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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST<sup>®</sup>

MINISTER'S  
HANDBOOK

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST®  
MINISTER'S HANDBOOK

Prepared and Published by The General Conference of  
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *Manual for Ministers* has, for most of the past century, been a valued tool for instruction and quick reference for the Seventh-day Adventist pastor. In 1992 the title of this work was changed to the *Minister's Manual*, and it was again renamed as the *Minister's Handbook* at the 1994 Annual Council. Floyd Bresee, General Conference Ministerial Association secretary (1985-1992), served as the principal writer of the 1992 edition, which has contributed, in a significant way for nearly two decades, to the world ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given the rapid pace of change in society and technology, as well as the growth of the church during this time, the General Conference Ministerial Association has elected again to edit, revise, and update the previous edition to reflect the present needs of pastoral ministry. [REDACTED] gratefully acknowledge the help of those who contributed to the preparation of this handbook.

**Researching.** — Ministerial secretaries from the world divisions sought counsel from pastors in their fields who contributed ideas for inclusion in the handbook. Past issues of *Ministry* magazine were researched. The former handbook was studied, along with the *Church Manual* and the *General Conference Working Policy*, in order to address issues of interest and concern to pastors.

**Writing.** — Working from the 1992 edition, Gary Patterson wrote this manuscript, with the assistance of Rae Patterson. Myrna Tetz did the principal editing.

**Reading.** — The manuscript was sent to a worldwide reading committee of pastors, ministerial secretaries, and administrators for

suggested changes, with special mention due to Israel Olaore, Ranieri Sales, and Bonita Shields. Final approval was made by the in-house Ministerial Association staff at the General Conference office: Jonas Arrais, James A. Cress, Sharon M. Cress, Willie E. Hucks II, Anthony R. Kent, Cathy Payne, Peter J. Prime, and Nikolaus Satelmajer.

***Publishing.*** — Cathy Payne directed the design process, James Cavil copyedited the manuscript, Erika Miike served as designer, and the General Conference Ministerial Resource Center coordinated the printing and distribution of the handbook.

Many others gave their counsel and time in the process of preparing this handbook. We extend to each our heartfelt appreciation.



# PREFACE

Christ calls all His followers to ministry, and every Christian has the privilege and duty to serve in ministry as part of a Christian lifestyle. But some hear an additional call to full-time ministry\* as a vocation, both to serve the needs of the church specifically and to lead the church in service to the broader needs of the world in general, giving witness, loving care, and saving grace to a dying world. For these ministries, specifically, this handbook has been prepared.

Such ministry falls primarily into three categories:

1. Pastoral ministry provided both for individuals and for the church body.
2. Evangelistic witness and proclamation of the gospel.
3. Administrative leadership in the church structure.

## RESOURCES

In order to function efficiently and effectively in these areas of ministry, the Adventist pastor needs to be well versed in the following four primary resources the church provides for ministerial and church leadership.

1. The *Church Manual*, as voted by the General Conference in session.
2. The *Minister's Handbook*, which gives guidelines for the work of the minister.

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\*The words "ministry" and "pastoral ministry" are often used interchangeably in this handbook.

3. The *Elder's Handbook*, which assists the minister in training local elders as associates in the church work and ministry.
4. *Pastoral Ministry*, a compilation from the writings of Ellen G. White, which specifically addresses the work of the pastor.

In an effort to provide these materials for the pastor and to give emphasis to the importance of their use in ministry, the Ministerial Association has published these four volumes in the same size and format in order to form a matched set for convenience in use.

Since this handbook assumes that the pastor has access to the *Church Manual*, quotations from it will be limited in length. However, because the *Church Manual* remains the authoritative source for church function, this particular reference will be referred to often in some sections of this handbook.

## **ALL MINISTERS**

The primary focus of the *Minister's Handbook* is on pastoral ministry. However, it applies broadly to all ministries, and those serving in specialized ministries and administration will also benefit from its use. The Seventh-day Adventist Church enjoys the service of both men and women, and in recognition of this inclusive ministry, the handbook seeks to use language that is gender-inclusive.

## **UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY**

Because Adventist ministers are raised, are trained, and serve in a multitude of differing races, cultures, and languages around the world, it is mandatory for the church to work sensitively in the cultures in which it functions. While this handbook must be translatable into many languages and be adaptable to local conditions and customs, there also needs to be reasonable coordination of pastoral plans and programs to create a united ministry throughout the world field.

This handbook was first prepared to foster unity throughout the

world and is now presented in revised form. Although no set order is established for the various ceremonies of the church, unity should be maintained in the general order of services and forms of worship. “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Because of the diversity of the world church, the handbook does not prescribe a rigid model, but rather provides a general pattern for each given area of ministry. Where culture dictates, divisions may need to include adaptation by adding footnotes or appendices. Bible quotations in the English version of the handbook come from the New King James Version.

While the emphasis of handbooks tends to be on techniques, the greatest need we as ministers have is a constant relationship with our Lord. Part of the preparation of this handbook was the prayer that its use will strengthen ministry in the Adventist Church both spiritually and professionally.



