as Christians, not only to God but to others (Wallis, 2008).

Therefore, the purpose of holistic ministry is not only to proclaim the Good News, the word of salvation, but also to demonstrate the love of God to people who are in need. Throughout Jesus' ministry there is evidence of a genuine holistic approach toward humanity; especially people who were marginalized, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised from society. These included the poor, the sick, the unclean, the prostitutes, and tax collectors—all outcasts as sinful people. Jesus expanded the Kingdom of God to places, people, and cultures that the Jews had never considered God to be interested in and has thus set these examples for many (Matt 9:10, 21:31, Rom 14:14).

ACS HISTORY

In 1879, the Seventh-day Adventist Church officially named the “Dorcas Society” as its community outreach program. It was named after Dorcas, a believer with a passion to serve others. Her story is found in Acts 9:32, 36, 39 in the New Testament. The Dorcas Society consisted of groups of women who met frequently to provide clothes, food, and/or money for families in the church or the immediate community who had temporary needs. Later, several churches wanted to involve men and started the idea of a co-ed Good Samaritan Society (General Conference Sabbath School, 2008). By 1953, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church broadened the concept of service to address an increasingly urbanized society. This new organization was named “Health and Welfare Services by Seventh-day Adventists.”

In 1956, with the purpose to strengthen Adventist church relief efforts, it became the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service (SAWS). As a result, SAWS expanded into a domestic and international Adventist church-organized community program. By 1972, Adventist Community Services became the official humanitarian agency of the Adventist church in North America. In 1973, SAWS program was renamed the Seventh-day Adventist World Service. Ten years later in 1983, it became Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA), expanding its services beyond the United States and Bermuda. Upon review in 2005, ACS International was reinstalled under the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department to focus on Adventists in community services and outreach ministries program (General Conference Sabbath School, 2008).

Today, Adventist Community Services (ACS) provides services such as disaster response, crisis care, community development, elder care ministries, youth & young adults empowerment ministries, Hope for Humanity and tutoring and mentoring programs globally.