

## GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Atlanta, Georgia

June 23, 2010, 8:30 a.m.

## PRESENT

Roy Adams, Onaolapo Ajibade, Harrington S Akomwa, Wim Altink, Saul K Alvarez-Dominguez, Niels-Erik A Andreassen, Jonas Arrais, Raquel C Arrais, Lisa M Beardsley, John R Beckett, Matthew A Bediako, Guillermo E Biaggi, Gordon Bietz, Branko Bistrovic, Rodney G Brady, Paul S Brantley, Gina S Brown, Herbert Brugger, G Alexander Bryant, Eliseo Bustamante, Mario A Calderon, Jesus Calvo Manso, Carolyn Catton,

Lorna M E Cedras, Shirley Chang, Carl Chin, Bookwon Chun, Chester V Clark III, Lowell C Cooper, Sharon M Cress, Rajmund Dabrowski, Eugene F Daniel, Thomas Davai, Abner De los Santos, Orlando S Deocades, Marino F de Oliveira, A Ganoune Diop, Karnik Doukmetzian, C Garland Dulan, G Thomas Evans, Larry R Evans, Laurie J Evans, Howard F Faigao, Jimmy L Ferguson, Ruthita J Fike, Mark A Finley, Karen M Flowers, John M Fowler,

David K Gairo, Agustin Galicia, Dale Galusha, L James Gibson, Carlos U Gill Krug, Clifford R Goldstein, Ricardo B Graham, John Graz, Alberto C Gulfan Jr, Roberto O Gullon, Erkki O Haapasalo, Bert B Haloviak, Allan R Handysides, Richard H Hart, Keith R Heinrich, Atte M Helminen, Dan Houghton, Eugene Hsu, Teodor Hutanu, Jobir I Iskhakov, Clyde M Iverson Jr, Daniel R Jackson, Michael R Jamieson, David Javier Perez, David Jennah,

Johann E Johannsson, William G Johnsson, Ignacio L Kalbermatter, Mikhail F Kaminskiy, Gerry D Karst, Anthony R Kent, Dae Sung Kim, Donald G King, Gerald Klingbeil, Linda Mei Lin Koh, Erton C Kohler, Allah-Ridy Kone, Shurman Kook, Gary D Krause, Vladimir A Krupskiy, Jonathan Kuntaraf, Kathleen H L Kuntaraf, Robert E Kyte, Peter N Landless, Samuel A Larmie, Pawel Lazar, Jairyong Lee, Israel Leito, Robert E Lemon,

Pavel I Liberanskiy, Eber Liessi, Charles C Ligan, Don Livesay, Mauricio Pinto Lima, Jose R Lizardo, Marlinton S Lopes, Francois Louw, Johnny Lubis, Paminus Machamire, Guenther Machel, Emmanuel S D Manu, Norman Maphosa, Solomon Maphosa, Alemu H Maruta, Jeannette Kahambu Matita, Jerome P Matthews, Geoffrey G Mbwana, Donna McNeilus, Saustin S Mfunne, Armando Miranda, Bareng Moahi, Joshua W Mok, Eric P Monnier,

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Baraka G Muganda, Patrick M Mulindwa, Evans Muvuti, Emmanuel Mwale, Pardon K Mwansa, Nina K H Myrdal, Catharina S Nangoy, G T Ng, Ivan M Nikolov, James R Nix, Don Noble, Jean-Claude Nocandy, Emmanuel K Noudoda, Goodwell Nthani, Richard A Ntriakwah, Gideon Nwaogwugwu, Etzer Obas, Tamas Ocsai, Lorna G Okotto, Joseph A Ola, Barry D Oliver, Daisy J Orion, Moisei Ostrovski, Rubin R Ott, Bjorn Ottesen, Brempong Owusu-Antwi,

Ruth E Parish, Jan Paulsen, Magdiel Perez Schulz, Juan O Perla, Philip Philipsen, Peter J Prime, Stoy E Proctor, Erika F Puni, Orlando E Ramos Giles, John Rathinaraj, Paul S Ratsara, Gordon L Retzer, Angel M Rodriguez, Jose Alberto Rodriguez, Guy F Roger, Abner S Roque, Vasile Rotaru, Wilfredo Ruiz, Michael L Ryan, Roy E Ryan, Claude Sabot, Donald R Sahly, Noldy Sakul, Charles C Sandefur Jr, Samuel Sandoval Ruiz, Nikolaus Satelmajer,

Lawrence E Schalk, Byron Scheuneman, Don C Schneider, Benjamin D Schoun, Carmen Schulz, Luis A Schulz, Alexander F Schwarz, Mesake Senibulu, Masaki Shoji, Helder R C Silva Ella S Simmons, Ian H Sleeman, Heather-Dawn Small, Robert Sjolander, Domingos Jose de Sousa, James Standish, Artur Stele, Wilfredo L Sumagaysay, Akeri Suzuki, Gary B Swanson, Joel Swanson, Lawrence P Tanabose, J Eduardo Teixeira, Halvard B Thomsen, Alberto R Timm,

Tor Tjeransen, Caroline V Katemba Tobing, Tomas Torres, Ronald W Townend, Djordje Trajkovski, Homer W Trecartin, Max A Trevino, Klaus-Juergen van Treeck, Filiberto M Verduzco-Avila, Bruno R Vertallier, Waisea V Vuniwa, Gilbert Wari, Dave Weigley, Bertil Wiklander, Jeffrey K Wilson, Ted N C Wilson, Harald Wollan, Joseph Hin-Chung Wong, James Sze Fai Wu, Masao Yanaga, Jael A Yohanna, Lori T Yingling, Gilmar Zahn, Joel Zukovski

#### ATTENDEES

Antonio Anobile, Seth Bardu, Gasore Bazungu, Jeffrey O Brown, Ken Corkum, Evangelisti Franco, Van Hurst, Mark A Kellner, Ventsislav Peneyotou, Gerald D Penick Jr, Calvin B Rock, Fredrick Russell, Mark B Thomas, Manzoua Noanpea N Veronique

The devotional message taken from Ephesians 4:1-16 was presented by Jan Paulsen, President of the General Conference.

Prayer was offered by Jan Paulsen, President of the General Conference.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

PASTORS - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend references to pastors by replacing strictly masculine designations with “the pastor” throughout the *Church Manual*.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

AUTHORITY AND FUNCTION OF THE *CHURCH MANUAL* -  
EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 1, *Why a Church Manual?*, Authority and Function of the *Church Manual*, page 2, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Since then, the content of the *Church Manual* is divided into two types of material.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

PURPOSE OF THE *CHURCH MANUAL* (AUTHORITY AND  
FUNCTION OF THE *CHURCH MANUAL*) - *CHURCH  
MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 1, *Why a Church Manual?*, Authority and Function of the *Church Manual*, page 3, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

The standards and practices of the Church are based upon the principles of the Holy Scriptures. ~~These principles are principles,~~ underscored by the Spirit of Prophecy and are set forth in this *Church Manual*. They are to be followed in all matters pertaining to the administration and operation of local churches. The *Church Manual* also defines the relationship that exists between the local congregation and the conference or other entities of Seventh-day Adventist denominational organization. ~~the Church both within the local congregation and its relationship to all other levels of Church organization.~~ No attempt should be made to set up standards of membership or to make, or attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for ~~the Church~~ local church operations which are contrary to these decisions adopted by the General Conference in session and

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~~which are set forth in this *Church Manual*, have not been adopted by the general body of believers and which are not set forth in this *Church Manual*.~~

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### MAKING CHANGES - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 1, Why a *Church Manual?*, Making Changes, page 4, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~A revision~~ Revision of a Note follows the same ~~procedural route.~~ procedure.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### RECENT EDITIONS OF THE *CHURCH MANUAL* (MAKING CHANGES) - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 1, Why a *Church Manual?*, Making Changes, page 4, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

A new edition of the *Church Manual* is published after every General Conference Session. ~~Leaders should always work with the most recent edition.~~ The most recent edition should always be used. This edition incorporates amendments made at the 2010 General Conference Session.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### WHERE TO GET ADVICE - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 1, Why a *Church Manual?*, Where to Get Advice, page 4, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Church officers and leaders, pastors, and members should ~~look to~~ consult with their conference for advice pertaining to the operating of their congregation or on questions arising from the *Church Manual*.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### CHURCH ORGANIZATION TODAY - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 3, Organization and Authority, Church Organization Today, page 12, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

There are several organizational levels within the Church leading from the individual believer to the worldwide organization of the work. Membership units in each of these levels periodically convene formal business sessions known as constituency meetings or sessions. (The constituency meeting or session of a local church is generally referred to as a business meeting.) ~~No level of the Church grants its own status.~~ In Seventh-day Adventist Church structure, no organization determines its own status nor does it function as if it had no obligations to the Church family beyond its boundaries.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### ORGANIZING A COMPANY - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraphs in Chapter 5, Organizing, Uniting, and Dissolving Churches and Companies, Organizing a Company, page 21, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~Members of the conference church, remote small groups, and house churches~~ Church members who are part of small groups or house groups may form the nucleus of a new company, and the company. Membership of all those who want to be part of a company should be held in either the conference church or a local church (mother church). If membership for those who want to be part of a company is to be held in the conference church, the conference committee will vote their membership transfers to the conference church and indicate that they are part of

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~~the new company. Potential members from other congregations should initiate transfers to the new company.~~

When the conference committee approves establishment of a company, ~~the district pastor or other pastor appointed by the conference committee, in counsel with local members, shall appoint from the membership of the company a leadership team:~~ a leadership team should be appointed, including a leader, a clerk, and a treasurer. The appointments should be carried out by the district pastor, or other pastor appointed by the conference committee, in counsel with the group being established as a company.

All other company appointments should be made by vote of ~~the members of the company at a meeting presided over by the district leader or other person authorized by the conference committee:~~ those who are part of the group that is forming the company. The district pastor or other person authorized by the conference committee shall preside at such a meeting. Only members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in regular standing shall be appointed.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### REASONS FOR DISCIPLINE - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 7, Discipline, Reasons for Discipline, page 44, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~Such violations as~~ Sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, fornication, promiscuity, incest, homosexual practice, sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, the production, use, or distribution of pornography, and other sexual perversions.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### REINSTATING THOSE PREVIOUSLY REMOVED FROM MEMBERSHIP - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION ADDITION

RECOMMENDED, To add the following paragraph to Chapter 7, Discipline, Process of Discipline, Reinstating Those Previously Removed From Membership, page 49, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

With respect to perpetrators of sexual abuse, restoration to membership does not remove all consequences of such a serious violation. For their own protection and the safety of vulnerable individuals, while attendance at church activities may be possible with properly established guidelines, a person convicted or disciplined for sexual abuse shall not be placed in a role which may put them in contact with children, youth, and other vulnerable individuals or in a position which would encourage vulnerable individuals to trust them implicitly.

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READMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP (REINSTATING THOSE  
PREVIOUSLY REMOVED FROM MEMBERSHIP) -  
*CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 7, Discipline, Process of Discipline, Reinstating Those Previously Removed From Membership, pages 49-50, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Because removal from membership is the most serious form of discipline, the period of time, determined by the church business meeting, before members may be reinstated should be sufficient to demonstrate that the issues which led to removal from membership have been resolved beyond reasonable doubt. ~~Readmission to membership is expected to be preceded by rebaptism.~~ It is expected that readmission to membership will be done in connection with rebaptism.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

SET TITHING EXAMPLE - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL*  
REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, General Qualifications, Set Tithing Example, page 53, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Setting Tithing Example—All officers shall set an example in the matter of returning a faithful tithe ~~through~~ to the Church. Anyone who fails to set such an example ~~should~~ shall not be elected to church office.

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#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE PASTOR - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Elders, Relationship to the Pastor, page 55, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Relationship to the Pastor—If the conference committee assigns a pastor or pastors to the congregation, the ~~pastor~~ pastor, or senior pastor if more than one, should be considered the ranking officer and the local elders ~~his~~ as assistants. Since their work is closely related, they should work together harmoniously. The pastor should not assume all lines of responsibility but should share these with the elders and other officers. The pastor serving the church regularly acts as the chairperson of the board. (See p. XX.) There may be circumstances, however, when it would be advisable for an elder to act as chairperson. The pastoral work of the church should be shared by the pastor and the elders. In counsel with the pastor, the elders should visit members, minister to the sick, foster prayer ministries, arrange or lead out in anointing services and child dedications, encourage the disheartened, and assist in other pastoral responsibilities. As undershepherds, elders should exercise constant vigilance over the flock.

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#### CONDUCTING CHURCH SERVICES - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Elders, Conducting Church Services, page 56, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Conducting Church Services—Under the pastor, or in the absence of the pastor, an elder is responsible for the services of the church and must either conduct them or arrange for someone to do so. Communion services must always be conducted by an ~~ordained~~ ordained/commissioned pastor or local elder. The pastor usually chairs the business meeting. In the absence of the pastor, and with approval of the pastor or the conference president, an elder should serve as chairperson.



08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

MARRIAGE CEREMONY - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Elders, Marriage Ceremony, page 56, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Marriage Ceremony—In a marriage ceremony, the charge, vows, and declaration of marriage are given only by an ordained pastor except in those areas where division committees have approved that selected licensed or commissioned pastors who have been ordained as local elders may perform the ceremony. (See p. XX.) Local laws may require that persons conducting marriage ceremonies also hold state licensure/permit to do so. An ~~Either an~~ ordained pastor, a licensed or commissioned pastor, or an elder may deliver the sermonette, offer the prayer, and give the blessing. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

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TO FOSTER PRAYER LIFE - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Elders, To Foster Prayer Life, page 56, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~To Foster Prayer Life—As Bible Study, Prayer, and a Relationship With Jesus—As~~ spiritual leaders, elders are responsible for ~~assisting with the development and encouragement of personal prayer life and~~ encouraging members to develop a personal relationship with Jesus by strengthening their habits of personal Bible study and prayer. Elders should model a commitment to Bible study and prayer. An effective personal prayer life of every member, supporting all ministries and programs of the local church, will enhance the church's mission. Elders may ask the board to appoint a council to assist in this role of development and encouragement.

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08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

FIRST ELDER - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Elders, First Elder, pages 57-58, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~First Elder—In churches with a large membership, it may be advisable~~ Elder—It may be advisable, due to church size, to choose more than one elder because the burdens of the office are too great for one person. If the church elects more than one elder, one should be designated “first elder.” The work should be divided among the elders in harmony with their experience and ability.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

INDUCTION SERVICE FOR DEACONESSSES - *CHURCH MANUAL*  
REVISION ADDITION

RECOMMENDED, To add the following paragraph to Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Deaconesses, Induction Service for Deaconesses, page 61, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

If they retain church membership, deaconesses, if ordained, do not have to be ordained again if they move their membership to other churches. When the term for which they were elected expires, they must be reelected if they are to continue to serve as deaconesses.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES COORDINATOR AND COMMITTEE -  
EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Children’s Ministries, Children’s Ministries Coordinator and Committee, page 69 (also included on pages 80, 87, 88, and 89), of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Everyone involved in work with children must meet all Church and legal standards and requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should consult with the conference which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)”

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### PUBLISHING MINISTRIES - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, Publishing Ministries, page 77, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

The mission of Publishing Ministries is the evangelism and nurture of church members. ~~For evangelism, the prophet said that church members were~~ Ellen G. White encouraged members to “sell or give away our literature.”—Ms 126, 1902.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESS MEETING AND LOCAL CHURCH BOARD (BUSINESS MEETINGS) - *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 10, Services and Other Meetings, Business Meetings, page 106, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

~~The business meeting is the governing body of the church.~~ The local church operates within defined roles in Seventh-day Adventist Church structure. Within the context of those roles, the business meeting is the governing body of the local church. Members in regular standing are encouraged to attend and are entitled to vote. A member under censure has no right to participate by voice or vote.

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DEFINITION AND FUNCTION (BOARD AND ITS MEETINGS) -  
*CHURCH MANUAL REVISION*

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 10, Services and Other Meetings, Board and Its Meetings, Definition and Function, page 107, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Definition and Function—Every church must have ~~an elected board~~; a functioning board whose members have been elected during a church business meeting. Its chief concern is the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

MEMBERSHIP (BOARD AND ITS MEETINGS) - EDITORIAL  
*CHURCH MANUAL REVISION*

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 10, Services and Other Meetings, Board and Its Meetings, Membership, pages 108-109, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

Membership—In addition to conference-appointed pastors, the church should ~~appoint~~ elect a representative board which includes the following officers:

- Elders
- Head deacon
- Head deaconess
- Treasurer
- Clerk
- Interest coordinator
- Adventist Men's coordinator
- Adventist Youth Society leader
- Adventurer Club director
- Ambassador Club director
- Bible School coordinator
- Children's ministries leader

Church music coordinator  
Communication Committee chairperson or communication secretary  
Community services and/or Dorcas Society leader  
Education secretary  
Family ministries leader  
Health ministries leader  
Home and School Association leader  
Pathfinder Club leader  
Personal ministries leader and secretary  
Publishing ministries coordinator  
Religious liberty leader  
Sabbath School superintendent  
Stewardship ministries leader  
Women's ministries leader

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OFFERINGS - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL* REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To amend the following paragraph in Chapter 11, Finance, Offerings, page 115, of the *Church Manual* revision, to read as follows (see 400GS *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual - Church Manual* Revision, as attached to the official copy of the minutes):

In addition to the traditional Calendar of ~~Offering~~ Offerings program where each offering taken is for a specific purpose, the General Conference has approved the Combined Offering system and the Personal Giving Plan. The division committee is authorized to determine which plan will be used in its territory.

08AC/ChMan/09AC/GCC(Atlanta) to AM-10GCS

WE ARE REFORMERS (DRESS) - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL*  
REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To approve moving the sentence "We are reformers." within Chapter 12, Standards of Christian Living from Dress, page 124, to High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, page 119.

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REARRANGEMENT OF PARAGRAPHS - EDITORIAL *CHURCH MANUAL*  
REVISION

RECOMMENDED, To approve the rearrangement of several additional paragraphs within the Church Manual revision as recommended by Annual Council. No content was changed so they have not been listed here.

Adhoc/POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC-10GCS

142-10GS RESOLUTION ON THE HOLY BIBLE

RECOMMENDED, To approve the Resolution on the Holy Bible, which reads as follows:

RESOLUTION ON THE HOLY BIBLE

As delegates to the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, we reaffirm confidence in the divine revelation and inspiration of the Bible, its authority in the life of the Church and of each believer, and its foundational role for faith, doctrine, and conduct. The Bible conveys to us a message of salvation in the context of a cosmic conflict that reveals God's loving, merciful, and righteous character.

The Bible presents Christ as the most sublime revelation of God's love, as the Incarnate God, as the One who offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice, bearing our sins in order to reconcile us to God; He is presented to us as our only Mediator before the Father in the heavenly sanctuary. The Bible presents Jesus as the only reliable source of hope for the human race; a hope grounded in the pattern of His life, in the redemptive work of His ministry, in His death on the cross, in His resurrection from the grave, and in His soon return in glory.

The hope and message found in the Bible transcends times and cultures and satisfies the deepest needs of the human heart. In it the Church, as God's end-time people, finds the good news that is to be proclaimed to all peoples and cultures in the fulfillment of God's mission. The Bible's message came to us through the work of the Holy Spirit whose guidance and illumination are necessary to understand it properly.

Since through the power and person of the Holy Spirit the Bible can transform us and develop Christ-like character, we, the delegates of the General Conference in Session, call Seventh-day Adventist believers and fellow Christians everywhere to make the Bible their daily source for personal study. Let Bible study be accompanied by prayer and praise; let it be an

open book in our homes to which we listen daily and an open book in our worship places where we collectively seek God's Word. Let the power of the Bible shape personal life and relationships and empower a witness that points the whole world to the glorious return of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ!

Adhoc/POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC-10GCS

143-10GS RESOLUTION ON THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY AS  
MANIFESTED IN THE MINISTRY AND WRITINGS OF  
ELLEN G WHITE

RECOMMENDED, To approve the Resolution on the Spirit of Prophecy as Manifested in the Ministry and Writings of Ellen G White, which reads as follows:

RESOLUTION ON THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY AS MANIFESTED  
IN THE MINISTRY AND WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

We, the delegates to the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, acknowledge with gratitude the continuing contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church found in the writings and ministry of Ellen G White. We are witnesses to how the Church has been blessed and guided by God through the inspired counsel of His messenger. Her counsels exalt the Bible as the Word of God, lift up Jesus as Creator and Redeemer of the world, and encourage a life of service and sacrifice. Her ministry has directly aided in the preservation of unity in the Church and its expanding global outreach.

The gift of prophecy, like the other spiritual gifts, is to bring about unity, equip God's people for the work of ministry, build up the body of Christ, protect it from being deceived by false doctrine, and foster individual and collective spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:11-15). We recognize in Ellen G White the gift of prophecy, and affirm that as this gift is valued and its instruction heeded, the Church prospers.

Consequently, we express our gratitude to God for His gracious gift in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G White. We call upon Seventh-day Adventists everywhere to prayerfully study her messages and benefit from the inspiration and instruction found there. We encourage the teachers and administrators of our educational institutions and the leaders of our health-care facilities and publishing houses to review her counsels for their areas of service. We urge pastors to make use of these writings in their sermon preparation and in their planning with the members for the mission of their churches. We appeal to Church administrators at every level to exert their influence in affirming the importance of these writings for the Church and to continue efforts to make these writings available to church members at affordable cost. And we affirm

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our commitment to “believe His prophets” (2 Chronicles 20:20), that we may prosper in fulfilling our mission to the world and thus hasten the coming of Jesus.

FM/POSCom/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC

#### 144-10G STATEMENT ON THE NURTURE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Seventh-day Adventists place a high value on children. In the light of the Bible they are seen as precious gifts from God entrusted to the care of parents, family, community of faith and society-at-large. Children possess enormous potential for making positive contributions to the Church and to society. Attention to their care, protection and development is extremely important.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms and extends its longstanding efforts to nurture and safeguard children and youth from persons—known and unknown—whose actions perpetrate any form of abuse and violence against them and/or sexually exploit them. Jesus modeled the kind of respect, nurture, and protection children should be able to expect from adults entrusted with their care. Some of His strongest words of reproof were directed toward those who would harm them. Because of the trusting nature and dependence of children upon older and wiser adults and the life-changing consequences when this trust is breached, children require vigilant protection.

#### Redemptive Correction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places a priority on church-based parent education that helps parents develop the skills necessary for a redemptive approach to correction. Many children experience harsh punishment in the name of a biblical approach to discipline. Correction characterized by severe, punitive, dictatorial control often leads to resentment and rebellion. Such harsh discipline is also associated with heightened risk for physical and psychological harm to children as well as increased likelihood the youth will resort to coercion and violence in resolving their differences with others. By contrast, examples from Scripture as well as a large body of research confirm the effectiveness of more gentle forms of discipline that allow children to learn through reasoning and experiencing the consequences of their choices. Such milder measures have been demonstrated to increase the likelihood children will make life-affirming choices and espouse parental values as they mature.



## Making Church a Safe Place for Children

The Church also takes seriously its responsibility to minimize the risk for child sexual abuse and violence against children in the congregational setting. First and foremost, church leaders and members must themselves live by a strict code of ethics that precludes even the appearance of evil as regards the exploitation of minors for the gratification of adult desires. Other practical measures toward making church a safe place for children include attention to the safety of the church facility and its surroundings and the careful supervision and monitoring of children and their environment during all church-related activities. Education regarding what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate interaction between adults and children, the warning signs of abuse and violence, and the specific steps to be followed should inappropriate behavior be reported or suspected are vitally important. Pastors and church leaders who are visible and approachable play an important role in prevention as well as in responding well to the needs of children whose safety may have been jeopardized. Regular updates are needed regarding their moral and legal responsibility to report child abuse to appropriate civil authorities. The designation of trained personnel and specific protocols at wider levels of Church organization will help to ensure appropriate action and follow-through when abuse is reported within the church setting.

Because of the complex nature of the problem of child sexual abuse and violence against children, intervention and treatment of perpetrators requires resources beyond the scope of ministry provided by the local church. However, the presence of a known perpetrator in a congregation calls for the highest levels of vigilance. While perpetrators should be held fully responsible for their own behavior, the supervision of persons with a history of inappropriate behavior is necessary to ensure that such persons maintain appropriate distance and refrain from all contact with children during church-related activities. Provision for alternative opportunities for perpetrators to grow spiritually in settings where children are not present greatly enhances child protection.

## Fostering Emotional and Spiritual Healing

Children who have been personally victimized or who have witnessed disturbing events need the care of adults who treat them with sensitivity and understanding. Practical support that helps children and families maintain stability in the midst of turmoil empowers victims and their families and promotes healing. The Church's commitment to breaking the silence frequently associated with child sexual abuse and violence, its efforts toward advocacy and justice for all victims, and deliberate action to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and violence will contribute much toward the emotional and spiritual recovery of all concerned. The Church regards the nurture and protection of children as a sacred trust.

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June 23, 2010, a.m.

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(This statement has been informed by the principles expressed in the following biblical passages: Lev. 18:6; 2 Sam. 13:1-11; 1 Kings 17:17-23; Ps. 9: 9, 12, 16-18; 11:5-7; 22:24; 34:18; 127:3-5; 128:3-4; Prov. 31:8-9; Is. 1:16-17; Jer. 22:3; Matt. 18:1-6; 21:9, 15-16; Mark 9:37; 10:13-16; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1Tim. 5:8; Heb. 13:3.)

(See also “Seventh-day Adventists Speak Up For Ending Violence Against Women and Girls”.)

POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC

#### 145-10G CREATION: THE BIBLE’S WORLDVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms its belief in the biblical account of creation in contrast to an evolutionary explanation for the origin of living organisms and the relationship of humans to other life forms. Seventh-day Adventists note with great interest the increasing discussion of intelligent design in nature and the evidence that supports this view. In the light of considerable public interest in this topic the Church takes this opportunity to express its confidence in the biblical record.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that God is the Creator of all life and that the Bible reveals a reliable account of His creative activity. Further, we believe that the biblical events recorded in Genesis 1-11, including the special creation of human beings, are historical and recent, that the seven days of creation were literal 24-hour days forming a literal week, and that the Flood was global in nature.

Belief in creation is foundational for Seventh-day Adventist understanding concerning much more than the question of origins. The purposes and mission of God described in the Bible, human responsibility for stewardship of the environment, the institution of marriage and the sacred meaning of the Sabbath all find their meaning in the doctrine of creation.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize that the biblical record of creation does not answer all questions that can be asked concerning origins. Our comprehension of such mysteries is limited. We anticipate that continued study of both the Bible and nature will deepen our understanding of God’s power and strengthen our faith in His Word and the creation account it contains.

(This statement is supported by numerous Bible passages including: Psalm 19:1; Colossians 1:16-17; Genesis 1-11; Psalm 139:14; Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27; Romans 8:20, 21.)

POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC to LCC-GCC(Atlanta)

146-10G SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS SPEAK UP FOR ENDING  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

We, the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, speak up and join with others to bring an end to violence against women and children. Global statistics indicate that in all societies women and girl children are more frequently the victims of violence. Actions or threats likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering are incompatible with biblical ethics and Christian morality. Such actions include, but are not limited to, family violence, rape, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), honor killings, and dowry murders. Manipulation, denial of personal liberty, and coercion are also acts of abuse and violence. To such behaviors the Seventh-day Adventist Church says, "Let's end it now!"

Seventh-day Adventists recognize that creation in God's image bestows dignity and worth on every individual. The measure of that worth is seen in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ to provide eternal life for everyone. The love and compassion that characterized the earthly life of Jesus sets an example for all His followers in their relationship with others. Christ-like behavior leaves no room for violence against family members or persons outside the family.

The Bible counsels Christians to view the body as the temple of God. Bringing intentional harm to another person desecrates that which God honors and is therefore sinful behavior. Seventh-day Adventists commit themselves to being leaders in breaking the cycle of violence perpetrated against women and girl children. We will speak out in defense of victims and survivors through teaching, preaching, Bible study, and advocacy programs.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks and welcomes partnerships and collaboration with others in addressing this global issue. The collective voice of many can save tens of thousands of women and girl children from the harm and suffering that result from abuse and violence.

(This statement is supported by the following Bible references: John 3:16; Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 61:1-3; Ephesians 5:2-3; 1 John 3:10, 15-18, 4:11; 3 John 1:2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19; Romans 12:1-2.)

10-64

June 23, 2010, a.m.

GCC - General Conference Session

POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC

## 147-10G SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND “DEFAMATION” OF RELIGION

A distinguishing feature of humans is our God-given ability to communicate in the abstract through speech, symbols, and the written word. Nowhere is this capacity more uniquely expressed than in the domain of faith. Communication concerning religious beliefs is central to our ability to explore meaning and purpose in life, discuss the values that guide our actions, and to share experiences as we search for a closer knowledge of God.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly supports freedom of speech in general, and freedom of religious speech in particular. Although freedom of speech is guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, efforts continue to limit speech at both the national level and at the United Nations. In both settings, significant focus has been placed on limiting speech that offends the religious beliefs of the hearer. Seventh-day Adventists affirm sensitivity and respect in all communication. We are thus concerned about speech designed to offend religious sensibilities. However, we believe that ceding the right to the state to control religious speech creates a far greater threat to the autonomy of people of faith than that posed by offensive speech. Indeed, there are numerous examples today of states citing a desire to protect religious feelings to justify the forceful silencing of peaceful religious speech.

Our opposition to the restriction of speech is not without exceptions. The Church recognizes that in limited circumstances, speech can result in significant, tangible harm to the right to physical safety, the enjoyment of one's property and other similarly compelling rights. In such very limited instances, we recognize the responsibility of the state to act to protect its population. When such limits are necessary, the Church expects governments to target restrictions narrowly to address only the dangerous speech in question.

The Church recognizes a special responsibility of those in power to communicate a message that supports fundamental human rights, including all the facets of religious freedom. This responsibility is particularly pertinent to governments, as they are generally in a unique position to encourage robust respect for the rights of their people, and particularly minorities.

While recognizing the right to freely express religious beliefs, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to self-regulate their speech to ensure it is consistent with biblical teachings. This includes the obligation to be both honest and loving. This is particularly important when discussing another faith as religious passions can prompt a one-dimensional view of others. Honesty does not mean merely stating facts accurately, but also placing information in an accurate context. Seventh-day Adventists will be constrained by Christ's law of love in all they say and do. When the God-given gift of speech is used to communicate in

love, we will bless not only our fellow human beings; we will honor the God who made us all with the gift to express ourselves.

POSCOM/ADCOM/PreC/GCC(Atlanta) to LCC

#### 148-10G SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST STATEMENT ON GLOBAL POVERTY

Poverty is present in every society. Poverty robs human beings of their most basic rights. It keeps people hungry; it deprives them of medical care, clean water, an education, the opportunity to work, and often results in a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and inequality. Every day, more than 24,000 children die due to preventable conditions created by poverty.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that actions to reduce poverty and its attendant injustices are an important part of Christian social responsibility. The Bible clearly reveals God's special interest in the poor and His expectations as to how His followers should respond to those who are unable to care for themselves. All human beings bear the image of God and are the recipients of God's blessing (Luke 6:20). In working with the poor we follow the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 25:35, 36). As a spiritual community Seventh-day Adventists advocate justice for the poor and "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves" (Proverbs 31:8 NIV) and against those who "deprive the poor of their rights" (Isaiah 10:2 NIV). We participate with God who "secures justice for the poor" (Psalm 140:12 NIV).

Working to reduce poverty and hunger means more than showing sympathy for the poor. It means advocating for public policy that offers justice and fairness to the poor, for their empowerment and human rights. It means sponsoring and participating in programs that address the causes of poverty and hunger, helping people to build sustainable lives. This commitment to justice is an act of love (Micah 6:8). Seventh-day Adventists believe it is also a call to live lives of simplicity and modesty that witness against materialism and a culture of affluence.

Seventh-day Adventists join the global community in supporting the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals for reducing poverty by at least 50 percent by 2015. In furtherance of this, Seventh-day Adventists partner with civil society, governments and others, working together locally and globally to participate in God's work of establishing enduring justice in a broken world.

As followers of Christ we engage this task with determined hope, energized by God's visionary promise of a new heaven and a new earth where there is no poverty or injustice. Seventh-day Adventists are called to live imaginatively and faithfully inside that vision of God's Kingdom by acting to end poverty now.

10-66  
June 23, 2010, a.m.  
GCC - General Conference Session

SEC/ADCOM/10SM/ADCOM/GCC(Atlanta) to LRE-10GCS

131-10GS STEERING COMMITTEE—GENERAL CONFERENCE  
SESSION - 2010

RECOMMENDED, To approve the 2010 General Conference Session Steering Committee, as follows:

STEERING

Jan Paulsen, Chair  
Larry R Evans, Secretary

Members: Rosa T Banks, Matthew A Bediako, G Alexander Bryant, Sheri Clemmer, Lowell C Cooper, Karnik Doukmetzian, George O Egwakhe, G Thomas Evans, Mark A Finley, Agustin Galicia, Alberto C Gulfan Jr, Eugene Hsu, Gerry D Karst, Erton C Kohler, Jairyong Lee, Israel Leito, Robert E Lemon, Jose R Lizardo, Geoffrey G Mbwana, Armando Miranda, Todd R McFarland, Pardon K Mwansa, G T Ng, Barry D Oliver, Daisy J Orion, Orville D Parchment, Juan R Prestol, John Rathinaraj, Paul S Ratsara, Michael L Ryan, Roy E Ryan, Claude Sabot, Don C Schneider, Ella S Simmons, Artur Stele, Homer W Trecartin, Bruno Vertallier, Gilbert Wari, Bertil Wiklander, Ted N C Wilson.

Invitees: Rajmund Dabrowski, William M Knott, Dian Lawrence, Halvard B Thomsen

SEC/ADCOM/ADCOM/GCC(Atlanta) to MAB

123-10Ge ALLOCATION OF AT LARGE DELEGATE SEATS  
DESIGNATED BY GENERAL CONFERENCE  
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE—GENERAL  
CONFERENCE SESSION - 2010

VOTED, 1. To delete the names of the following individuals from the allocation of delegates at large by the General Conference Administrative Committee voted by the General Conference Executive Committee at Spring Meeting on April 7, 2010 as they are not able to attend the General Conference Session:

- a. Behrens, B Lyn Former President, Loma Linda University
- b. Reed, Monica CEO, Celebration Hospital, Florida

2. To approve the following delegate at large reserved for allocation by the General Conference Administrative Committee for the 2010 General Conference Session, under the provision of General Conference Constitution, Article V, Section 8.-f.-(2):

- a. Doss, Cheryl Director, Institute of World Mission

SEC/ADCOM/GCC(Atlanta) to MAB

125-10Gc ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL GUESTS DESIGNATED FOR  
INSTITUTIONS/SERVICES/ORGANIZATIONS

VOTED, 1. To delete the following names of Special Guests designated for Institutions/Services/Organizations voted by the General Conference Executive Committee at Spring Meeting on April 7, 2010:

- a. General Conference Auditing Service  
Pannekoek, Mark
- b. Review and Herald Publishing Association (RHPA)  
Martinelli, Mario  
Tooley, Richard

2. To edit the name of the following Special Guest designated for Institutions/Services/Organizations voted by the General Conference Executive Committee at Spring Meeting on April 7, 2010:

- a. General Conference Auditing Service  
Pagidipalli, Michael P ~~Rao, Michael P~~

Prayer was offered by Gilbert Wari, President of the West-Central Africa Division.

Jan Paulsen, Chair  
G T Ng, Secretary  
Larry R Evans, Editorial Secretary  
Tamara K Boward, Recording Secretary

3  
4 400-10GS *SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MANUAL -*  
5 *CHURCH MANUAL REVISION*

6  
7 VOTED, To revise the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* to read as follows:

8  
9 CHAPTER 1

10  
11 Why a *Church Manual*?

12  
13 Why does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a *Church Manual*?

14  
15 God is a God of order as evidenced in His works of creation and redemption.  
16 Consequently, order belongs to the essence of His Church. Order is achieved through principles  
17 and regulations that guide the Church in its internal operations and in the fulfillment of its  
18 mission to the world. In order for it to be a successful ecclesiastical organization at the service  
19 of the Lord and humanity, it needs order, rule, and discipline. Scripture affirms that “all things  
20 be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

21  
22 Ellen G. White pointed out such needs in 1875: “The church of Christ is in constant  
23 peril. Satan is seeking to destroy the people of God, and one man’s mind, one man’s judgment,  
24 is not sufficient to be trusted. Christ would have His followers brought together in church  
25 capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming  
26 others better than themselves.”—9T 445.

27  
28 But Church leaders did not quickly produce a book of rules for Church governance, even  
29 though the General Conference Session met annually during the Church’s early years and  
30 delegates voted on matters of church order and life. Finally, in 1882, the General Conference  
31 Session voted to have prepared “instructions to church officers, to be printed in the *Review and*  
32 *Herald* or in tract form.”—RH, Dec. 26, 1882. This revealed the growing realization that order  
33 was imperative if organization was to function effectively and that uniformity in order required  
34 its guiding principles to be put into printed form.