James A. Cress  
Ministerial Association Secretary  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
June 1, 2009



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# CHAPTER 1

## THE CALLING

Individuals who have received a call to the gospel ministry also receive at the same time a personal call from Christ. In addition, they accept an invitation from the church community who recognizes the call and affirms it, both by employing and credentialing the individual in pastoral ministry. The call comes in both instances from Christ and includes three distinct spiritual qualifications.

### 1. COLABORERS WITH CHRIST

**Ministry a privilege.** — Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ must be considered a high privilege granted to humankind by Christ Himself, because the call comes not from human origin but of divine instigation. “The greatest work, the noblest effort, in which men can engage is to point sinners to the Lamb of God. True ministers are co-laborers with the Lord in the accomplishment of His purposes” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 18).

**Ministry a divine appointment.** — “God has a church, and she has a divinely appointed ministry” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 52). Many avenues of service exist in the employment world and are open to individual choice. Because of ministry’s uniqueness in its divine appointment, ministry is more than a profession. It is a calling. “And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Heb. 5:4).

**Ministerial training.** — Having received a call to ministry does not obviate the need for careful training and preparation for service. Rather, it motivates and propels those called to spend both the time

and effort required to fulfill the calling. Moses spent many years in preparation for his leadership and service to Israel. And even our Lord Jesus Christ spent several decades preparing for His ministry.

Ministers for God do not consider themselves “self-called.” As with the apostle Paul, the initiative is not the individual’s, but the Lord’s. Paul did not choose the ministry of the gospel; rather, God chose him for that ministry. Paul’s choice was whether or not to respond to God’s call. A call to the gospel ministry is a call to become an ambassador for Christ. This call demands the full commitment of one’s being to this high calling.



## 2. A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

The early apostles were successful in inviting others to come to Christ because they themselves had already come to Him. Individuals can give to others only what they already possess. In order to share the good news of the saving grace in Christ, one must have already experienced it, and daily live in that grace.

After the disciples accepted the invitation of Christ, they spent the next three years in personal relationship with Him, learning His ways of serving and reaching people. Only then were they prepared to minister successfully. Saul saw a vision of Christ on the Damascus road, and it caused him to ask, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6). After much prayer and searching he was renamed Paul, and, as with the apostles, he found that the power in ministry to appeal to human hearts results from a personal fellowship and experience with Christ.

***Serve as He served.*** — To live as Christ lived means living to serve as He served. Jesus lived to bless others. He lived to love. By nature, humankind is born selfish, and only by grace can we learn to live as Christ lived and minister as He ministered. Successful ministry follows the motto of John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must



decrease” (John 3:30). “Those who have the deepest experience in the things of God are the farthest removed from pride and self-exaltation. Because they have an exalted conception of the glory of God, they feel that the lowest place in His service is too honorable for them” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 142).

To enjoy serving is to enjoy the ministry. Ministers, however, must not feel that gospel ministry somehow makes them more important than others or that this is the only vocation to which people are called. For an individual, the most important work is whatever work God asks that person to do, with the work of service the grandest work in the world. God calls all—every member of every congregation—to some form of ministry and of service.

### 3. A PERSONAL EMPOWERING BY CHRIST

Ministers need to exhibit a variety of traits, such as faithfulness, moral purity, integrity, spiritual leadership, intelligence with common sense, relational skills, and teaching ability. Those called by Christ will be empowered by Christ. Whomever Christ calls, He enables. He does not call to failure. Not all possess the same gifts, but He will provide the gifts that are necessary to bring success in the performance of what He calls His ministers to do. As Paul proclaimed, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12).

“The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth His highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ, they are made complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence” (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 112, 113).

## CHAPTER 2

# SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Discipleship must become a personal spiritual discipline resulting in a private dimension before it can have a public influence. As a response to God's initiative, we cannot initiate discipleship on our own. This commitment leads us to center ourselves in Him while Christ becomes the passion of our lives. Private study of God's Word, meditation, and prayer are essential elements in a pastor's personal life.

***Essential to leadership.*** — The fervent request of the psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10), can be described as the primary essential to pastoral leadership. Without this spiritual dimension, ministerial leadership becomes little more than the implementation of psychological theories, organizational methods, and motivational techniques. Real power in ministry springs from spirituality resulting from a personal encounter with Christ.

***Essential to evangelism.*** — Christ instructed His disciples, “I, if I am lifted up . . . , will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). Knowing Jesus and holding Him up before the people turns out to be the first essential of soul-winning success.

***Essential to preaching.*** — Sermon preparation requires significant time for Bible study and prayer. This essential of sermon preparation must go hand in hand with personal devotion and study. One cannot convincingly and honestly provide spiritual material to the congregation unless that material derives its power from personal experience with the Lord.