35  
36 However, when the proposal to place the articles in permanent form as a church manual  
37 came before the 1883 General Conference Session, delegates rejected the idea. They feared a  
38 manual might formalize the Church and take from its pastors their individual freedom to deal  
39 with matters of order as they desired.

40  
41 But this fear—doubtless reflecting the opposition that had existed twenty years before to  
42 any kind of organization—evidently soon lessened. The annual General Conference Sessions  
43 continued to take actions on matters of order.





1 attempt to enforce, rules or regulations for local church operations which are contrary to these  
2 decisions adopted by the General Conference in session and which are set forth in this *Church*  
3 *Manual*.

#### 5 Making Changes

7 The General Conference through the years voted important changes concerning the  
8 *Church Manual*. Realizing the importance of conducting the worldwide work of the Church  
9 “decently and in order,” the 1946 General Conference Session voted that “[a]ll changes or  
10 revisions of policy that are to be made in the *Manual* shall be authorized by the General  
11 Conference session.” *General Conference Report*, No. 8, p. 197 (June 14, 1946).

13 In 1948, recognizing that local conditions sometimes call for special actions, the General  
14 Conference Committee voted that “each division, including the North American Division of the  
15 world field, prepare a ‘Supplement’ to the new *Church Manual* not in any way modifying it but  
16 containing such additional matter as is applicable to the conditions and circumstances prevailing  
17 in the division; the manuscripts for these Supplements to be submitted to the General Conference  
18 Committee for endorsement before being printed.”—*Autumn Council Actions*, 1948, p. 19.

20 The 2000 General Conference Session authorized the reclassification of some existing  
21 *Church Manual* material, into the Notes sections as guidance and examples rather than  
22 mandatory material, and approved the process for making changes. Changes in the *Church*  
23 *Manual*, except for the Notes and editorial changes, can be made only by action of a General  
24 Conference Session, where delegates of the world Church have voice and vote. If a local church,  
25 conference, or union conference/mission wishes to propose a *Church Manual* revision, it should  
26 submit its proposal to the next constituent level for counsel and study. If that level approves the  
27 proposal, it submits the suggested revision to the next level for additional evaluation. If the  
28 various levels approve the proposal, it eventually comes before the General Conference *Church*  
29 *Manual* Committee, which considers all recommendations. If the *Church Manual* Committee  
30 approves a revision, it prepares it for presentation at an Annual Council and/or General  
31 Conference Session.

33 Revision of a Note follows the same procedure. The General Conference Executive  
34 Committee may approve changes to the Notes at any Annual Council.

36 The *Church Manual* Committee reports proposed non-substantive editorial changes to the  
37 main content of the *Church Manual* to an Annual Council of the General Conference Executive  
38 Committee, which may give final approval. However, in the event the Annual Council  
39 determines by one-third vote that an editorial change substantively alters the meaning of a  
40 passage, the proposed change must go to the General Conference Session.

1 At the final Annual Council of a quinquennium, the General Conference Executive  
2 Committee reviews all changes to the Notes and coordinates the changes with any proposed  
3 amendments to the main content of the *Church Manual*.  
4

5 A new edition of the *Church Manual* is published after every General Conference  
6 Session. The most recent edition should always be used. This edition incorporates amendments  
7 made at the 2010 General Conference Session.  
8

#### 9 Where to Get Advice

10  
11 Church officers and leaders, pastors, and members should consult with their conference  
12 for advice pertaining to the operating of their congregation or on questions arising from the  
13 *Church Manual*. If they do not reach mutual understanding, they should consult with their union  
14 conference/mission for clarification.  
15

#### 16 Terms Used in the *Church Manual*

17  
18 *Church*—For editorial and printing economy, “Church,” with capital “C,” in these pages  
19 is used in place of the full term “Seventh-day Adventist Church” and refers to the overall Church  
20 organization rather than to a local church or congregation, with the exception of when it is  
21 referred to within a quotation.  
22

23 *Conference, mission, section, delegation, field, union of churches*—For purposes of  
24 editorial and printing economy, “conference” in these pages means “conference, mission, field,  
25 section, delegation, or union of churches,” as the administrative context indicates. Generally,  
26 each congregation is a member of the sisterhood of churches known as a conference, but until the  
27 local organization achieves conference status, under General Conference *Working Policy* it may  
28 be identified as a mission, section, delegation, or field. In some world divisions, unions of  
29 churches in a particular country function as a conference for local-church purposes and as a  
30 union for other Church organizational purposes. (See Chapter XX, Church Organization.)  
31

32 *Pastor and minister*—Most areas of the world Church use “pastor” to identify a member  
33 of the clergy, so that term is used in these pages rather than “minister,” regardless of the  
34 responsibilities assigned by the local conference. Use of the term here is not intended to  
35 mandate that usage where the custom is to use “minister.” Pastors referred to in this manual are  
36 those who have been appointed by the conference to oversee the affairs of the local church or  
37 district.  
38

39 *Abbreviations* of Ellen G. White’s books follow the “Key to Abbreviations” found in the  
40 front of most of her books and are listed in the Spirit of Prophecy Index on p. XX.  
41

1 *Scripture quotations* are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise  
2 indicated, with the exception of when referred to within a Spirit of Prophecy quotation.

## CHAPTER 2

### Church of the Living God

8 Scripture uses various expressions to describe the church, such as “the church of God”  
9 (Acts 20:28), “the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12), and “the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15).

11 To belong to the church of God is a unique and soul-satisfying privilege. It is God’s  
12 purpose to gather out a people from the far corners of the earth to bind them into one body, the  
13 body of Christ, the church, of which He is the living head. All who are children of God in Christ  
14 Jesus are members of this body, and in this relationship they may enjoy fellowship with each  
15 other and fellowship also with their Lord.

17 The Bible uses the word *church* in at least two senses: a general sense applying to the  
18 church in all the world (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28) and a particular sense applying to the church  
19 in a city or a province, such as to those at Rome (Rom. 1:6, 7), Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and  
20 Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1) and of Galatia (1 Cor. 16:1), Asia (1 Cor. 16:19), and Syria and  
21 Cilicia (Acts 15:41).

23 Christ, being the head of the church and its living Lord, has a deep love for the members  
24 of His body. In the church He is to be glorified (Eph. 3:21). Through the church He will reveal  
25 the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). Day by day He nourishes the church (Eph. 5:29),  
26 and His longing desire is to make of it “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such  
27 thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

### No Wall of Partition

31 Christ sought by precept and example to teach the truth that with God there was to be no  
32 dividing wall between Israel and other nations (John 4:4-42; 10:16; Luke 9:51-56;  
33 Matt. 15:21-28). The apostle Paul writes, “[T]he Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same  
34 body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).

36 Nor is there to be among Christ’s followers any preference of caste or nationality or race  
37 or color, for all are of one blood. The elect of God are a universal brotherhood, a new humanity,  
38 “all one in Christ Jesus” (John 3:16; Gal. 3:28).

40 “Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the  
41 foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked

1 together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Savior has a  
2 boundless love for every human being.”—7T 225.

3  
4 “No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste is recognized by God. He is the  
5 Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through  
6 redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment  
7 of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God . . . In Christ there is neither Jew nor  
8 Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood.”—COL 386.

### 9 10 Supreme Object of Christ’s Regard

11  
12 Those in Christ’s service who are called to leadership are to “take care of the church”  
13 (1 Tim. 3:5), to “shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28), and to show “concern for all the  
14 churches” (2 Cor. 11:28).

15  
16 “I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it  
17 may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends  
18 to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to  
19 render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes  
20 personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church.”—TM 15.

21  
22 As the bride of Christ and the supreme object of His regard, the Church is expected in all  
23 its functions to represent the order and the character of the divine.

24  
25 “At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments—‘Christ our righteousness.’  
26 There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world in holding aloft  
27 the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The beauty of holiness is to appear in its  
28 native luster in contrast with the deformity and darkness of the disloyal, those who have revolted  
29 from the law of God. Thus we acknowledge God, and recognize His law, the foundation of His  
30 government in heaven and throughout His earthly dominions. His authority should be kept  
31 distinct and plain before the world; and no laws are to be acknowledged that come in collision  
32 with the laws of Jehovah. If in defiance of God’s arrangements the world be allowed to  
33 influence our decisions or our actions, the purpose of God is defeated. However specious the  
34 pretext, if the church waver here, there is written against her in the books of heaven a betrayal of  
35 the most sacred trusts, and treachery to the kingdom of Christ. The church is firmly and  
36 decidedly to hold her principles before the whole heavenly universe and the kingdoms of the  
37 world; steadfast fidelity in maintaining the honor and sacredness of the law of God will attract  
38 the notice and admiration of even the world, and many will, by the good works which they shall  
39 behold, be led to glorify our Father in heaven.”—TM 16, 17.

1 The apostle Peter writes, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy  
2 nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of  
3 darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

4  
5 Complete in Christ  
6

7 “The Lord has provided His church with capabilities and blessings, that they may present  
8 to the world an image of His own sufficiency, and that His church may be complete in Him, a  
9 continual representation of another, even the eternal world, of laws that are higher than earthly  
10 laws. His church is to be a temple built after the divine similitude, and the angelic architect has  
11 brought his golden measuring rod from heaven, that every stone may be hewed and squared by  
12 the divine measurement and polished to shine as an emblem of heaven, radiating in all directions  
13 the bright, clear beams of the Sun of Righteousness . . .

14  
15 “The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His  
16 mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his  
17 triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His  
18 government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions.  
19 They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the  
20 powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy that  
21 fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after  
22 the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations  
23 and pleasures of heaven.

24  
25 “To His church, Christ has given ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of  
26 glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. The church, being endowed with the  
27 righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace,  
28 is to appear in full and final display....”—TM 17, 18.

29  
30 “In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the  
31 reward of all His suffering, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory—  
32 Christ, the great center from which radiates all glory. ‘Blessed are they which are called unto the  
33 marriage supper of the Lamb.’”—TM 18, 19.

34  
35 The Church is committed to the foregoing principles of the spiritual unity of Christ’s  
36 church. By the peace and power which Christ’s righteousness brings, the Church pledges to  
37 conquer every barrier that sin has erected between human beings.  
38

1 CHAPTER 3  
2

3 Organization and Authority  
4

5 Church organization is based on God's principles. "[N]ever allow anyone's ideas to  
6 unsettle your faith in regard to the order and harmony which should exist in the church....The  
7 God of heaven is a God of order, and He requires all His followers to have rules and regulations,  
8 and to preserve order."—5T 274.  
9

10 Biblical Basis for Organization  
11

12 When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt and chose them as His peculiar  
13 people, He provided for them an impressive system of organization to govern their conduct in  
14 both civil and religious matters.  
15

16 "The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization,  
17 wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the  
18 perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy.  
19 God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their  
20 visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the  
21 tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the  
22 nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled  
23 over the tribes. Under these were 'captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and  
24 captains over fifties, and captains over tens,' and, lastly, officers who might be employed for  
25 special duties."—PP 374.  
26

27 The New Testament church showed the same perfection in its organization. Christ  
28 Himself, who formed the church (Matt. 16:18), "set the members, each one of them, in the body  
29 just as He pleased" (1 Cor. 12:18). He endowed them with gifts and talents adequate for the  
30 functions devolving upon them and organized them into a living, working body, of which He is  
31 the head.  
32

33 "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not the same  
34 function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another"  
35 (Rom. 12:4, 5). "And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the  
36 firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).  
37

38 "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries,  
39 but the same Lord." "For as the body is one and has many members, and but all the members of  
40 that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." "Now you are the body of Christ,  
41 and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second

1 prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations,  
2 varieties of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:4, 5, 12, 27, 28).

### 4 Importance of Organization

5  
6 Just as there can be no living, active human body unless its members are organically  
7 united and functioning together, so there can be no living, growing, prospering church unless its  
8 members are organized into a united spiritual body, all performing their God-given duties and  
9 functions under the direction of a divinely constituted authority. Without organization no  
10 institution or movement can prosper. A nation without organized government would be chaos.  
11 A business enterprise without organization would fail. A church without organization would  
12 disintegrate and perish.

13  
14 For the sake of the Church’s healthy development and for the accomplishment of her task  
15 of carrying the gospel of salvation to all the world, Christ gave it a simple but effective system of  
16 organization. Success in her endeavors to achieve her mission depends on loyal adherence to  
17 this divine pattern.

18  
19 “Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God  
20 will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that  
21 in this work there is no such thing as every man’s being independent.”—TM 489.

22  
23 “Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this  
24 people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the  
25 greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of  
26 God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of  
27 organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. License must not be given  
28 to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time.”—TM 489.

### 29 Purposes of Organization

30  
31  
32 “As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there  
33 would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide  
34 for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the  
35 churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the  
36 publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was  
37 indispensable.”—TM 26.

38  
39 “As members of the visible church, and workers in the vineyard of the Lord, all professed  
40 Christians should do their utmost to preserve peace, harmony, and love in the church. Mark the  
41 prayer of Christ: ‘That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they  
42 also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ The unity of the



1 church is the convincing evidence that God has sent Jesus into the world as its Redeemer.”—  
2 5T 619, 620.

#### 4 The New Testament Model

5  
6 The Savior’s commission to the church to carry the gospel to all the world (Matt. 28:19,  
7 20; Mark 16:15) meant not only preaching the gospel but ensuring the welfare of those who  
8 accepted that message. This involved shepherding as well as housing the flock and also meeting  
9 relationship problems. Such a situation called for organization.

10  
11 At first the apostles constituted a council that directed the activities of the church from  
12 Jerusalem (Acts 6:2; 8:14). When the company there became so large that the administration of  
13 its practical affairs became a problem, the church appointed deacons to care for its business (Acts  
14 6:2-4).

15  
16 Later, other congregations grew up, not only in Asia but also in Europe, and this called  
17 for further organizational steps. In Asia Minor, elders were ordained “in every church” (Acts  
18 14:23). Extension of the work throughout the various provinces of the Roman Empire called for  
19 organization of churches into what might be called conferences (Gal. 1:2). Thus, step by step,  
20 organization grew in the early church. As needs arose, God directed the leaders of His work so  
21 that, in counsel with the church, they developed a form of organization that safeguarded the  
22 interests of the work.

#### 23 Church Organization Today

24  
25  
26 The Seventh-day Adventist form of governance is representative, which recognizes that  
27 authority rests in the membership and is expressed through duly elected representatives at each  
28 level of organization, with executive responsibility delegated to representative bodies and  
29 officers for the governing of the Church at each separate level. This form of governance  
30 recognizes also that ordination to the ministry is recognized by the Church worldwide.

31  
32 “Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church  
33 chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose  
34 the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the  
35 officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution,  
36 every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the  
37 election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference.”—  
38 8T 236, 237.

39  
40 The present organizational system of the Church resulted from a developing theological  
41 understanding of the mission of the Church, membership growth, and the Church’s geographic

1 spread. Representatives of conferences met in 1863 to organize the General Conference of  
2 Seventh-day Adventists.

3  
4 There are several organizational levels within the Church leading from the individual  
5 believer to the worldwide organization of the work. Membership units in each of these levels  
6 periodically convene formal business sessions known as constituency meetings or sessions. (The  
7 constituency meeting or session of a local church is generally referred to as a business meeting.)  
8 In Seventh-day Adventist Church structure, no organization determines its own status nor does it  
9 function as if it had no obligations to the Church family beyond its boundaries.

#### 10 11 Outline of Denominational Organization

12  
13 1. Local Church—A group of members in a defined location that has been granted,  
14 by the constituency of a conference in session, official status as a church.

15  
16 2. Local Conference—A group of local churches, within a defined geographical  
17 area, that has been granted by action of a division executive committee at midyear, yearend, or  
18 division council meeting, official status as a Seventh-day Adventist local conference/mission/  
19 field and subsequently accepted, at a union constituency meeting, into the sisterhood of  
20 conferences/missions. (See p. XX.)

21  
22 3. Union of Churches—A group of churches, within a defined geographical area,  
23 that has been granted, by a General Conference Session, official status as a union of churches  
24 with either conference or mission status.

25  
26 4. Union Conference/Mission—A group of conferences, within a defined  
27 geographical area, that has been granted by a General Conference Session official status as a  
28 union conference/mission.

29  
30 5. General Conference and its Divisions—The General Conference represents the  
31 worldwide expression of the Church. Its constituent membership is defined in its Constitution.  
32 To facilitate its worldwide activity, the General Conference has established regional offices,  
33 known as divisions of the General Conference, which have been assigned, by action of the  
34 General Conference Executive Committee at Annual Councils, general administrative oversight  
35 for designated groups of unions and other Church units within specific geographical areas.

36  
37 The Bible is the foundation and source of belief and practice; on this basis, the General  
38 Conference in Session determines the stated fundamental beliefs of the Church. The General  
39 Conference in Session also authorizes establishment of unions and the attachment of field units,  
40 revises the *Church Manual*, elects General Conference and division leadership, performs other  
41 functions as outlined in its Constitution and Bylaws, and considers items referred to it by its  
42 Executive Committee. The General Conference Executive Committee between Sessions is

1 empowered by the Constitution and Bylaws to act on behalf of the constituents. Thus Church  
2 organizations around the world recognize the General Conference in Session as the voice of the  
3 Church.

#### 4 5 Role of Institutions

6  
7 The constituent levels of the Church operate a variety of educational, health-care,  
8 publishing, and other institutions reaching out in the name of Christ to meet the needs of a  
9 distraught world. In Seventh-day Adventist theology and philosophy, these institutions from  
10 their inception have been indispensable instruments for carrying out the Church's spiritual  
11 mission of serving the whole person and taking the gospel to the world.

12  
13 No Church organization or institution assumes responsibility for the liabilities, debts,  
14 acts, or omissions of any other Church organization simply because of its Church affiliation.

#### 15 16 Authority in the Early Church

17  
18 As Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, Lord and King of all creation, God alone is the  
19 source of authority for the Church. He delegated authority to His prophets and apostles  
20 (2 Cor. 10:8). They, therefore, occupied a crucial and unique position in the transmission of the  
21 Word of God and the edification of the church (Eph. 2:20).

22  
23 The early church bore responsibility for purity in doctrine and practice. The elders (or  
24 bishops) held great authority. One of their main functions was general pastoral care and  
25 oversight (Acts 20:17-28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3), with special tasks such as giving  
26 instruction in sound doctrine and refuting those who contradicted it (1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:5, 9).  
27 They were instructed to "test the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1) or, in Paul's  
28 terms, to "[t]est all things" and "hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

29  
30 The same was true regarding its exercise of discipline (Matt. 18:15-17), which ranged  
31 from private and caring admonition (cf. Matt. 18:16; Gal. 6:1) to removal from membership  
32 (Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:11, 13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

33  
34 The Church thus has authority to settle the rules for its own governance.

#### 35 36 General Conference the Highest Authority

37  
38 In the Church today, the General Conference Session, and the General Conference  
39 Executive Committee between sessions, is the highest ecclesiastical authority in the  
40 administration of the Church. The General Conference Executive Committee is authorized by its  
41 constitution to create subordinate organizations with authority to carry out their roles. Therefore  
42 all subordinate organizations and institutions throughout the Church will recognize the General

1 Conference Session, and the General Conference Executive Committee between sessions, as the  
2 highest ecclesiastical authority, under God, among Seventh-day Adventists.

3  
4 When differences arise in or between churches and conferences or institutions, appeal to  
5 the next higher constituent level is proper until it reaches an Annual Council of the General  
6 Conference Executive Committee or the General Conference Session. Between these meetings,  
7 the General Conference Executive Committee constitutes the body of final authority on all  
8 questions. The committee's decision may be reviewed at a General Conference Session or an  
9 Annual Council. When organizations review decisions of other organizations, they do not  
10 assume responsibility for the liabilities of any other organization.

11  
12 "I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man's judgment should be surrendered  
13 to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few  
14 men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans  
15 shall be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled  
16 from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be  
17 stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent  
18 maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body."—  
19 9T 260.

## 20 21 CHAPTER 4

### 22 23 Pastors and Other Church Employees

#### 24 25 A Divinely Appointed Ministry

26  
27 "God has a church, and she has a divinely appointed ministry. 'And He gave some,  
28 apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the  
29 perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till  
30 we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect  
31 man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ . . . '

32  
33 "Men appointed of God have been chosen to watch with jealous care, with vigilant  
34 perseverance, that the church may not be overthrown by the evil devices of Satan, but that she  
35 shall stand in the world to promote the glory of God among men."—TM 52, 53.

36  
37 Conference President—The conference president should be an ordained pastor of  
38 experience and good report. He stands at the head of the gospel ministry in the conference and is  
39 the chief elder, or overseer, of all the churches. He works for their spiritual welfare and counsels  
40 them regarding their activities and plans. He has access to all the churches and their services,  
41 business meetings, and boards, without vote unless granted by the church, or unless he is a

1 member of that congregation. He may, by virtue of his office, preside over any meeting of any  
2 church when necessary. He has access to all church records.

3  
4 The conference president does not have authority to set aside the duly elected officers of  
5 the church but will work in cooperation with them. They in turn are bound, in recognition of the  
6 ties of conference fellowship, to counsel with him over all that pertains to the welfare of the  
7 church. They should not attempt to exclude him from a proper discharge of his duties.

8  
9 Conference Departmental Directors—Conference departmental directors foster important  
10 lines of denominational work under the general direction of the conference committee in  
11 consultation with the conference president. In order to successfully carry on the work assigned  
12 to them, these employees must have access to the churches so they can present and develop their  
13 plans. These employees will have sympathetic consideration for all church plans, even outside  
14 their respective departments.

15  
16 Departmental directors are not vested with administrative or executive authority, so their  
17 relation to local churches is advisory. Their work does not bear the same relationship to the  
18 churches as that of the conference committee or president. In the promotion of their specific  
19 kinds of work, they labor throughout the entire conference. However, they are not expected to  
20 counsel churches regarding elections and other administrative duties or any other line of service,  
21 unless especially requested to do so by the conference president.

22  
23 Ordained Pastors—Ordained pastors appointed by the conference committee to act as  
24 pastors or district leaders do not take the place of the president in their respective fields. They  
25 are not charged with administrative powers as is the president, but they cooperate with him in  
26 carrying out the plans and policies of the conference.

27  
28 On assignment to a local church, the ordained pastor is assisted by the local elders. By  
29 virtue of ordination, the pastor is qualified to function in all rites and ceremonies. The pastor  
30 should be the congregation's spiritual leader and adviser. Pastors should instruct the officers in  
31 their duties and plan with them for all lines of church work and activity.

32  
33 The pastor is a member of the church board and serves as its chairperson. If the pastor  
34 desires to be relieved of the responsibility of acting as chairperson of the board, an elder serves  
35 as chairperson in cooperation with the pastor. (See p. XX.) The pastor, with the assistance of  
36 the elders, is expected to plan for and lead out in all spiritual services, such as Sabbath morning  
37 worship and prayer meeting, and should officiate at the communion service and baptism. Pastors  
38 should not surround themselves with any special body of counselors of their own choosing, but  
39 always cooperate with the elected officers.

1 When an evangelist is asked to conduct an evangelistic effort where there is a church, the  
2 conference should invite the pastor to assist the evangelist, thus giving the pastor an opportunity  
3 to become acquainted with prospective members.  
4

5 Pastors or assistant pastors are not nominated or elected to such positions by the church.  
6 Their connection with the church is by appointment of the conference committee, and such  
7 appointments may be changed at any time. (See p. XX.)  
8

9 A pastor may be removed from office by conference committee action without the  
10 individual's church membership being affected. But when a pastor is removed from church  
11 membership and subsequently restored to membership as a lay person, the pastor's membership  
12 restoration does not mean restoration to the ministry.  
13

14 Licensed Ministers—To give men an opportunity to demonstrate their call to the  
15 ministry, especially in the area of soul winning, prospective candidates are granted ministerial  
16 licenses by the conference. The granting of such licenses confers the opportunity to develop the  
17 ministerial gift.  
18

19 Licensed ministers are authorized to preach, to engage in evangelism, to lead out in  
20 outreach (missionary) work, and to assist in all church activities.  
21

22 There are circumstances, however, where it is necessary for the conference to appoint a  
23 licensed minister to carry responsibility as a pastor or assistant pastor of a church or group of  
24 churches. In order to open the way for a licensed minister to perform certain pastoral functions,  
25 the church or group of churches being served must elect the pastor as a local elder. Then, since  
26 the right to permit the extension of a licensed minister's authority rests first with the division  
27 executive committee, it must approve the extension by specifically and clearly defining the  
28 additional functions that licensed minister may perform. The extended functions are limited only  
29 to the church or group of churches where the pastor is assigned and is an elder. After the  
30 division committee acts, the conference committee may act. (See p. XX.)  
31

32 The conference committee shall not extend the functions of a licensed minister beyond  
33 what has been authorized by the division committee. It also shall not authorize a licensed  
34 minister to perform the extended functions in any church beyond where the licensed minister is  
35 assigned and is an elder. A conference committee action cannot be substituted for church  
36 election or ordination to gospel ministry.  
37

38 Bible Instructors—The conference may employ Bible instructors and assign them to  
39 work with evangelistic efforts or with local congregations. Though the instructors work under  
40 the general direction of the conference, an instructor assigned to an evangelistic effort works  
41 under the direction of the evangelist conducting the campaign, and an instructor assigned to a  
42 church works under the direction of the pastor. An instructor should not, except by special

1 arrangement with the conference, be asked to carry a church office but should be left free to  
2 carry on soul-winning work.

3  
4 Conference Directs Church Employees—The conference president in counsel with the  
5 conference committee directs all conference employees, such as pastors, Bible instructors, and  
6 departmental directors, who receive their credentials from and are responsible to the conference,  
7 not the local church. A church may ask the conference president for the services or help of  
8 conference employees, but appointments in all cases rest with the conference committee. The  
9 conference committee may change employee assignments whenever it believes they are needed.  
10 The employee or the church may appeal to the conference committee for a hearing on the  
11 decision to remove the employee, and the committee will carefully consider the appeal in light of  
12 the needs of the entire conference. If the employee refuses to cooperate with the committee and  
13 declines to work in harmony with its decisions, the committee may regard the employee's  
14 conduct as insubordination and may deal with it accordingly. In no case should the employee  
15 appeal to the church regarding such decisions. If a local church supports an employee's refusal  
16 to cooperate, it also becomes subject to conference discipline.

#### 17 18 Credentials and Licenses

19  
20 God's work is to be jealously safeguarded by responsible leaders from the local church to  
21 the General Conference. Official credentials and licenses are issued to all authorized full-time  
22 Church employees and are granted by controlling committees for limited periods.

23  
24 In a local conference, the committee confers authority upon individuals to represent the  
25 Church as pastors and gospel workers. This authority is represented by the granting of  
26 credentials and licenses, which are written commissions, properly dated and signed by the  
27 officers of the conference. The authority thus conveyed is not personal or inherent in the  
28 individual but is inherent in the granting body, which may recall the credentials for cause at any  
29 time. Credentials and licenses granted employees are not their personal property and must be  
30 returned when employment is terminated or at the request of the organization that issued them.

31  
32 In order that enemies of the Church may not gain access to our pulpits, no one should be  
33 allowed to speak to any congregation unless he/she presents a current denominational credential  
34 or license. It is recognized, however, that there are times when congregations may be addressed  
35 by government officials or civic leaders; but all unauthorized persons should be excluded from  
36 the pulpit. (See p. XX.)

37  
38 Expired Credentials and Licenses—Credentials and licenses are granted for the duration  
39 of the term as provided for by the conference Constitution and Bylaws or Operating Policy and  
40 are renewed by a vote of the conference in session or by the executive committee. Possession of  
41 an expired credential or license gives the person no authority whatsoever.

1 Retired Employees—Retired employees deserve honor and consideration for helping  
2 build up God’s church. They may continue to bless and help the congregations where they hold  
3 membership through election to any office. They also may exercise pastoral functions under the  
4 direction of the conference committee.

5  
6 Former Pastors Without Credentials—Individuals previously ordained as pastors but who  
7 no longer have valid credentials may be elected as elders and, if their ordinations have not been  
8 invalidated, need not be ordained as elders. Their services are limited to the functions of a local  
9 elder.

## 10 CHAPTER 5

### 11 Organizing, Uniting, and Dissolving Churches and Companies

#### 12 Organizing a Church

13 A church is organized by an ordained pastor on the recommendation of the conference  
14 executive committee. (For the procedure for organizing a company, see p. XX.) Since so much  
15 is involved in the organization of a church, the local conference president should be invited to be  
16 present.

17 When a company of baptized believers is prepared to assume the responsibilities of an  
18 organized church, it must consult with the conference president and obtain approval from the  
19 conference executive committee prior to seeking a date for the organization to take place.

20 When the baptized believers assemble on the agreed upon date, the individual officiating  
21 should first present a brief review of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

22 Then the one presiding should make a call asking all who are in agreement with these  
23 principles and who desire to unite in church fellowship to come forward. The name of each  
24 person should be recorded. If any are already members of the conference church or another  
25 congregation, the one officiating should present letters of transfers they have secured. Those  
26 transferring form the nucleus of the congregation.

27 If, however, there are no transferring members, then three members (preferably  
28 established Sabbathkeepers among those present) should be selected as a nucleus. They may be  
29 asked these questions: Do you accept Christ as your personal Savior? Are you in full harmony  
30 with the principles of faith that have just been presented? Have you been baptized by  
31 immersion? Are you in regular standing and enjoying one another’s confidence?

32 If they answer these questions in the affirmative, the three are declared the nucleus of the  
33 new church. Then one after another the names that were recorded are called, each person is



1 asked the questions listed in the preceding paragraph, and the presiding person takes a vote  
2 among the nucleus to receive each individual into church fellowship. Each person thus received  
3 becomes a member of the church and is qualified to vote on the next name. Care should be taken  
4 to see that full fellowship and brotherly love exist among those received into membership.  
5 Should any difficulty arise in any case over a question either of doctrine or of fellowship, action  
6 should be deferred unless the matter can be adjusted kindly and tactfully.

7  
8 When the nucleus has voted on all potential members, the church is a complete entity and  
9 ready for election of officers. Members then should choose a nominating committee, with the  
10 officiating pastor serving as chairperson. The nominating committee brings in nominations to  
11 fill the various church offices. When these have been elected, the elders should be ordained,  
12 unless they have already been ordained as elders. A similar but shorter service should take place  
13 for ordination of deacons and deaconesses. The church then is fully organized and ready for  
14 service.

15  
16 Before the organizing meeting ends, the members should vote to request the conference  
17 to receive the newly organized church into the sisterhood of churches at the next conference  
18 session.

19  
20 To maximize success of the new congregation, conference and local leaders should see  
21 that all officers are fully instructed concerning their duties. The church also should have the  
22 materials needed for the communion service, which, if possible, should be celebrated as part of  
23 the organizational meeting. The treasurer, the clerk, and the other officers should receive all the  
24 necessary records or equipment needed to carry out their responsibilities.

### 25 26 Organizing a Company

27  
28 Where a number of isolated believers reside near one another or where they belong to a  
29 small group, house church, or church planting core group, they should consider forming a  
30 company of believers for fellowship, worship, and mission with the objective of growing into an  
31 organized church or multiplying house churches in that geographical area.

32  
33 Company status is approved by vote of the conference committee, which, should it  
34 become necessary, may subsequently dissolve the company. The division and/or conference  
35 should have written guidelines for organizing companies within its territory.

36  
37 Church members who are part of small groups or house groups may form the nucleus of a  
38 new company. Membership of all those who want to be part of a company should be held in  
39 either the conference church or a local church (mother church). If membership for those who  
40 want to be part of a company is to be held in the conference church, the conference committee  
41 will vote their membership transfers to the conference church and indicate that they are part of  
42 the new company.

1  
2       When the conference committee approves establishment of a company, a leadership team  
3 should be appointed, including a leader, a clerk, and a treasurer. The appointment should be  
4 carried out by the district pastor, or other pastor appointed by the conference committee, in  
5 counsel with the group being established as a company.

6  
7       All other company appointments should be made by vote of those who are part of the  
8 group that is forming the company. The district pastor or other person authorized by the  
9 conference committee shall preside at such a meeting. Only members of the Seventh-day  
10 Adventist Church in regular standing shall be appointed.

11  
12       The leader of a company shall not be ordained to that office and does not have the  
13 authority to perform those functions that are vested in an elder of a church. However, where  
14 exceptional circumstances warrant, the conference committee may appoint a person of church  
15 experience and leadership ability to serve as elder of the company.

16  
17       The clerk of the company shall keep record of all activities and meetings of the company  
18 and shall send regular statistical reports to the mother church or the conference executive  
19 secretary. These reports should include statistics on attendance and activities of the company,  
20 including outreach ministries conducted during the week or on Sabbath.

21  
22       The treasurer of the company shall keep record of all money received and disbursed and  
23 shall send promptly, at the time established by the conference, all tithes and offerings, other than  
24 funds collected for local purposes, to the conference treasurer, who also is treasurer of the  
25 conference church.

26  
27       If the members of an organized company are members of the conference church, the  
28 company does not possess the right to administer discipline or transfer or receive members. All  
29 such matters must be referred to the conference committee, which constitutes the board of the  
30 conference church. The conference president is the elder of the conference church.

31  
32       If the conference organizes a company through a neighboring mother church instead of  
33 through the conference church, the functions listed above (such as reporting and membership)  
34 would be cared for by/through the mother church.

35  
36       Since a company should want to grow and eventually be recognized as a church, its  
37 leadership should prepare members for church status by promoting all activities generally carried  
38 on by a church.

## Uniting Churches

When it is advisable to unite two churches, the conference committee should recommend such a course. In a duly called meeting, presided over by the conference president or the pastor or other ordained pastor, each church should vote on the question of union. When favorable action has been taken by both churches, a joint meeting of the two churches should be arranged with the conference president presiding or in his absence an ordained pastor appointed by the conference.

A carefully written statement of agreement should be prepared setting forth the reasons for uniting and stating any special matters or conditions involved, such as the disposal of property and responsibility for financial obligations. It should provide for the new name of the united church and for the release from service of all officers of the two churches.

Adoption of the agreement by the united body consummates the union of the two churches. Members of the new congregation then should choose a nominating committee to nominate officers to serve for the remainder of the current year.

A copy of the agreement should then be filed with the conference.

The entire membership of both churches unites in the new organization. It is not permissible to remove any members by failing to include them in the membership list at the time of uniting. The united body becomes responsible for the order and discipline of all members. Members under discipline should be dealt with as provided elsewhere in this manual.

All records of both churches become a part of the records of the united body. The local conference should be notified so it may take suitable actions at its next session.

## Dissolving or Expelling Churches

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish . . . For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Eph. 5:25-30).

This spirit should permeate all efforts to help an erring church and all aspects of any discipline that may be applied—always to help and save for the cause of God.

Church status is not necessarily perpetual. A church may be dissolved or expelled from the sisterhood of churches for the following reasons:

1  
2           1.     Loss of Members—Occasionally, despite efforts to preserve a church, so many  
3 members are lost by moving away or by death or by apostasy that the existence of the church is  
4 threatened. Under such circumstances the conference committee should recommend possible  
5 dissolution of the church.

6  
7           Before a church takes final action to dissolve, the remaining members shall be invited to  
8 transfer their memberships to other churches.

9  
10           If enough members remain, the congregation may call a business meeting, presided over  
11 by the conference president or by a pastor designated by him, to vote to approve letters  
12 requesting transfer of all members in regular standing to unite with other churches. In this way  
13 the church dissolves itself upon recommendation of the conference committee and the way is  
14 opened for the conference committee to take action recording dissolution of the church.

15  
16           If, in the judgment of the conference committee, there are too few members available to  
17 call a business meeting, the conference committee shall have the authority to recommend transfer  
18 of members in regular standing to other churches or to the conference church. In this way the  
19 church is dissolved.

20  
21           If at the time of dissolution there are members who are under discipline and therefore  
22 cannot be granted letters saying they are in regular standing, their memberships shall be  
23 provisionally held in the conference church while conference administration ensures that every  
24 effort is made as soon as possible to help such members to a satisfactory Christian experience. If  
25 the efforts are successful, their memberships may then be confirmed in the conference church or  
26 letters granted to them for transfer to other churches. If they cannot be reclaimed, they should be  
27 removed from membership by vote of the conference committee.

28  
29           2.     Discipline—Occasions for expelling churches for disciplinary reasons are rare  
30 because the mission of the church is to seek and to save. Where serious problems such as  
31 apostasy, refusal to operate in harmony with the *Church Manual*, or rebellion against the  
32 conference persist, earnest efforts should be made to avert the need for expulsion. The pastor  
33 should seek to deepen the spiritual life of the church through preaching and personal visitation  
34 ministries. The conference should encourage a series of revival meetings to lead the members to  
35 renew their covenant with their Lord. If these efforts are unsuccessful, the pastor, in cooperation  
36 with the conference committee, should counsel with the church and its leadership, seeking to  
37 bring healing and reconciliation and to preserve the church.

38  
39           Such remedial measures are preferable to permitting the deterioration of relationships  
40 which could lead to expulsion of the church.