## BARRIERS TO SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

**1. Lack of dependence.** — “There is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 362). But losing track of the source of strength results in a failure to seek God’s guidance. As Jeremiah assured the captives in Babylon who had lost the sense of God’s guidance: “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

**2. Lack of time.** — Finding time for spiritual discipline is basically an issue of priorities. Everyone has exactly the same amount of time in each day. The issue is how we manage the time and what we select as the priority on which we spend the time. If prayer, the study of God’s Word, and private devotions are valued as an important part of ministry and personal life, then time will be allotted for this pursuit. Jesus admonished His audience on the mount, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33).

**3. Lack of privacy.** — While it may not always be possible to set rigid times and locations for private devotions, yet even in the press of both church and family needs, ministers must be sure to set aside time for study and prayer. “All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. . . . We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58).

**4. Lack of planning.** — Without a specific plan, not much of a devotional life will be developed. Within the pastor’s frequently varied schedule, the plan must, of course, be flexible. Yet without specific

intent and planning, it is easy to let personal devotions slip away. In addition to one's private study, a spiritual support group may provide additional opportunity to share with others in the spiritual journey.

**5. *Lack of discipline.*** — Spiritual growth does require self-discipline. Like any activity of fitness or responsibility, be it spiritual, physical, or family-oriented, accomplishing the task requires discipline. Devotional life should not be considered an end in itself. The focus must not be on the amount of time spent, or on the number of pages read, or on feelings of spirituality. Rather, spiritual growth must be based on communion with God. “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

## DEVOTIONAL METHODS

***Reading.*** — Reading helps keep the relationship with God fresh and informed. Consider Scripture as the physical form of His communication to humanity and the primary source of devotional study and prayer. Reading should not ignore the valuable contribution of Ellen White, and should also include some of the great Christian devotional classics, as well as practical ministry publications.

***Prayer and meditation.*** — While prayer emphasizes talking, meditation on the Word of God emphasizes listening and concentrates on thinking about God. “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83).

***Praise prayer.*** — Prayer should begin with praise. Much can be learned from the life of Jesus about the importance and effectiveness

of prayer. He prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35). He spent entire nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). He sometimes withdrew from His direct ministry to pray (Luke 5:16). His power for ministry came from His prayer life (Luke 3:21, 22). Prayer prepared Him for His darkest hour (Matt. 26:36-46).

***Penitential prayer.*** — Prayer and confession in private devotions cannot be considered the same as public prayer, where individuals usually pray in rather broad generalities addressing the concerns of the hearers. Devotional repentance should be highly personal and specific, recognizing one's failings and the need for victory over sin.

***Intercessory prayer.*** — Many are the requests for prayer that come to the church and the pastor. In this ministry Paul instructs Timothy, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). Christ, our example, prayed even for those who crucified Him.

# CHAPTER 3

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Christ's instruction to His disciples before His ascension was directed to the care of people. And this directive extends to all aspects of pastoral ministry. The supreme interest of the pastor must be serving people. As important as study, preaching, administration, teaching, or any other aspect of ministry may be, without each being centered in the service to people, it will not lead to success as a minister of Jesus Christ. People are a pastor's specialty. In this service the personal characteristics of integrity and warmth rate higher than professional skills. "Tact and good judgment increase the usefulness of the laborer a hundredfold" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 119).

### LOVING PEOPLE

Pastors must love people. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Jesus employed the shepherd's model to describe His relation to His people and the work of ministry. "I am the good shepherd," He states. "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep" (John 10:11-13). Hirelings see the work of shepherding as just a job that can easily be abandoned under stress.

Moses, pleading with God for his people at Mount Sinai,

demonstrated remarkably the ideal of pastoral love. After Israel's worship of the golden calf, he interceded with God on their behalf. "His timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for those for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing so much. . . . His interest in Israel sprang from no selfish motive. The prosperity of God's chosen people was dearer to him than personal honor, dearer than the privilege of becoming the father of a mighty nation" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 319).

***Loving unlovely people.*** — Loving humanity in general is a concept that is broadly embraced without much hesitation. But loving faulty people in particular could be categorized as one of the more difficult tasks of pastoral life. Pastors must be able to see people as they are and yet not lose sight of what they could become by God's grace. To be a true shepherd, pastors must minister as Christ ministered. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). To be compassionate as Jesus was compassionate means going beyond mere sympathy for the fallen nature of humanity. This compassion not only accepts people as they are in their imperfections but seeks to help them overcome in Christ.

***Loving hurtful people.*** — Christ even included loving hurtful and unkind people in His admonition to good shepherding. At times when people criticize, misunderstand, and even falsely accuse, the example of Christ clearly demonstrates the loving response of the true shepherd. Even as He hung on the cross, Christ forgave those who had nailed Him there. Thus He demonstrates that true forgiveness is based, not on a change in the actions and attitudes of those who do wrong, but on the attitude of the one who willingly forgives.

Genuinely forgiving those who engage in mistreatment best describes the test of Christian love. Whether or not that forgiveness is received by them is then according to their own choice. Indeed,

there are consequences that result from sinful behavior that are not reversible, but in the act of forgiving, one does not need to establish who did wrong, but rather consider forgiveness as a matter of “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another . . . ; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Col. 3:13).

## FRIENDSHIPS

That friendships exist is natural and God-given. Clearly among the disciples, Peter, James, and John enjoyed a unique and special relationship with Christ. Likewise pastors will find and enjoy the friendship of people with whom they labor and serve. Close trustworthy friendships not only are acceptable but indicate relational competence and emotional maturity on the pastor's part.

***Everyone needs close friends.*** — Friendships assist in the development of a realistic view of one's personal strengths and limitations. A friend not only offers support but also provides additional insight into life and ministry. One may open up and communicate freely with a close friend, and obviously one's spouse makes an ideal source of this kind of friendship. Yet the spouse cannot be all that a friend must be unless the communication of ideas, ideals, plans, fears, failures, and frustrations are openly, honestly, and prayerfully shared with each other. While friendship with the spouse should be the most complete of friendships, if the spouse is the only one in which to confide it places too heavy a burden on the partner.

The General Conference Ministerial Association urges that the ministerial association secretary be the person available as a close friend to ministers. However, often ministers and their spouses are not comfortable confiding in those involved with ministerial placement or discipline. In such cases a fellow pastor may serve as a confidant and friend. Such pastors often share similar problems and frustrations and understand each other's lives more completely than anyone else.



***Close friends in the congregation.*** — As natural as it is to find close friends in the congregation, there are some cautions that must be observed in such relationships. Pastors must maintain a wholesome spirit among all members in the congregation, avoiding partiality toward any one individual. Pastors must know the importance of striving to maintain a loving relationship with the indifferent and unresponsive equally with those who are enthusiastic and cooperative. Also, the necessity of confidentiality restricts the sharing of problems with others in the congregation. Close friendships with elders usually escape criticism, as members expect that these associates in ministry should enjoy such a relationship.

***Community relationships.*** — Adventist communities seeking to uphold standards and fulfill a mission not recognized by the world in general may at times be perceived as isolated from the communities in which they exist. These communities may interpret this focus as unfriendly aloofness and a notion of spiritual superiority. Pastors should be actively involved in the community, seeking membership and involvement in the local ministerial association and community service organizations. Not only are there many items of similar interest, but these can be valuable, professional friendships that open opportunities for shared ministry and witness.

# CHAPTER 4

## TIME MANAGEMENT

### THE GIFT OF TIME

Time comes as a gift given to everyone. The issue isn't about whether some have more time than others, but rather how each person manages this gift. The reason that some seem to accomplish more than others lies in the priorities they choose and how they use the time. Jesus emphasized the importance of time management when He stated, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

### WISE USE OF TIME

**1. Plan.** — Planning increases efficiency. Set goals and objectives based on what most needs accomplishing, and then develop a time schedule to achieve these goals. Without such a plan, one may easily drift from task to task, often seeking the pleasant and avoiding the difficult, while neglecting the most important tasks. "When you rise in the morning, take into consideration, as far as possible, the work you must accomplish during the day. If necessary, have a small book in which to jot down the things that need to be done, and set yourself a time in which to do your work" (*Evangelism*, p. 652).

Plans must be flexible. Don't plan so rigidly that exceptions and emergencies cannot be addressed. Failure to respond to emergencies in the name of time management becomes offensive to those in need. A plan so precise and detailed that it cannot realistically be followed will probably be abandoned.

Time planning needs to be communicated to fellow workers and

also to the congregation. Discuss the schedule of pastoral work and responsibilities with the church board, and then announce it to the congregation. Clearly communicate that the pastor will always be available for emergencies, but that in an endeavor to make the best use of available time, there must be some limitations. The pastor's schedule can be posted on the office door and also included in the bulletin or in other church communication options. Make every effort to be available at these scheduled times.

Managing telephone availability is significantly important to people who call, and answering machines do not address this importance. Calls to the pastor and to the church office need to be answered personally. Therefore, when answering devices are used, failing to respond promptly is inappropriate and rude. Call forwarding may also be used to direct calls to another location where someone has been assigned to take the call.

Written correspondence and electronic mail can become significant users of a pastor's time. Balancing the importance of response against the mass of communication is no small task, and one can easily go to extremes either in spending too much time on trivial correspondence or in simply not responding to legitimate requests. Avoid the trivial, but respect the legitimate. Care must be taken in what a pastor communicates in either letters or e-mail, for what a pastor writes has a long life after the moment of writing. Be sure that the words thus recorded will continue to contribute to ministry and not undermine it.

**2. Create at your prime time.** — The time of highest work and creative energy levels varies with different people. For some it may be first thing in the morning; for others it may be late at night. One is not better than the other—it is simply a matter of individual distinction. However, do not procrastinate. Do creative, hard-thinking work when the energy level for its accomplishment is highest.

**3. Use the help of others.** — Office associates, if available, sig-

nificantly increase a pastor's effectiveness by handling much of the church detail work, such as taking phone calls, preparing bulletins and publications, and making appointments and contacts. Few churches are able to finance the salary of full-time office workers, but part-time help or volunteer workers may be available to assist the pastor in these endeavors.