1           However, if all efforts to preserve the church fail, the conference committee should give  
2 careful study to the question of expulsion. If such action is decided upon, the conference shall  
3 follow the following procedure:  
4

5           a.       The decision to recommend expulsion, with supporting reasons, shall be  
6 presented to the church itself in a business meeting for its information and consideration.  
7

8           b.       If the church does not accept the recommendation, it may respond in one  
9 of the following ways:  
10

11                   1)       Eliminating the causes for discipline and accepting the conference  
12 specifications, request the conference to rescind the recommendation to dissolve or expel.  
13

14                   2)       Appeal to the union executive committee, or to the division in case  
15 of a union of churches, to arbitrate on behalf of the church.  
16

17           c.       If the church remains in rebellion, the conference executive committee  
18 makes a recommendation to a regular or specially called constituency meeting that the church be  
19 dissolved.  
20

21           d.       If the constituency takes action to expel, the conference shall enforce the  
22 decision.  
23

#### 24                                   Care of Members, Records, and Funds 25

26           Loyal members of a dissolved or expelled church may desire to retain their memberships  
27 in the Church. To ensure their welfare, their memberships shall be provisionally held for up to  
28 one year in the conference church to allow opportunity for those who desire to have their  
29 memberships in the conference church confirmed or transferred to another church. Their  
30 standing shall be evaluated by the conference committee, and, if satisfactory, the conference  
31 committee may recommend them for membership in the conference church or churches of their  
32 choice.  
33

34           The names of members of a dissolved or expelled church who are under discipline shall  
35 be referred to the conference secretary for early attention by the conference committee as set out  
36 in "Loss of Members," above.  
37

38           On dissolution or expulsion of a church for loss of members or for disciplinary reasons,  
39 all offerings, financial accounts, and all property real or personal, whether held in the name of  
40 the local church or the conference or other denominational legal association, are held in trust for  
41 the conference. The conference therefore has the right, the authority, and the duty to administer,

1 protect, or dispose of such property and funds. All records of the church are to be held in the  
2 custody of the conference secretary and/or treasurer.

3  
4 In cases where discipline is not involved, an alternative to dissolving or expelling a  
5 church is to return it to company status. Such a decision will be made by a majority vote of the  
6 conference committee, following consultation with the district pastor and members, and  
7 conveyed to the church by the pastor or conference representative.

8  
9 At a business meeting (see p. XX), letters of transfer may be voted to all remaining  
10 members in regular standing to the conference church or to other churches in the cases of any  
11 members who wish to transfer. At the same meeting, the pastor, in counsel with the local  
12 members, shall appoint from the members of the new company a leadership team including a  
13 leader, a clerk, and a treasurer. For details of other organizational matters relating to a company,  
14 see “Organized Companies” on p. XX.

## 15 CHAPTER 6

### 16 Membership

17  
18  
19  
20 The solemn obligations of membership in the body of Christ should be impressed on  
21 everyone desiring Church membership. Only those giving evidence of having experienced the  
22 new birth and enjoying a spiritual experience in the Lord Jesus are prepared for acceptance into  
23 membership. Pastors must instruct candidates in the fundamental teachings and related practices  
24 of the Church so they will enter the Church on a sound spiritual basis. While there is no stated  
25 age for baptism, it is recommended that very young children who express a desire to be baptized  
26 should be encouraged and entered into an instruction program that may lead to baptism.

27  
28 The apostle Paul writes: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into  
29 Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism  
30 into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also  
31 should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3, 4).

32  
33 Luke also reports: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be  
34 baptized in the name of Jesus Christ . . . ’ Then those who gladly received his word were  
35 baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:38, 41).

36  
37 “The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His  
38 marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the  
39 grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the  
40 principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God.”—  
41 AA 9.

Baptism

A Prerequisite to Membership—“Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit . . .

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command: ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing.’ And to them is fulfilled the promise: ‘I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.’ 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.”—6T 91.

Baptism is the avenue of induction into the Church. It is fundamentally the pledge of entrance into Christ’s saving covenant and should be treated as a solemn and yet joyful welcome into the family of God.

Membership in the Church is only possible in those churches included in the sisterhood of churches recognized by a conference.

Mode of Baptism—The Church believes in baptism by immersion and accepts into membership only those who have been baptized in this manner. (See Chapter X, Fundamental Beliefs.) Those who acknowledge their lost state as sinners, sincerely repent of their sins, and experience conversion, may, after proper instruction, be accepted as candidates for baptism and Church membership.

Thorough Instruction and Public Examination Before Baptism—Candidates individually or in a baptismal class should be instructed from the Scriptures regarding the Church’s Fundamental Beliefs and practices and the responsibilities of membership. A pastor should satisfy the church by a public examination that candidates are well instructed, are committed to taking this important step, and by practice and conduct demonstrate a willing acceptance of Church doctrines and the principles of conduct which are the outward expression of those doctrines, for “by their fruits you will know them” (Matt. 7:20).

If public examination is impractical, then candidates should be examined by the board or a committee appointed by the board, such as the board of elders, whose report then should be given to the church before the baptism. (See p. XX.)

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord’s side, to

1 come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Before baptism there  
2 should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made,  
3 not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God  
4 that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the  
5 candidates for baptism.”—6T 95, 96.

### Baptismal Vow and Commitment

9 Baptismal candidates and those being received into fellowship by profession of faith shall  
10 affirm their acceptance of the Fundamental Beliefs in the presence of the local congregation or  
11 other properly appointed body. (See p. XX.)

13 The pastor or elder should address the following questions to the candidate(s), whose  
14 reply may be by verbal assent, raising the hand, or other culturally appropriate method.

#### Vow

18 1. Do you believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three  
19 coeternal Persons?

21 2. Do you accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for  
22 your sins and believe that by God’s grace through faith in His shed blood you are saved from sin  
23 and its penalty?

25 3. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Savior, believing that God,  
26 in Christ, has forgiven your sins and given you a new heart, and do you renounce the sinful ways  
27 of the world?

29 4. Do you accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, your Intercessor in the  
30 heavenly sanctuary, and accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving,  
31 Christ-centered life in your home and before the world?

33 5. Do you believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, the only rule of faith and  
34 practice for the Christian? Do you covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study?

36 6. Do you accept the Ten Commandments as a transcript of the character of God and  
37 a revelation of His will? Is it your purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this  
38 law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the  
39 week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation?

41 7. Do you look forward to the soon coming of Jesus and the blessed hope, when  
42 “this mortal shall . . . put on immortality”? As you prepare to meet the Lord, will you witness to



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1 His loving salvation by using your talents in personal soul-winning endeavor to help others to be  
2 ready for His glorious appearing?  
3

4 8. Do you accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of  
5 prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church?  
6

7 9. Do you believe in Church organization? Is it your purpose to worship God and to  
8 support the Church through your tithes and offerings and by your personal effort and influence?  
9

10 10. Do you believe that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and will you honor  
11 God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, and abstaining from all unclean  
12 foods; from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; from the use, manufacture, or  
13 sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking  
14 in narcotics or other drugs?  
15

16 11. Do you know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the  
17 Seventh-day Adventist Church? Do you purpose, by the grace of God, to fulfill His will by  
18 ordering your life in harmony with these principles?  
19

20 12. Do you accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire  
21 to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of your sins?  
22

23 13. Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant  
24 church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and  
25 accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire to be a member of this local congregation of the  
26 world Church?  
27

28 Alternative Vow  
29

30 1. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, and do you desire to  
31 live your life in a saving relationship with Him?  
32

33 2. Do you accept the teachings of the Bible as expressed in the Statement of  
34 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and do you pledge by God's grace to  
35 live your life in harmony with these teachings?  
36

37 3. Do you desire to be baptized as a public expression of your belief in Jesus Christ,  
38 to be accepted into the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to support the  
39 Church and its mission as a faithful steward by your personal influence, tithes and offerings, and  
40 a life of service?  
41



1  
2 8. I accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy  
3 is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.  
4

5 9. I believe in Church organization. It is my purpose to worship God and to support  
6 the Church through my tithes and offerings and by my personal effort and influence.  
7

8 10. I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and I will honor God by  
9 caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, and abstaining from all unclean foods;  
10 from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; from the use, manufacture, or sale of  
11 tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking in  
12 narcotics or other drugs.  
13

14 11. I know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the  
15 Seventh-day Adventist Church. I purpose, by the grace of God, to fulfill His will by ordering my  
16 life in harmony with these principles.  
17

18 12. I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire to be so  
19 baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.  
20

21 13. I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church  
22 of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted  
23 into its fellowship. I desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world church.  
24

25 Voting Acceptance Subject to Baptism—After the candidates have, in the presence of the  
26 church membership or other properly appointed body, answered the questions of the vow in the  
27 affirmative, or assurance has been given to the church that they have already done so, the church  
28 should vote on their acceptance into membership subject to baptism, which should not be unduly  
29 delayed.  
30

31 Receiving Members Who Are Not Known—In preparing for the baptism of converts, an  
32 evangelist should invite the pastor or elder to visit the baptismal class to become acquainted with  
33 the candidates. Such contacts will enable the church to be better prepared to receive the new  
34 members.  
35

36 Baptismal Preparations—At the baptismal ceremony the deacons should make necessary  
37 preparations and also assist male candidates into and out of the water. The deaconesses should  
38 assist female candidates.  
39

40 Care should be exercised to see that proper attire is provided for the candidates,  
41 preferably robes of suitable heavy material. If robes are not available, the candidates should  
42 dress in modest attire.

1  
2 The baptism should be followed by a short welcoming ceremony.

3  
4 Rebaptism

5  
6 Rebaptism is specifically mentioned only in Acts 19:1-7, where the apostle Paul endorsed  
7 it for a group of believers whose previous baptism of repentance had been by John. In addition  
8 to repentance, Christian baptism is associated with an understanding of and personal  
9 commitment to the gospel and the teachings of Jesus and a reception of the Holy Spirit. With  
10 this increased understanding and commitment, rebaptism is acceptable.

11  
12 Individuals From Other Christian Communions—On biblical grounds, individuals from  
13 other Christian communions who have embraced Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and who have  
14 previously been baptized by immersion may request rebaptism.

15  
16 The following examples, however, suggest that rebaptism may not be required.  
17 Evidently the instance of Acts 19 was a special one, for Apollos is reported to have received  
18 John's baptism (Acts 18:25), and there is no record that he was rebaptized. Apparently some of  
19 the apostles themselves received John's baptism (John 1:35-40), but there is no record they were  
20 rebaptized.

21  
22 If a new believer has accepted significant new truths, Ellen G. White supports rebaptism  
23 as the Spirit leads the new believer to request it. This follows the developmental pattern of Acts  
24 19. An individual who has previously experienced baptism by immersion should evaluate his/  
25 her new religious experience and determine whether he/she desires rebaptism. There is to be no  
26 urging.

27  
28 "This [rebaptism] is a subject which each individual must conscientiously take his  
29 position upon in the fear of God. This subject should be carefully presented in the spirit of  
30 tenderness and love. Then the duty of urging belongs to no one but God; give God a chance to  
31 work with His Holy Spirit upon the minds, so that the individual will be perfectly convinced and  
32 satisfied in regard to this advanced step."—Ev 373.

33  
34 Apostasy and Rebaptism—Although apostasy existed in the apostolic church (Heb. 6:4-  
35 6), Scripture does not address the question of rebaptism. Ellen G. White supports rebaptism  
36 when members have apostatized and then are reconverted and wish to rejoin the Church. (See  
37 p. XX.)

38  
39 "The Lord calls for a decided reformation. And when a soul is truly reconverted, let him  
40 be rebaptized. Let him renew his covenant with God, and God will renew His covenant with  
41 him."—Ev 375.

1 Inappropriate Rebaptism—On the basis of biblical teaching and the guidance of Ellen G.  
2 White, rebaptism should occur only in special circumstances and should be relatively rare. To  
3 administer baptism repeatedly or on an emotional basis lessens its meaning and represents a  
4 misunderstanding of the gravity and significance that Scripture assigns to it. A member whose  
5 spiritual experience has become cold needs a spirit of repentance which leads to revival and  
6 reformation. This experience will be followed by participation in the communion service to  
7 signify renewed cleansing and fellowship in the body of Christ, making rebaptism unnecessary.  
8

### 9 Profession of Faith

10  
11 Individuals who have accepted the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist  
12 Church and who desire membership in the Church on profession of faith, may be accepted under  
13 any of the following four circumstances:  
14

15 1. A committed Christian coming from another Christian communion who has  
16 already been baptized by immersion as practiced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (See  
17 p. XX.)  
18

19 2. A member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who, because of world  
20 conditions, is unable to secure a letter of transfer from his/her home church. (See p. XX.)  
21

22 3. A member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church whose request for membership  
23 transfer has received no response from the church where he/she is a member. In such a case, the  
24 church shall seek assistance of the conference or conferences involved.  
25

26 4. An individual who has been a member, but whose membership has been  
27 misplaced or has been withdrawn because he/she was a missing member, yet who has remained  
28 faithful to his/her Christian commitment.  
29

30 Great care should be exercised in receiving members if they have formerly been members  
31 of another congregation. When a person applies for membership on profession of faith, inquiries  
32 should be made concerning the applicant's former experience. Church officers should seek the  
33 advice and help of the conference president. Sufficient time should be taken to investigate the  
34 facts.  
35

36 When a person applies for membership on profession of faith and it is found that he/she  
37 still is a member of another congregation, no steps should be taken to receive that person into  
38 membership until the church holding the membership grants a letters of transfer. If, after the  
39 process of transfer is followed (see p. XX), a church refuses to grant a letter of transfer and the  
40 member feels the letter has been unjustly denied, the member may appeal to the conference  
41 committee. Following this procedure will result in a higher appreciation of the sacredness of

1 Church membership and in wrongs being made right. No church has the right to withhold  
2 transfer unless the person is under discipline.

3  
4 When an individual whose membership has been removed seeks readmission to church  
5 membership, readmission is normally preceded by rebaptism. (See p. XX.)

#### 6 7 Transferring Members

8  
9 When members move to a different area, the clerk of the church holding their  
10 membership records should write to the secretary of the relevant conference requesting that a  
11 pastor in the new locality visit them and help facilitate their membership transfer to the new  
12 congregation.

13  
14 The clerk of the church holding the membership records also should notify the  
15 transferring members of the intention to give their new addresses to the conference.

16  
17 Members who move to another locality for longer than six months should make  
18 immediate applications for letters of transfer. Members moving to an isolated area with no  
19 church within a reasonable distance should apply to join the conference church.

20  
21 Method of Granting Letters of Transfer—Members should apply for their letters of  
22 transfer to the clerk of the church with which the members desire to unite (the receiving church).  
23 That clerk sends the request to the clerk of the church from which the members desire to transfer  
24 (the granting church). (For alternative method see p. XX.)

25  
26 When the clerk of the granting church receives the request, the clerk brings it to the  
27 pastor or elder, who in turn presents it to the board. After due consideration, the board votes to  
28 recommend, favorably or otherwise, to the church. (See p. XX.) The pastor or elder then brings  
29 the recommendation to the attention of the church for a first reading. Final action is taken the  
30 following week, when the request is presented to the church for a vote.

31  
32 The purpose of the one-week interval is to give members an opportunity to object to the  
33 granting of the letter. Objections ordinarily should not be publicly stated but be lodged with the  
34 pastor or elder, who then refers them to the board for consideration. The board should give each  
35 objector opportunity to appear to present his/her objection. If the objection is not based on valid  
36 grounds, the person raising objection should be admonished to withdraw it. If the objection is  
37 based on valid grounds, it is the duty of the board to investigate. Final action on granting the  
38 letter is deferred until the matter has been satisfactorily settled.

39  
40 If the objection involves personal relationships, every effort should be made to effect  
41 reconciliation. If public offenses are involved, disciplinary measures may be called for. If there  
42 is some spiritual lapse, efforts should be made to restore the member.

1  
2 Clerk to Prepare Letter—When the church has granted the letter of transfer, the clerk fills  
3 out the regular transfer form and forwards it to the clerk of the receiving church. The clerk of the  
4 receiving church then passes the letter to the pastor or elder, who presents it first to the board for  
5 recommendation, after which the request is presented to the church at its next regular service.  
6 The vote accepting the person into membership usually is taken at the regular service one week  
7 later. The clerk of the receiving church then adds the member's name and date of admittance to  
8 the membership record. The clerk also fills out the return portion of the letter of transfer,  
9 certifying that the member has been accepted, and returns it to the clerk of the granting church.  
10 (See p. XX.)

11  
12 Letter Valid Six Months—A letter of transfer is valid for six months from date of issue.  
13

14 Alternative Method for Membership Transfer—A division may approve alternative  
15 methods for transferring members between churches within the division, but when members  
16 request transfers to a church in another division, the above "Method of Granting Letters of  
17 Transfer" must be followed.  
18

19 Membership During Transfer—Under no circumstances shall the clerk of the granting  
20 church remove a member's name from the membership record until the return portion of the  
21 transfer letter has been received, certifying that the member has been voted into the fellowship of  
22 the receiving church. To do so deprives the person of membership during the transfer. The  
23 clerk, the elders, the pastor, and the conference president are all responsible for seeing that all  
24 churches adhere to this procedure.  
25

26 Receiving Members Under Difficult Conditions—World conditions sometimes prevent  
27 communications concerning a membership transfer. In such situations, the receiving church, in  
28 counsel with the conference, should satisfy itself as to the applicant's standing and then receive  
29 him/her into membership on profession of faith. If the way later opens to communicate with the  
30 granting church or to the conference where it is located, the receiving church should send a letter  
31 stating what it has done.  
32

33 Counted in Statistical Reports—When quarterly and annual statistical reports are made, a  
34 member to whom a letter has been granted, but whose return certificate has not been received, is  
35 counted as a member of the granting church. When the return certificate has been received, the  
36 name is then removed from the membership record of the granting church and not included in  
37 subsequent reports.  
38

39 If Member Is Not Accepted—The receiving church must receive the member unless it  
40 knows a valid reason it should not extend the privilege of membership. If a church does not  
41 receive the member, the clerk should return the letter to the granting church with a full

1 explanation of the reasons. The person's membership then remains with the granting church,  
2 which should cooperate with the member to resolve the matter.  
3

4 Letters Granted Only to Those in Regular Standing—Letters of transfer are granted only  
5 to members in regular standing, never to a member under discipline. Qualifying statements are  
6 out of order except when the pastor or board of the granting church has factual or proven  
7 knowledge that the member has been involved as a perpetrator of child abuse. In that case, for  
8 the safety of children, the pastor or elder should provide a confidential statement alerting the  
9 pastor or elder of the congregation to which the member is transferring.  
10

11 If a member who has moved to a new location has grown indifferent, the pastor or elder  
12 of the granting church may, to be clear in the matter before the transfer is granted, take up the  
13 question with the pastor or elder of the receiving church.  
14

15 No Letter Without Member's Approval—In no case should a church vote a letter of  
16 transfer contrary to the desire of the member nor should a church accept a member by a letter  
17 granted under such circumstances. Membership is the personal relationship of an individual to  
18 the body of Christ, and a church should recognize this relationship and avoid any action that  
19 might be construed as arbitrary.  
20

21 On the other hand, a member is under obligation to recognize the welfare of the church  
22 and to make every effort to relieve the church of problems incident to absentee members. When  
23 a member moves, he/she should promptly request a letter of transfer.  
24

25 When a church is expelled from the sisterhood of churches by action of a conference  
26 session, the memberships of all loyal members, except those who refuse, are considered moved  
27 to the conference church on a provisional basis. The conference church then may issue letters of  
28 transfer for loyal members and deal with other memberships as may be necessary. (See p. XX.)  
29

30 Church Board Cannot Grant Letters—A board has no authority to vote letters of transfer  
31 or to receive members by letter. The board's authority is limited to making recommendations to  
32 the church. Action on all transfers of membership, favorable or otherwise, must be taken by the  
33 church. (See p. XX.) The clerk has no authority to remove or add names to the membership  
34 record except by vote of the church. When a member dies, the clerk records the date of death in  
35 the membership record, and no action by the church is necessary.  
36

37 Membership in the Conference Church—Isolated members should unite with the  
38 conference church, which is a body organized for the benefit of believers who otherwise would  
39 be without church privileges. Aged and infirmed members who live near a church and  
40 conference officers and other employees, including pastors, should be members of a local  
41 church, not the conference church.  
42



1 The conference president is the presiding elder of the conference church, and the work  
2 normally carried by the clerk and the treasurer is handled by the conference secretary and  
3 treasurer. Since the church has no board, all business normally conducted by a local church  
4 board is conducted by the conference committee, which also appoints delegates from the  
5 conference church to the conference session.

6  
7 Membership Record—The church should have one membership record. Names are  
8 added or removed only on the vote of the church or at death. (See p. XX.) Under no  
9 circumstances should a church keep a retired membership list.

## 10 CHAPTER 7

### 11 Discipline

12  
13  
14  
15 The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy set forth in clear, unmistakable language the solemn  
16 responsibility that rests upon the people of God to maintain their purity, integrity, and spiritual  
17 fervor. If members grow indifferent or drift away, the church must seek to reclaim them for the  
18 Lord.

19  
20 Dealing With Erring Members—“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell  
21 him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if  
22 he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses  
23 every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he  
24 refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I  
25 say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth  
26 will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:15-18).

27  
28 “In dealing with erring church members, God’s people are carefully to follow the  
29 instruction given by the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.

30  
31 “Human beings are Christ’s property, purchased by Him at an infinite price, bound to  
32 Him by the love that He and His Father have manifested for them. How careful, then, we should  
33 be in our dealing with one another! Men have no right to surmise evil in regard to their fellow  
34 men. Church members have no right to follow their own impulses and inclinations in dealing  
35 with fellow members who have erred. They should not even express their prejudices regarding  
36 the erring, for thus they place in other minds the leaven of evil . . .

37  
38 “‘If thy brother shall trespass against thee,’ Christ declared, ‘go and tell him his fault  
39 between thee and him alone.’ . . . Do not tell others of the wrong. One person is told, then  
40 another, and still another; and continually the report grows, and the evil increases, till the whole  
41 church is made to suffer. Settle the matter ‘between thee and him alone.’ This is God’s plan.”—  
42 7T 260.

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God's Plan—"Whatever the character of the offense, this does not change the plan that God has made for the settlement of misunderstandings and personal injuries. Speaking alone and in the spirit of Christ to the one who is in fault will often remove the difficulty. Go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ's love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Reason with him calmly and quietly. Let no angry words escape your lips. Speak in a way that will appeal to his better judgment. Remember the words: 'He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' James 5:20 . . .

"All heaven is interested in the interview between the one who has been injured and the one who is in error. As the erring one accepts the reproof offered in the love of Christ, and acknowledges his wrong, asking forgiveness from God and from his brother, the sunshine of heaven fills his heart . . . The Spirit of God binds heart to heart, and there is music in heaven over the union brought about . . .

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' . . . Take with you those who are spiritually minded, and talk with the one in error in regard to the wrong . . . As he sees their agreement in the matter his mind may be enlightened.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them,' what then shall be done? Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one? 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.' . . . Let the church take action in regard to its members.

"But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' . . . If he will not heed the voice of the church, if he refuses all the efforts made to reclaim him, upon the church rests the responsibility of separating him from fellowship. His name should then be stricken from the books.

"No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong doer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this instruction has been followed, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness . . .

"Verily I say unto you,' Christ continued, 'whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' . . .

1            “This statement holds its force in all ages. On the church has been conferred the power to  
2 act in Christ’s stead. It is God’s instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline  
3 among His people. To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its  
4 prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship  
5 those who are unworthy, who by their un-Christlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth.  
6 Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God’s word will be  
7 ratified in heaven.”—7T 261-263.

8  
9            Authority of the Church—“The world’s Redeemer has invested great power with His  
10 church. He states the rules to be applied in cases of trial with its members. After He has given  
11 explicit directions as to the course to be pursued, He says: ‘Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye  
12 shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever [in church discipline] ye shall  
13 loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ Thus even the heavenly authority ratifies the discipline  
14 of the church in regard to its members when the Bible rule has been followed.

15  
16            “The word of God does not give license for one man to set up his judgment in opposition  
17 to the judgment of the church, neither is he allowed to urge his opinions against the opinions of  
18 the church.”—3T 428.

19  
20            Church’s Responsibility—“God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins  
21 existing in individuals among them. If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out  
22 the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these  
23 sins.”—3T 269.

24  
25            “If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it  
26 could not hold together as a body.”—3T 428.

27  
28            Unconsecrated Resist Discipline—“There are many who do not have the discretion of  
29 Joshua and who have no special duty to search out wrongs and to deal promptly with the sins  
30 existing among them. Let not such hinder those who have the burden of this work upon them; let  
31 them not stand in the way of those who have this duty to do. Some make it a point to question  
32 and doubt and find fault because others do the work that God has not laid upon them. These  
33 stand directly in the way to hinder those upon whom God has laid the burden of reproving and  
34 correcting prevailing sins in order that His frown may be turned away from His people. Should a  
35 case like Achan’s be among us, there are many who would accuse those who might act the part  
36 of Joshua in searching out the wrong, of having a wicked, faultfinding spirit. God is not to be  
37 trifled with and His warnings disregarded with impunity by a perverse people . . .

38  
39            “Those who work in the fear of God to rid the church of hindrances and to correct  
40 grievous wrongs, that the people of God may see the necessity of abhorring sin and may prosper  
41 in purity, and that the name of God may be glorified, will ever meet with resisting influences  
42 from the unconsecrated.”—3T 270, 271.

1  
2       Safeguarding Unity of the Church—Christians should make every effort to avoid  
3 tendencies that would divide them and bring dishonor to their cause. “It is the purpose of God  
4 that His children shall blend in unity. Do they not expect to live together in the same  
5 heaven? . . . Those who refuse to work in harmony greatly dishonor God.”—8T 240. The church  
6 should discourage actions that threaten harmony among its members and should consistently  
7 encourage unity.

8  
9       Although all members have equal rights within the church, no individual member or  
10 group should start a movement or form an organization or seek to encourage a following for the  
11 attainment of any objective or for the teaching of any doctrine or message not in harmony with  
12 the fundamental religious objectives and teachings of the Church. Such a course would result in  
13 the fostering of a divisive spirit, the fragmenting of the witness of the Church, and thus in  
14 hindering of the Church’s discharge of its obligations to the Lord and the world.

15  
16       Reconciliation of Differences—Every effort should be made to settle differences among  
17 church members and contain the controversy within the smallest possible sphere. Reconciliation  
18 of differences within the church should, in most cases, be possible without recourse either to a  
19 conciliation process provided by the Church or to civil litigation.

20  
21       “If matters of difficulty between brethren were not laid open before others, but frankly  
22 spoken of between themselves in the spirit of Christian love, how much evil might be prevented!  
23 How many roots of bitterness whereby many are defiled would be destroyed, and how closely  
24 and tenderly might the followers of Christ be united in His love!”—MB 59. (See p. XX.)

25  
26       “Contentions, strife, and lawsuits between brethren are a disgrace to the cause of truth.  
27 Those who take such a course expose the church to the ridicule of her enemies and cause the  
28 powers of darkness to triumph. They are piercing the wounds of Christ afresh and putting Him  
29 to an open shame. By ignoring the authority of the church they show contempt for God, who  
30 gave to the church its authority.”—5T 242, 243.

31  
32       Civil litigation is often carried on in a spirit of contention that results from and reveals  
33 human selfishness. It is this kind of adversarial proceedings that must be discouraged by a  
34 church that seeks to exhibit the spirit of Christ. Christian unselfishness will lead followers of  
35 Christ to suffer themselves to be defrauded (1 Cor. 6:7) rather than to “go to law before the  
36 unrighteous, and not before the saints” (1 Cor. 6:1).

37  
38       While there are, in the modern world, occasions for seeking decrees of civil courts,  
39 Christians should prefer settlement within the authority of the Church and should limit the  
40 seeking of such decrees to cases that are clearly within the jurisdiction of the civil courts and not  
41 within the authority of the Church or for which the Church agrees it has no adequate process for  
42 orderly settlement. Such suits before civil courts should never become revengeful adversary

1 proceedings but should develop out of a desire to seek arbitration and to settle differences  
2 amicably.

3  
4 Examples of such civil cases may include, but are not limited to, the settlement of  
5 insurance claims, the issuance of decrees affecting the boundaries and ownership of real  
6 property, the deciding of some matters involving the administration of estates, and the awarding  
7 of custody of minor children.

8  
9 While the Church should set up procedures within the constraints of legal practice to  
10 avoid the type of litigation referred to in 1 Corinthians 6, it should constantly be on guard against  
11 turning from its gospel mission and taking up the duties of a civil magistrate. (See Luke 12:13,  
12 14 and 9T 216-218.)

13  
14 God's ideal for members of His Church is that they should, as far as possible, "live  
15 peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). The Church should use its readily accessible and  
16 reasonably prompt process by which many differences among members can be settled. Should  
17 the Church fail to respond to a request for help in reconciling a difference, or if the Church  
18 acknowledges that the nature of the case is such that it is not within its authority, it should be  
19 recognized that the member has exhausted the possibilities of the biblically outlined procedure  
20 for the settlement of differences and that what he/she should do beyond that point is a matter for  
21 his/her conscience. (See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 698.)

22  
23 However, when the Church, endeavoring to assist in timely and amicable settlement of  
24 differences among its members, recommends a solution, members should not summarily reject  
25 the recommendation. As 1 Cor. 6:7 indicates, it is no light matter for a member, outside the  
26 orderly processes of the Church, to litigate a grievance against another member.

27  
28 Members who demonstrate impatience and selfishness by their unwillingness to wait for  
29 and accept recommendations of the Church in the settlement of grievances against other church  
30 members may properly be subject to the discipline of the church (see p. XX) because of the  
31 disruptive effect on the Church and their refusal to recognize properly constituted Church  
32 authority.

33  
34 Settlement of Grievances of Members Against the Church—The same principles that  
35 influence resolution of differences among members apply to the settlement of grievances of  
36 members against Church organizations and institutions.

37  
38 Members should not instigate litigation against any Church entity except under  
39 circumstances where the Church has not provided adequate process for orderly settlement of the  
40 grievance or where the nature of the case is such that it is clearly not within the authority of the  
41 Church to settle.

1 Settlement of Grievances of the Church Against Members—At times Church  
2 organizations or institutions may have grievances against members. In such circumstances,  
3 Church administrators must, in Christian forbearance, keep in mind the biblical counsel for  
4 settling disputes among Christians and apply that counsel to the settlement of grievances of the  
5 Church against its members. The Church should, in preference to litigating matters in a secular  
6 court, make every reasonable effort in cooperation with the member to provide a process by  
7 which orderly settlement of the problem can be accomplished.

8  
9 The Church recognizes the need of exercising great care to protect the highest spiritual  
10 interests of its members, to ensure fair treatment, and to safeguard the name of the Church. It  
11 cannot afford to deal lightly with such sins or permit personal considerations to affect its actions,  
12 and at the same time it must strive to reclaim and restore those who err.

13  
14 “If the erring one repents and submits to Christ’s discipline, he is to be given another  
15 trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God’s servants still  
16 have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And, however  
17 aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit and, by  
18 confessing and forsaking his sin, gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and  
19 welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as  
20 they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves lest they also be  
21 tempted.”—7T 263.

### 22 23 Reasons for Discipline

24  
25 The reasons for which members shall be subject to discipline are:

- 26  
27 1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the Fundamental Beliefs  
28 of the Church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.
- 29  
30 2. Violation of the law of God, such as worship of idols, murder, stealing, profanity,  
31 gambling, Sabbathbreaking, and willful and habitual falsehood.
- 32  
33 3. Violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God as it relates to the  
34 marriage institution, the Christian home, and biblical standards of moral conduct.
- 35  
36 4. Sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, fornication, promiscuity,  
37 incest, homosexual practice, the production, use, or distribution of pornography, and other sexual  
38 perversions.
- 39  
40 5. Remarriage of a divorced person, except the spouse who has remained faithful to  
41 the marriage vow in a divorce for adultery or for sexual perversions.
- 42

- 1 6. Physical violence, including violence within the family.
- 2
- 3 7. Fraud or willful misrepresentation in business.
- 4
- 5 8. Disorderly conduct which brings reproach upon the church.
- 6
- 7 9. Adhering to or taking part in a divisive or disloyal movement or organization.
- 8 (See p. XX.)
- 9
- 10 10. Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit
- 11 to the order and discipline of the church.
- 12
- 13 11. The use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages.
- 14
- 15 12. The use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human
- 16 consumption.
- 17
- 18 13. The use or manufacture of illicit drugs or the misuse of, or trafficking in, narcotics
- 19 or other drugs.
- 20

21 Process of Discipline

22

23 When grievous sins are involved, the church has two ways in which disciplinary

24 measures must be taken:

25

- 26 1. By a vote of censure.
- 27
- 28 2. By a vote to remove from membership.
- 29

30 Discipline by Censure—In cases where the offense is not considered by the church to be

31 so serious as to warrant the extreme course of removing membership, the church may express its

32 disapproval by a vote of censure.

33

34 Censure has two purposes: (1) To enable the church to express its disapproval of a

35 grievous offense that has brought disgrace upon the cause of God and (2) to impress offending

36 members with the need for a change of life and reformation of conduct and to give them a period

37 of grace and probation during which to make those changes.

38

39 A vote of censure is for a stated period of from a minimum of one month to a maximum

40 of twelve months. It terminates an erring member's election or appointment to all offices and

41 removes the privilege of election while it is in effect. Members under censure have no right to

42 participate by voice or by vote in the affairs of the church or lead church activities, such as

1 teaching a Sabbath School class. They are not deprived, however, of the privilege of sharing the  
2 blessings of Sabbath School, church worship, or communion. Membership may not be  
3 transferred during the period of censure.  
4

5       Votes of censure must not carry any provision involving removal of membership in case  
6 of failure to comply with any condition imposed. Assessment should be made at the expiration  
7 of the period of censure to determine whether the disciplined members have changed course. If  
8 their conduct is satisfactory, they may then be considered in regular standing without further  
9 action and shall be notified that the censure has ended. If their conduct is not satisfactory, the  
10 church again should consider appropriate discipline. Any return to church office must be by  
11 election.  
12

13       Discipline by Removal from Membership—Removing individuals from membership in  
14 the church, the body of Christ, is the ultimate discipline that the church can administer. Only  
15 after the instruction given in this chapter has been followed, after counsel from the pastor or the  
16 conference when the pastor is unavailable, and after all possible efforts have been made to win  
17 and restore them to right paths, should an individual be removed from membership.  
18

19       No Additional Tests of Fellowship—No minister, congregation, or conference has  
20 authority to establish tests of fellowship. This authority rests with the General Conference  
21 Session. Anyone seeking to apply tests other than those herein set forth does not, therefore,  
22 properly represent the Church. (See 1T 207.)  
23

24       Timeliness of Discipline—The church must care for the disciplinary process within a  
25 reasonable time and then communicate its decisions with kindness and promptness. Delay in  
26 administering discipline may increase the frustration and suffering of the member and the church  
27 itself.  
28

29       Caution about Judging Character and Motive—“Christ has plainly taught that those who  
30 persist in open sin must be separated from the church, but He has not committed to us the work  
31 of judging character and motive. He knows our nature too well to entrust this work to us.  
32 Should we try to uproot from the church those whom we suppose to be spurious Christians, we  
33 should be sure to make mistakes. Often we regard as hopeless subjects the very ones whom  
34 Christ is drawing to Himself. Were we to deal with these souls according to our imperfect  
35 judgment, it would perhaps extinguish their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians  
36 will at last be found wanting. Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would  
37 never enter there. Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart. The tares and the  
38 wheat are to grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.  
39 There is in the Savior’s words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love.  
40 As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in  
41 the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended



1 believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be  
2 caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast.”—COL 71, 72.

3  
4       At a Properly Called Meeting—Members may be disciplined for sufficient cause, but  
5 only at a properly called business meeting (See p. XX.) after the church board has reviewed the  
6 case. The meeting must be presided over by an ordained pastor, or licensed pastor who is  
7 ordained as a local elder of the church concerned or, in the pastor’s absence and in counsel with  
8 the pastor or with the conference president, an elder of the local church.

9  
10       By Majority Vote—Members may be removed from membership or otherwise  
11 disciplined only by a majority vote of members present and voting at a duly called meeting.  
12 “[T]he majority of the church is a power which should control its individual members.”—  
13 5T 107.

14  
15       Church Board Cannot Remove Members—The board may recommend to a business  
16 meeting the removal of members, but under no circumstance does the board have the right to  
17 take final action. Except in the case of the death of members, the clerk can remove a name from  
18 the records only after a vote of the church in a business meeting.

19  
20       Fundamental Rights of the Members—Members have a fundamental right to prior  
21 notification of the disciplinary meeting and the right to be heard in their own defense, introduce  
22 evidence, and produce witnesses. No church should vote to remove a member under  
23 circumstances that deprive the member of these rights. Written notice must be given at least two  
24 weeks before the meeting and include the reasons for the disciplinary hearing.

25  
26       Lawyers Not to Represent Members—The work of the Church in its administration of  
27 order and discipline is an ecclesiastical function that in no sense has to do with civil or legal  
28 procedure. Therefore, the Church does not recognize the right of members to bring legal counsel  
29 to represent them in any meeting called to administer order or discipline or for the transaction of  
30 any other church business. Members wanting to bring legal counsel into a meeting should be  
31 informed that they will not be given a hearing if they insist on bringing legal counsel.

32  
33       The church also should exclude all nonmembers from any church meeting called for the  
34 administration of church order or discipline, except when they are called as witnesses.

35  
36       Transferring Members under Censure—No church shall receive into membership persons  
37 who are under censure of another congregation because that would condone the offenses for  
38 which the members have been disciplined. The acceptance into membership of those under  
39 discipline is such a serious violation of Church policy that an offending church may be subject to  
40 discipline by the conference constituency.

1 Members Not to Be Removed for Nonattendance—Church leaders should faithfully visit  
2 absentee members and encourage them to resume attendance and to enjoy the blessings of  
3 worship with the congregation.  
4

5 When because of age, infirmity, or other unavoidable cause members find it impossible  
6 to attend worship services regularly, they should keep in contact with church leaders by letter or  
7 other means. However, as long as members are loyal to the doctrines of the Church,  
8 nonattendance shall not be considered sufficient cause for removal from membership.  
9

10 Members Moving Away and Not Reporting—When members move, they should inform  
11 the clerk or elder of their new address. While remaining members of that church, they should  
12 report and send their tithe and offerings at least quarterly. If, however, members move without  
13 leaving a forwarding address and make no effort to contact or report to the church, and the  
14 church cannot locate them for at least two years, then the church may certify that it has tried  
15 without success to locate the members and the members may be removed by a vote of the  
16 church. The clerk should record in the membership record: “Whereabouts unknown. Voted to  
17 designate as missing.”  
18

19 Members Not to Be Removed for Pecuniary Reasons—Though members should support  
20 the work of the Church to the extent they are able, they should never be removed because of their  
21 inability or failure to contribute financially to the Church.  
22

23 Removing Members at Their Request—Great care should be exercised in dealing with  
24 members who request to be removed from membership. Although the Church recognizes the  
25 right of members to decide whether to belong to the Church, ample time should be given such  
26 members for thought and reflection and every effort made to restore them to a satisfactory  
27 experience.  
28

29 Letters of resignation should be presented to the board, which will forward them to a  
30 business meeting. Out of Christian consideration for the individuals involved, action shall be  
31 taken without public discussion.  
32

33 Notification to Those Removed From Membership—A church removing members must  
34 notify them in writing of the action taken but with the assurance of enduring spiritual interest and  
35 personal concern. This communication should, where possible, be delivered in person by the  
36 pastor or by a board designee. The former members should be assured that the church hopes  
37 they will return to the church and that one day there will be eternal fellowship together in the  
38 kingdom of God.  
39

40 Reinstating Those Previously Removed From Membership—When persons have been  
41 removed, the church should, where possible, maintain contact and manifest the spirit of  
42 friendship and love, endeavoring to bring them back to the Lord.

1  
2 Those previously removed may be received again into membership when the period  
3 assigned by the church in a business meeting is concluded, when confession of wrongs  
4 committed is made, evidence is given of real repentance and change of life, and the life is  
5 consistent with Church standards and it is clear that the member will fully submit to Church  
6 order and discipline. Such reinstatement should preferably be in the church from which the  
7 member was dismissed. However, when this is not possible, the church where the person is  
8 requesting reinstatement must seek information from the former church about the reasons for  
9 which the person was removed from membership.

10  
11 When dealing with perpetrators of sexual abuse, it should be remembered that restoration  
12 to membership does not remove all consequences of such a serious violation. While attendance  
13 at church activities may be permissible with properly established guidelines, a person convicted  
14 or disciplined for sexual abuse should not be placed in a role which could put them in contact  
15 with children, youth, and other vulnerable individuals. Neither shall they be given any position  
16 which would encourage vulnerable individuals to trust them implicitly.

17  
18 Because removal from membership is the most serious form of discipline, the period of  
19 time, determined by the church business meeting, before members may be reinstated should be  
20 sufficient to demonstrate that the issues which led to removal from membership have been  
21 resolved beyond reasonable doubt. It is expected that readmission to membership will be done in  
22 connection with rebaptism.

23  
24 Right of Appeal for Reinstatement—While it is the right of the church to administer  
25 discipline, this does not set aside the rights of members to seek fairness. If members believe that  
26 they have been treated unfairly by the local church, or not had the right to be heard fairly, and the  
27 church is unwilling to reconsider the case or if the officers refuse to consider their applications  
28 for reinstatement, the former members have a right to appeal in writing to the church for a  
29 hearing. The church should not neglect or refuse to grant such hearings. If it does, or if the  
30 former members still feel unfairly treated by the church after the appeal, they have the right to a  
31 final appeal for a hearing to the executive committee of the conference.

32  
33 If, after a full and impartial hearing, the conference committee is satisfied that an  
34 injustice has been inflicted by the church, the committee may recommend reinstatement to  
35 membership. But if membership is still refused by the church, then the conference committee  
36 may recommend membership in some other church. On the other hand, if it finds good grounds  
37 for sustaining the church in refusing to reinstate the former members, it will so record its  
38 decision.

1 CHAPTER 8

2  
3 Local Church Officers and Organizations

4  
5 Choosing quality officers is important for the prosperity of the church, which should  
6 exercise the greatest care when calling men and women into positions of sacred responsibility.

7  
8 General Qualifications

9  
10 Moral and Religious Fitness—“Moreover you shall select from all the people able men,  
11 such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of  
12 thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens” (Ex. 18:21).

13  
14 “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the  
15 Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

16  
17 “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into  
18 reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:7).

19  
20 “And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, commit these to  
21 faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

22  
23 “A bishop [elder] then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-  
24 minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for  
25 money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his  
26 children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house,  
27 how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall  
28 into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those  
29 who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

30  
31 “Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not  
32 greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also  
33 first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise, their wives  
34 must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of  
35 one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as  
36 deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ  
37 Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:2-13; also see Titus 1:5-11 and 2:1, 7, 8).

38  
39 “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in  
40 love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine  
41 . . . Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save  
42 both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

1  
2 Feeding and Guarding the Church—The apostle Paul called together “the elders of the  
3 church” and counseled them: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among  
4 which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He has  
5 purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will  
6 come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves shall men will rise up,  
7 speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and  
8 remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears”  
9 (Acts 20:17, 28-31; also see 1 Peter 5:1-3).

10  
11 Respecting Pastors and Officers—“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who  
12 labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very  
13 highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12, 13; also see  
14 1 Tim. 5:17 and Heb. 13:7, 17).

15  
16 “The Thessalonian believers were greatly annoyed by men coming among them with  
17 fanatical ideas and doctrines. Some were ‘disorderly, working not at all, but ... busybodies.’  
18 The church had been properly organized, and officers had been appointed to act as ministers and  
19 deacons. But there were some, self-willed and impetuous, who refused to be subordinate to  
20 those who held positions of authority in the church. They claimed not only the right of private  
21 judgment, but that of publicly urging their views upon the church. In view of this, Paul called  
22 the attention of the Thessalonians to the respect and deference due to those who had been chosen  
23 to occupy positions of authority in the church.”—AA 261, 262.

24  
25 “Those who hold responsible positions in the church may have faults in common with  
26 other people and may err in their decisions; but notwithstanding this, the church of Christ on  
27 earth has given to them an authority that cannot be lightly esteemed.”—4T 17.

28  
29 Not Hurried Into Office—“In many places we meet men who have been hurried into  
30 responsible positions as elders of the church when they are not qualified for such a position.  
31 They have not proper government over themselves. Their influence is not good. The church is  
32 in trouble continually in consequence of the defective character of the leader. Hands have been  
33 laid too suddenly upon these men.”—4T 406, 407. (Also see 5T 617 and 1 Tim. 5:22.)

34  
35 Those Opposing Unity Not Suitable for Office—“There have of late arisen among us  
36 men who profess to be the servants of Christ, but whose work is opposed to that unity which our  
37 Lord established in the church. They have original plans and methods of labor. They desire to  
38 introduce changes into the church to suit their ideas of progress and imagine that grand results  
39 are thus to be secured. These men need to be learners rather than teachers in the school of  
40 Christ. They are ever restless, aspiring to accomplish some great work, to do something that will  
41 bring honor to themselves. They need to learn that most profitable of all lessons, humility and  
42 faith in Jesus . . .

1  
2 “Teachers of the truth, missionaries, officers in the church, can do a good work for the  
3 Master if they will but purify their own souls by obeying the truth.”—5T 238.  
4

5 Unsafe to Choose Those Refusing to Cooperate—“God has placed in the church, as His  
6 appointed helpers, men of varied talents, that through the combined wisdom of many the mind of  
7 the Spirit may be met. Men who move in accordance with their own strong traits of character,  
8 refusing to yoke up with others who have had a long experience in the work of God, will become  
9 blinded by self-confidence, unable to discern between the false and the true. It is not safe for  
10 such ones to be chosen as leaders in the church; for they would follow their own judgment and  
11 plans, regardless of the judgment of their brethren. It is easy for the enemy to work through  
12 those who, themselves needing counsel at every step, undertake the guardianship of souls in their  
13 own strength, without having learned the lowliness of Christ.”—AA 279. (See p. XX.)  
14

15 Local Membership—Members in regular standing are eligible for election to leadership  
16 positions in the church where they hold membership. (See p. XX.) Exceptions may be made for  
17 the following:  
18

19 1. Students who are members in regular standing but who, for purposes of education,  
20 live away from home and regularly attend a church in the area of their temporary residence.  
21

22 2. A conference employee assigned by the conference as pastor/leader for two or  
23 more congregations. (See p. XX.)  
24

25 3. An elder who, when necessary and with the recommendation of the conference  
26 committee, may be elected to serve in more than one church within a district. (See p. XX.)  
27

28 Other exceptions may be considered by the conference committee.  
29

30 Setting Tithing Example—All officers shall set an example in the matter of returning a  
31 faithful tithe to the Church. Anyone who fails to set such an example shall not be elected to  
32 church office.  
33

34 Not Delegates Ex Officio—No church officer is a delegate ex officio to a conference  
35 session. If the church wants an officer to serve as a delegate, it must elect that officer as a  
36 delegate.  
37

38 Distributing Responsibility—The church should not lay too much responsibility on a  
39 small group of willing officers, while others are underused. Unless circumstances make it  
40 necessary, election of one individual to several offices should be discouraged.  
41

1 Removal and Readmission—When an officer is removed from membership and  
2 subsequently readmitted, the readmittance does not reinstate the individual to the former office.

### 4 Term of Office

5  
6 The term of office for officers of both the church and its auxiliary organizations shall be  
7 one year, except where the church in a business meeting votes to have elections every two years  
8 in order to facilitate continuity and development of spiritual gifts and eliminate the work  
9 involved in having yearly elections.

10  
11 While it is not advisable for one person to serve indefinitely in a particular position,  
12 officers may be reelected.

### 14 Elders

15  
16 Religious Leaders of the Church—Elders must be recognized by the church as strong  
17 spiritual leaders and must have good reputations both in the church and community. In the  
18 absence of a pastor, elders are the spiritual leaders of the church and by precept and example  
19 must seek to lead the church into a deeper and fuller Christian experience.

20  
21 Elders should be able to conduct the services of the church and minister in both word and  
22 doctrine when the assigned pastor is unavailable. However, elders should not be chosen  
23 primarily because of social position or speaking ability, but because of their consecrated lives  
24 and leadership abilities.

25  
26 Elders may be reelected, but it is not advisable for them to serve indefinitely. The church  
27 is under no obligation to reelect and may choose others whenever changes seem advisable. Upon  
28 the election of new elders, the former elders no longer function as elders but may be elected to  
29 other church offices.

30  
31 Ordination of Elders—Election to the office of elder does not in itself qualify one as an  
32 elder. Ordination is required before an elder has authority to function. Between election and  
33 ordination, the elected elder may function as church leader but not administer the ordinances of  
34 the church.

35  
36 The ordination service is performed only by an ordained pastor currently credentialed by  
37 the conference. As a courtesy, a visiting ordained pastor may be invited to assist. However,  
38 only on the specific request of conference officers would a visiting ordained pastor or a retired  
39 ordained pastor conduct the ordination.

40  
41 The sacred rite of ordination should be simply performed in the presence of the church  
42 and may include a brief outline of the office of elder, the qualities required, and the principal

1 duties the elder will be authorized to perform. After the exhortation, the ordained pastor, assisted  
2 by other ordained pastors and/or local elders who are participating in the service, will ordain the  
3 elders by prayer and the laying on of hands. (See p. XX.)  
4

5 Once ordained, elders need not be ordained again if reelected, or upon election as elders  
6 of other churches, provided they have maintained regular membership status. They are also  
7 qualified to serve as deacons.  
8

9 Relationship to the Pastor—If the conference committee assigns a pastor or pastors to the  
10 congregation, the pastor, or senior pastor if more than one, should be considered the ranking  
11 officer and the local elders as assistants. Since their work is closely related, they should work  
12 together harmoniously. The pastor should not assume all lines of responsibility but should share  
13 these with the elders and other officers. The pastor serving the church regularly acts as the  
14 chairperson of the board. (See p. XX.) There may be circumstances, however, when it would be  
15 advisable for an elder to act as chairperson. The pastoral work of the church should be shared by  
16 the pastor and the elders. In counsel with the pastor, the elders should visit members, minister to  
17 the sick, foster prayer ministries, arrange or lead out in anointing services and child dedications,  
18 encourage the disheartened, and assist in other pastoral responsibilities. As undershepherds,  
19 elders should exercise constant vigilance over the flock.  
20

21 If the pastor is a licensed minister, the church or churches served should elect the pastor  
22 as an elder. (See p. XX.)  
23

24 Because the pastor is appointed to the position in the church by the conference, the pastor  
25 serves the church as a conference employee, is responsible to the conference committee, and  
26 maintains a sympathetic and cooperative relation to and works in harmony with all the plans and  
27 policies of the local church. Elders, who are elected by the church, are responsible to that body  
28 and to its board. (See p. XX.)  
29

30 Work of Elders Is Local—The authority and work of elders are confined to the church in  
31 which their election has been made. It is not permissible for a conference committee by vote to  
32 confer on an elder the status which is granted to an ordained pastor to serve other churches as  
33 elder. If that need exists, the conference committee may recommend to the church needing an  
34 elder that it invite and elect the elder of a nearby church to serve. Thus by election one  
35 individual may, when necessary, serve more than one church. Such an arrangement should be  
36 made only in counsel with the conference committee. Authority to elect elders is inherent in the  
37 local church and not in the conference committee. The only way one may be qualified for  
38 serving the Church at large is by ordination to the gospel ministry. (See p. XX.)  
39

40 Conducting Church Services—Under the pastor, or in the absence of the pastor, an elder  
41 is responsible for the services of the church and must either conduct them or arrange for someone  
42 to do so. Communion services must always be conducted by an ordained/commissioned pastor



1 or local elder. The pastor usually chairs the business meeting. In the absence of the pastor, and  
2 with approval of the pastor or the conference president, an elder should serve as chairperson.  
3

4       Baptismal Service—In the absence of an ordained pastor, an elder shall request the  
5 conference president to arrange for the baptism of those desiring to unite with the church. (See  
6 p. XX.) An elder should not officiate in the service without first obtaining permission from the  
7 conference president.  
8

9       Marriage Ceremony—In a marriage ceremony, the charge, vows, and declaration of  
10 marriage are given only by an ordained pastor except in those areas where division committees  
11 have approved that selected licensed or commissioned pastors who have been ordained as local  
12 elders may perform the ceremony. (See p. XX.) Local laws may require that persons conducting  
13 marriage ceremonies also hold state licensure/permit to do so. An ordained pastor, a licensed or  
14 commissioned pastor, or an elder may deliver the sermonette, offer the prayer, and give the  
15 blessing. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
16

17       To Foster Tithing—By faithfully returning tithes, elders do much to encourage other  
18 members to return a faithful tithe. (See p. XX.) Elders can foster tithing by public presentation  
19 of the scriptural privilege and responsibility of stewardship and by personal labor with members  
20 in a tactful and helpful manner.  
21

22       Elders should regard all financial matters pertaining to members as confidential and shall  
23 not give such information to unauthorized persons.  
24

25       To Foster Bible Study, Prayer, and a Relationship With Jesus—As spiritual leaders,  
26 elders are responsible for encouraging members to develop a personal relationship with Jesus by  
27 strengthening their habits of personal Bible study and prayer. Elders should model a  
28 commitment to Bible study and prayer. An effective personal prayer life of every member,  
29 supporting all ministries and programs of the local church, will enhance the church's mission.  
30 Elders may ask the board to appoint a council to assist in this role of development and  
31 encouragement.  
32

33       To Foster All Lines of Work—Under and in cooperation with the pastor, elders are  
34 spiritual leaders of the church and are responsible for fostering all departments and activities of  
35 the work. Elders should maintain a mutually helpful relationship with other officers.  
36

37       To Cooperate with the Conference—The pastor, elders, and all officers should cooperate  
38 with conference officers and departmental directors in carrying out approved plans. They should  
39 inform the church of all regular and special offerings, promote all the programs and activities of  
40 the church, and encourage all officers to support conference plans and policies.  
41

1 Elders should work closely with the treasurer and see that all conference funds are  
2 remitted promptly to the conference treasurer at the time established by the conference. Elders  
3 should see that the clerk's report is sent promptly to the conference secretary at the close of each  
4 quarter.

5  
6 Elders should regard all correspondence from the conference office as important. Letters  
7 calling for announcements should be presented at the proper time.

8  
9 In the absence of the pastor, the first elder (see p. XX) should see that the church elects  
10 delegates to conference sessions and that the clerk sends the names of delegates to the  
11 conference office.

12  
13 To Foster Worldwide Work—Elders also should foster world mission work by carefully  
14 studying the worldwide work and encouraging members to personally support mission work.  
15 Their kindly, tactful attitude will encourage liberality of members both in church services and  
16 Sabbath School.

17  
18 Training and Equipping Elders—The Ministerial Association, in cooperation with the  
19 departments, promotes the training and equipping of elders. However, the pastor has the primary  
20 responsibility for training elders. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

21  
22 Free to Work Effectively—Elders especially should be left free of other burdens to  
23 perform effectively their many duties. It may be advisable in some cases to ask elders to lead the  
24 outreach (missionary) work of the church, but even this should be avoided if other talent is  
25 available.

26  
27 First Elder—It may be advisable, due to church size, to choose more than one elder  
28 because the burdens of the office are too great for one person. If the church elects more than one  
29 elder, one should be designated "first elder." The work should be divided among the elders in  
30 harmony with their experience and ability.

31  
32 Limitation of Authority—Elders do not have the authority to receive or remove members.  
33 This is done only by vote of the church. Only the board may recommend that the church vote to  
34 receive or remove members. (See p. XX.)

### 35 36 Church Leaders

37  
38 Occasionally no one possesses the experience and qualifications to serve as an elder.  
39 Under such circumstances the church should elect a person to be known as "leader." In the  
40 absence of the pastor or a conference-assigned pastor, the leader is responsible for the services of  
41 the church, including business meetings. The leader must either conduct these or arrange for  
42 someone else to do so.

1  
2 A leader may not preside at any of the church ordinances, administer baptism, conduct  
3 the Lord's Supper, perform the marriage ceremony, or preside at business meetings when  
4 members are disciplined. A request should be made to the conference president for an ordained  
5 pastor to preside at such meetings.

## 6 7 Deacons

8  
9 The New Testament identifies the office of deacon with the Greek word *diakonos*, from  
10 which the English "deacon" is derived. The Greek word is variously interpreted as "servant,  
11 minister, writer, attendant" and in Christian circles has acquired the specialized meaning now  
12 attached to "deacon."

13  
14 The men who came to be known as the seven deacons of the apostolic church were  
15 chosen and ordained to attend to the business of the church. (See Acts 6:1-8.) Their  
16 qualifications, slightly less exacting than those of elders, are listed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

17  
18 "The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the  
19 needs of the poor did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully  
20 qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and  
21 success."—AA 90.

22  
23 "The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work proved a  
24 great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as  
25 well as to the general financial interests of the church, and by their prudent management and  
26 their godly example they were an important aid to their fellow officers in binding together the  
27 various interests of the church into a united whole."—AA 89.

28  
29 Today, appointment of deacons through election brings similar blessings in church  
30 administration by relieving pastors, elders, and other officers of duties that deacons may perform  
31 well.

32  
33 "The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in  
34 leading positions of responsibility in the church should be spent in dealing with the weightier  
35 matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart. It is not in the order of God that such  
36 men should be appealed to for the adjustment of minor matters that others are well qualified to  
37 handle."—AA 93.

38  
39 Board of Deacons—Where a church has a number of deacons, it should organize a board  
40 of deacons chaired by the head deacon and with another deacon serving as secretary. Such a  
41 body provides a way to distribute responsibility and coordinate their contributions to the

1 well-being of the congregation. It also provides a training ground where new deacons are  
2 instructed in their duties.

3  
4 Deacons Must Be Ordained—Newly elected deacons cannot fill their office until they  
5 have been ordained by an ordained pastor currently credentialed by the conference.

6  
7 The sacred rite of ordination should be characterized by simplicity and performed in the  
8 presence of the church. The pastor may give a brief outline of the biblical office of deacon, the  
9 qualities required for service, and the principal duties deacons are authorized to perform. After a  
10 short exhortation to faithfulness in service, the pastor, assisted by an elder where appropriate,  
11 ordains the deacons by prayer and the laying on of hands. (See p. XX.)

12  
13 If they retain church membership, deacons, once ordained, do not have to be ordained  
14 again if they move their memberships to other churches. When the term for which they were  
15 elected expires, they must be reelected if they are to continue to serve as deacons.

16  
17 Elders subsequently elected as deacons need not be ordained as deacons because  
18 ordination as elder covers this office.

19  
20 Deacons Not Authorized to Preside—Deacons are not authorized to preside at any of the  
21 ordinances of the church or business meetings and cannot perform the marriage ceremony or  
22 officiate at the reception or transfer of members.

23  
24 If a church has no one authorized to perform such duties, it shall contact the conference  
25 for assistance.

26  
27 Duties of Deacons—The work of deacons involves a wide range of services for the  
28 church, including:

29  
30 1. Assistance at Services and Meetings—Deacons are usually responsible for  
31 welcoming members and visitors as they enter the church and for assisting them, where  
32 necessary, to find seats. They also cooperate with the pastor and elders for smooth functioning  
33 of all meetings.

34  
35 2. Visitation of Members—In many churches, visitation is arranged by distributing  
36 membership by districts and assigning a deacon to each district with the expectation that he will  
37 visit each home at least once a quarter.

38  
39 3. Preparation for Baptismal Services—Deacons make necessary preparations for  
40 baptismal services. (See p. XX.)



1 If they retain church membership, deaconesses do not have to be ordained again if they  
2 move their memberships to other churches. When the term for which they were elected expires,  
3 they must be reelected if they are to continue to serve as deaconesses.  
4

5 Duties of Deaconesses—Deaconesses serve the church in a wide variety of activities,  
6 including:  
7

8 1. Greeting and Visiting Guests and Members—In many churches, deaconesses  
9 assist in greeting guests and members at meetings and in visiting members in their homes when  
10 they cannot attend services.  
11

12 2. Assistance at Baptisms—Deaconesses ensure that female candidates are cared for  
13 both before and after the ceremony. They also give such counsel and help as may be necessary  
14 regarding suitable garments for baptism. Robes of suitable material should be provided. Where  
15 robes are used, the deaconesses should see that they are laundered and carefully stored. (See  
16 p. XX.)  
17

18 3. Arrangements for the Communion Service—Deaconesses and deacons arrange for  
19 everything needed for this service and see that everything used is cared for afterward. (See  
20 p. XX.)  
21

22 Before the communion service begins, deaconesses make arrangements for the  
23 communion table, including preparing the bread and wine, arranging the ordinance table, pouring  
24 the wine, placing the plates of unleavened bread, and covering the table with the linen provided  
25 for that purpose.  
26

27 Deaconesses assist in the ordinance of foot-washing, giving special aid to women visitors  
28 and new members.  
29

30 4. The Care of the Sick and the Poor—Deaconesses assist deacons in caring for the  
31 sick, needy, and unfortunate. (See p. XX.)  
32

33 5. Care and Maintenance of Property—In churches where the responsibility for the  
34 care and maintenance of church property is not assigned to a building committee, deacons and  
35 deaconesses have this responsibility. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
36

#### 37 Clerk

38

39 Much of the efficient functioning of the church depends on the work of the clerk.  
40 Because of the important and specialized functions of this office, it is wise to choose one who  
41 can be reelected to provide continuity in record keeping and reporting.  
42

1 Large churches may elect assistant clerks as needed. When the clerk, as secretary, cannot  
2 attend a business meeting, the clerk should arrange for an assistant to be present to take the  
3 minutes. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
4

5 No Names Added or Removed Without Vote—The clerk has no authority to add or  
6 remove names from the membership record without a vote of the church, which must always  
7 vote to add or remove a name, except in the case of the death of a member. When a member  
8 dies, the clerk will record the date of the death in the membership record. (See p. XX.)  
9

10 Transferring Members—The clerk handles correspondence between members and  
11 churches in the transferring of memberships. (See p. XX.)  
12

13 Corresponding With Members—The clerk should try to keep in touch with absent  
14 members. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
15

16 Notice of Delegates for Conference Sessions—The clerk, on authorization of the board,  
17 promptly notifies the conference of delegates elected to represent the church at a conference  
18 session, using blanks or forms provided by the conference. (See p. XX.)  
19

20 Reports to Be Furnished Promptly—The clerk must promptly furnish reports requested  
21 by the conference. Some are quarterly, others annual. It is essential that reports be sent to the  
22 conference secretary within the time specified because they are important for the accuracy of  
23 reports prepared by other organizations of the world Church. The clerk collects information for  
24 these reports from the other officers and department leaders. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
25

26 Church Records—The clerk keeps church records, which should be carefully preserved.  
27 All records and account books of all officers are the property of the church and are to be  
28 surrendered to the newly elected clerk at the expiration of the term of office of the previous  
29 clerk, or to the church at any time during the term on request of the pastor or elders.  
30

### 31 Treasurer

32

33 Because of the important functions of the treasurer, it is wise to choose one who can be  
34 reelected to provide continuity in record keeping and reporting. Large churches may elect  
35 assistant treasurers as needed.  
36

37 The treasurer can greatly encourage faithfulness in the returning of tithe and deepen the  
38 spirit of liberality on the part of the members. A word of counsel given in the spirit of the  
39 Master will help members to render faithfully to God His own in tithes and offerings, even in a  
40 time of financial stringency.  
41

1           Treasurer the Custodian of All Funds—The treasurer is the custodian of all church funds.  
2 These include (1) conference funds, (2) local church funds, and (3) funds belonging to auxiliary  
3 organizations of the local church.  
4

5           All funds (conference, local church, and local church auxiliary) are deposited by the  
6 treasurer in a bank or financial institution account in the name of the church, unless the local  
7 conference authorizes another system.  
8

9           Surplus church funds may be deposited in savings accounts upon authorization of the  
10 board. Where large balances are carried for building or special projects, the board may authorize  
11 separate bank accounts. Such accounts, however, shall be operated by the treasurer and reported  
12 to the church along with all other church funds.  
13

14           All church bank accounts are exclusively for church funds and are never to be combined  
15 with any personal account or funds.  
16

17           Conference Funds—Conference funds, which include tithe, all regular mission funds, and  
18 all funds for special conference projects and institutions, are trust funds. At the close of each  
19 month, or more often if requested by the conference, the treasurer shall send to the conference  
20 treasurer the entire amount of conference funds received during that period of time. The church  
21 may not borrow, use, or withhold such conference funds for any purpose.  
22

23           Sabbath School Funds—All Sabbath School offerings are to be passed over weekly to the  
24 treasurer by the Sabbath School secretary-treasurer, the treasurer keeping a careful record of all  
25 such offerings. These mission funds are transmitted to the conference office as outlined in the  
26 previous paragraph. Sabbath School expense funds are held in trust, subject to the orders of the  
27 Sabbath School Council (see p. XX), to meet the routine expenses of the Sabbath School.  
28

29           Local Church Funds—Local church funds include church expense, building and repair  
30 funds, and the fund for the poor and needy. These funds belong to the local church and are  
31 disbursed by the treasurer only by authorization of the board or business meeting. However, the  
32 treasurer shall pay from the expense funds all bills for local expense that have been authorized by  
33 the board.  
34

35           Funds of Auxiliary Organizations—Auxiliary organization funds include such funds as  
36 church outreach programs, family life, Adventist Youth Society, community services/Dorcas  
37 Society, Sabbath School expense, and that portion of the health ministries funds belonging to the  
38 church, and may include church school funds. All money received by and for these  
39 organizations is turned over promptly to the church treasurer by the secretary of the organization,  
40 the deacons, or whoever has received the funds. These funds belong to the auxiliary  
41 organizations of the church. They may be disbursed only by order of the auxiliary organization  
42 to which they belong.



1  
2 The treasurer shall give receipts for all funds received. On receiving money from the  
3 treasurer, the secretary of the auxiliary organization shall give a proper receipt to the treasurer.  
4

5 Safeguarding the Purpose of Funds—When an offering is taken for worldwide missions  
6 or for any general or local enterprise, all money placed in the offering plate (unless otherwise  
7 indicated by the donor) shall be counted as part of that particular offering. All offerings and gifts  
8 contributed by individuals for a specific fund or purpose must be used for that purpose. Neither  
9 the treasurer nor the board has the authority to divert any funds from the objective for which they  
10 were given.  
11

12 The funds of auxiliary organizations, often donations given for specific purposes, are  
13 raised for that special part of the church's work for which the auxiliary organization is  
14 established. Such funds are held in trust by the treasurer, and they too may not be borrowed or in  
15 any way diverted by the treasurer or the board from the objective for which they were raised.  
16

17 When an auxiliary organization is discontinued, the church in regular business session  
18 may take action indicating the disposition of any balance of funds in the account of the  
19 organization.  
20

21 Money for Personal Literature Orders—Money for personal orders of literature, books,  
22 pamphlets, magazines, and subscriptions for periodicals is cared for by the treasurer in areas  
23 where a local Adventist Book Center does not exist. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
24

25 Proper Method for Payment of Money by Members—The treasurer should urge that all  
26 money paid in by members, other than the regular church collection, be placed in tithe and  
27 offering envelopes, unless an alternative method has been implemented by the conference.  
28 Members should list the various items and amounts on the envelope as indicated and to make  
29 sure that the money enclosed equals the total shown. They should also sign their names and give  
30 their addresses, and place the envelopes on the offering plate or hand them to the treasurer, who  
31 should preserve the envelopes to serve as vouchers until all accounts are checked by the  
32 conference auditor.  
33

34 Members who return their tithes and offerings by check or postal notes should, where  
35 legally possible, make such checks or notes payable to the church, rather than to any individual.  
36

37 Receipts to Members—Receipts should be issued promptly for all money received from  
38 members, no matter how small the amount, and a strict account of all receipts and payments  
39 should be kept by the treasurer. All general offerings not in envelopes should be counted by the  
40 treasurer in the presence of another officer, preferably a deacon, and a receipt given to such  
41 officer.  
42

1 Proper Method of Remitting Funds to the Conference—In sending remittances to the  
2 conference treasurer, all checks, bank drafts, or money orders should be made payable to the  
3 organization wherever legally possible and not to any individual. A copy of the treasurer’s  
4 records for the period should be enclosed with the remittance. Remittance blanks are furnished  
5 by the conference. (See p. XX.)  
6

7 Preservation of Financial Documents—Financial documents, vouchers, or receipted bills  
8 should be secured for all funds received and disbursed in accordance with the system authorized  
9 by the local conference.  
10

11 Books Should Be Audited—The conference treasurer, or other individual appointed by  
12 the conference committee, audits the church financial records, usually each year.  
13

14 The treasurer’s books and other financial records relating to the work of the treasurer, the  
15 church school treasurer, and the treasurer of any other organization may be called for and  
16 inspected at any time by the conference auditor or by the pastor, district leader, head elder, or by  
17 any others authorized by the church board, but should not be made available to unauthorized  
18 persons. (See p. XX.)  
19

20 Reports of all funds received and disbursed should be presented at the regular business  
21 meetings of the church. A copy of these reports should be given to the leading officers.  
22

23 When the number of individuals returning tithes in the church is reported, the spouse and  
24 minor children who are non-wage earners but members of the church should be counted in this  
25 group, in addition to the wage-earner of the family.  
26

27 Relations With Members Confidential—The treasurer should always remember that  
28 relations with individual members are strictly confidential. The treasurer should never comment  
29 on the tithe returned by any member or on the income or anything concerning it, except to those  
30 who share the responsibility of the work. Great harm may be caused by failure to observe this  
31 rule.  
32

### 33 Interest Coordinator

34  
35 An interest coordinator should be elected to make sure that interests developed through  
36 the church’s missionary outreach are cared for promptly. This person is a member of the board  
37 and the Personal Ministries Council and works directly with the pastor and chairperson of that  
38 council.  
39

40 Duties of this office include:

- 41  
42 1. Keeping an organized list of all interests received by the church.

1  
2           2.     Assisting the pastor and chairperson of the Personal Ministries Council in  
3 enlisting and recruiting qualified members for follow-up service.

4  
5           3.     Presenting to the board a monthly report on the number of interests received and  
6 followed up. When an interest is sufficiently developed, it should be shared with the pastor.

### 7 8                                   Departments and Other Organizations 9

10           Church structure, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is vital for the spiritual growth of  
11 members and for the fulfillment of the Church’s mission. It is the skeleton of the ecclesiastical  
12 body. And “the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to  
13 the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the  
14 edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16, RSV).

15  
16           The most important elements of structure and organization are the officers (see Chapter  
17 XX) and the departments and other organizations. This section describes their objectives,  
18 leadership, and functions.

19  
20           The work of the departments and auxiliary organizations is closely tied to the work of the  
21 pastor because all are equally engaged in gospel outreach. The pastor serves as a counselor to  
22 these organizations, and they in turn assist in the overall church outreach programs. In case of  
23 emergency, or where circumstances require, the pastor may call a meeting of any committee or  
24 organization.

25  
26           Every church should utilize the services of the departments and organizations to nurture  
27 its members and accomplish the mission given by Christ (see Matt. 28:19; Rev. 10:11; 14:6).

### 28 29                                   Children’s Ministries 30

31           Children’s Ministries develops the faith of children from birth through age fourteen,  
32 leading them into union with the Church. It seeks to provide multiple ministries that will lead  
33 children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him. It cooperates with the Sabbath  
34 School and other departments to provide religious education to children and fulfills its mission  
35 by developing a variety of grace-oriented ministries for children that are inclusive, service  
36 oriented, leadership building, safe, and evangelistic.

37  
38           “Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons  
39 that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his  
40 character than all that it learns in future years.”—CG 193.  
41

1 “It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their  
2 hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children  
3 may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be  
4 educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage, that they may form  
5 characters after the similitude of the character of Christ.”—DA 515.

6  
7 “Children of eight, ten or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of  
8 personal religion . . . If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their  
9 state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.”—1T 400.

10  
11 “When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was  
12 speaking to His followers in all ages—to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all  
13 Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would  
14 say, They will come if you do not hinder them.”—DA 517.

15  
16 Children’s Ministries Coordinator and Committee—The church elects a children’s  
17 ministries coordinator to develop ministries that nurture the faith of children. The coordinator  
18 should have leadership ability as well as experience and passion for working with children.

19  
20 The children’s ministries coordinator works with the pastor and board to establish a  
21 children’s ministries committee to provide ministries for children. The committee should consist  
22 of individuals with interest and experience in working with children. Ordinarily, the members  
23 include Sabbath School division leaders, Vacation Bible School leader, Junior Youth leaders,  
24 and two to three others who have a passion for ministry to children.

25  
26 If the church has a Children’s Ministries department, Vacation Bible Schools, children’s  
27 branch Sabbath Schools, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, and Story Hours, they will come under the  
28 direction of Children’s Ministries. (See p. XX.)

29  
30 Everyone involved in work with children must meet Church and legal standards and  
31 requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should consult  
32 with the conference which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and  
33 certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

34  
35 Resources—For children’s ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

### 36 37 38 39 40 41 Communication

Communication ministry calls for the support of every layperson, Church employee, and  
Church institution. The Communication department promotes the use of a sound program of  
public relations and all contemporary communication techniques, sustainable technologies, and

1 media in the promulgation of the gospel. The church should elect a communication secretary  
2 and, where needed, a communication committee.

3  
4 “We must take every justifiable means of bringing the light before the people. Let the  
5 press be utilized, and let every advertising agency be employed that will call attention to the  
6 work.”—6T 36.

7  
8 “Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be  
9 different from the methods used in the work in the past.”—Ev 105.

10  
11 Communication Secretary—The communication secretary should have the ability to meet  
12 people and rightly represent the Church, sound judgment, good organization, effective writing  
13 skills, and a willingness to carry out assignments.

14  
15 The secretary gathers and disseminates news to local media, cooperates with the  
16 conference communication director, and presents periodic reports to the business meeting. The  
17 conference communication department provides appropriate instruction and help to  
18 communication secretaries.