**4. Group appointments.** — Geographically group visits so as to make travel the most efficient. The telephone can be an effective tool for many contacts and also increases efficiency. Hospital visitation is important to those who are ill and to their families. These visits, though best when kept short, are still of great significance. The cultural expectation of pastoral visitation varies significantly in different locations and among different age groups.

**5. Use time twice.** — In ministry, travel requires much time. Both Scripture and books are available in recorded format and can be heard during travel. In addition, disciplining one's mind to think, plan, pray, and even do sermon preparation during travel time provides personal quiet moments for these pursuits. During moments of waiting for appointments, for example, be prepared to utilize such by planning in advance for some productive activity.

**6. Delegate.** — "It is a great mistake to keep a minister who is gifted with power to preach the gospel constantly at work in business matters. He who holds forth the Word of life is not to allow too many burdens to be placed upon him" (*Evangelism*, pp. 91, 92). The apostles learned that when they tried to do all the work of the church by themselves, the work did not all get done. So they delegated the part to which they were not directly called, saying, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. . . . We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4).

# CHAPTER 5

## PERSONAL HEALTH

As an asset to ministry, good health provides the ability to do good work and serves as an example of the result of prudent and abstemious living. Loma Linda University health studies clearly demonstrate the advantages of the Adventist lifestyle's not only adding more years to life but improving health as well. "A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22).

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

While we know the Adventist lifestyle to be a wise choice, it does not guarantee that its adherents will not suffer illness. A physical checkup performed on a regular basis can detect problems that may be able to be treated early, possibly avoiding serious results later in life. Denominational employers provide a variety of health-care options that should be followed in the best interest of both the individual and the church. Maintaining good health also involves the wise following of three critical health practices: proper diet, exercise, and rest.

**1. Diet.** — Eat the right foods in the right amounts. "Many of our ministers are digging their graves with their teeth" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 408). "God cannot let His Holy Spirit rest upon those who, while they know how they should eat for health, persist in a course that will enfeeble mind and body" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 55, 56). The abundance of good counsel on proper diet and food should be not only accessed but followed.

**2. Exercise.** — Given that much of pastoral ministry results in a rather sedentary lifestyle, intentional effort must be given to maintaining a fit and strong body. “The whole system needs the invigorating influence of exercise in the open air. A few hours of manual labor each day would tend to renew the bodily vigor and rest and relax the mind. In this way the general health would be promoted, and a greater amount of pastoral labor could be performed” (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 264, 265).

**3. Rest.** — There are occasions when the demands of ministry make obtaining adequate rest difficult. However, allowing this to become a habit will, over time, actually reduce—because of exhaustion, incapacity, or even death—the amount of ministry that can be performed. Rest and relaxation are crucial, not only for physical well-being, but for family stability as well. Because the sleep requirements of people vary, to know one’s personal needs and get enough sleep each night cannot be considered optional.

Take a day off each week. Take advantage of the annual vacations an employer provides. Overwork indicates, not great devotion to the work, but foolishness. After many intense and stressful events Jesus invited His disciples to “ ‘come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat” (Mark 6:31).

## MENTAL HEALTH

Ministry is recognized as stressful work. The intrapersonal nature of ministry provides not only opportunity for joyful exchange with others but also times of pain and distress. Public speaking, administrative leadership, ministry to the ill and bereaved—all contribute to stress. While some stress may aid in focusing efforts on a task, continued high and unresolved stress is debilitating. Because the level of stress

that one may be able to absorb varies from person to person, knowing one's limits and developing methods of coping are crucial to effective ministry.

Burnout, defined as the reaction to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, is often the product of the repeated emotional stress that comes from constant involvement with people. In addition, the expectations of the congregation and conference leadership may differ, placing the pastor in awkward situations. Seeking counsel and encouragement from others often deters burnout. Such counsel may come from the conference ministerial secretary, a fellow pastor, a friend, a support group, or from within the pastor's family. Some conferences provide anonymous free counseling with a professional counselor when needed.

## CHAPTER 6

# PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Personal appearance definitely has an impact. When a pastor meets someone for the first time, that person makes an immediate judgment, accurate or not, based on appearance. Furthermore, appearance becomes an ongoing influence in continued ministry. “God expects His ministers, in their manners and in their dress, to give a fitting representation of the principles of truth and the sacredness of their office” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 174). “A minister who is negligent in his apparel often wounds those of good taste and refined sensibilities” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 613).

### **DRESS STANDARDS**

Indeed, a multitude of styles and options available for dress exist, with a rather wide range of these considered acceptable. However, because ministry has the reputation of being a high-level profession, individuals expect the dress of a pastor to conform to the standard of professionals. A clear indication of this expectation in a given culture may easily be determined by observing the attire worn by other professionals in the community. Dressing in a second-class manner compared with others in the community will give the impression that your ministry is second-class. Culture and customs vary widely in different places, and age influences styles as well. But extreme fashion should generally be avoided. Many times, what is seen speaks more loudly than what is verbally spoken.



### **APPEARANCE SHOULD ATTRACT TO CHRIST**

Personal appearance will open or close doors for ministry. “The God of heaven . . . is honored or dishonored by the apparel of those who officiate in His honor” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 173).