19  
20 The pastor, who is primarily responsible for the communication program of the church,  
21 will work closely in an advisory capacity with the communication secretary or committee.

22  
23 Any department or organization may appoint an individual to provide the communication  
24 secretary or committee with information about newsworthy events.

25  
26 Communication Committee—In a large church a communication committee may more  
27 adequately handle the many facets of the public relations and communication program. The  
28 church elects the committee, and the communication secretary serves as chairperson. Members  
29 of the committee may be assigned specific communication responsibilities, such as working with  
30 the press, media producers and online personnel, and internal church media. If there is a nearby  
31 Church institution, a member of its public relations or communication staff should be invited to  
32 sit with the committee.

33  
34 Central Communication Committee—If several churches in an area arrange for a central  
35 communication committee, the communication secretary of each church should be a member and  
36 should work in harmony with any general plan that will better coordinate the handling of news  
37 and other media activities for the cooperating churches. The establishment of this committee  
38 would be initiated by the conference communication director. Meetings of the central committee  
39 would be called and presided over by a chairperson selected by the group.

1 Education

2  
3 Church entities operate schools from kindergarten through university levels for the  
4 purpose of transmitting to students the Church's ideals, beliefs, attitudes, values, habits, and  
5 customs. The source, the means, and the aim of Adventist education are a true knowledge of  
6 God, fellowship and companionship with Him in study and service, and likeness to Him in  
7 character development.

8  
9 Education Secretary—The church elects an education secretary to promote and generate  
10 support for Christian education. The secretary is a member of the Home and School Association  
11 executive committee and works in cooperation with the association.

12  
13 Home and School Association—A church with a school shall establish a Home and  
14 School Association, the purpose of which is to provide parent education and unite the home, the  
15 school, and the church in endeavors to provide Christian education for the children. Parents of  
16 students, school patrons, and church members should be encouraged to be active members of the  
17 association.

18  
19 Home and School Association officers shall be a leader, assistant leader,  
20 secretary-treasurer, librarian, and the educational secretary. (See p. XX.) To give continuity,  
21 some of the officers should be elected for second terms. All shall be members of the church.

22  
23 The leader of the association shall be a member with success in training children, whose  
24 mind is open to new ideas, and who believes in the importance of Christian education.

25  
26 The secretary-treasurer keeps the records of the association and reports to the director of  
27 the conference education department at the beginning and end of each school year. Association  
28 funds are channeled through the church/school treasurer, kept as a separate account, and audited  
29 under denominational policy.

30  
31 The principal is an ex officio member of the Home and School Association Committee.

32  
33 Church School Board—The administrative body of every elementary (primary) school  
34 and junior academy (partial high school) operated by one church shall be a church school board  
35 elected by the church or a school committee appointed by the church board. Thus this body may  
36 be a separate school board, the church board, or a school committee of the church board  
37 appointed for this purpose. Division working policies explain the functions of school boards.

38  
39 School board members should be chosen for their consecration, their belief in and loyalty  
40 to the principles of Christian education, their good judgment and tact, their experience in school  
41 matters, and their financial judgment and ability. They should believe in and be willing to follow  
42 denominational educational policies and recommendations.

1  
2           If two or more churches jointly operate what is known as a multi-constituent school, the  
3 administrative body shall be drawn from the constituent churches.  
4

5           One or more members of the school board should be chosen from among the members of  
6 the church board, so that the school board may be closely related to the church board.  
7

8           The pastor should be a member of the school board. If the school is operated by more  
9 than one church, generally the pastors of the participating churches concerned are members of  
10 the board.  
11

12           In junior academies and elementary schools, the principal or head teacher should be a  
13 member of the board.  
14

15           Some members of the board may be parents of children attending the school, so the board  
16 may profit from parental viewpoints and counsel resulting from close observation and  
17 experience.  
18

19           The school board officers shall be a chairperson and a secretary. If the school is operated  
20 by one church, the church elects the chairperson.  
21

22           In multi-constituent school boards, additional officers shall include a treasurer, a vice  
23 chairperson, and an assistant secretary. At its first meeting after its election, a union school  
24 board elects its own chairperson from among its members. In the event that agreement between  
25 the churches is not possible, the appointment will be made by the conference board of education  
26 or the conference committee. The principal of the school generally is appointed secretary of the  
27 board.  
28

29           Any action of a multi-constituent school board that involves the supporting churches in  
30 financial obligations must be submitted to their respective boards for approval.  
31

32           Where a separate school board is elected, one of two plans may be followed to establish  
33 time of election and term of office: (1) All the members may be elected at the close of the  
34 calendar or fiscal year and function for one year; (2) the members of the first board may be  
35 chosen for terms of one, two, and three years, respectively, with replacement members being  
36 chosen each succeeding year for a term of three years. The purpose of this plan is to have a  
37 nucleus of experienced members on the board to ensure a continuity of policy. When a mid-term  
38 vacancy is filled, the new member serves the remainder of the original term.  
39

40           The school board or school committee should meet at a regular time and place at least  
41 once each month during the school year.  
42

1 The school board chairperson calls meetings, presides, sees that the actions of the board  
2 are carried out, and countersigns all financial orders issued by the secretary. The chairperson is a  
3 member ex officio of the elementary school and junior academy Inspection Committee, which  
4 surveys and evaluates the school and its work.

5  
6 The secretary keeps a permanent record of meetings, issues orders for money to pay  
7 accounts or obligations, and carries on correspondence for the board.

8  
9 Where one church operates a school, the work of the treasurer is usually carried by the  
10 church treasurer or an assistant church treasurer, who receives tuition and other money; pays out  
11 money on the order of the secretary (countersigned by the chairperson), keeps a careful account  
12 of all transfers, and at each monthly meeting gives a detailed report to the board. In a multi-  
13 constituent board, a treasurer is appointed by the union board.

#### 14 15 Family Ministries

16  
17 The objective of Family Ministries is to strengthen marriage and the family. The family  
18 was established by divine creation with marriage at its center. As the primary setting in which  
19 values are learned and the capacity for close relationships with God and others is developed, its  
20 health is vital to the Church's disciple-making mission.

21  
22 Family Ministries upholds the biblical teaching related to the family and lifts up God's  
23 ideals for family living. At the same time, it brings an understanding of the brokenness  
24 experienced by individuals and families in a fallen world. The department facilitates  
25 understanding, unity, and love at home and in the family of God. It fosters reconciliation  
26 between the generations promised in the Elijah message of Malachi 4:5, 6 and extends hope and  
27 support to those who have been hurt by abuse, family dysfunction, and broken relationships.  
28 Relational growth opportunities are provided through family life education and enrichment.  
29 Individuals, married couples, and families are helped to avail themselves of professional  
30 counseling when necessary.

31  
32 Ministry to families in the local church focuses on premarital guidance for couples,  
33 marriage strengthening programs, and the education of parents. Ministry to families also gives  
34 attention to the special needs of single parents and step-families and provides instruction in  
35 family-to-family evangelism.

36  
37 "Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home . . . There is no missionary  
38 field more important than this . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected, and it  
39 is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be  
40 corrected."—AH 35.

41  
42 "God designs that the families of earth shall be a symbol of the family in heaven.



1 Christian homes, established and conducted in accordance with God’s plan, are among His most  
2 effective agencies for the formation of Christian character and for the advancement of His  
3 work.”—6T 430.

4  
5 “The mission of the home extends beyond its own members . . . Far more  
6 powerful than any sermon that can be preached is the influence of a true home upon human  
7 hearts and lives.”—MH 352.

8  
9 Family Ministries Leader(s)—An individual or married couple (see p. XX for the  
10 Church’s definition of marriage) may be elected to serve as family ministries leader(s). They  
11 should model strong and growing family relationships and exhibit a sincere interest in fostering  
12 the well-being of all families. In order to be effective, the family ministries leader(s) must have  
13 an understanding of God’s redemptive plan for dealing with the brokenness in relationships  
14 which sin has brought. The leader(s) also must maintain appropriate confidentiality and know  
15 when and how to encourage individuals in critical situations to seek professional counseling.

16  
17 Family Ministries Committee—The board may establish a Family Ministries Committee  
18 chaired by the Family Ministries leader(s).

19  
20 Resources—For family ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

## 21 Health Ministries

22  
23  
24 The Church believes its responsibility to make Christ known to the world includes a  
25 moral obligation to preserve human dignity by promoting optimal levels of physical, mental, and  
26 spiritual health.

27  
28 In addition to ministering to those who are ill, this responsibility extends to the  
29 prevention of disease through effective health education and leadership in promoting optimum  
30 health, free of tobacco, alcohol, other drugs, and unclean foods. Where possible, members shall  
31 be encouraged to follow a primarily vegetarian diet.

32  
33 Health Ministries Leader—For planning and implementing an efficient program, the  
34 church elects a health ministries leader and, if needed, an associate leader. The leader should be  
35 health-oriented and interested in promoting the Church’s standards in healthful living among  
36 members and in the community through church-operated health ministries programs. The leader  
37 should be able to screen programs and information that are representative of the ideals and  
38 philosophy of the Church and to integrate them into an effective spiritual and physical witness.

39  
40 Health Ministries Council—Where practical, a church may appoint a health ministries  
41 council to provide leadership to both members and community in the field of healthful living and  
42 to assist in cooperative soul-saving activities through a viable program of health and temperance

1 and spiritual emphasis. The council, in collaboration with the Personal Ministries Council, shall  
2 lead out in developing a schedule of health ministries activities that include such programs as  
3 stop-smoking plans, cooking schools, health classes, stress-control programs, and related  
4 endeavors. If not serving as chairperson, the pastor should be an ex officio member.

5  
6 Health Ministries or Temperance Society—In some areas a health ministries or  
7 temperance society may be established as a separate entity distinct from Church organizations.  
8 The conference health ministries director should be involved in establishing such an entity.

9  
10 World Health Ministries Sabbath Offering—The entire World Health Ministries Sabbath  
11 offering is sent to the conference to be distributed according to policy. Upon the church's  
12 request to the conference, up to 25 percent of the offering received in the church may revert to  
13 the church for Health Ministries programs.

14  
15 Resources—For health ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

## 16 17 Music

18  
19 Selecting Music Coordinators—The church should take great care in selecting music  
20 leaders, choosing only those who are thoroughly consecrated and provide appropriate music for  
21 all church worship services and meetings. Secular music or that of a questionable nature should  
22 never be introduced into our services.

23  
24 Music leaders should work closely with the pastor or elders in order that musical  
25 selections harmonize with the sermon theme. The music leader is under the direction of the  
26 pastor or elders and does not work independently. The music leader should counsel with them  
27 about the music to be rendered and the selection of singers and musicians.

28  
29 Selecting Musicians—Sacred music is an important part of public worship. The church  
30 must exercise care in selecting choir members and other musicians who will rightly represent  
31 Church principles. They should be members of the church, the Sabbath School, or the Adventist  
32 Youth Society. Because they occupy a conspicuous place in church services, they should be  
33 examples of modesty and decorum in their appearance and dress. Choir robes are optional.

34  
35 Churches may have multiple choirs. A children's choir is a means of spiritual nurture,  
36 bonding to the church family, and outreach.

## 37 38 Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

39  
40 The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) department promotes and maintains  
41 religious liberty, with particular emphasis upon liberty of conscience. Religious liberty includes  
42 the human right to have or adopt the religion of one's choice, to change religious belief

1 according to conscience, to manifest one's religion individually or in community with fellow  
2 believers, in worship, observance, practice, witness, and teaching, subject to respect for the  
3 equivalent rights of others.  
4

5 Religious Liberty Leader—The elected religious liberty leader cooperates with both the  
6 pastor and the conference or union PARL department. The leader should be of positive spiritual  
7 influence, able to meet the general public, interested in public affairs, proficient as a  
8 correspondent, and concerned with the preservation of liberty for God's people.  
9

10 Religious Liberty Associations—Each church is considered an informal religious liberty  
11 association, and every church member is considered a member of the association. The pastor or  
12 an elder is the chairperson.  
13

14 Resources—For Public Affairs and Religious Liberty resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.  
15

#### 16 Publishing Ministries 17

18 Publishing Ministries coordinates and promotes literature evangelism under supervision  
19 of the Publishing Ministries Council and the appropriate publishing organization for the territory.  
20 It assists other departments in the promotion, sale, and distribution of subscription magazines  
21 and other missionary literature. The department works with the pastor and other departments in  
22 planning for systematic ways to involve members in publishing ministries.  
23

24 “There are many places in which the voice of the minister cannot be heard, places which  
25 can be reached only by our publications—the books, papers, and tracts filled with the Bible  
26 truths that the people need.”—CM 4.  
27

28 The mission of Publishing Ministries is evangelism and the nurture of church members.  
29 Ellen G. White encouraged members to “sell or give away our literature.”—Ms 126, 1902.  
30

31 Selling Through Literature Evangelists—“God calls for workers from every church  
32 among us to enter His service as canvasser evangelists [literature evangelists].”—CM 20.  
33

34 Giving Away (Sharing) by Church Members—“Let every believer scatter broadcast tracts  
35 and leaflets and books containing the message for this time.”—CM 21.  
36

37 Publishing Ministries Coordinator—The church elects a publishing ministries coordinator  
38 to provide leadership in literature evangelism activities.  
39

40 Publishing Ministries Council—The board appoints the Publishing Ministries Council,  
41 which works under the board's direction. The publishing ministries coordinator chairs the

1 council. The pastor, personal ministries leader, and personal ministries secretary serve as ex  
2 officio members. Members should have interest and experience in literature evangelism.

3  
4 Resources—For publishing ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

## 5 6 Sabbath School and Personal Ministries

### 7 8 Sabbath School

9  
10 The Sabbath School, the primary religious education program of the Church, has four  
11 purposes: study of the Scripture, fellowship, community outreach, and world mission emphasis.  
12 General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries distributes the Sabbath School  
13 Bible Study Guide for all age levels, provides designs for Sabbath School programming within  
14 the context of the various world division cultures, provides resources and training systems for  
15 Sabbath School teachers, and promotes world mission Sabbath School offerings.

16  
17 “The Sabbath school is an important branch of the missionary work, not only because it  
18 gives to young and old a knowledge of God’s word, but because it awakens in them a love for its  
19 sacred truths, and a desire to study them for themselves; above all, it teaches them to regulate  
20 their lives by its holy teachings.”—CSW 10, 11.

21  
22 “The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God’s great instrumentalities to bring  
23 souls to a knowledge of the truth.”—CSW 115.

24  
25 Officers of the Sabbath School Council—The church elects Sabbath School officers and  
26 members of the Sabbath School Council. Officers include the superintendent and any assistant  
27 superintendents; secretary and any assistant secretaries; a leader for each division, including  
28 adult and extension divisions; children’s ministries coordinator and/or Vacation Bible School  
29 director; and investment secretary.

30  
31 The officers, teachers, and all Sabbath School members should cooperate with other  
32 departments in all outreach (missionary) work, as well as carrying on Sabbath School evangelism  
33 by means of regular Sabbath School classes and such activities as Decision Days, pastors’ Bible  
34 classes, Community Guest Days, Vacation Bible Schools, and branch Sabbath Schools, including  
35 Neighborhood Bible Clubs and Story Hours.

36  
37 The Sabbath School Council is the administrative body of the Sabbath School. It consists  
38 of the superintendent (who serves as chairperson), any assistant superintendents, secretary (who  
39 serves as secretary), any assistant secretaries, division leaders, investment secretary, personal  
40 ministries leader, children’s ministries coordinator and/or Vacation Bible School director, an  
41 elder (appointed by the board or by the board of elders), and the pastor.

1 As soon as possible after the officers are elected, the superintendent should call a council  
2 meeting to appoint, as needed for the various divisions, other officers who do not serve as  
3 members of the council. These may include assistant division leaders, division secretaries, music  
4 directors, pianists and/or organists, and greeters.

5  
6 In addition to the appointed officers listed above, the council studies the need of all  
7 divisions and groups and appoints teachers whose names are submitted to the board for approval.  
8 To maintain both the integrity of the Sabbath School lesson curriculum and the quality of  
9 teaching, the council should exercise great care in choosing teachers. Particularly when selecting  
10 teachers for the children's divisions, the council should consult with division leaders. All  
11 teachers shall be members of the church in regular standing.

12  
13 The council is responsible for the successful operation of the entire Sabbath School  
14 through the superintendent. The council should meet regularly as needed. The council should  
15 ensure that program helps and materials, including the *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*  
16 prepared by the General Conference, are supplied in sufficient quantities.

17  
18 Sabbath School Superintendent and Other Sabbath School Officers—The superintendent  
19 is the leading officer of the Sabbath School and should begin planning for its smooth and  
20 effective operation as soon as elected. The superintendent should support the plans and  
21 emphases of the conference Sabbath School department and should implement decisions of the  
22 Sabbath School Council concerning the operation of the Sabbath School. The church may elect  
23 one or more assistant superintendents.

24  
25 The secretary should complete the quarterly report on the appropriate form immediately  
26 after the last Sabbath of the quarter and mail it before the deadline to the conference Sabbath  
27 School and personal ministries directors. The secretary also should place a copy in the  
28 secretary's permanent file, give copies to the superintendent and the pastor, and present it at the  
29 business meeting.

30  
31 The Investment secretary promotes the Investment Plan for mission support in all  
32 Sabbath School divisions and keeps all members informed as the program progresses.

33  
34 The Vacation Bible School (VBS) director leads in organizing, promoting, and launching  
35 community evangelism through the annual VBS. The church may assign this responsibility to  
36 the children's ministries coordinator.

37  
38 The council may appoint a music director for the Sabbath School in consultation with  
39 division leaders. As an expression of worship, music should glorify God. Singers and other  
40 musicians should be as carefully selected as are the leaders for other parts of the Sabbath School  
41 service and should be measured by the same standards. (See p. XX.) The council also may  
42 appoint pianists and organists for the divisions.

1  
2 Sabbath School Division Leaders—The church board elects a leader for each division.  
3 The Sabbath School Council may appoint assistant division leaders as needed. The *Sabbath*  
4 *School Handbook*, available from the Adventist Book Center or the conference Sabbath School  
5 department, contains information about all divisions, from beginners through adult and the  
6 extension division, which cares for those unable to attend Sabbath School.

7  
8 Sabbath School Teachers—The Sabbath School Council chooses and the church board  
9 approves Sabbath School teachers. They should have an aptitude for teaching and be willing to  
10 study ways to improve their teaching abilities. They should be diligent in preparation, regular  
11 and punctual in attendance, and examples in the daily study of the *Sabbath School Bible Study*  
12 *Guide*.

13  
14 The council should make special effort to select teachers for children and youth who have  
15 an interest in those age levels and ability to meet their needs. Everyone involved in work with  
16 the children's divisions must meet Church and legal standards and requirements, such as  
17 background checks or certification. Local church leaders should consult with the conference  
18 which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and certifications are available  
19 and/or required. All teachers should be encouraged to participate in the teacher training courses  
20 available through the conference Sabbath School department. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

21  
22 Every Sabbath School should have a weekly teachers' meeting.

23  
24 Realizing that "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible  
25 will stand through the last great conflict" (GC 593, 594), Sabbath School leaders should strongly  
26 encourage regular systematic study of the Word. The *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is  
27 designed to encourage daily feasting on the Word, a practice which has done much to maintain  
28 unity throughout the Church. Every member should have access to the appropriate age-level  
29 *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* published by the General Conference and/or division.  
30 Similarly, every leader and teacher should have access to the helps produced for the various  
31 Sabbath School divisions by the General Conference and/or division.

32  
33 Teachers should have at least thirty minutes during which to teach their classes.

34  
35 Sabbath School Offerings—The Sabbath School secretary should accurately record  
36 Sabbath School offerings and pass them on to the treasurer as soon as possible. Extension  
37 division offerings should be added to the regular Sabbath School offerings. Many Sabbath  
38 Schools take offerings for Sabbath School expense. With the exception of that expense fund, all  
39 Sabbath School offerings are for the support of the mission fields and are to be passed on in their  
40 entirety by the treasurer to the conference. These funds include the regular weekly Sabbath  
41 School offering, the Thirteenth Sabbath offering, Sabbath School Investment, and  
42 Birthday-Thank offering. Each is to be identified as a separate fund in the financial system of

1 the church. Mission funds are distributed according to policy. No mission funds may be  
2 retained by the church or conference.

3  
4 The Sabbath School expense offering and the mission offering, where the calendar of  
5 offerings is being used, shall not be taken as one offering and divided according to an agreed-  
6 upon formula or percentage. The offerings may be taken as combined offering where the church  
7 is operating under a division-approved combined offering plan.

8  
9 Resources—For Sabbath School and personal ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

### 10 11 Personal Ministries

12  
13 Personal Ministries provides resources and trains members to unite their efforts with  
14 those of the pastor and officers in soul-winning service. It also has primary responsibility for  
15 programs assisting those in need.

16  
17 Personal Ministries Council—The Personal Ministries Council guides the outreach  
18 (missionary) efforts of the church and works under the direction of the board. The council  
19 should meet at least once each month and should consist of pastor, an elder, treasurer, and  
20 leaders of the other departments and auxiliary services functioning in that congregation. The  
21 Personal Ministries Council may assign subcommittees for specialized tasks. All subcommittees  
22 report to the Personal Ministries Council. The Personal Ministries Council and leader are  
23 responsible for organizing small group ministries.

24  
25 Personal Ministries Officers—The church elects the Personal Ministries officers,  
26 including the leader, assistants (as needed), and the secretary.

27  
28 The leader trains and directs members in outreach (missionary) service and chairs the  
29 Personal Ministries Council. The leader reports in the monthly Church Outreach (Missionary)  
30 Sabbath service and business meetings about total outreach (missionary) activities of the  
31 congregation. Assistants may be assigned to coordinate the Bible correspondence school, Bible  
32 evangelism, literature distribution, Ingathering (or equivalent appeals), small group ministries,  
33 member training, and other soul-winning programs.

34  
35 The secretary serves as representative of the Adventist Book Center for all departments  
36 of the church and works with the leader in developing the outreach (missionary) programs of the  
37 church.

38  
39 Adventist Men—Adventist Men is a subsidiary of the Personal Ministries department. It  
40 includes lay-preaching efforts, prison ministry, and community services.

1 Bible School Coordinator—The Bible School coordinator organizes and coordinates the  
2 church’s Bible School outreach ministry to the community. The coordinator should work closely  
3 with the pastor, the interest coordinator, and the personal ministries leader.  
4

5 Community Services/Dorcas Society Leader—The church elects the community services/  
6 Dorcas Society leader, assistant leaders (as needed), and secretary-treasurer. This organization  
7 gathers and prepares clothing, food, and other supplies for those in need and works closely with  
8 the deacons and deaconesses. Community services/Dorcas ministry, however, includes more  
9 than giving material aid. It encompasses adult education, visiting, homemaking, home nursing,  
10 counseling, and other services.  
11

12 If the church operates a community services center, the Personal Ministries Council is its  
13 governing committee. The council appoints the director of the center, who is a member of the  
14 council.  
15

16 Ministry to People with Disabilities—This ministry functions under the Personal  
17 Ministries Council and develops programs for members and others with disabilities. It should  
18 create witnessing programs, recommend how to make church facilities more accessible, help  
19 solve transportation problems, and recommend ways to involve members with disabilities. The  
20 coordinator of Ministry to People with Disabilities serves as a liaison with organizations  
21 providing services for people with disabilities, such as Christian Record Services, and promotes  
22 Christian Record Services programs.  
23

24 Resources—For Sabbath School and personal ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.  
25

### 26 Stewardship Ministries 27

28 Stewardship ministries encourages members to respond to God’s grace by dedicating all  
29 they have to Him. Stewardship responsibility involves more than just money. It includes, but is  
30 not limited to, the proper care and use of the body, mind, time, abilities, spiritual gifts,  
31 relationships, influence, language, the environment, and material possessions. The department  
32 assists members in their partnership with God in completing His mission through the proper  
33 utilization of all of His gifts and resources.  
34

35 When the Spirit of God takes possession of the life, “Those whose hearts are filled with  
36 the love of Christ, will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through  
37 His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received  
38 from God’s hand, they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the gospel.”—  
39 AA 71.  
40

41 Stewardship Ministries Leader—The stewardship ministries leader should practice the  
42 principles of Christian stewardship and should have an understanding of the spiritual and



1 financial ministry of the Church. The leader will work in cooperation with the conference  
2 stewardship ministries director, the pastor, and the board. The leader acts as a liaison between  
3 the conference stewardship ministries department and the congregation.  
4

5 Resources—For stewardship ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.  
6

### 7 Women's Ministries 8

9 Women's Ministries upholds, encourages, and challenges women in their daily walk as  
10 disciples of Jesus Christ and as members of His church.  
11

12 Its objectives are to foster spiritual growth and renewal; affirm that women are of  
13 immeasurable worth by virtue of their creation and redemption, equip them for service, and offer  
14 women's perspectives on church issues; minister to the broad spectrum of women's needs, with  
15 regard for multicultural and multiethnic perspectives; cooperate with other departments to  
16 facilitate ministry to women and of women; build good will among women to encourage mutual  
17 support and creative exchange of ideas; mentor and encourage women and create paths for their  
18 involvement in the church; and find ways and means to challenge each woman to use her gifts to  
19 further global mission.  
20

21 Women's Ministries Leader and Committee—The elected women's ministries leader  
22 develops specific ministries to nurture women and equip them for service. She serves as  
23 chairperson of the Women's Ministries Committee and encourages ideas and plans which  
24 maximize women's contributions to the mission of the Church.  
25

26 The leader assists the board with integrating activities and programs for women into the  
27 larger church program. She keeps the church informed of the contribution of women's ministries  
28 to church life. The leader's liaison for training and resource material is the conference women's  
29 ministries director.  
30

31 The women's ministries leader should be a sensitive, caring woman with a burden for  
32 women's ministry and concerns, a balance in her perspectives, an ability to encourage other  
33 women to cultivate their spiritual gifts, and an ability to work well with women in the church, the  
34 pastor, and the board.  
35

36 The Women's Ministries Committee fosters ministry to women in the church. This  
37 committee should be composed of those interested in the broad spectrum of women's needs and  
38 services and those with varied talents and experience.  
39

40 Resources—For women's ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.  
41

Youth Ministries

The various youth organizations of the church should work closely with the Youth Ministries department of the conference.

Adventist Youth Society (AYS)—The church works for and with its youth through the AYS. Under the AYS leader, youth are to work together in development of a strong youth ministry that includes spiritual, mental, and physical development of each individual, Christian social interaction, and an active witnessing program that supports the general soul-winning plans of the church. The goal of AYS should be to involve all youth in activities that will tie them closer to the church and train them for Christian service.

God said to Moses, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:6-9).

The apostle Paul added, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

“We have an army of youth today who can do much if they are properly directed and encouraged . . . We want them to be blessed of God. We want them to act a part in well organized plans for helping other youth.”—*General Conference Bulletin*, January 29, 30, 1893, p. 24.

“When the youth give their hearts to God, our responsibility for them does not cease. They must be interested in the Lord’s work, and led to see that He expects them to do something to advance His cause. It is not enough to show how much needs to be done, and to urge the youth to act a part. They must be taught how to labor for the Master. They must be trained, disciplined, drilled, in the best methods of winning souls to Christ. Teach them to try in a quiet, unpretending way to help their young companions. Let different branches of missionary effort be systematically laid out, in which they may take part, and let them be given instruction and help. Thus they will learn to work for God.”—GW 210.

“With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!”—MYP 196.

While there is to be an active AYS in every church, it is important that the youth program not be isolated from the rest of the church. In addition to their AYS participation, youth should

1 be integrated into responsible leadership and in all lines of church work. As young elders,  
2 deacons, and deaconesses, for example, they can work with and learn from experienced officers.

3  
4 “In order that the work may go forward in all its branches, God calls for youthful vigor,  
5 zeal, and courage. He has chosen the youth to aid in the advancement of His cause. To plan  
6 with clear mind and execute with courageous hand demands fresh, uncrippled energies. Young  
7 men and women are invited to give God the strength of their youth, that through the exercise of  
8 their powers, through keen thought and vigorous action, they may bring glory to Him and  
9 salvation to their fellow-men.”—GW 67.

10  
11 Adventist Youth Ministries Committee—The Adventist Youth Ministries Committee is  
12 the umbrella organization in the church for the general planning of the youth ministry program.  
13 (See p. XX.) It includes the elected officers of the Adventist Youth Society (AYS) plus the  
14 personal ministries leader, youth Sabbath School division leader, health ministries leader,  
15 Ambassador Club director, Pathfinder Club director, Adventurer Club director, principal of the  
16 school, the sponsor, and the pastor. The AYS leader, who is a member of the board, chairs this  
17 committee. The committee should meet as necessary to develop short- and long-range goals and  
18 plans for a successful ministry.

19  
20 AYS Committee—The AYS Committee is responsible for senior youth activities and  
21 works in coordination with the other youth entities through the Adventist Youth Ministries  
22 Committee. If there is no Ambassador, Pathfinder, or Adventurer program, the AYS will include  
23 these younger members in a junior society.

24  
25 AYS Officers—The church elects these AYS officers: youth leader, associate youth  
26 leader, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary-treasurer, chorister, pianist or organist, and sponsor  
27 (who may be an elder). Since music plays an important role in the formation of youth character,  
28 musicians should be as carefully selected as the other AYS officers. (See p. XX.) This group  
29 forms the nucleus for the AYS Committee, which in counsel with the youth appoints other  
30 officers. In smaller churches one person may carry several responsibilities.

31  
32 The AYS leader must exemplify Christ-like graces and have a burden for soul winning  
33 and contagious enthusiasm. In helping motivate youth to work together and take responsibilities,  
34 the leader will be in the background—guiding, counseling, and encouraging youth, helping them  
35 gain experience and the joys of achievement. The leader should study the youth profile of the  
36 church and seek to involve every youth in the AYS.

37  
38 The leader will keep in touch with the pastor, the sponsor, and the conference youth  
39 ministries director, taking advantage of opportunities for in-service training and leading the  
40 society into a cooperative relationship with the church and the conference.

1           The associate leader (if needed) will assist the leader and will chair the AYS Committee  
2 and perform leadership duties when the leader is absent. The AYS committee may assign  
3 additional responsibilities to the associate leader.  
4

5           The secretary-treasurer will keep a record of AYS activities, submit monthly reports on  
6 forms provided to the conference youth ministries director, and encourage youth to report their  
7 witnessing activities during the ten-minute personal ministries period.  
8

9           The assistant secretary-treasurer (if needed) assists with the secretary-treasurer's work as  
10 assigned.  
11

12           AYS Sponsor—The AYS sponsor may be an elder or other person on the board who  
13 understands the objectives of the AYS, is sympathetic with youth and their involvement in the  
14 church's ministries, and will serve as a valued counselor to the youth. The sponsor serves as a  
15 guide or counselor to AYS officers and joins them regularly in AYS Committee meetings. The  
16 sponsor will work with the AYS leader to present the society's needs to the board.  
17

18           The sponsor should become acquainted with the conference youth ministries director and  
19 keep the director informed of changes in officer personnel and other AYS matters. Along with  
20 AYS officers, the sponsor should attend conference youth training institutes to keep informed  
21 about developments in youth ministry.  
22

23           For the sake of continuity, the sponsor, if possible, should serve multiple terms.  
24

25           Adventist Youth Features—To help youth grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ,  
26 the youth ministries department arranges age-related programming that provides an environment  
27 for development of spiritual gifts.  
28

29           Adventist Junior Youth Society (AJY)—The objectives of AJY are the training of junior  
30 youth for Christian leadership and service and the development of members to their fullest  
31 potential.  
32

33           In churches with schools, the AJY is part of the curriculum and a teacher is AJY leader or  
34 sponsor. When the AJY is conducted in the school, each classroom is considered a society, with  
35 students in the lower elementary designated as preparatory members. Upper-elementary students  
36 are regular members.  
37

38           Everyone involved in work with youth must meet Church and legal standards and  
39 requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should consult  
40 with the conference which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and  
41 certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
42

1 Ambassador Club—The Ambassador Club provides a specialized program to meet the  
2 needs of youth, ages 16 through 21. It offers young people in this age group organization and  
3 structure, and promotes their active involvement in the church, locally and globally. The club is  
4 designed to strengthen the current senior youth/young adult ministry of the Church. It challenges  
5 them to experience and share a personal relationship with Christ, helps them develop a lifestyle  
6 that fits their belief system and vocational interest, and provides them with a safe venue for  
7 wholesome development of lifelong friendships. Its activities are to be carried out in accordance  
8 with conference policies and in coordination with other youth/young adult ministries of the local  
9 church. The Ambassador Club has a director and associate director(s). The associate director(s)  
10 may also serve as the secretary and treasurer. The director is a member of the Adventist Youth  
11 Society Council.

12  
13 Pathfinder Club—The Pathfinder Club provides a church-centered outlet for the spirit of  
14 adventure and exploration found in junior youth. This includes carefully tailored activities in  
15 outdoor living, nature exploration, crafts, hobbies, or vocations beyond the possibilities in an  
16 average AJY. In this setting spiritual emphasis is well received, and the Pathfinder Club has  
17 demonstrated its soul-winning influence. In many churches Pathfinder Clubs have replaced the  
18 traditional AJY. If there is a school, the Pathfinder Club should supplement the work of the  
19 AJY.

20  
21 The Pathfinder Club director and deputy directors are elected by the church. (See p. XX.)  
22 If two deputy directors are elected, there should be one of each gender. One of the deputy  
23 directors may also serve as club scribe and treasurer. The director is a member of the board and  
24 the Adventist Youth Ministries Committee.

25  
26 Additional Pathfinder staff may include instructors of craft and nature classes and  
27 counselors who are each responsible for a unit of six to eight Pathfinders.

28  
29 Resource materials are available from the conference youth ministries director.

30  
31 Everyone involved in work with minor children must meet Church and legal standards  
32 and requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should  
33 consult with the conference which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and  
34 certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

35  
36 Adventurer Club—The Adventurer Club provides home and church programs for parents  
37 with 6- through 9-year-old children. It is designed to stimulate the children's curiosity and  
38 includes age-specific activities that involve both parent and child in recreational activities,  
39 simple crafts, appreciation of God's creation, and other activities that are of interest to that age.  
40 All is carried out with a spiritual focus setting the stage for participation in the church as a  
41 Pathfinder.

1 The church elects the club director and associates. (See p. XX.) Additional staff  
2 members are selected by the administrative staff of the club. The director is a member of the  
3 Adventist Youth Ministries Committee. Resource materials are available from the conference  
4 youth ministries director.

5  
6 Everyone involved in work with minor children must meet Church and legal standards  
7 and requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should  
8 consult with the conference which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and  
9 certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

10  
11 Resources—For youth ministries resources, see Notes, #X, p. XX.

### 12 Induction Service

13  
14  
15 All newly elected officers of the local church may be included in an induction service  
16 conducted by a pastor holding a current license or credential. (See p. XX.) If no pastor is  
17 available, an elder of the church may conduct the service for officers other than elders, deacons,  
18 and deaconesses. If the church holds an induction service for newly elected officers, it should  
19 include leaders of all departments and other organizations.

## 20 CHAPTER 9

### 21 Elections

22  
23  
24  
25 The election of church officers who will perform their duties prayerfully, seriously, and  
26 competently is an important work. This chapter outlines the election procedure, from  
27 appointment of the nominating committee to filling vacancies between annual elections.

#### 28 Nominating Committee and the Election Process

29  
30  
31 Officers are elected every one or two years (see p. XX) through an appointed nominating  
32 committee. This committee brings its report to the church, which then votes on the names  
33 presented. This procedure enables the church to give careful study to each name prior to election  
34 and avoids the competitive element that may arise when nominations are made from the floor.

35  
36 The nominating committee shall study the needs of the church and inquire into the fitness  
37 of members to serve in the different offices. This is another reason officers shall not be  
38 nominated from the floor or by general ballot.

39  
40 The size of the nominating committee will range from five members in a small church to  
41 a larger number in a large church. The number to be chosen is left to the discretion of each

1 church and should be studied by the board. A suitable recommendation then will be brought to  
2 the church, using a minimum of time in the Sabbath worship hour.  
3

4       When and How the Nominating Committee Is Appointed—The nominating committee  
5 should be appointed early in the closing quarter of the church year and should report at least  
6 three weeks before the final Sabbath of the church year.  
7

8       The pastor or district leader or, in the absence of the pastor or district leader, the elder  
9 should bring the matter to the attention of the church. The church shall then appoint an  
10 organizing committee responsible to nominate the nominating committee. This organizing  
11 committee may be chosen in one of two ways:  
12

13       1.       By nominations, verbal or written, from the floor. If verbal nominations are  
14 made, no member may nominate more than one person. The effort of one individual or a small  
15 group to dictate to the entire membership is disapproved. Every effort should be made to ensure  
16 fair representation in the composition of the organizing committee. Everything of a political  
17 nature should be avoided. The pastor or district leader shall serve as chairperson of this  
18 organizing committee. If a pastor or district leader has not yet been appointed to serve as church  
19 leader, the chairperson of this organizing committee shall be appointed by the board from among  
20 the members of the organizing committee. The size of the organizing committee should be five  
21 to seven more than the number of board members.  
22

23       2.       By the church authorizing the board, together with five to seven additional  
24 persons chosen by the church (see preceding paragraph), to function as the organizing  
25 committee. If this method is adopted, the chairperson of the board normally serves as  
26 chairperson of the organizing committee (see p. XX).  
27

28       How the Process Works—The steps of the nominating process are:  
29

30       1.       The church appoints by vote an organizing committee by one of the two methods  
31 listed above.  
32

33       2.       The organizing committee recommends names to the church for the nominating  
34 committee, with a recommendation for secretary. Every effort should be made to ensure fair  
35 representation in the composition of the nominating committee.  
36

37       3.       By vote, the church appoints the nominating committee and the secretary.  
38

39       4.       The pastor or district leader is an ex officio member and serves as chairperson of  
40 the nominating committee. Should the pastor or district leader choose not to serve as  
41 chairperson, or if a pastor or district leader has not been appointed to the church, the organizing

1 committee shall recommend the name from the proposed nominating committee to serve as  
2 chairperson.