**1. Good taste.** — Taste in clothing, including shoes, should be appropriate to the occasion. Formal dress, such as a business suit, serves best in the pulpit, as well as at weddings and funerals. But do not hesitate to dress casually when the occasion calls for it.

**2. Neatness.** — Neatness involves not only dress but the whole person. Good grooming of skin, teeth, hair, and nails should be considered as important to appearance as good clothing. Not only should clothing be kept clean, but also the person. Consider personal hygiene and cleanliness as vital to representing the church properly.

### **APPEARANCE SHOULD NOT BE OVERLY OBVIOUS**

Dress that draws attention to the self may result from many causes. Sloppy, gaudy, or inappropriate dress for the occasion may detract from both ministry and message. It is best if appearance goes mostly unnoticed. The objective should be to dress so that people do not notice, other than to recognize that the appearance is modest, appropriate, and in good taste.

## CHAPTER 7

# PERSONAL FINANCE

Personal finance has significant potential for positive and negative influence in both the congregation and the community. Even with the best of intentions the pastor can often be misunderstood in the area of finance. While expectations of the pastor do not include living in poverty, at the same time a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption and opulence will undermine what otherwise might be a successful ministry. Trust the Lord to provide, “and my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

**1. *Absolute honesty.*** — Financial dealings must be clearly open and honest to avoid even the appearance of evil. The church expects absolute financial honesty from the pastor (and rightly so), and members expect the same from church funds as well as personal funds. Members must know that church funds will continue to be handled with a great sense of responsibility and integrity. Personal profit derived from a pastor’s position and influence on monetary decisions equates with conflict of interest and should not be allowed under any circumstances.

**2. *Responsible living.*** — A Christian minister, as a divinely called servant-leader of the congregation, should live at the general economic level of the membership as a whole, with the tithing system and the wage scale of the church designed to make this possible. While one should not expect to become wealthy on the pay scale of the ministry, yet at the same time the faithful and steady income provided by the church makes it possible for the minister to live with security, knowing that personal needs will be cared for.

**3. Prompt payment of expenses.** — Not only personal reputation, but that of the church as well, is influenced by the prompt and faithful payment of bills.

**4. Wise but not selfish shopping.** — Careful planning in shopping makes limited funds stretch further, but avoid seeking clergy discounts as if ministers deserve some special treatment. If a business wishes to offer the church special rates on purchases, this should be considered a gift to the church. Expecting to receive personal favors undermines respect for the church and the ministry.

**5. Borrowing and lending.** — Borrow only as necessary, and at the lowest cost for the shortest period of time possible. Borrowing or seeking gifts from church members should be avoided. The potential for misunderstanding and strained relationships with the lender is great, and favoritism toward the lender becomes an easy trap. Live on a budget, and be wise and cautious in the use of credit, paying off such accounts monthly. Avoid becoming involved in the cosigning or guaranteeing of loans for others. Pastors are counseled, “Let them guard themselves as with a fence of barbed wire against the inclination to go into debt” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 235, 236).

**6. Saving.** — Plan for emergencies, such as transportation needs, repairs, replacement of appliances, and sudden medical expenses. Savings should be planned and accumulated in order to provide funds for large items, such as the education of children, the purchase of an automobile, the down payment on a home purchase, and preparation for retirement. Even when attempting to save large sums but falling short, establishing the habit of saving is more important than the amount saved.

**7. Insurance.** — Adequate insurance is needed to protect personal finances, property, and liability.

**8. Outside employment.** — Employing organizations are responsible for providing ministers a living wage. Full-time ministers are

responsible for living within that wage in order to devote full energy to serving the church, not seeking outside work and income, or seeking to be paid for preaching in other locations. “The minister who is wholly consecrated to God refuses to engage in business that would hinder him from giving himself fully to his sacred calling” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 366).

**9. Family.** — Personal finance is a shared family responsibility.

**10. Being an exemplary giver.** — With faithfulness in returning tithe as both a biblical and employment expectation, the generous giving of offerings provides a positive leadership example to the church.

# CHAPTER 8

## FAMILY LIFE

### MINISTRY AND THE HOME

**Recognize the limitations of family as a model.** — Frequently church members look at the pastor's family as a model of family life, and the family members are expected to represent what the church stands for in both personal and family behavior. While this expectation has some validity, it must also be recognized that all families are subject to human frailties and imperfections, and that only by the grace of God and the choice of each individual are their lives lived in accordance with the divine will.

**Provide time for the family.** — The urgency of ministerial service, as a never-ending task with eternal consequences, can lead to putting church work ahead of family needs. In addition, frequent moves in pastoral assignments may lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation. In all this the pastor's family stands as the first priority in a minister's life. This does not mean, however, that more time will be allocated to family concerns than to church work, but it does mean that in all planning and dealing with ministry concerns, the needs of the family should be primary. Proper care for the family involves a direct link to proper care of the church. "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5). "The minister's duties lie around him, nigh and afar off; but his first duty is to his children. . . . The world is not so much in need of great minds, as of good men, who are a blessing in their homes. Nothing can excuse the minister for neglecting the inner circle for the larger circle outside. The spiritual welfare of his

family comes first” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 204).