3  
4 5. The nominating committee meets to prepare the list of officers that it will present  
5 to the church for approval.

6  
7 6. By vote, the church appoints its officers for the ensuing year.

8  
9 Who Should Be Members of the Nominating Committee—Only members in regular  
10 standing should be chosen to serve on the nominating committee. They should be persons of  
11 good judgment who have the welfare and prosperity of the church at heart.

12  
13 Work of the Nominating Committee—The chairperson should call a meeting of the  
14 committee as soon as possible after its election. With earnest prayer, the committee should begin  
15 preparing a list of nominees for all offices. Nominees must be members in regular standing of  
16 the church making the appointments. The list of nominees will be presented to the church at a  
17 Sabbath service or at a specially called business meeting. In making their selections, the  
18 committee may counsel with others who are well informed. This committee does not nominate  
19 either the pastor or the assistant pastor(s), who are appointed by the conference.

20  
21 The list of officers to be considered by the nominating committee may vary with size of  
22 membership. A larger church may determine it needs more officers. A smaller church may have  
23 fewer. The committee deals with all leadership positions except Sabbath School teachers, who  
24 are recommended by the Sabbath School Council and approved by the board. See Notes, #X,  
25 p. XX, for a list of possible officers.

26  
27 Nominating Committee to Get Consent of Prospective Officers—Having nominated  
28 persons who are faithful, loyal members of the local church, except when the conference has  
29 approved an exception (See p. XX, “Work of Elders is Local”), the appropriate members of the  
30 committee should inform them of their nominations and secure their consent to serve.

31  
32 Members May Appear before the Nominating Committee—Members desiring to appear  
33 before the committee to make suggestions or objections should be given opportunity to do so.  
34 After they have addressed the committee and retired from the room, the committee should  
35 consider their comments and then make its report to the church.

36  
37 Nominating Committee Discussions Are Confidential—All inquiries and discussions of  
38 the committee are confidential. It is a violation of Christian ethics and the spirit of the golden  
39 rule for a member of the committee to repeat outside of the committee any personal or sensitive  
40 information discussed. To offend in this regard is reason for excluding the committee member  
41 from future participation in the work of a nominating committee. Should the necessity arise for  
42 inquiries to be made outside the committee, the chairperson should make them.



1  
2           Reporting to the Church—The nominating committee’s report is presented to the church  
3 as a whole and not to the church board, which has no jurisdiction in the process. The report may  
4 be presented at a Sabbath service or at a specially called business meeting.

5  
6           When the nominating committee is ready to report, the chairperson should make  
7 appropriate remarks to the church. A copy of the report should be placed in the hands of  
8 members or read aloud by the secretary of the committee. The chairperson should announce that  
9 the church will vote on the report one or two weeks later.

10  
11           Every member should vote in the election of officers. Election is by majority vote of  
12 those present and voting.

13  
14           Objections to the Report of the Nominating Committee—Members may object to the  
15 nominating committee’s report and should present their objections in person to the committee  
16 before the second reading of the report by making an appointment through the chairperson or  
17 pastor. Or, at the time of the second reading of the report, a member may request that the whole  
18 report be referred without discussion to the committee for further consideration. It is the usual  
19 procedure for the chairperson to accept the referral. However, if the request becomes a motion,  
20 it is nondebateable and is decided by majority vote.

21  
22           The chairperson should announce when and where the committee will meet to hear  
23 objections. At that time, members making objections, or any other member who desires to do so,  
24 should appear before the committee. If the election is deferred because of objections, it would be  
25 a serious matter for those raising objections to fail to appear before the committee.

26  
27           The committee should give due consideration to the objections presented. If they are  
28 found to be justified, the committee should substitute new names for those to which objection  
29 was made. When the report is again presented, the church proceeds to vote on the report of the  
30 committee.

31  
32           Trivial or groundless objections to any name should never be made, but if there are  
33 serious reasons that any nomination should be changed, these reasons should be stated to the  
34 nominating committee.

35  
36           Filling Vacancies Between Elections—If an office of the church becomes vacant during  
37 the term of office because of death, removal, resignation, or any other reason, the board  
38 nominates a successor to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term of office and submits the  
39 nomination to the church for election.

Delegates to Local Conference Session

Administrative authority in a conference originates with its constituency. The churches of a conference elect delegates to the conference session to represent them in the councils of the conference. The conference session elects conference personnel, grants credentials and licenses (unless the conference constitution gives its executive committee this responsibility), amends its constitution and bylaws if necessary, and transacts other business. One of its most important acts is the election of the executive committee, which functions for the constituency between sessions. In this committee is vested the delegated power and authority of all the churches of the conference.

Choosing Delegates—It is God’s plan that members chosen to be delegates be trustworthy, tried, and proved, “able to reason from cause to effect,” because they are to “lay plans that shall be followed in the advancement of the work.” (See 9T 262.)

The number of delegates from each church to a conference session is determined by the conference constitution. When the time comes to select delegates, the pastor, or the head elder in cooperation with the pastor, brings the matter before the church. A committee may be appointed to nominate delegates, or the board may be asked to nominate them. Nothing of a political nature should be allowed to come into this work. Men and women of known piety and loyalty and who are able to attend the session should be nominated as delegates. (See p. XX.)

When the committee or board has completed its work, it reports its nominees to the church. The church then votes on the nominations. No church officer is a delegate ex officio. After the election, the clerk fills out the delegates’ credential blanks and returns them to the secretary of the conference. The delegates become the representatives of the church, to unite with the delegates of other churches to transact all business coming before the conference session.

Delegates to a union conference/mission session are chosen by the conference, not by the churches. The delegates to a General Conference Session are chosen by the divisions and the union conferences/missions.

Duty of Delegates—Delegates to a conference session are not chosen to represent merely the church or conference. They should view the work as a whole, remembering their responsibility for the welfare of the worldwide work of the Church. It is not permissible for church or conference delegations to organize or attempt to direct their votes as a unit. Nor is it permissible for the delegates from a large church or the conference to claim preeminence in directing affairs in a conference session. Each delegate should be susceptible to the direction of the Holy Spirit and vote according to personal convictions. Any church or conference officer or leader attempting to control the votes of a group of delegates would be considered disqualified for holding office.

1  
2 Responsibility of Conference Officers—The local church has no authority outside its own  
3 body. It unites with other churches in the conference in delegating authority and responsibility to  
4 the conference officers and executive committee to carry on the work of the conference between  
5 sessions. Conference officers are answerable to the conference as a whole and not to any one  
6 church.

7  
8 Conference Executive Committee—Conference executive committee members are  
9 elected to represent the work in the entire conference, not that of one church, district, or  
10 institution. Each member should foster all interests of the work in all parts of the field and make  
11 decisions only after prayerful and careful study. Decisions of the committee are not to be  
12 controlled or influenced by any church, group, or individual.

## 13 14 CHAPTER 10

### 15 16 Services and Other Meetings

#### 17 18 General Principles

19  
20 The apostle John declared that “true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and  
21 truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” (John 4:23).

22  
23 “Although God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet He honors with His presence  
24 the assemblies of His people. He has promised that when they come together to seek Him, to  
25 acknowledge their sins, and to pray for one another, He will meet with them by His Spirit. But  
26 those who assemble to worship Him should put away every evil thing. Unless they worship Him  
27 in spirit and truth and in the beauty of holiness, their coming together will be of no avail.”—  
28 PK 50.

29  
30 Purpose of Services and Meetings—The purpose of all services and meetings is to  
31 worship God for His creative work and for the benefits of His salvation; to understand His Word,  
32 His teachings, and His purposes; to fellowship in faith and love; to witness about our personal  
33 faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice at the cross; and to learn how to fulfill the gospel commission  
34 of making disciples in all the world (Matt. 28:19, 20).

35  
36 Reverence for the House of Worship—“To the humble, believing soul, the house of God  
37 on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ’s  
38 representatives, are God’s appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that  
39 loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth.

1 “From the sacredness which was attached to the earthly sanctuary, Christians may learn  
2 how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people . . . God Himself gave  
3 the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature.  
4

5 “The house is the sanctuary for the family, and the closet or the grove the most retired  
6 place for individual worship; but the church is the sanctuary for the congregation. There should  
7 be rules in regard to the time, the place, and the manner of worshiping. Nothing that is sacred,  
8 nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness or  
9 indifference.”—5T 491.  
10

11 Teach Children Reverence—“Parents, elevate the standard of Christianity in the minds of  
12 your children; help them to weave Jesus into their experience; teach them to have the highest  
13 reverence for the house of God and to understand that when they enter the Lord’s house it should  
14 be with hearts that are softened and subdued by such thoughts as these: ‘God is here; this is His  
15 house. I must have pure thoughts and the holiest motives. I must have no pride, envy, jealousy,  
16 evil surmising, hatred, or deception in my heart, for I am coming into the presence of the holy  
17 God. This is the place where God meets with and blesses His people. The high and holy One  
18 who inhabiteth eternity looks upon me, searches my heart, and reads the most secret thoughts  
19 and acts of my life.’”—5T 494.  
20

21 Decorum and Quietness in the Place of Worship—“When the worshipers enter the place  
22 of meeting, they should do so with decorum, passing quietly to their seats . . . Common talking,  
23 whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after  
24 the service. Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers.  
25

26 “If some have to wait a few minutes before the meeting begins, let them maintain a true  
27 spirit of devotion by silent meditation, keeping the heart uplifted to God in prayer that the service  
28 may be of special benefit to their own hearts and lead to the conviction and conversion of other  
29 souls. They should remember that heavenly messengers are in the house . . . If when the people  
30 come into the house of worship, they have genuine reverence for the Lord and bear in mind that  
31 they are in His presence, there will be a sweet eloquence in silence. The whispering and  
32 laughing and talking which might be without sin in a common business place should find no  
33 sanction in the house where God is worshiped. The mind should be prepared to hear the word of  
34 God, that it may have due weight and suitably impress the heart.”—5T 492.  
35

36 Hospitality—“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly  
37 entertained angels” (Heb. 13:2). Every church should cultivate a spirit of hospitality, an essential  
38 element of Christian life and experience. Nothing is so deadening to the spiritual life of a church  
39 as a cold, formal atmosphere that drives out hospitality and Christian fellowship. Especially  
40 selected greeters should cordially welcome visitors, who also may be welcomed at the time of  
41 the worship service.  
42

1 Place of Music in Worship

2  
3 Power of Music—“Music can be a great power for good, yet we do not make the most of  
4 this branch of worship. The singing is generally done from impulse or to meet special cases, and  
5 at other times those who sing are left to blunder along, and the music loses its proper effect upon  
6 the minds of those present. Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. Let the voices be  
7 lifted in songs of praise and devotion. Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let  
8 the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering.”—4T 71.

9  
10 Sing With Spirit and Understanding—“In their efforts to reach the people, the Lord’s  
11 messengers are not to follow the ways of the world. In the meetings that are held, they are not to  
12 depend on worldly singers and theatrical display to awaken an interest. How can those who have  
13 no interest in the word of God, who have never read His word with a sincere desire to understand  
14 its truths, be expected to sing with the spirit and the understanding? . . . How can the heavenly  
15 choir join in music that is only a form? . . .

16  
17 “The singing is not always to be done by a few. As often as possible, let the entire  
18 congregation join.”—9T 143, 144.

19  
20 Pulpit Not a Forum

21  
22 The Church confers no right to any pastor, elder, or other person to make the pulpit a  
23 forum for advocating disputed points of doctrine or church procedure.

24  
25 Testing New Light—Members who think they have new light contrary to the established  
26 views of the Church should seek counsel from responsible leaders.

27  
28 “There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of  
29 truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of  
30 the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a  
31 humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their  
32 judgment; for ‘in the multitude of counselors there is safety.’”—5T 293. (See also Acts 15:1-  
33 32.)

34  
35 This plan was followed in the early church. When a difference of opinion arose at  
36 Antioch over an important question, the believers sent representatives to Jerusalem to submit the  
37 question to the apostles and elders. The believers in Antioch joyfully accepted the decision of  
38 the Jerusalem council, thus preserving unity and brotherly love.

39  
40 The counsel to test new light must not be regarded as deterring anyone from diligently  
41 studying the Scriptures, but rather as a protection against the infiltration of false theories and

1 erroneous doctrines into the Church. God wants His children faithfully to search His Word for  
2 light and truth, but He does not want them to be led astray by false teachings.

3  
4 “We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge  
5 and wisdom; we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore  
6 is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and  
7 yet deeper in the mine, and the result will be glorious treasure. Through a correct faith, divine  
8 knowledge will become human knowledge.”—COL 113.

9  
10 “New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection  
11 with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to  
12 be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine  
13 forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to  
14 become the property of the remnant people of God.”—CSW 34.

15  
16 When new light shines forth from the sacred page to reward the earnest seeker after truth,  
17 it does not make void the old. Instead it merges with the old, causing it to grow brighter with  
18 added luster. Therefore, “the path of the just is like the shining sun, [t]hat shines ever brighter  
19 unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

20  
21 Although the child of God must stand ready to accept advancing light, one must never  
22 give heed to any voice, however pious and plausible, that would lead away from the fundamental  
23 doctrines of the Bible.

24  
25 “We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the  
26 special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture, and pile it as proof around  
27 their asserted theories. This has been done over and over again during the past fifty years. And  
28 while the Scriptures are God’s word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such  
29 application moves one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, is a  
30 great mistake. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstration of the  
31 Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of  
32 God.”—CW 32.

### 33 34 Importance of Maintaining Unity

35  
36 It is important that we maintain “the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:13), and just as important  
37 that we seek to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (verse 3). Such unity requires  
38 caution and counsel with church leadership.

39  
40 “God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth,  
41 the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They  
42 will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely

1 opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and  
2 governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one  
3 man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinion of his brethren, and justifies his  
4 course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others,  
5 how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? . . .

6  
7 “Though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are  
8 not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our  
9 brethren; for this course would lead to disorder in the church. It is the duty of ministers to  
10 respect the judgment of their brethren; but their relations to one another, as well as the doctrines  
11 they teach, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony; then, if hearts are  
12 teachable, there will be no divisions among us. Some are inclined to be disorderly, and are  
13 drifting away from the great landmarks of the faith; but God is moving upon His ministers to be  
14 one in doctrine and in spirit.”—TM 29, 30.

15  
16 In view of these considerations, it is evident that the pulpit must be reserved for the  
17 preaching of the truths of the Divine Word and the presentation of denominational plans and  
18 policies for the advancement of the work of God, not personal views and opinions. (See p. XX.)

19  
20 Unauthorized Speakers—Under no circumstances should a pastor, elder, or other officer  
21 invite strangers or any unauthorized persons to conduct services. Individuals who have been  
22 removed from the ministry, or who have been removed from membership in other places, or  
23 designing persons who have no authority from the church, should not be given access to the  
24 pulpit. Those worthy of confidence will be able to identify themselves by producing proper  
25 credentials.

26  
27 At times it is acceptable for government officials or civic leaders to address a  
28 congregation, but all others should be excluded from the pulpit unless permission is granted by  
29 the conference. Every pastor, elder, and conference president must enforce this rule. (See  
30 p. XX.)

### 31 32 Sabbath School and Worship Services

33  
34 Sabbath School—The Sabbath School, one of our most important services, is the church  
35 at study. Every Sabbath our members and thousands of interested friends meet in Sabbath  
36 School to study God’s Word systematically. All members of the church should be encouraged to  
37 attend Sabbath School and bring visitors.

38  
39 Each Sabbath School should endeavor to provide appropriate age-level programs.  
40 Materials and resources are available from the conference, union, and division.

1 Sabbath School should promote local and worldwide mission activities, the mission  
2 offering, and significant time for Bible study. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
3

4 Announcements and Departmental Promotions—Thoughtful consideration should be  
5 given to the length and character of the announcements and departmental promotions during  
6 Sabbath services. If they deal with matters not specifically related to Sabbath worship or the  
7 work of the church, pastors and officers should exclude them, maintaining even in this respect a  
8 proper spirit of worship and Sabbath observance.  
9

10 Many churches issue printed bulletins giving the order of service and also the  
11 announcements for the week. Where this is done, there is little or no need for oral  
12 announcements. Where no such printed provision is made, many churches make the  
13 announcements before the worship service begins. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
14

15 Proper consideration also should be given for the various departments to promote their  
16 programs, but great care should be exercised to safeguard the time needed for studying and  
17 preaching the Word of God.  
18

19 Worship Service—The Sabbath worship service is the most important church meeting.  
20 Here members gather weekly to unite in worshiping God in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving, to  
21 hear the Word of God, to gather strength and grace to fight the battles of life, and to learn God's  
22 will for them in soul-winning service. Reverence, simplicity, and promptness should  
23 characterize the service.  
24

25 Skill, Study, and Planning Required—"Is it not your duty to put some skill and study and  
26 planning into the matter of conducting religious meetings—how they shall be conducted so as to  
27 do the greatest amount of good, and leave the very best impression upon all who attend?"—RH,  
28 Apr. 14, 1885, p. 225.  
29

30 "Our God is a tender, merciful Father. His service should not be looked upon as a  
31 heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take  
32 part in His work . . . Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of  
33 conversation, and of our most joyful emotion . . . As we express our gratitude we are  
34 approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts. 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth' God.  
35 Psalm 50:23. Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator, with 'thanksgiving, and the  
36 voice of melody.' Isaiah 51:3."—SC 103, 104.  
37

38 Form of Service—The Sabbath morning service has two main divisions: the  
39 congregational response in praise and adoration, expressed in song, prayer, and gifts, and the  
40 message from the Word of God. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
41



1 There is no set form or order for public worship. A short order of service is usually better  
2 suited to the real spirit of worship. Long preliminaries should be avoided. The opening  
3 exercises should not consume time required for the preaching of the Word of God. (For  
4 suggested forms of service, see Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
5

6 Church Outreach (Missionary) Service—The first Sabbath of each month is the Church  
7 Outreach (Missionary) Sabbath. This worship service focuses on lay evangelism and may  
8 feature plans and activities of various departments. “God has committed to our hands the most  
9 sacred work, and we need to meet together to receive instruction, that we may be fitted to  
10 perform this work.”—6T 32.  
11

12 Public Prayer—“Christ impressed upon His disciples the idea that their prayers should be  
13 short, expressing just what they wanted, and no more . . . One or two minutes is long enough for  
14 any ordinary prayer.”—2T 581.  
15

16 “Let those who pray and those who speak pronounce their words properly and speak in  
17 clear, distinct, even tones. Prayer, if properly offered, is a power for good. It is one of the means  
18 used by the Lord to communicate to the people the precious treasures of truth . . . Let God’s  
19 people learn how to speak and pray in a way that will properly represent the great truths they  
20 possess. Let the testimonies borne and the prayers offered be clear and distinct. Thus God will  
21 be glorified.”—6T 382.  
22

23 Supplying Literature on Sabbath—Generally Sabbath is the opportune time for the  
24 personal ministries secretary to place literature in the hands of members. Objectionable methods  
25 that divert the attention from true worship and reverence should be avoided.  
26

### 27 Communion Service

28  
29 The communion service customarily is celebrated once per quarter. The service includes  
30 the ordinance of foot-washing followed by the Lord’s Supper. It should be a most sacred and  
31 joyous occasion to the congregation, pastor, and elders. The service usually takes place during  
32 the worship service but may be scheduled at other times.  
33

34 Ordinance of Foot-Washing—“Now, having washed the disciples’ feet, He said, ‘I have  
35 given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.’ In these words Christ was not  
36 merely enjoining the practice of hospitality. More was meant than the washing of the feet of  
37 guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of  
38 our Lord this . . . ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the  
39 disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.  
40

41 “This ordinance is Christ’s appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While  
42 pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship

1 with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood.  
2 Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed.”—  
3 DA 650.  
4

5 In the act of washing the disciples’ feet, Christ performed a deeper cleansing, that of  
6 washing from the heart the stain of sin. The communicants sense an unworthiness to accept the  
7 sacred emblems before experiencing the cleansing that makes them “completely clean”  
8 (John 13:10). Jesus desired to wash away “alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts . . .  
9 Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away . . . Looking  
10 upon them, Jesus could say, ‘Ye are clean.’”—DA 646.  
11

12 The spiritual experience that lies at the heart of foot-washing lifts it from being a  
13 common custom to being a sacred ordinance. It conveys a message of forgiveness, acceptance,  
14 assurance, and solidarity, primarily from Christ to the believer, but also between the believers  
15 themselves. This message is expressed in an atmosphere of humility.  
16

17 The Lord’s Supper—Angels declare that Jesus, the Redeemer of this world, is holy.  
18 Likewise, the symbols representing His body and His blood are holy. Since the Lord Himself  
19 selected the deeply meaningful symbols of the unleavened bread and unfermented fruit of the  
20 vine and used the simplest of means for washing the disciples’ feet, there should be great  
21 reluctance to introduce alternative symbols and means, except under emergency conditions, lest  
22 the original significance of the service be lost. Likewise in the order of service and the  
23 traditional roles played by the pastor, elders, deacons, and deaconesses, there should be caution  
24 lest substitution and innovation tend to make common that which is sacred.  
25

26 The service of the Lord’s Supper is just as holy today as it was when instituted by Jesus  
27 Christ. Jesus is still present when this sacred ordinance is celebrated. “It is at these, His own  
28 appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence.”—DA 656.  
29

30 Unleavened Bread and Unfermented Wine (Grape Juice)—“Christ is still at the table on  
31 which the paschal supper has been spread. The unleavened cakes used at the Passover season are  
32 before Him. The Passover wine, untouched by fermentation, is on the table. These emblems  
33 Christ employs to represent His own unblemished sacrifice. Nothing corrupted by fermentation,  
34 the symbol of sin and death, could represent the ‘Lamb without blemish and without spot.’  
35 1 Peter 1:19.”—DA 653.  
36

37 Neither the wine nor the bread contained elements of fermentation because on the  
38 evening of the first day of the Hebrew Passover all leaven, or fermentation, had been removed  
39 from their dwellings (Ex. 12:15, 19; 13:7). Therefore, only unfermented grape juice and  
40 unleavened bread are appropriate for use in the communion service, and great care must be  
41 exercised in providing these elements. In isolated areas where grape or raisin juice or  
42 concentrate is unavailable, the conference office will advise or assist.

1  
2 A Memorial of the Crucifixion—“As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ’s  
3 broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of Communion in the upper  
4 chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore  
5 the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was  
6 obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us.”—DA 661.

7  
8 A Proclamation of the Second Coming—“The Communion service points to Christ’s  
9 second coming. It was designed to keep this hope vivid in the minds of the disciples. Whenever  
10 they met together to commemorate His death, they recounted how ‘He took the cup, and gave  
11 thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament,  
12 which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth  
13 of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’ In  
14 their tribulation they found comfort in the hope of their Lord’s return. Unspeakably precious to  
15 them was the thought, ‘As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s  
16 death till He come.’ 1 Cor. 11:26.”—DA 659.

17  
18 Announcing the Communion Service—The communion service may appropriately be  
19 included as part of any Christian worship service. However, to give proper emphasis and make  
20 communion available to the greatest number of members, usually it is part of the worship service  
21 on the next to the last Sabbath of each quarter.

22  
23 On the preceding Sabbath an announcement should be made of the service calling  
24 attention to the importance of the forthcoming communion, so that all members may prepare  
25 their hearts and put aright any unresolved differences they have with one another. When they  
26 come to the table of the Lord the following Sabbath, they then can receive the intended blessing.  
27 Those absent for the announcement also should be invited to attend.

28  
29 Conducting the Communion Service—Length of Service—Time is not the most  
30 significant factor in the communion service. However, attendance can be improved and the  
31 spiritual impact increased by (1) eliminating extraneous items from the worship service on this  
32 high day, (2) avoiding delays before and after foot-washing, and (3) having the deaconesses  
33 arrange the emblems on the communion table well beforehand.

34  
35 Preliminaries—The introductory portion of the service should be brief, including only  
36 short announcements, a hymn, prayer, offering, and a short sermon before separating for the  
37 foot-washing and returning for the Lord’s Supper.

38  
39 Foot-Washing—Each church should have a plan for meeting the needs of its members for  
40 the foot-washing service. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

1 Bread and Wine—Following the foot-washing, the congregation comes together once  
2 again to partake of the bread and the wine. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)  
3

4 Celebration—Communion should always be a solemn, never somber, experience.  
5 Wrongs have been righted, sins have been forgiven, and faith has been reaffirmed. It is a time  
6 for celebration. Let the music be bright and joyous. The service should end on a high note, such  
7 as with a musical feature or congregational singing, followed by dismissal.  
8

9 An offering for the poor is often taken as the congregation leaves.  
10

11 After the service the deacons and deaconesses clear the table, collect the utensils, and  
12 respectfully dispose of any remaining emblems. In no case should these emblems be consumed  
13 or returned to common use.  
14

15 Who May Participate—The Church practices open communion. All who have committed  
16 their lives to the Savior may participate. Children learn the significance of the service by  
17 observing others participating. After receiving formal instruction in baptismal classes and  
18 making their commitment to Jesus in baptism, they are thereby prepared to partake in the service  
19 themselves.  
20

21 “Christ’s example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord’s Supper. It is true that open sin  
22 excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. 1 Cor. 5:11. But beyond this none are  
23 to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these  
24 occasions. For who can read the heart? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? ‘Let a  
25 man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.’ For ‘whosoever  
26 shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and  
27 blood of the Lord.’ ‘He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to  
28 himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’ 1 Cor. 11:28, 27, 29 . . . “There may come into the  
29 company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take  
30 part in the service. They should not be forbidden. There are witnesses present who were present  
31 when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and of Judas. More than human eyes beheld the  
32 scene.”—DA 656.  
33

34 Every Member Should Attend—“None should exclude themselves from the Communion  
35 because some who are unworthy may be present. Every disciple is called upon to participate  
36 publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Savior. It is at these, His own  
37 appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. Hearts and  
38 hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His  
39 children. All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect  
40 these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. Of them it may appropriately be said, ‘Ye are  
41 not all clean.’”—DA 656.  
42

1 Who May Conduct Communion Service—The communion service is to be conducted by  
2 an ordained pastor or an ordained elder. Deacons, although ordained, cannot conduct the service.  
3

4 Communion for Those Who Cannot Attend—If members are ill or cannot for other  
5 reasons attend the communion service, the pastor or elder, possibly accompanied and assisted by  
6 a deacon or deaconess, may conduct a special service in their homes.  
7

### 8 Prayer Meeting 9

10 Prayer Meetings Should be Interesting—“The prayer meetings should be the most  
11 interesting gatherings that are held, but these are frequently poorly managed. Many attend  
12 preaching, but neglect the prayer meeting. Here, again, thought is required. Wisdom should be  
13 sought of God, and plans should be laid to conduct the meetings so that they will be interesting  
14 and attractive. The people hunger for the bread of life. If they find it at the prayer meeting they  
15 will go there to receive it.  
16

17 “Long, prosy talks and prayers are out of place anywhere, and especially in the social  
18 [prayer] meeting. Those who are forward and ever ready to speak are allowed to crowd out the  
19 testimony of the timid and retiring. Those who are most superficial generally have the most to  
20 say. Their prayers are long and mechanical. They weary the angels and the people who listen to  
21 them. Our prayers should be short and right to the point. Let the long, tiresome petitions be left  
22 for the closet, if any have such to offer. Let the Spirit of God into your hearts, and it will sweep  
23 away all dry formality.”—4T 70, 71.  
24

25 More than ordinary efforts should be made to assure the success of the prayer meeting.  
26 The meeting should begin on time, even if only two or three persons are present. There should  
27 be a short, fifteen- to twenty-minute Scripture study or presentation from the Spirit of Prophecy,  
28 followed by prayer, testimonies, and a benediction.  
29

30 Vary the plan of the service from week to week.  
31

32 If members are unable to assemble at the usual place for prayer meeting, home meetings  
33 may be of great benefit.  
34

### 35 Business Meetings 36

37 The local church operates within defined roles in Seventh-day Adventist Church  
38 structure. Within the context of those roles, the business meeting is the governing authority of  
39 the local church. Members in regular standing are encouraged to attend and are entitled to vote.  
40 A member under censure has no right to participate by voice or vote.  
41

1 Business meetings shall be held at least once a year. The pastor, or the board in  
2 consultation with and support of the pastor, calls the meeting. Business meetings typically are  
3 announced a week or two in advance at the regular Sabbath worship service, with detail as to  
4 time and place. The pastor, an elder arranged by the pastor, or in some cases, the conference  
5 president, serves as chairperson of the business meeting.

6  
7 Each church decides what the quorum will be for future meetings.

8  
9 Votes by proxy or letter are not permitted.

10  
11 Major items should be decided at a regular or specially called business meeting.

12  
13 The business meeting has authority over the board and may delegate responsibilities to  
14 the board in addition to those already assigned by the *Church Manual*. (See p. XX.)

15  
16 The business meeting agenda should include reports about the work of the church. At  
17 least once a year, the agenda should include reports covering church activities. Based on those  
18 reports, presentation of a proposed plan of action for the next year should be presented for  
19 approval. When possible, reports and plans for the next year should be presented in writing.  
20 (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

21  
22 In order to maintain a spirit of cooperation between the church and conference, the  
23 church shall secure counsel from conference officers on all major matters.

24  
25 Conference and union officers (president, secretary, treasurer) or their designee may  
26 attend without vote (unless granted by the church) any business meeting of any church in their  
27 territory. An action to allow voting is not required if the officer is currently a member of that  
28 congregation.

### 29 30 Board and Its Meetings

31  
32 Definition and Function—Every church must have a functioning board whose members  
33 have been elected during a church business meeting. Its chief concern is the spiritual nurture of  
34 the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases.

35  
36 Included in church board responsibilities are:

- 37  
38 1. Spiritual nurture.  
39  
40 2. Evangelism in all of its phases.  
41  
42 3. Maintenance of doctrinal purity.

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- 1
- 2 4. Upholding Christian standards.
- 3
- 4 5. Recommending changes in church membership.
- 5
- 6 6. Church finances.
- 7
- 8 7. Protection and care of church properties.
- 9
- 10 8. Coordination of church departments.
- 11

12 The Gospel Commission of Jesus makes evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the  
13 gospel, the primary function of the church (Matt. 28:18-20). It is, therefore, also the primary  
14 function of the board, which serves as the chief committee of the church. When the board  
15 devotes its first interests and highest energies to every-member evangelism, most problems are  
16 alleviated or prevented and a strong, positive influence is felt in the spiritual life and growth of  
17 members.

18  
19 The board is elected by the members at the time of the regular election of officers. (See  
20 p. XX.)

21  
22 Membership—In addition to conference-appointed pastors, the church should elect a  
23 representative board which includes the following officers:

- 24
- 25 Elders
- 26 Head deacon
- 27 Head deaconess
- 28 Treasurer
- 29 Clerk
- 30 Interest coordinator
- 31 Adventist Men's coordinator
- 32 Adventist Youth Society leader
- 33 Adventurer Club director
- 34 Ambassador Club director
- 35 Bible School coordinator
- 36 Children's ministries leader
- 37 Church music coordinator
- 38 Communication Committee chairperson or communication secretary
- 39 Community services and/or Dorcas Society leader
- 40 Education secretary
- 41 Family ministries leader
- 42 Health ministries leader

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- 1 Home and School Association leader
- 2 Pathfinder Club leader
- 3 Personal ministries leader and secretary
- 4 Publishing ministries coordinator
- 5 Religious liberty leader
- 6 Sabbath School superintendent
- 7 Stewardship ministries leader
- 8 Women's ministries leader
- 9

10 In some cases, depending on the size of the membership, the board may not include all of  
11 this list or may add additional members. The pastor appointed by the conference to serve the  
12 church always is a member of the board.

13  
14 Officers—The chairperson of the board is the conference-appointed pastor. If the pastor  
15 prefers not to act in this capacity or is unable to be present, he/she may arrange for an elder to  
16 preside as chairperson.

17  
18 The clerk serves as secretary of the board and is responsible for recording, presenting,  
19 and preserving the minutes of the meetings.

20  
21 Meetings—Because the work of the board is vital to the life, health, and growth of the  
22 church, it is recommended that it meets at least once each month, more frequently if needed. It is  
23 well to fix the monthly meeting time for the same week and the same day each month.

24  
25 The board meeting is announced at the regular Sabbath worship service and all board  
26 members are urged to attend.

27  
28 Each church should determine at a business meeting the number of board members who  
29 must be present to constitute a quorum at future meetings.

30  
31 Votes by proxy or letter are not permitted.

32  
33 Work of the Board—1. The most important item on the agenda should be planning the  
34 evangelization of the outreach (missionary) territory of the church. In addition, once each  
35 quarter an entire meeting should be devoted to plans for evangelism. The board will study  
36 conference recommendations for evangelistic programs and methods and how they can be  
37 implemented locally. The pastor and the board will initiate and develop plans for public  
38 evangelistic campaigns.

39  
40 2. Coordinating outreach programs of departments. The church board is responsible  
41 for coordinating the work of all church departments. Each department develops its plans for  
42 outreach within its own sphere. To avoid conflict in timing and competition in securing



1 volunteers and to achieve maximum beneficial results, coordination is essential. Before  
2 completing and announcing plans for any program, each department should submit its plans to  
3 the board for approval. The departments also report to the board on the progress and results of  
4 their outreach programs. The board may suggest how departmental programs can contribute to  
5 the preparation, conduct, and follow-up of a public evangelistic campaign.

6  
7 3. Encouraging the personal ministries department to enlist all members and children  
8 in some form of personal outreach (missionary) service. Training classes should be conducted in  
9 various lines of outreach ministry.

10  
11 4. Encouraging the interest coordinator to ensure that every interest is personally and  
12 promptly followed up by an assigned layperson.

13  
14 5. Encouraging each department to report at least quarterly to the board and to  
15 members at business meetings or in Sabbath meetings.

16  
17 6. Receiving regular reports. The board should consider details of church business  
18 and receive regular reports of the treasurer on the church's finances. The board should study the  
19 membership record and inquire into the spiritual standing of all members and provide for visits  
20 to sick, discouraged, or backslidden members. Other officers should periodically report.

21  
22 Committees of the Board—The board should permit no other business to interfere with  
23 planning for evangelism. Should other business be too time-consuming, the board should  
24 appoint committees to care for specific areas of church business, such as finance or church  
25 building projects. Such committees will then make recommendations to the board. (See Notes,  
26 #X, p. XX.)

#### 27 28 School Board Meetings

29  
30 The church school is usually supervised by a church school board. The church elects a  
31 chairperson to preside over meetings and a secretary to keep records of meetings and actions.  
32 This board should meet at regular times. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson.  
33 Some churches prefer to have the church board, or a subcommittee of the church board, also  
34 serve as the school board. (See also p. XX.)  
35

1 Home and School Association Meetings

2  
3 The Home and School Association should meet monthly and coordinate the activities of  
4 home, school, and church. Attention should be given to the education of parents, as well as to  
5 assisting the school to obtain needed resources, such as room parents, books, teaching materials,  
6 and equipment. Materials to assist Home and School leaders are available through the  
7 conference education department. (See also p. XX.)

8  
9 Youth Meetings

10  
11 Leaders of the church's various youth groups should schedule regular meetings that  
12 involve the church's young people in meaningful activities that will tie them closer to the church  
13 and train them for useful service. (See also p. XX.)

14  
15 Adventist Youth Society Meetings—Adventist Youth Society meetings should meet on a  
16 regular schedule and focus on developing the spiritual, mental, and physical characteristics of the  
17 church's youth. Meetings also provide Christian social interaction and witnessing programs  
18 supporting the soul-winning plans of the church. The Adventist Youth Ministries Committee  
19 encourages and coordinates Adventist Youth Society activities and those of other youth  
20 organizations. (See p. XX and Notes, #X, p. XX.)

21  
22 Adventist Junior Youth Society Meetings—Adventist Junior Youth Society meetings are  
23 similar in purpose to Adventist Youth Society meetings but involves junior youth. If there is a  
24 church school, the Adventist Junior Youth Society is usually a part of the school's spiritual  
25 curriculum. (See Notes, #X, p. XX.)