***Give dependable time to the family.*** — When family time is frequently interrupted or canceled because of church work, the family may feel second-class and in competition with the church. Avoid missing and postponing family appointments. When it occurs, make sure to reestablish the family appointment at the earliest possible opportunity. Do things together. Share in the work of the home, doing daily chores along with family members. Engage in shared recreation and entertainment that each family member enjoys.

***Communicate.*** — Things held in common with the family relate to the quality and amount of effort placed in communication. Verbal communication includes both talking and listening. Children and parents must establish open channels of communication that neither judge nor threaten. Sharing what transpires in daily life, sharing spiritual experiences and insights, sharing both the triumphs and failures, the joys and sorrows of the day, bonds the family together in a godly communion.

***Affirm freely.*** — Look for something good and beautiful in your spouse and children each day and tell them of your respect and appreciation. Say only kind, appreciative things about the family from the pulpit.

***Pray daily.*** — Make family worship a happy and creative experience. Be the spiritual leader of the home, but do not assume to know all the answers. Because Christianity is an intensely personal experience, no one person has all the answers. Families need to talk about their individually owned beliefs and standards, not just impose them as family traditions or church rules.

### ADVANTAGES OF CLERGY FAMILIES

While unique stresses in the pastoral family happen, yet there are also special advantages, such as wider exposure to people and ideas,

travel opportunities, and a more secure family environment spiritually committed to making Christian love work. These advantages tend to provide:

- A strong sense of purpose and mission in life.
- Opportunity to work as a team on tasks of eternal significance.
- A people-oriented vocation that addresses the needs of humanity.
- Satisfaction in bringing people into the family of God.
- The love of Christian friends.

Maintaining a happy, exemplary pastor's family provides both present joys and eternal rewards in the kingdom of God. "One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 32).

# CHAPTER 9

## PASTORAL ETHICS

### ETHICS CODE

The General Conference Ministerial Association, with counsel from pastors and church administrators, has prepared and recommends to every Adventist minister the following code of ethics:

#### SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MINISTER'S CODE OF ETHICS

I recognize that a call to the gospel ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not for the purpose of bestowing special privilege or position, but rather for living a life of devotion and service to God, His church, and the world. I affirm that my personal life and professional activities shall be rooted in the Word of God and subject to the Lordship of Christ. I am totally committed to the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I am dedicated to the maintenance of high standards of professional conduct and competence in my ministry. I purpose to build relationships based on the principles expressed in the life and teachings of Christ.

I shall, by the grace of God, apply these standards in my life so as to include the following:

1. Maintain a meaningful devotional life for myself and my family.
2. Give full time and attention to the ministry as my only vocation.
3. Commit myself to continuing professional growth.
4. Initiate and maintain supportive professional relationships with fellow ministers.



5. Practice strictest professional confidentiality.
6. Support my employing organization and the world church.
7. Manage church and personal finances with integrity and transparency.
8. Perceive and treat my family as a primary part of my ministry.
9. Practice healthful living.
10. Relate with propriety to both men and women.
11. Respect the personhood of every individual, without bias or prejudice.
12. Love those to whom I minister, and commit myself to their spiritual growth.

### **ETHICS AND FELLOW MINISTERS**

***Fellow pastors.*** — The work of ministry predisposes ministers to a shared fellowship and understanding of one another's interests and concerns. Supporting one another's ministry and sharing ministry ideas and concepts strengthens ministry. No one person has all the wisdom and creativity that ministry needs. Rather than perceiving other clergy members as the competition, ministers should see them as support. Pastors' meetings should not only provide inspiration and instruction in ministry skills, but also be occasions for warm fellowship.

***Supervising pastors.*** — In multistaff settings, such as large churches or districts, the roles of ministerial responsibility should be clearly stated and understood. Though individual ministry and service should not be stifled in such settings, the final responsibility for overall ministry rests with the supervising pastor. Multistaff members must support one another and work toward the common goals established in the church program. Any attempt to play one pastor against the other and undermine the working relationship of the staff must be rejected.

Ministerial internship presents a unique setting for multistaff ministry. Placing interns in this role for continued education allows them to learn while working with an experienced and seasoned minister. In addition, the experienced pastor has the opportunity to learn from the intern, who may have had more recent contact in educational circles. To assist in this relationship and training process, the General Conference Ministerial Association has prepared the publication *A Manual for Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors*, available from the Ministerial Resource Center.

***The predecessor.*** — When moving to a new church assignment, do not quickly discard the previous program. Rather, assume that those who have gone before may have known of the needs of the church that will not be immediately known to the new pastor. Move ahead carefully, wisely, and respectfully, continuing what now works well and gradually introducing new concepts and ideas that will enhance and build the church program further.