26  
27 Ambassador Club Meetings—Ambassador Club meetings provide specialized programs  
28 to meet the needs of youth, ages 16 through 21, and promote their involvement in the Church.  
29 Its meetings and other activities are to be carried out according to conference policies and in  
30 coordination with other youth/young adult ministries of the local church.

31  
32 Pathfinder Club Meetings—The Pathfinder Club meetings provide specialized programs  
33 for junior youth and in some areas have replaced the Adventist Junior Youth Society meetings.  
34 Churches where both function should coordinate their activities. Pathfinders will meet according  
35 to conference departmental policy.

36  
37 Adventurer Club Meetings—Adventurer Club meetings provide specialized programs for  
38 primary/early school-age children designed to complement and strengthen parental involvement  
39 in early childhood development. Meetings and other activities are to be carried out according to  
40 conference policies as outlined in the club manuals and in coordination with other youth-related  
41 and family-related organizations of the church.

CHAPTER 11

Finance

The biblical plan for the support of the work of God is by the tithes and offerings of His people. The Lord says, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house” (Mal. 3:10). The Church has followed this plan from its earliest days.

“The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.”—PP 525.

“Tithes and offerings for God are an acknowledgment of His claim on us by creation, and they are also an acknowledgment of His claim by redemption. Because all our power is derived from Christ, these offerings are to flow from us to God. They are to keep ever before us the claim of redemption, the greatest of all claims, and the one that involves every other.”—6T 479.

“The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work.”—9T 249.

“He has given His people a plan for raising sums sufficient to make the enterprise self-sustaining. God’s plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility . . . Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle: ‘Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’”—3T 388, 389.

“God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people. Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord’s work. Of the means entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—the tenth. He leaves all free to say whether or not they will give more than this.”—AA 74.

“God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means . . . The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord’s work.”—9T 247.

1 Stewardship

2  
3 Christians are God's stewards, entrusted with His goods and, as His partners, responsible  
4 to manage them in harmony with His guidelines and principles. The divine counsel is that as His  
5 stewards, we are to "be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Though the question of stewardship covers  
6 many aspects of Christian life and experience, without doubt the stewardship of our means is  
7 vitally important. It concerns the entire Church family and involves our recognition of the  
8 sovereignty of God, His ownership of all things, and the bestowal of His grace upon our hearts.  
9

10 While this aspect of Christian stewardship concerns our material possessions, it  
11 nevertheless reacts upon our Christian experience. The Lord requires certain things of us, in  
12 order that He may do certain things for us. Our yielding obedience to what our heavenly Father  
13 requires places this phase of stewardship upon a high spiritual plane. He does not arbitrarily  
14 demand either that we serve Him or that we recognize Him with our gifts. But He has so  
15 arranged that when we work in harmony with Him in these things there will flow to our own  
16 hearts great spiritual blessings.  
17

18 "God desires all His stewards to be exact in following divine arrangements. They are not  
19 to offset the Lord's plans by performing some deed of charity or giving some gift or some  
20 offering when or how they, the human agents, shall see fit. It is a very poor policy for men to  
21 seek to improve on God's plan, and invent a makeshift, averaging up their good impulses on this  
22 and that occasion, and offsetting them against God's requirements. God calls upon all to give  
23 their influence to His own arrangement."—9T 248.  
24

25 Tithe

26  
27 In recognition of the biblical plan and the solemn privilege and responsibility that rest  
28 upon members as children of God and members of His body, the Church, all are encouraged to  
29 faithfully return a tithe, one-tenth of their increase or personal income, into the denomination's  
30 treasury.  
31

32 Tithe shall not be used in any way by the local church but held in trust and remitted to the  
33 conference treasurer. Thus tithe from all the churches flows into the conference treasury and  
34 percentages are forwarded to the next higher level in accordance with General Conference and  
35 division working policies to meet the expenses of conducting the work of God in their respective  
36 spheres of responsibility and activity.  
37

38 These policies have been developed for the gathering and disbursing of funds in all the  
39 world and for the conducting of the business affairs of the cause. The financial and business  
40 aspects of the work are of great importance. They cannot be separated from the proclamation of  
41 the message of salvation. They are indeed an integral part of it.  
42



1 Other Offerings—Other offerings are taken from time to time for world mission work  
2 and for general and local projects. When any offering is taken, all money collected, unless  
3 otherwise indicated by the donor, shall be counted as part of that particular offering.  
4

5 Special Gifts to Fields—The financial support of the worldwide work of the Church is  
6 based on the budget system. Appropriations are made to the various fields on the basis of  
7 budgeted needs. This is a fair and equitable method of distributing the funds.  
8

9 Where special gifts outside the regular budget plan are made to a particular field, a  
10 disparity is created to the disadvantage of other fields. If such gifts are given for the purpose of  
11 starting new work, the work thus started may languish when the special gift is used up, or it may  
12 have to be included in the budget for its future support. Thus other fields, with perhaps greater  
13 needs but without the opportunity of making them known, would be deprived of their equitable  
14 part of general funds that would be diverted to the work started by special gifts.  
15

16 History has proved the wisdom of having members generously and loyally give their  
17 offerings and gifts through the accepted channels and knowing that every field shares in the  
18 benefits of their giving.  
19

20 Assisting the Poor and Needy—Offerings for the poor and needy are taken to assist the  
21 members who require help. A reserve fund should be kept for such emergency cases. In  
22 addition, the church should take a benevolent attitude toward all in need, and the board may  
23 make appropriations from this fund to assist the church's health and welfare work for families in  
24 the community.  
25

26 Church Budget for Local Expenses—The most satisfactory method of providing for  
27 church expenses is the budget plan. Before the beginning of the new budget year, the board  
28 should prepare a budget of expenses for church activities during the next year. The budget  
29 should include all income and expenses, including those related to all departments. It should  
30 provide for such projected costs as utilities, insurance, maintenance, janitor service, funds for the  
31 poor and needy, and church school expense. (See Notes, #X, p. XX, for sample budget.)  
32

33 The budget should be presented to the church for its study and adoption, and for plans to  
34 assure that funds shall be provided to balance the budget during the coming year. Funds to meet  
35 the church expense budget may be raised by offerings or subscriptions. Members should be  
36 urged to support their local church in proportion to their financial circumstances.  
37

#### 38 General Financial Counsel

39 Regulation of Soliciting Funds—The following are regulations for soliciting funds:  
40  
41

1           1.       No conference, church, or institution, without special counsel and arrangement,  
2 shall plan work requiring solicitation of funds from outside its territory. Any solicitation within  
3 its territory shall be in harmony with local, union, division, and General Conference policies. No  
4 authority is granted to denominational employees representing special interests in one part of the  
5 field to solicit help in any other part of the field or in any other conference without arrangement  
6 with and written authorization from conference officers where the fund-raising would take place.  
7

8           2.       The following principles protect churches from unauthorized, fraudulent, and  
9 undenominational solicitation:  
10

11           a.       Pastors and officers shall not grant the privilege of the pulpit to persons  
12 for fund-raising who have not been recognized or recommended by the conference. (See p. XX.)  
13 No permission shall be granted to solicit funds either publicly or privately without such  
14 recognition.  
15

16           b.       All funds contributed for any cause in response to appeals shall be passed  
17 through regular church channels.  
18

19           c.       Conference and church officers shall take such steps as may be necessary  
20 to prevent unauthorized or illegal public solicitation.  
21

22           3.       No campaign other than the Annual Appeal (Ingathering or equivalent appeal),  
23 which involves using Appeal literature and containers with authorized Appeal labels, shall be  
24 conducted for the solicitation of money for either home or overseas mission work. Unions and  
25 conferences should prevent violations of this regulation.  
26

27           4.       Interdivision employees visiting their home churches or otherwise communicating  
28 with their home bases are asked to solicit funds only for enterprises included in the budget of  
29 appropriations, working in cooperation with churches and conferences to raise the funds required  
30 to meet the appropriations on which our world mission work depends. All such funds shall be  
31 passed through regular channels.  
32

33           Questionable Methods for Raising Funds—The local church should take a strong stand  
34 against questionable methods for raising money.  
35

36           “When money is raised for religious purposes, to what means do many churches resort?  
37 To bazaars, suppers, fancy fairs, even to lotteries and like devices. Often the place set apart for  
38 God’s worship is desecrated by feasting and drinking, buying, selling, and merrymaking.  
39 Respect for the house of God and reverence for His worship are lessened in the minds of the  
40 youth. The barriers of self-restraint are weakened. Selfishness, appetite, the love of display, are  
41 appealed to, and they strengthen as they are indulged.”—9T 91.  
42

1 “As God’s work extends, calls for help will come more and more frequently . . . If  
2 professing Christians would faithfully bring to God their tithes and offerings, His treasury would  
3 be full. There would then be no occasion to resort to fairs, lotteries, or parties of pleasure to  
4 secure funds for the support of the gospel.”—AA 338.

5  
6 Tithes and Offerings Not a Personal Trust Fund—Tithes and offerings donated by  
7 members to the Church do not create a trust fund for the future benefit of the givers. These funds  
8 shall be used for the current purposes for which they are given.

9  
10 Financing Building Plans—Churches considering the purchase or erection of church or  
11 other buildings, or incurring debt of any kind, should counsel with conference officers before  
12 undertaking such financial obligations. In the purchase or building of church properties, in no  
13 case shall commitments be made or building operations begun until approval has been given by  
14 the conference and union committees. These committees will approve only after they have  
15 assured themselves that the financial arrangements conform to established policies. In giving  
16 financial counsel, the conference committee should consider the size of the congregation, its  
17 financial strength, and the location of the building.

18  
19 Handling and Accounting for Funds—The gathering and handling of funds for the Lord’s  
20 work is a sacred responsibility. The proper channel through which these funds flow is first from  
21 members to the local church, where the treasurer receives the funds. (See p. XX.) The treasurer  
22 disburses funds intended for local church purposes. The treasurer holds in trust and passes on to  
23 the conference treasurer funds intended for conference or general purposes. The treasurer of the  
24 local church works under the direction of the board. Treasurers of any level (local church,  
25 conference, union, or division/General Conference) do not act independently. They disburse  
26 funds only by action or authority of responsible committees.

27  
28 Auditing—Every set of accounting records, from those of the local church to those of the  
29 General Conference, are subject to audit by auditors appointed for the purpose. This rule, which  
30 also applies to every denominationally affiliated institution, provides the maximum of safety in  
31 the handling of funds. (See p. XX.)

## 32 33 CHAPTER 12

### 34 35 Standards of Christian Living

#### 36 37 High Calling of God in Christ Jesus

38  
39 The Christian’s life is not a slight modification or improvement, but a complete  
40 transformation of nature. This means a death to self and sin and a resurrection to a new life as a  
41 new person in Christ Jesus.



1 The heart of the Christian becomes the dwelling place of Christ by faith. This is brought  
2 about by “the contemplation of Christ, beholding Christ, ever cherishing the Savior as our very  
3 best and honored Friend, so that we would not in any action grieve and offend Him.” Thus  
4 Christians “have the companionship of the divine presence,” and as we realize that presence,  
5 “our thoughts are brought into captivity to Jesus Christ” (TM 387, 388) and our habits made to  
6 conform to the divine standard.

7  
8 We should bear in mind that “as a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and  
9 truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God’s presence.”—Ed 255.

10  
11 “No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most  
12 High . . . Every act, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were only  
13 one person in the whole world, and the attention of heaven were centered upon him.”—  
14 PP 217, 218.

15  
16 God’s love extends to everyone, and to His children in particular. His ear is ever open to  
17 the appeals of His people, those who have turned from the world and given themselves to Him.  
18 Out of this sacred relationship grows a respect and a reverence which is manifested every day  
19 and everywhere.

20  
21 As Christians we are members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.  
22 Therefore, we should say no word and perform no act that would bring dishonor upon “that  
23 worthy name by the which ye are called.” We are reformers. In every phase of life we should  
24 “study carefully the divine-human character and constantly inquire, ‘What would Jesus do were  
25 He in my place?’ This should be the measurement of our duty.”—MH 491.

26  
27 Through the remnant Church God will demonstrate to the entire universe the adequacy of  
28 the gospel to save men and women from the power of sin. As members of that church we should  
29 emphasize again the great Bible standards and renew allegiance to these God-given principles.  
30 We should come up to the high standards of the Christian life and be separated from the world.  
31 To this end we would heed the Lord’s admonition: “Do not love the world or the things in the  
32 world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

### 33 34 Bible Study and Prayer

35  
36 Spiritual life is maintained by spiritual food. We must maintain the habit of devotional  
37 Bible study and prayer if we are to perfect holiness. In a time when a flood of communication  
38 pours forth from the printed page, radio, television, the internet, and other modern mass media,  
39 when thousands of voices plead for a hearing, we must close our eyes and our ears to much that  
40 seeks entrance to our minds and devote ourselves to God’s Book, the Book of all books, the  
41 Book of Life—the Bible. If we cease to be the people of the Book, we are lost, and our mission

1 has failed. Only as we daily talk to God in prayer and listen to His voice can we hope to live the  
2 life that is “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) and finish His work.

3  
4 Prayer is a two-way conversation in which we listen to and talk to God. “Prayer is the  
5 opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”—SC 93. “Through sincere prayer we are brought  
6 into connection with the mind of the Infinite,” and “[w]ithout unceasing prayer and diligent  
7 watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path.”—  
8 SC 97, 95.

9  
10 The home is the cornerstone of the Church. A Christian home is a house of prayer.  
11 “Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around  
12 God’s altar . . . Those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives must pray.”—MH 393.

### 13 14 Community Relationships

15  
16 While our “citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the  
17 Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20), we are yet in the world as an integral part of human society and  
18 must share with our fellow citizens certain responsibilities in the common problems of life.  
19 Wherever we live, as children of God we should be recognized as outstanding citizens in our  
20 Christian integrity and in working for the common good.

21  
22 While our highest responsibility is to the Church and the Gospel Commission, we should  
23 support by our service and our means, as far as possible and consistent with our beliefs, efforts  
24 for social order and betterment. Even though we must stand apart from political and social strife,  
25 we should always, quietly and firmly, maintain an uncompromising stand for justice and right in  
26 civic affairs, along with full adherence to our religious convictions. It is our sacred  
27 responsibility to be loyal citizens of the nations to which we belong, rendering “to Caesar the  
28 things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21).

### 29 30 Sabbathkeeping

31  
32 The Sabbath is a token of God’s love to humanity. It is a memorial of God’s power in the  
33 original creation and also a sign of His power to recreate and sanctify our lives (Eze. 20:12), and  
34 its observance is an evidence of our loyalty to Him and of our fellowship with Him.

35  
36 The Sabbath holds a special place in our lives. The seventh day of the week, from sunset  
37 Friday to sunset Saturday (Lev. 23:32), is a gift from God, a sign of His grace in time. It is a  
38 privilege, a special appointment with the One who loves us and whom we love, a sacred time set  
39 aside by God’s eternal law, a day of delight for worshiping God and sharing with others (Isa.  
40 58:13). We welcome the Sabbath with joy and gratitude.

1 “The Sabbath—oh!—make it the sweetest, the most blessed day of the whole week.”—  
2 FLB 36.

3  
4 “The Sabbath . . . is God’s time, not ours; when we trespass upon it we are stealing from  
5 God . . . God has given us the whole of six days in which to do our work, and has reserved only  
6 one to Himself. This should be a day of blessing to us—a day when we should lay aside all our  
7 secular matters and center our thoughts upon God and heaven.”—HP 152.

8  
9 “We are not to teach our children that they must not be happy on the Sabbath, that it is  
10 wrong to walk out of doors. Oh, no. Christ led His disciples out by the lakeside on the Sabbath  
11 day and taught them. His sermons on the Sabbath were not always preached within enclosed  
12 walls.”—HP 152.

13  
14 “God’s love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His  
15 merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with  
16 Him, with nature, and with one another.”—Ed 251.

17  
18 The Sabbath hours belong to God and are to be used for Him alone. Our own pleasure,  
19 words, business, and thoughts should find no place in the observance of the Lord’s day (Isa.  
20 58:13). Let us gather in the family circle at sunset and welcome the Sabbath with prayer and  
21 song, and let us close the day with prayer and expressions of gratitude for His wondrous love.  
22 The Sabbath is a special day for worship in our homes and churches, a day of joy to ourselves  
23 and our children, a day in which we can learn more of God through the Bible and the great lesson  
24 book of nature. It is a time we can visit the sick and work for the salvation of souls. We should  
25 lay aside the ordinary affairs of the six working days and perform no unnecessary work. We  
26 should not let secular media occupy our time on God’s holy day.

27  
28 “The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. The law forbids secular  
29 labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly  
30 pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested  
31 upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote  
32 those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.”—DA 207.

33  
34 A program of activities in harmony with the spirit of true Sabbathkeeping will make this  
35 blessed day the happiest and best of all the week for ourselves and for our children—a veritable  
36 foretaste of our heavenly rest.

### 37 38 Reverence in the Place of Worship

39  
40 Christians who appreciate God’s omnipotence, His holiness, and His love will always  
41 manifest a spirit of deep reverence for God, His Word, and His worship. “Humility and  
42 reverence should characterize the deportment of all who come into the presence of God.”—

1 PP 252. We will recognize that “the hour and place of prayer are sacred, because God is  
2 there.”—GW 178. We will come to the house of worship, not carelessly, but in the spirit of  
3 meditation and prayer, and will avoid unnecessary conversation.  
4

5 As parents we should reverently instruct our children how they should behave in “the  
6 house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Faithful instruction and discipline of youth at home, Sabbath  
7 School, and church regarding reverence for God and His worship will go far in holding their  
8 loyalty in afteryears.  
9

10 Pastors who sense the sacredness of God’s service will, by example, instruction, and  
11 conduct in the pulpit, foster reverence, simplicity, good order, and decorum in the church.  
12

### 13 Health and Temperance 14

15 Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9). “Both mental and spiritual  
16 vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes  
17 physical health promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character.”—  
18 Ed 195.  
19

20 For this reason, we live intelligently in accordance with health principles of physical  
21 exercise, respiration, sunshine, pure air, use of water, sleep, and rest. By conviction, we choose  
22 to eat healthfully, wear suitable clothing, practice cleanliness, engage in proper recreation, and  
23 freely choose to follow the principles of health, self-control, and wholesome diet. Therefore, we  
24 abstain from all forms of alcohol, tobacco, and addictive drugs. We strive to preserve our  
25 physical and psychological balance by avoiding any excess.  
26

27 Health reform and the teaching of health and temperance are inseparable parts of the  
28 Church’s message. Instruction came to us through the Lord’s messenger “that those who are  
29 keeping His commandments must be brought into sacred relationship to Himself, and that by  
30 temperance in eating and drinking they must keep mind and body in the most favorable condition  
31 for service.”—CH 132, 133. Also, “it is the Lord’s design that the restoring influence of health  
32 reform shall be a part of the last great effort to proclaim the gospel message.”—MM 259.  
33

34 We belong to God, body, soul, and spirit. It is therefore our religious duty to observe the  
35 laws of health, both for our own well-being and happiness and for more efficient service to God  
36 and society. We must keep our appetites under control. God has furnished us with a liberal  
37 variety of foods sufficient to satisfy every dietary need. “Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared  
38 in a simple way . . . make, with milk or cream, the most healthful diet.”—CD 92.  
39

40 When we practice the principles of healthful living, we will not feel the need for  
41 stimulants. Nature’s law forbids our use of intoxicants and narcotics of any kind. From the early

1 days of this movement abstinence from the use of liquor and tobacco has been a condition of  
2 membership. (See p. XX.)  
3

4 God has given us great light on the principles of health, and modern scientific research  
5 has abundantly verified these principles.  
6

### 7 Dress

8

9 As Seventh-day Adventist Christians we have been called out from the world. Our  
10 religion must have a molding influence on all our activities. Our habits must stem from principle  
11 and not from the example of the world. Customs and fashions may change, but principles of  
12 right conduct remain the same. Early in our history Ellen G. White wrote that the purpose of  
13 Christian dress is “to protect the people of God from the corrupting influence of the world, as  
14 well as to promote physical and moral health.”—4T 634. She also counsels that we should avoid  
15 gaudy display and profuse ornamentation, fads and extreme fashions, particularly those  
16 transgressing the laws of modesty, and that our clothing should be, when possible, “of good  
17 quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service . . . rather than display.” Our attire should be  
18 characterized by “modesty,” “beauty,” “grace,” and “appropriateness of natural simplicity.”—  
19 MYP 351, 352.  
20

21 The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not  
22 let “the dress question fill the mind.”—Ev 273.  
23

24 “To dress plainly, abstaining from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind, is in  
25 keeping with our faith.”—3T 366. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of  
26 jewelry is contrary to the will of God. The apostle Paul admonishes us to dress ourselves “in  
27 modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly  
28 clothing” (1 Tim. 2:9). The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention not in keeping  
29 with Christian self-forgetfulness.  
30

31 In some countries and cultures the custom of wearing the wedding ring is considered  
32 imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not  
33 regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we do not condemn the practice.  
34

35 Let us remember that it is not outward adornment that expresses true Christian character,  
36 but “the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,  
37 which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:3, 4). We should avoid the use of  
38 cosmetics not in keeping with good taste and the principles of Christian modesty.  
39

40 We should observe cleanliness and Christlike deportment as we seek at all times to please  
41 and rightly represent Christ our Lord. Christian parents by example, instruction, and authority  
42 should lead their sons and daughters to attire themselves modestly, and thus win the respect and



1 Unfortunately, however, modern mass media also can bring to their audiences almost  
2 continuous theatrical and other performances with influences that are neither wholesome nor  
3 uplifting. If we are not discriminating, they will bring sordid programs right into our homes.  
4

5 Safety for ourselves and our children is found in a determination, by God's help, to  
6 follow the admonition of the apostle Paul: "Finally . . . whatever things are true . . . noble . . .  
7 just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything  
8 praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).  
9

### 10 Recreation and Entertainment

11  
12 Recreation is a purposeful refreshing of the powers of body and mind. A vigorous,  
13 wholesome mind will not require worldly amusement but will find a renewal of strength in good  
14 recreation.  
15

16 "Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be  
17 Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them  
18 that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls. Through the drama he has worked for  
19 ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering  
20 music, the masquerade, the dance, the card table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of  
21 principle and open the door to sensual indulgence. In every gathering for pleasure where pride is  
22 fostered or appetite indulged, where one is led to forget God and lose sight of eternal interests,  
23 there Satan is binding his chains about the soul."—PP 459, 460. (See p. XX.)  
24

25 We must avoid anything that dramatizes, graphically presents, or suggests the sins and  
26 crimes of humanity—murder, adultery, robbery, and similar evils, which to a large degree are  
27 responsible for the breakdown of morality. Instead, we should find delight in God's great world  
28 of nature and in the romance of human agencies and divine workings.  
29

30 Social dancing is another form of amusement with an evil influence. "The amusement of  
31 dancing . . . is a school of depravity, a fearful curse to society."—MYP 399. (See 2 Cor. 6:15-  
32 18; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:19-22; Eph. 5:8-11; Col. 3:5-10.)  
33

34 Recreation is essential. But instead of joining the multitudes who are "lovers of pleasures  
35 rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4), we should endeavor to make our friendships and  
36 recreations both Christ-centered and church-centered.  
37

### 38 Music

39  
40 "Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble,  
41 and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God."—PP 594. Jesus "held  
42 communion with heaven in song."—DA 73.

1  
2 Music is one of the highest arts. Good music not only gives us pleasure but elevates our  
3 minds and cultivates our finest qualities. God often has used spiritual songs to touch the hearts  
4 of sinners and lead to repentance. On the contrary, debased music breaks down morality and  
5 draws us away from our relationship with God.

6  
7 We should exercise great care in the choice of music in our homes, social gatherings,  
8 schools, and churches. Any melody partaking of the nature of jazz, rock, or related hybrid forms  
9 or any language expressing foolish or trivial sentiments, will be shunned. (See p. XX.)

## 10 11 Conclusion

12  
13 Standing amid the perils of the last days, bearing the responsibility of speedily carrying  
14 the last offer of salvation to the world, and facing a judgment that will culminate in the  
15 establishment of universal righteousness, let us consecrate ourselves body, soul, and spirit to  
16 God, determining to maintain the high standards of living that must characterize those who wait  
17 for the return of their Lord.

## 18 19 CHAPTER 13

### 20 21 Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

#### 22 23 Social Relationships

24  
25 God gives us the social instinct for our pleasure and benefit. “By mutual contact minds  
26 receive polish and refinement; by social intercourse, acquaintances are formed and friendships  
27 contracted which result in a unity of heart and an atmosphere of love which is pleasing in the  
28 sight of heaven.”—6T 172.

29  
30 Proper association of the sexes is beneficial to both. Such association should be  
31 conducted upon a high plane and with regard for the social conventions that have been  
32 prescribed for our protection. It is the purpose of Satan to pervert every good thing, and the  
33 perversion of the best often leads to that which is worst.

34  
35 Today the ideals that make these social relationships safe and happy are breaking down to  
36 an alarming degree. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious  
37 principle, the association of the sexes has to a large extent degenerated into freedom and license,  
38 sexual perversions, incest, and sexual abuse of children.

39  
40 Millions have abandoned biblical standards of conduct and are bartering the sacred  
41 experiences of marriage and parenthood for the bitter, remorseful fruits of sin. Not only are  
42 these evils damaging the familial structure of society, but the breakdown of the family in turn



1 fosters and breeds these and other evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are  
2 distressing. The effects on society are both disastrous and cumulative.

3  
4 These evils have become more open and threatening to the ideals and purposes of the  
5 Christian home. Adultery, pornography, abuse of any kind (including sexual abuse of spouses,  
6 children, and the elderly), incest, and homosexual and lesbian practices are among the  
7 perversions of God's original plan and illustrate the brokenness of humanity. As the intent of  
8 clear passages of Scripture (see Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:22, 29; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Rom.  
9 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much  
10 uncertainty and confusion prevail. Since ancient times and civilizations, Satan's plan always has  
11 been to cause people to forget that God is their Creator and that when He created humankind in  
12 His own image, He created both "male and female" (Gen. 1:27).

13  
14 Though God's Word alerts us to the degrading results of the world's obsession with sex  
15 and the pursuit of sensual pleasure, Christ came to destroy the works of Satan and reestablish the  
16 relationship of humans with their Creator. Though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, when we  
17 are in Christ we receive full pardon and the right to choose anew the better way to complete  
18 renewal. By means of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit, we all may be freed from the  
19 grip of sinful practices as we are restored to the image of our Creator.

20  
21 As parents and spiritual guides of youth, we must gain a sympathetic understanding of  
22 their problems, seek to provide for them a Christian social environment, and spiritually draw  
23 near to them so we can impart the ideals, inspiration, and power of Christianity.

24  
25 Whatever may be the mistakes of our parents or peers, it is our responsibility and  
26 privilege to know and to hold the highest ideals of Christian manhood and womanhood. We can  
27 build Christian character that will buttress us against evil and make us uplifting influences in  
28 society by reverent Bible study, a deep acquaintance with the works of nature, rigorous guarding  
29 of the sacred powers of the body, earnest purpose, constancy in prayer, and sincere, unselfish  
30 ministry to others.

31  
32 Social gatherings for both young and old should be occasions for happy fellowship and  
33 improvement of the powers of mind and soul, not for light and trifling amusement. Good music,  
34 elevating conversation, good recitations, suitable still or motion pictures, games carefully  
35 selected for educational value, and, above all, the making and using of plans for outreach  
36 (missionary) effort will bless and strengthen the lives of all. The Youth Ministries department of  
37 the General Conference has published helpful information and practical suggestions for the  
38 conduct of social gatherings and for guidance in other social relations.

39  
40 Our homes are by far the best places for social gatherings. In large centers where it is  
41 impossible to hold such gatherings in homes and where there is no social center of our own, we  
42 should secure a place free from influences destructive of Christian standards, rather than a place

1 ordinarily used for commercial amusements and sports, such as social halls and skating rinks,  
2 which can suggest an atmosphere contrary to Christian standards.

### 4 Chaperonage

5  
6 Chaperonage, the happy and cordial association of those older in years with young  
7 people, is one of the most wholesome influences in the lives of children and youth. “There is  
8 danger that both parents and teachers . . . fail to come sufficiently into social relation with their  
9 children or scholars.”—CT 76. It is the duty of our homes, schools, and other institutions to care  
10 for the morals and reputation of those placed in our charge. As parents we should strongly  
11 support the regulations of the institutions serving our youth and children, and we should institute  
12 equal safeguards in our homes. To make this possible, we must learn how to be welcome  
13 companions of our children. But it rests chiefly upon the young people themselves to make  
14 chaperonage an honored and happy relationship.

### 16 Courtship

17  
18 Courtship is recognized as a preparatory period during which a man and a woman,  
19 already mutually attracted, become more thoroughly acquainted with each other in preparation  
20 for intended marriage.

21  
22 “Let those who are contemplating marriage weigh every sentiment and watch every  
23 development of character in the one with whom they think to unite their life destiny. Let every  
24 step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest  
25 purpose to please and honor God. Marriage affects the afterlife both in this world and in the  
26 world to come. A sincere Christian will make no plans that God cannot approve.”—MH 359.

27  
28 Failure to follow these principles in Christian courtship may lead to tragedy. Unity of  
29 husband and wife in ideals and purposes is a requisite to a happy and successful home.  
30 Differences of partners regarding religion are likely to mar the happiness of the home and lead to  
31 confusion, perplexity, and failure in child rearing. The Bible advises, “Do not be unequally  
32 yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14).

33  
34 “The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was  
35 designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is  
36 entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration of its  
37 responsibilities.”—AH 18.

38  
39 Worship of God, Sabbathkeeping, recreation, association, use of financial resources, and  
40 training of children are components of happy family relationships. Because differences in these  
41 areas can often lead to a deterioration of these relationships, to discouragement, and even to

1 complete loss of Christian experience, an adequate preparation for marriage should include  
2 premarital pastoral counseling in these areas.

3  
4 ““Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). The happiness and  
5 prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the  
6 believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes.  
7 They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and  
8 correct one’s principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency  
9 to lead away from God.”—PP 174.

10  
11 The Spirit of Prophecy consistently counsels against marriage between “the believer and  
12 the unbeliever” and further cautions against uniting with fellow Christians who have “not  
13 accepted the truth for this time.”—5T 364. Marriages are more likely to endure, and family life  
14 to fulfill the divine plan, if husband and wife are united and are bound together by common  
15 spiritual values and lifestyles. For these reasons, the Church strongly discourages marriage  
16 between a Seventh-day Adventist and a member of another religion and strongly urges its pastors  
17 not to perform such marriages.

18  
19 The Church recognizes that it is the prerogative of each individual member to make the  
20 final decision relative to the choice of a marriage partner. However, it is the hope of the Church  
21 that if the member chooses a partner who is not a member of the Church, the couple will realize  
22 and appreciate that the Seventh-day Adventist pastor, who has covenanted to uphold the  
23 principles outlined above, should not be expected to perform the marriage.

24  
25 If a member does enter into such a marriage, the church is to demonstrate love and  
26 concern with the purpose of encouraging the couple toward complete unity in Christ.

## 27 28 Marriage

29  
30 Marriage is a divine institution established by God Himself before the Fall, when  
31 everything, including marriage, was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). “Therefore a man shall leave his  
32 father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). “God  
33 celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the  
34 universe. ‘Marriage is honourable’; it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of  
35 the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise.”—  
36 AH 25, 26.

37  
38 God intended the marriage of Adam and Eve to be the pattern for all future marriages,  
39 and Christ endorsed this original concept: “Have you not read that He who made them at the  
40 beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father  
41 and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no  
42 longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”

1 (Matt. 19:4-6). Marriage, thus instituted by God, is a monogamous, heterosexual relationship  
2 between one male and one female.

3  
4 Marriage is a lifelong commitment of husband and wife to each other and between the  
5 couple and God (Mark 10:2-9; Rom. 7:2). Paul indicates that the commitment which Christ has  
6 for the church is a model of the relationship between husband and wife (Eph. 5:31, 32). God  
7 intended marriage to be as permanent as Christ's relationship with the church.

8  
9 Sexual intimacy within marriage is a sacred gift from God to the human family. It is an  
10 integral part of marriage, reserved for marriage only (Gen. 2:24; Prov. 5:5-20). Such intimacy,  
11 designed to be shared exclusively between husband and wife, promotes ever-increasing  
12 closeness, happiness, and security and provides for the perpetuation of the human race.

13  
14 Unity in marriage is achieved by mutual respect and love. No one is superior (Eph. 5:21-  
15 28). "Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The  
16 spirit that Christ manifests toward the church is the spirit that husband and wife are to manifest  
17 toward each other."—7T 46. God's Word condemns violence in personal relationships (Gen.  
18 6:11, 13; Ps. 11:5; Isa. 58:4, 5; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:19-21). It is the spirit of Christ to love and  
19 accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or demean them (Rom. 12:10;  
20 14:19; Eph. 4:26; 5:28, 29; Col. 3:8-14; 1 Thess. 5:11). There is no room among Christ's  
21 followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power (Matt. 20:25-28; Eph. 6:4). Violence in  
22 the setting of marriage and family is abhorrent (see AH 343).

23  
24 "Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the  
25 principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the  
26 church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of  
27 kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other."—7T 47.

28  
29 The entrance of sin adversely affected marriage. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost  
30 the oneness which they had known with God and with one another (Gen. 3:6-24). Their  
31 relationship became marked with guilt, shame, blame, and pain. Wherever sin reigns, its sad  
32 effects on marriage include alienation, unfaithfulness, neglect, abuse, sexual perversion,  
33 domination of one partner by the other, violence, separation, desertion, and divorce.

34  
35 Marriages involving more than one husband and one wife are also an expression of the  
36 effects of sin on the institution of marriage. Such marriages, though practiced in Old Testament  
37 times, are not in harmony with the divine design. God's plan for marriage requires His people to  
38 transcend the mores of popular culture that conflict with the biblical view.

39  
40 The Christian concept of marriage includes the following:  
41

1 1. Divine Ideal to Be Restored in Christ—In redeeming the world from sin and its  
2 consequences, God seeks to restore marriage to its original ideal. This is envisioned for the lives  
3 of those who have been born again into Christ’s kingdom, those whose hearts are being  
4 sanctified by the Holy Spirit and who have as their primary purpose the exaltation of the Lord  
5 Jesus Christ. (See also 1 Peter 3:7; TMB 64.)  
6

7 2. Oneness and Equality to Be Restored in Christ—The gospel emphasizes the love  
8 and submission of husband and wife to one another (1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Eph. 5:21). The model for the  
9 husband’s leadership is the self-sacrificial love and service that Christ gives to the Church  
10 (Eph. 5:24, 25). Both Peter and Paul speak about the need for respect in the marriage  
11 relationship (1 Peter 3:7; Eph. 5:22, 23).  
12

13 3. Grace Available for All—God seeks to restore to wholeness and reconcile to  
14 Himself all who have failed to attain the divine standard (2 Cor. 5:19). This includes those who  
15 have experienced broken marriage relationships.  
16

17 4. Role of the Church—Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament  
18 dealt with the problems caused by broken marriages (Deut. 24:1-5; 1 Cor. 7:11). Both, while  
19 upholding and affirming the ideal, worked constructively and redemptively with those who had  
20 fallen short of the divine standard. Similarly, the Church today is called to uphold and affirm  
21 God’s ideal for marriage and, at the same time, to be a forgiving, reconciling, healing  
22 community, showing understanding and compassion when brokenness occurs.  
23

## 24 Divorce 25

26 Divorce is contrary to God’s original purpose in creating marriage (Matt. 19:3-8; Mark  
27 10:2-9), but the Bible is not silent about it. Because divorce occurred as part of the fallen human  
28 experience, biblical legislation was given to limit the damage it caused (Deut. 24:1-4). The Bible  
29 consistently seeks to elevate marriage and to discourage divorce by describing the joys of  
30 married love and faithfulness (Prov. 5:18-20; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:9-5:1), by referring to the  
31 marriage-like relationship of God with His people (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:1), by focusing on the  
32 possibilities of forgiveness and marital renewal (Hosea 3:1-3), and by indicating God’s  
33 abhorrence of divorce and the misery it causes (Mal. 2:15, 16). Jesus restored the creation view  
34 of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and between the couple and  
35 God (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Much biblical instruction affirms marriage and seeks to  
36 correct problems that tend to weaken or destroy the foundation of marriage (Eph. 5:21-33; Heb.  
37 13:4; 1 Peter 3:7).  
38

39 Marriage rests on principles of love, loyalty, exclusiveness, trust, and support upheld by  
40 both partners in obedience to God (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:6; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 5:21-29; 1 Thess. 4:1-  
41 7). When these principles are violated, Scripture acknowledges that tragic circumstances can  
42 destroy marriage.

1  
2 Divine grace is the only remedy for the brokenness of divorce. When marriage fails,  
3 former partners should be encouraged to examine their experience and to seek God's will for  
4 their lives. God provides comfort to those who have been wounded. God also accepts the  
5 repentance of individuals who commit the most destructive sins, even those that carry with them  
6 irreparable consequences (2 Sam. 11; 12; Ps. 34:18; 86:5; Joel 2:12, 13; John 8:2-11; 1 John 1:9).

7  
8 Scripture recognizes adultery and fornication (Matt. 5:32) and abandonment by an  
9 unbelieving partner (1 Cor. 7:10-15) as grounds for divorce.

10  
11 There is no direct teaching in Scripture regarding remarriage after divorce. However,  
12 there is a strong implication in Jesus' words in Matthew 19:9 that would allow the remarriage of  
13 one who has remained faithful but whose spouse has been unfaithful to the marriage vow.

#### 14 Church's Position on Divorce and Remarriage

15  
16  
17 Acknowledging the biblical teachings on marriage, the Church is aware that marriage  
18 relationships are less than ideal in many cases. The problem of divorce and remarriage can be  
19 seen in its true light only as it is viewed from Heaven's viewpoint and against the background of  
20 the Garden of Eden.

21  
22 Central to God's holy plan for our world was the creation of beings made in His image  
23 who would multiply and replenish the earth and live together in purity, harmony, and happiness.  
24 He brought forth Eve from the side of Adam and gave her to Adam as his wife. Thus was  
25 marriage instituted—God the author of the institution and the officiator at the first marriage.  
26 After the Lord had revealed to Adam that Eve was verily bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,  
27 there could never arise a doubt in his mind that the two of them were one flesh. Nor could ever a  
28 doubt arise in the mind of either of the holy pair that God intended that their home should endure  
29 forever.

30  
31 The Church adheres to this view of marriage and the home without reservation, believing  
32 that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. The belief  
33 that marriage is a divine institution rests upon the Holy Scriptures. Accordingly, all thinking and  
34 reasoning in the perplexing field of divorce and remarriage must constantly be harmonized with  
35 that holy ideal revealed in Eden.

36  
37 The Church believes in the law of God and also in the forgiving mercy of God. It  
38 believes that victory and salvation can as surely be found by those who have transgressed in the  
39 matter of divorce and remarriage as by those who have failed in any other of God's holy  
40 standards.

1           Nothing presented here is intended to minimize the mercy of God or the forgiveness of  
2 God. In the fear of the Lord, the Church here sets forth the principles and practices that should  
3 apply in this matter of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.  
4

5           Though marriage was first performed by God alone, it is recognized that people now live  
6 under civil governments; therefore, marriage has both divine and civil aspects. The divine aspect  
7 is governed by the laws of God, the civil by the laws of the state.  
8

9           In harmony with these teachings, the following statements set forth the position of the  
10 Church:  
11

12           1.       When Jesus said, "Let not man put asunder," He established a rule of conduct for  
13 the Church under the dispensation of grace which must transcend all civil enactments which  
14 would go beyond His interpretation of the divine law governing the marriage relation. Here He  
15 gives a rule to which His followers should adhere even if the state or prevailing custom allows  
16 larger liberty. "In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no  
17 dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow."—TMB 63. (Also  
18 see Matt. 5:32; 19:9.)  
19

20           2.       Unfaithfulness to the marriage vow has generally been seen to mean adultery or  
21 fornication. However, the New Testament word for fornication includes certain other sexual  
22 irregularities (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10; Rom. 1:24-27). Therefore, sexual perversions,  
23 including incest, child sexual abuse, and homosexual practices are also recognized as a misuse of  
24 sexual powers and a violation of the divine intention in marriage. As such they are just cause for  
25 separation or divorce.  
26

27           Even though the Scriptures allow divorce for the reasons mentioned above, as well as for  
28 abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:10-15), the church and those concerned should  
29 make earnest endeavors to effect a reconciliation, urging the spouses to manifest toward each  
30 other a Christlike spirit of forgiveness and restoration. The church is urged to relate lovingly and  
31 redemptively toward the couple in order to assist in the reconciliation process.  
32

33           3.       In the event that reconciliation is not effected, the spouse who has remained  
34 faithful to the spouse who violated the marriage vow has the biblical right to secure a divorce  
35 and also to remarry.  
36

37           4.       A spouse who has violated the marriage vow (see sections 1 and 2 above) shall be  
38 subject to discipline by the local church. (See p. XX.) If genuinely repentant, the spouse may be  
39 placed under censure for a stated period of time rather than removed from church membership.  
40 A spouse who gives no evidence of full and sincere repentance shall be removed from  
41 membership. In case the violation has brought public reproach on the cause of God, the church,

1 in order to maintain its high standards and good name, may remove the individual from  
2 membership.

3  
4 Any of these forms of discipline shall be applied by the church in a manner that would  
5 seek to attain the two objectives of discipline—to correct and redeem. In the gospel of Christ,  
6 the redemptive side of discipline is always tied to an authentic transformation of the sinner into a  
7 new creature in Jesus Christ.

8  
9 5. A spouse who has violated the marriage vow and who is divorced does not have  
10 the moral right to marry another while the spouse who has been faithful to the marriage vow still  
11 lives and remains unmarried and chaste. The person who does so shall be removed from  
12 membership. The person whom he/she marries, if a member, also shall be removed from  
13 membership.

14  
15 6. It is recognized that sometimes marriage relations deteriorate to the point where it  
16 is better for a husband and wife to separate. “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the  
17 Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain  
18 unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife” (1 Cor.  
19 7:10,11). In many such cases, the custody of children, the adjustment of property rights, or even  
20 personal protection may necessitate a change in marital status. In such cases, it may be  
21 permissible in some countries to secure what is known as a legal separation. However, in some  
22 jurisdictions such a separation can be secured only by divorce.

23  
24 A separation or divorce which results from factors such as physical violence or in which  
25 “unfaithfulness to the marriage vow” (see sections 1 and 2 above) is not involved does not give  
26 either one the scriptural right to remarry, unless in the meantime the other party has remarried,  
27 committed adultery or fornication, or died. Should a member who has been thus divorced  
28 remarry without these biblical grounds, he/she shall be removed from membership, and the one  
29 whom he/she marries, if a member, also shall be removed from membership. (See p. XX.)

30  
31 7. A spouse who has violated the marriage vow and has been divorced and removed  
32 from membership and who has remarried, or a person who has been divorced on other than the  
33 grounds set forth in sections 1 and 2 above and has remarried, and who has been removed from  
34 membership, shall be considered ineligible for membership except as provided below.

35  
36 8. The marriage contract is not only sacred but also possibly more complex when,  
37 for example, it involves children. Hence, in a request for readmittance to membership, the  
38 options available to the repentant may be severely limited. Before final action is taken by the  
39 church, the request for readmittance shall be brought by the church through the pastor or district  
40 leader to the conference committee for counsel and recommendation of steps the repentant one,  
41 or ones, may take to secure readmittance.



1 9. Readmittance to membership of those who have been removed for reasons given  
2 in the foregoing sections shall normally be on the basis of rebaptism. (See p. XX.)  
3

4 10. When a person who has been removed from membership is readmitted to  
5 membership, as provided in section 8, every care should be exercised to safeguard the unity and  
6 harmony of the church by not giving that person responsibility as a leader, especially in an office  
7 which requires the rite of ordination, unless by very careful counsel with conference  
8 administration.  
9

10 11. No pastor has the right to officiate at the remarriage of any person who, under the  
11 stipulation of the preceding paragraphs, has no scriptural right to remarry.  
12

#### 13 Local Church Ministry for Families 14

15 The Church as a redemptive agency of Christ is to minister to its members in all of their  
16 needs and to nurture everyone so that all may grow into a mature Christian experience. This is  
17 particularly true when members face lifelong decisions such as marriage and distressful  
18 experiences such as divorce. When a couple's marriage is in danger of breaking down, every  
19 effort should be made by the partners and those in the church or family who minister to them to  
20 bring about their reconciliation in harmony with divine principles for restoring wounded  
21 relationships (Hosea 3:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; 13:4-7; Gal. 6:1).  
22

23 Resources which can be of assistance to members in the development of a strong  
24 Christian home are available through the church or other church organizations. These resources  
25 include: (1) programs of orientation for couples engaged to be married, (2) programs of  
26 instruction for married couples with their families, and (3) programs of support for broken  
27 families and divorced individuals.  
28

29 Pastoral support is vital in the area of instruction and orientation in the case of marriage,  
30 and healing and restoration in the case of divorce. The pastoral function in the latter case is both  
31 disciplinary and supportive. That function includes the sharing of relevant information, some of  
32 which may be sensitive and must be handled with great discretion. However, this ethical  
33 concern alone should not be the grounds for avoiding disciplinary actions established in sections  
34 1-11 above.  
35

36 Just as God forgives, members are called to forgive and to accept those who have failed  
37 (Isa. 54:5-8; Matt. 6:14, 15; Eph. 4:32). The Bible urges patience, compassion, and forgiveness  
38 in the Christian care of those who have erred (Matt. 18:10-20; Gal. 6:1, 2). While individuals are  
39 under discipline, either by censure or by being removed from membership, the church, as an  
40 instrument of God's mission, shall make every effort to maintain caring and spiritually nurturing  
41 contact with them.  
42

CHAPTER 14

Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.

1. The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

2. The Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

3. The Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

4. The Son

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was

1 conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation  
2 as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles  
3 He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died  
4 voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to  
5 minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final  
6 deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19;  
7 John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18;  
8 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

## 9 10 5. The Holy Spirit

11  
12 God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation,  
13 and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He  
14 draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the  
15 image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends  
16 spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the  
17 Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21;  
18 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

## 19 20 6. Creation

21  
22 God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His  
23 creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon  
24 the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a  
25 perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the  
26 image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged  
27 with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the  
28 glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

## 29 30 7. The Nature of Man

31  
32 Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and  
33 freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body,  
34 mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents  
35 disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under  
36 God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their  
37 descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and  
38 tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores  
39 in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to  
40 love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts  
41 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20;  
42 Gen. 2:15.)

1  
2           8.       The Great Controversy  
3

4           All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding  
5 the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in  
6 heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan,  
7 God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of  
8 rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the  
9 distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual  
10 devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world  
11 became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be  
12 vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal  
13 angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14;  
14 Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9;  
15 Heb. 1:14.)  
16

17           9.       The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ  
18

19           In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection,  
20 God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this  
21 atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and  
22 holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and  
23 the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness.  
24 The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The  
25 resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept  
26 the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus  
27 Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter  
28 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2;  
29 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)  
30

31           10.      The Experience of Salvation  
32

33           In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in  
34 Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need,  
35 acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and  
36 Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine  
37 power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as  
38 God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are  
39 born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts,  
40 and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the  
41 divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21;  
42 John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17;

1 Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26;  
2 John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4;  
3 5:6-10.)  
4

## 5 11. Growing in Christ 6

7 By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the  
8 demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their  
9 ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as  
10 we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within  
11 us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free  
12 from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers,  
13 ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are  
14 called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding  
15 on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for  
16 worship, and participating in the mission of the church. As we give ourselves in loving service  
17 to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the  
18 Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4;  
19 77:11, 12; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess. 5:23;  
20 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21;  
21 Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb. 10:25.)  
22

## 23 12. The Church 24

25 The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.  
26 In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world;  
27 and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration  
28 of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the  
29 gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the  
30 Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as  
31 children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a  
32 community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom  
33 Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her  
34 to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having  
35 spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-11;  
36 Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)  
37

1           13.     The Remnant and Its Mission  
2

3           The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a  
4 time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God  
5 and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims  
6 salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is  
7 symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in  
8 heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have  
9 a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14;  
10 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)  
11

12           14.     Unity in the Body of Christ  
13

14           The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue,  
15 and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and  
16 nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be  
17 divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one  
18 fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or  
19 reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and  
20 hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune  
21 God, who has adopted us as His children. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20;  
22 Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John  
23 17:20-23.)  
24

25           15.     Baptism  
26

27           By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify  
28 of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ  
29 as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism  
30 is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy  
31 Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and  
32 evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of  
33 their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)  
34

1           16.     The Lord's Supper  
2

3           The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an  
4 expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is  
5 present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death  
6 until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and  
7 confession. The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to  
8 express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love.  
9 The communion service is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30;  
10 Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.)  
11

12           17.     Spiritual Gifts and Ministries  
13

14           God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each  
15 member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity.  
16 Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts  
17 provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions.  
18 According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy,  
19 proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service  
20 and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and  
21 endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic,  
22 and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the  
23 church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When  
24 members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is  
25 protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God,  
26 and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts  
27 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)  
28

29           18.     The Gift of Prophecy  
30

31           One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the  
32 remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger,  
33 her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church  
34 comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the  
35 standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21;  
36 Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)  
37

38           19.     The Law of God  
39

40           The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and  
41 exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human  
42 conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the

1 basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the  
2 agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation  
3 is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This  
4 obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of  
5 our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates  
6 the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17;  
7 Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10;  
8 Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)  
9

## 10 20. The Sabbath

11  
12 The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and  
13 instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of  
14 God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest,  
15 worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the  
16 Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a  
17 symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a  
18 foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His  
19 eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening  
20 to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3;  
21 Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20;  
22 Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)  
23

## 24 21. Stewardship

25  
26 We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and  
27 possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their  
28 proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men,  
29 and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support  
30 and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and  
31 the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to  
32 others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11;  
33 Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.)  
34



1           22.     Christian Behavior  
2

3           We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the  
4 principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve  
5 ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives.  
6 This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian  
7 taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and  
8 neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the  
9 imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the  
10 temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise  
11 and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods  
12 identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of  
13 drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we  
14 are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who  
15 desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21;  
16 Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2.)  
17

18           23.     Marriage and the Family  
19

20           Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union  
21 between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage  
22 commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners  
23 who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this  
24 relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship  
25 between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a  
26 spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family  
27 relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each  
28 other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the  
29 church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward  
30 complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their  
31 example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender  
32 and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing  
33 family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25;  
34 Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke  
35 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)  
36

37           24.     Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary  
38

39           There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In  
40 it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning  
41 sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and  
42 began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic

1 period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work  
2 of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the  
3 cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the  
4 sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified  
5 with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly  
6 intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy  
7 to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in  
8 Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are  
9 ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God  
10 in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall  
11 receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human  
12 probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17;  
13 Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12;  
14 22:12.)

#### 15 16 25. The Second Coming of Christ

17  
18 The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the  
19 gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He  
20 returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be  
21 glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of  
22 most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's  
23 coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted  
24 to be ready at all times. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7;  
25 Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20;  
26 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)

#### 27 28 26. Death and Resurrection

29  
30 The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His  
31 redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our  
32 life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to  
33 meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a  
34 thousand years later. (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14;  
35 Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)

#### 36 37 27. The Millennium and the End of Sin

38  
39 The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between  
40 the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth  
41 will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels.  
42 At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The

1 unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city;  
2 but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of  
3 sin and sinners forever. (Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18,  
4 19.)

5  
6 28. The New Earth  
7

8 On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for  
9 the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His  
10 presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have  
11 passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate  
12 and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13;  
13 Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)  
14

15 Notes  
16

17 *These notes contain explanatory material regarding how a church may proceed in a*  
18 *particular matter. A church may adopt alternative ways of handling such items. Such*  
19 *alternative methods should be in harmony with generally accepted principles of Church*  
20 *organization and operation.*  
21

22 CHAPTER 8 Notes  
23

24 1. Training and Equipping of Elders—(See p. XX.)—While the pastor has the  
25 primary responsibility for training elders, conferences are encouraged to schedule periodic  
26 meetings for their training. In order to support a pastor-elder team relationship, pastors also  
27 should attend the training meetings. Leaders of companies who function in the place of elders  
28 also should be invited.  
29

30 2. Marriage Ceremony—(See p. XX.)—In some countries or states a pastor must be  
31 legally appointed and registered in order to conduct the marriage service. In many lands the  
32 pastor may perform the ceremony in the church, but the marriage contract is legally signed by  
33 the district registrar, who usually sits in the vestry and listens to the approved form of marriage  
34 declaration. In still other lands, the pastor cannot perform the ceremony at all because it is  
35 recognized as a state responsibility and is looked upon as a civil contract. In such cases members  
36 usually retire to the home or place of worship, where a pastor conducts a special service to seek  
37 the blessing of the Lord upon the couple. (See p. XX.)  
38

39 3. Care and Maintenance of Church Property—(See p. XX.)—Deacons and  
40 deaconesses must see that the church building is kept clean and in repair and that the grounds are  
41 kept clean and attractive. This also includes ensuring that janitorial work is done. In large  
42 churches where it is necessary to employ a janitor, the deacons should recommend a suitable

1 person to the board, which votes to employ such help, or the board may authorize the deacons to  
2 employ a janitor. Board authorization should be obtained for all major repair expenses. All bills  
3 for repairs, as well as for recurring expenses, such as water, electricity, and, fuel, are referred to  
4 the treasurer for payment.

5  
6 4. Clerk Keeps Records—(See p. XX.)—Board minutes should be recorded in the  
7 church record book, or in another appropriate record system adopted by the church, giving the  
8 time and date of meeting, number attending, and a report of all actions taken. The clerk should  
9 also make a list of committees appointed at the meeting, giving to the chairperson a list of the  
10 members of each committee, together with its terms of reference and an outline of work it is  
11 asked to do. The church record book may be secured from the Adventist Book Center or, in  
12 some countries, from the publishing house.

13  
14 The church record book contains a place for recording membership, including columns  
15 showing how and when members are received or removed. This record must be kept  
16 chronologically, and supporting data for each entry also should be recorded in the section where  
17 minutes of membership actions are kept. The membership record must be accurately and  
18 currently maintained in order to show the official standing of the membership.

19  
20 5. Corresponding With Members—(See p. XX.)—The clerk should correspond  
21 frequently with absent members and should pass on to them news of church progress,  
22 encouraging them, in turn, to report their Christian activities each quarter.

23  
24 6. Money for Personal Literature Orders—(See p. XX.)—Where a local Adventist  
25 Book Center does not exist, members may place money for personal orders of literature, books,  
26 pamphlets, magazines, and subscriptions for periodicals in an envelope, with the order form  
27 properly filled out, and hand it to the personal ministries secretary. The treasurer then remits  
28 both order and payment for all such literature to the Adventist Book Center or to the publishing  
29 house, according to the system adopted by the conference. At the close of each quarter the  
30 personal ministries secretary will report to the church, at its quarterly business meeting, about the  
31 standing of its account with the Adventist Book Center and/or publishing house and shall provide  
32 a copy for the treasurer. (See p. XX.)

33  
34 7. Safeguarding Children—Church should be a safe place to bring our children.  
35 Everyone involved with children who are minors must meet all Church and legal standards and  
36 requirements. In order to safeguard our children, churches are encouraged to adopt policies  
37 which would provide a measure of safety and protection for children. Such policies should  
38 include the following:

39  
40 a. Two-Adult Policy—Have two adults present in children's classrooms or  
41 activities.

1           b.       Open Door—Discourage private or one-on-one contact and encourage an  
2 open door policy in all situations. Where an open door is not possible, station a second adult at  
3 the door.  
4

5           c.       Volunteer Screening—Have all volunteers complete a volunteer  
6 information form, check their references and, if required by law, do a police background check.  
7

8           d.       Six-Month Policy—Require a waiting period of six months for newly  
9 baptized or transferring members who have indicated a willingness to work with children.  
10

11          e.       Training—Provide regular training for teachers and volunteers to help  
12 them understand and protect children and how to nurture their faith.  
13

14           Local church leaders should consult with the conference in order to ascertain conference  
15 procedures and requirements including local legal requirements for individuals working with  
16 children.  
17

18           Additional resources are available from Adventist Risk Management at  
19 [www.adventistrisk.org](http://www.adventistrisk.org).  
20

21          8.       Children’s Ministries Resources—(See p. XX)—a) *The Children’s Ministries*  
22 *Handbook; A Step-by-Step Guide for Children’s Leaders Around the World*, 2005; b) *The*  
23 *Children’s Ministries Coordinator; A Step-by-Step Guide for Organizing Children’s Ministries*  
24 *in the Local Church*, 2005; and c) *Pastor’s & Elder’s Handbook for Children’s Ministries*, 2005.  
25 Silver Spring MD: Children’s Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For  
26 further information, contact your local conference children’s ministries director and  
27 [www.gcchildmin.org](http://www.gcchildmin.org).  
28

29          9.       Family Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—*Caring for Families Today: A*  
30 *Guide for Family Ministries*, 2009. Silver Spring MD: Family Ministries, General Conference  
31 of Seventh-day Adventists. For further information, contact your local conference family  
32 ministries director and [www.adventistfamilyministries.org](http://www.adventistfamilyministries.org).  
33

34          10.       Health Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—*CELEBRATIONS* (a 12-program  
35 outline of the essential health ministry presentations, includes scripts and PowerPoints),  
36 *CHARTERS* (a series of lectures with PowerPoint for presentation to lay audiences, *Foundations*  
37 *for Health Ministry* (84 lectures on basic health for health ministry leaders), *Breathe Free* (stop  
38 smoking curriculum), *Youth Alive* (a program to build resiliency in our youth), *Vegetarian*  
39 *Cuisine Instructor’s Course* (a comprehensive “how to” manual), *Birthing Companions* (to  
40 support young pregnant women in their pregnancy), *Regeneration* (a 12-step program for  
41 recovery in addiction), and *My Vegetarian Food Pyramid* (posters large or small).  
42

1 11. Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Resources—(See p. XX.)—For further  
2 information contact your local conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director or visit  
3 [www.parl.org](http://www.parl.org) and [www.irla.org](http://www.irla.org).  
4

5 12. Publishing Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—*Literature Ministry Training*  
6 *Manual* (Vol. 1-3 with PowerPoint presentations); *The Publishing Ministry and the Church*  
7 (booklet); *Student Literature Evangelism Manual*; *Miracles of Grace* (a book of 365 testimonies  
8 of literature evangelists around the world); *The Literature Evangelist* (a quarterly magazine of  
9 General Conference Publishing Ministries). For further information, contact your local  
10 conference or union publishing director. You also can go to [publishing.gc.adventist.org](http://publishing.gc.adventist.org).  
11

12 13. Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—Sabbath  
13 School Bible Study Guides for various ages (*CQ*, *Cornerstone Connections*, *Real-Time Faith*,  
14 *PowerPoints*, *Primary*, *Kindergarten*, and *Beginner*); *Sabbath School Handbook*; *Keys for*  
15 *Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Leaders* (a series of leaflets); *Reaching & Winning* (a  
16 series of booklets for personal ministries to peoples of various faith systems); *Adventist*  
17 *Community Services Handbook*; *The Sharing* (newsletter). For further information, contact your  
18 local conference Sabbath School and personal ministries director and  
19 [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org) or the following: [GraceLink.net](http://GraceLink.net),  
20 [JuniorPowerPoints.org](http://JuniorPowerPoints.org), [RealTimeFaith.net](http://RealTimeFaith.net), [CornerstoneConnections.net](http://CornerstoneConnections.net), [CQBibleStudy.org](http://CQBibleStudy.org), or  
21 [SabbathSchoolU.org](http://SabbathSchoolU.org).  
22

23 14. Stewardship Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—*Steps to Discipleship*, 2009.  
24 Silver Spring, MD: Stewardship Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. For  
25 further information, contact your local conference, union, or division stewardship ministries  
26 department or visit [www.adventiststewardship.com](http://www.adventiststewardship.com).  
27

28 15. Women's Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—Leadership certification levels 1-  
29 4; Resource materials for Day of Prayer, Women's Emphasis Day, and Abuse Prevention  
30 Emphasis Day; *Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Women's Ministries*. For further  
31 information, contact your local conference women's ministries director and visit  
32 [www.adventistwomensministries.org](http://www.adventistwomensministries.org).  
33

34 16. Youth Ministries Resources—(See p. XX.)—Visit our website for many more  
35 materials and further information at [www.gcyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyouthministries.org) or email  
36 [youth@gc.adventist.org](mailto:youth@gc.adventist.org).  
37

## 38 CHAPTER 9 Notes

39  
40 1. Sample List of Church Leaders—(See p. XX). The nominating committee selects  
41 members to serve as officers in a variety of positions. A small church may have a short list of  
42 officers. A large church may have a long list of officers. Here is a list that may be considered:

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1	
2	Elder(s)
3	Deacon(s)
4	Deaconess(es)
5	Clerk
6	Treasurer and assistant(s)
7	Interest coordinator
8	Church board
9	Church school board
10	
11	Adventist Junior Youth Society leader and assistant(s)
12	Adventist Youth Society leader and associate(s)
13	Adventist Youth Society sponsor
14	Adventist Youth Society secretary-treasurer and assistant
15	Adventist Youth Society music director
16	Adventist Youth Society pianist or organist
17	Adventurer Club director
18	Ambassador Club director
19	Bible School coordinator
20	Children's ministries coordinator
21	Church chorister or song leader or music coordinator
22	Church organist or pianist
23	Communication secretary or Communication Committee
24	Community Services director
25	Dorcas Society leader
26	Dorcas Society secretary-treasurer
27	Education secretary
28	Family ministries leader(s)
29	Health ministries leader
30	Ministry to People with Disabilities coordinator
31	Pathfinder Club director and deputy director
32	Personal ministries leader
33	Personal ministries secretary
34	Prayer ministries director
35	Publishing ministries coordinator
36	Religious liberty leader
37	Sabbath School superintendent(s) and assistant(s)
38	Sabbath School secretary and assistant(s)
39	Sabbath School division leaders, including leaders for the adult and extension divisions
40	Sabbath School investment secretary

1 Stewardship ministries leader

2 Vacation Bible School director

3 Women's ministries leader

4  
5 Additional personnel considered necessary

6  
7 Home and School Association officers (leader and secretary-treasurer): If only one  
8 church supports a school, the church nominating committee makes recommendations to the  
9 school board, which then makes the appointments. If more than one church supports a school,  
10 the school board conducts the whole process. (See p. XX.)

11  
12 CHAPTER 10 Notes

13  
14 1. Form of Service—(See p. XX.)—As the participants enter and kneel, the  
15 congregation should, with bowed heads, implore the presence and blessing of God. A  
16 worshipful hush prepares the way for the exercises that follow.

17  
18 The two main divisions of the worship service are:

19  
20 a. The congregational response in praise and adoration, expressed in song,  
21 prayer, and gifts.

22  
23 b. The message from the Word of God.

24  
25 The one leading the worshippers into the presence of God with the pastoral prayer is  
26 performing perhaps the holiest exercise of the service and, with a sense of awe, should humbly  
27 realize its importance. Customarily, the person praying kneels facing the congregation, and the  
28 congregation, as far as practicable kneeling, in turn faces the individual praying. The prayer  
29 should be brief but should include adoration, thanks, and mention of the personal needs of  
30 worshippers, as well as of the world field.

31  
32 The offering is a vital part of the worship hour. While we are counseled to “worship the  
33 Lord in the beauty of holiness,” we are also exhorted to “[b]ring an offering, and come into His  
34 courts” (Ps. 96:9, 8). So the presentation of our gifts to God quite naturally finds its place as a  
35 part of the worship service.

36  
37 Special music or a devotional hymn is appropriate.

38  
39 Then comes what should be one of the most important parts of the worship hour—the  
40 spiritual feeding of the flock of God. Blessed results to the glory of God always follow when a  
41 congregation is truly fed and feels that “God has visited His people” (Luke 7:16). The one who



1 brings the message should fully sense the sacredness of this work and should be thoroughly  
2 prepared.

3  
4 The elder collaborates with the church pastor in planning the order of the service. If the  
5 church has no regular pastor, the elder is in charge of the service and should either conduct it or  
6 arrange for someone to do so. From time to time a meeting for testimony and praise may be  
7 conducted, or the time may be given to certain members to relate their experiences in outreach  
8 (missionary) work.

9  
10 2. Forms of Service—(See p. XX.)—Forms of service vary from country to country  
11 and culture to culture. Following are two suggested forms:

12  
13 Longer Order of Worship

14  
15 Musical prelude  
16 Announcements  
17 Service participants enter  
18 Doxology  
19 Invocation (prayer)  
20 Scripture reading  
21 Hymn of praise  
22 Prayer  
23 Anthem or special music  
24 Offering  
25 Hymn of consecration  
26 Sermon  
27 Hymn  
28 Benediction  
29 Congregation standing or seated for a few moments of silent prayer  
30 Musical postlude

31  
32 Shorter Order of Worship

33  
34 Announcements  
35 Hymn  
36 Prayer  
37 Offering  
38 Hymn or special music  
39 Sermon  
40 Hymn  
41 Benediction  
42 Congregation standing or seated for silent prayer

1  
2           3.     Foot-Washing—(See p. XX.)—Men and women should be provided separate  
3 areas for foot-washing. Where stairs or distance is a problem, special arrangements should be  
4 made for those with disabilities. In places where it is socially acceptable and where clothing is  
5 such that there would be no immodesty, separate arrangements may be made for husband and  
6 wife or parents and baptized children to share with each other in the foot-washing ceremony. To  
7 encourage shy or sensitive people who may view the selecting of a foot-washing partner as an  
8 embarrassing experience, church leaders should be designated to help such persons find partners.  
9

10           All should thoroughly wash their hands before returning to participate in the Lord's  
11 Supper. Those leading out in the service should do this publicly for hygienic purposes.  
12

13           4.     Bread and Wine—(See p. XX.)—A hymn may be sung during the reassembly of  
14 the congregation as the officiating pastors or elders take their places near the bread and wine  
15 (unfermented grape juice) and the deacons and deaconesses take their places.  
16

17           The covering over the bread is removed.  
18

19           A suitable passage of Scripture may be read, such as 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24; Matthew  
20 26:26; Mark 14:22; or Luke 22:19; or a brief sermon may be given at this point in the service  
21 rather than earlier. This can be especially effective if the sermon emphasizes the meaning of the  
22 bread and wine so its message is still fresh in the minds of participants as the emblems are being  
23 distributed.  
24

25           Those officiating normally kneel while the blessing is asked on the bread. The  
26 congregation may kneel or remain seated.  
27

28           Usually most of the bread to be served is broken ahead of time, with a small portion left  
29 on each plate for the elders and/or pastors to break. (All handling the bread must wash their  
30 hands thoroughly before returning for the communion service.) The pastors and elders hand the  
31 plates containing the bread to the deacons, who then serve the congregation, though in small  
32 congregations the pastor or elders may serve all participants.  
33

34           During this time there may be a choice of special music, testimonies, a summary of the  
35 sermon, selected readings, congregational singing, or meditative music.  
36

37           Participants should retain their portions of the bread until the officiating pastors or elders  
38 have been served. When everyone has been seated, the leader invites all to partake of the bread  
39 together. Silent prayers are offered as the bread is eaten.  
40

41           The pastor then reads a suitable passage, such as 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26; Matthew  
42 26:27-29; Mark 14:23-25; or Luke 22:20. Leaders kneel as the prayer is given over the wine.

1 Again, deacons serve the congregation. Activities such as those suggested during the passing of  
2 the bread may be continued at this time. After the officiating pastors or elders have been served,  
3 all worshippers partake of the wine together.  
4

5 An optional method is for the bread to be blessed and broken; then the bread and wine are  
6 placed on the same tray and passed to the congregation. The worshiper takes both from the tray  
7 at the same time. The bread is eaten, followed by silent prayer. Then after prayer over the wine,  
8 it is taken, followed by silent prayer. Where pews or seats are equipped with racks to hold the  
9 wine glasses, the collection of glasses is unnecessary until after the service.  
10

11 5. Sabbath School—The usual length of time for Sabbath School is one hour and ten  
12 minutes. This, however, does not prevent a conference from adopting a longer or shorter period,  
13 though it is important to have sufficient time to regularly promote the missionary activities and  
14 responsibilities of the world church, along with the mission offering, plus at least thirty minutes  
15 for Bible study.  
16

17 6. Adventist Youth Society Resources—(See p. XX.)—Resource materials to help  
18 Adventist Youth Society leadership are available from the division, union, and conference youth  
19 ministries departments. Included in these resource materials is *Youth Ministry Accent*, a  
20 quarterly journal published by the General Conference Youth Ministries department. Available  
21 leaflets covering a broad spectrum of topics to help in youth ministry may be secured from the  
22 conference youth ministries department and the Adventist Book Center.  
23

24 7. Adventist Youth Society Organizational Plan—(See p. XX.)—Detailed  
25 information regarding the Adventist Youth Society organizational plan is available from the  
26 conference youth ministries director. Each church should study its own youth and family profile,  
27 resources, personnel, facilities, and school relationships, developing the best youth ministry in  
28 keeping with these factors.  
29

30 In some places another term for “society,” such as “fellowship” or “action,” may be  
31 selected, but the name “Adventist Youth” should always be used to clearly identify the  
32 organization.  
33

34 8. Adventist Junior Youth Society—(See p. XX.)—If the AJYS is part of the local  
35 Adventist school program, each classroom is considered a separate society, with the teacher as  
36 the leader and students elected as society officers. Where there is no church school, junior youth  
37 should be integrated into the overall youth program with a family-involvement approach.  
38

39 9. Times of Meetings—(See p. XX.)—In order to strengthen and develop the  
40 outreach (missionary) spirit among our members, auxiliary personal ministries meetings might  
41 be conducted in one or more of the following ways:  
42

1           a.       The ten-minute weekly personal ministries meeting held each Sabbath,  
2 usually following the close of the Sabbath School and preceding the preaching service.

3  
4           b.       A midweek meeting combined with the weekly prayer meeting. On this  
5 occasion, the first part of the service may be given to a devotional message, followed by a season  
6 of prayer, remembering that worship is vital in spiritual growth and preparation for service. The  
7 remainder of the time may be devoted to training for lay evangelistic service. Instruction in  
8 soul-winning methods is presented, and the members are given opportunity to present and  
9 discuss problems they have met in lay evangelism.

10  
11           Personal ministries meetings should meet at times suited to local conditions. The  
12 Personal Ministries Council should carefully plan to make the personal ministries services of the  
13 church occasions for spiritual revival and practical training, and see that they are conducted with  
14 the same regularity and continuity as other meetings of the church.

15  
16       10.       Business Meetings—(See p. XX.)—Reports may comprise the following  
17 activities:

18  
19           a.       A report from the clerk showing the present membership of the church and  
20 the number of members received and those transferred to other churches. Note also should be  
21 made, giving the number but not necessarily the names of those who were removed from  
22 fellowship during the year, as well as those who have died. A brief statement of the decisions of  
23 the church board in its meetings may interest members.

24  
25           b.       A report from the personal ministries leader giving a statement of outreach  
26 (missionary) activities, including community services activities, together with plans for future  
27 work. This should be followed by a report from the personal ministries secretary.

28  
29           c.       A report from the treasurer showing the amount of tithe received and sent  
30 to the conference, a statement of mission offerings received and forwarded, and a statement  
31 showing local church funds received and disbursed.

32  
33           d.       A report from the deacons and deaconesses concerning visits to members,  
34 their activities in behalf of the poor, and their other nurturing work.

35  
36           e.       A report from the secretary of the young people's society outlining the  
37 activities in outreach (missionary) and other lines by the youth of the church.

38  
39           f.       A report from the Sabbath School secretary giving the membership and  
40 other matters pertaining to the Sabbath School.

1 g. A report from the treasurer about the financial status of the church school,  
 2 with details as to its needs in equipment and other matters.

3  
 4 h. A report from the principal or teacher of the church school covering such  
 5 matters as enrollment, the educational progress of the school, baptisms among the  
 6 schoolchildren, and the results of the children's efforts in denominational endeavors.

7  
 8 i. A report from the Home and School Association leader covering the  
 9 activities and needs of that organization.

10  
 11 j. A report from the communication secretary covering press, radio,  
 12 television, and other communication activities involving church and community.

13  
 14 11. Other Committees of the Board—(See p. XX.)—Leaders of other board-  
 15 appointed committees should periodically report. For example, in a large church, the board may  
 16 appoint a committee for evangelistic planning composed of the heads of the church outreach  
 17 departments, with an elder as chairperson. This committee will report to the board and will also  
 18 assume the task of department coordination of outreach programs.

19  
 20 CHAPTER 11 Notes

21  
 22 1. Sample Annual Budget\*—(See p. XX.)

23  
 24 Church Proposed Operating Budget

25  
 26 Estimated Receipts—

27	Sabbath School Expense Collections	1,500.00	
28	Church Fund for the Needy	375.00	
29	Combined (Church) Budget Giving	27,055.00	
30	Welfare Fund	<u>300.00</u>	
31	Total Receipts		<u>29,230.00</u>

32  
 33 Estimated Expenses—

34	Repairs and Painting Church Building	2,250.00
35	Fuel	2,350.00
36	Janitor and Supplies	1,475.00
37	Insurance on Building and Furnishings	750.00
38	Church Fund for the Needy	1,450.00
39	Sabbath School Supplies	1,250.00
40	Emergency Expense	2,000.00
41	Light	3,220.00
42	Water	360.00

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1	Gas	550.00	
2	Stationery and Supplies	500.00	
3	Laundry	75.00	
4	Church School Subsidy	8,000.00	
5	Welfare Expense	1,000.00	
6	Evangelism and Church Planting	<u>4,000.00</u>	
7	Total Proposed Expenses		<u>29,230.00</u>
8	Balance		<u>00,000.00</u>
9			

10 \* Additional columns (such as Last Year's Budget and Last Year's Actual) should be  
11 included for comparison, but have been left out of this sample due to space constraints.