***The successor.*** — When departing a post of service, leave behind good church records, such as a church directory (including officers and committees), financial reports, church board and committee minutes, and street maps marked to show membership locations, community outreach territories, and evangelistic interests. Share helpful personal information about shopping, health-care availability, bookstores, and other locations that a pastor may need to access.

***Ministers of other churches.*** — In some settings there may be multiple Adventist churches nearby. Open communication, cooperation, and respect between the pastors of these churches is vital to the success of all. In addition, cultivate good relationships with fellow pastors of other denominations in the area. Much may be shared with these pastors, including community service and similar concerns and beliefs. A hostile and competitive spirit undermines the work that can be done in the community. Frequently some form of ministerial as-

sociation or alliance is available for shared ministry.

### ETHICS AND JOB PLACEMENT

**Seeking position.** — The goal of ministry includes service, not position. In God’s work promotion becomes His business. “If any are qualified for a higher position, the Lord will lay the burden, not alone on them, but on those who have tested them, who know their worth, and who can understandingly urge them forward” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 477).

**Seeking a high standard.** — Aim high, but aim at a high standard, not a high position. Work diligently in the assignment given, and leave promotion to God.

### ETHICS AND RACE

The success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s mission of world outreach can be seen by the breadth of its membership around the world: “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). With this breadth of membership, no place exists for racial discrimination. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27, 28).

### ETHICS AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Sacred trust.** — As a sacred trust, the call to ministry involves respect for the personhood of all. Any breach of trust in this area brings reproach to ministry, to the church, and to God. It is unreasonable to ask members to trust pastors who have engaged in such practices as adultery, pedophilia, homosexuality, fornication, and other sexual misconduct.

**Forgiveness and restoration.** — While violation of these standards

becomes grounds for termination of service and employment in pastoral ministry, the dismissed should experience the affirmation of God's forgiving grace and love. The church should seek to restore and nurture such persons in their spiritual and family relationships.

### ETHICS IN RELATIONSHIPS

***Spousal relationships.*** — Let it be clearly demonstrated and widely observed that a strong bond of loving relationship in the family has been established between husband and wife. Work diligently to make your home life successful and joyful. Such a relationship both strengthens the bonds of love from within and repels temptation from without.

***Recognition of vulnerability.*** — Denying vulnerability to sexual temptation is hazardous. Toying with flirtations and fantasies is a dangerous game. If regularly indulged, erotic and romantic longings will win over rational thought. By being perceptive of one's feelings and candidly facing up to the beginning of an attraction, temptation can be rejected.

***Counseling.*** — Because spiritual counseling is part of a pastor's responsibility, caution must be observed in this practice. Some counseling may call for auditory but not visibility privacy. Most pastors are not professional counselors, and they have not been called to be such. For the most part, other than in spiritual counsel, those needing counseling should be referred to professional Christian counselors.

### ETHICS AND THE LAW

***Legal implications.*** — Church employees, congregations, and victims must be aware of the potential for sexual misconduct to occur. In certain circumstances requirements by law include the reporting of sexual misconduct. In some jurisdictions certain individuals may be mandated to report certain forms of abuse (such as sexual

abuse of minors or elder abuse) even if knowledge of that abuse was acquired in a confidential setting. Legal counsel should be sought on the requirements in your area.

Sexual misconduct is not limited to minors, however. It can also occur between purportedly consenting adults. Special care should be taken in dealing with individuals where there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power.

***Injury.*** — Regarding injury, generally the law holds churches responsible only for injuries that result from negligence. Reasonable steps should be taken to maintain facilities in a safe condition in order to protect those in attendance at church facilities and functions.

***Negligent supervision.*** — Negligent supervision addresses issues that relate to the exercise of sufficient care in supervising an employee or volunteer worker. Liability may be imposed for negligently supervising (or failing to supervise) an employee or volunteer if that person causes harm.

***Staff placement.*** — When an individual is placed in a position of trust, care must be taken to ensure that this person is worthy of that trust. Churches should have in place a policy for checking the background of individuals who are in positions that have the potential for abuse or causing harm. Consult with your conference, insurance provider, or legal counsel when developing and implementing these policies.

If you receive an inquiry concerning the background of an individual who is being considered for a position of trust and you are aware of any past misconduct or allegations of past misconduct by that person, consult with your conference office or legal advisor. Care must be taken to protect both the person about whom the inquiry is being made and any person who could be harmed by future misconduct by that person.

### **ETHICS IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Policies and procedures for the handling of financial matters are clearly delineated in the *Church Manual* and in the *General Conference Working Policy*. Failure to abide by these policies not only risks disrepute of the employee and the church but also places the employee in jeopardy of termination of employment.

# CHAPTER 10

## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

### **GROWTH AS OPPORTUNITY**

While physical growth reaches a natural stopping point, professional growth provides the opportunity to continue to expand and develop in ministry as long as desired. The reason for professional growth should be, not in order to obtain position, but to be better equipped for service.

### **MANDATE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION**

The Annual Council of 1986 took action “to urge the controlling bodies of Seventh-day Adventist organizations to make it possible for Seventh-day Adventist ministers to take at least 20 clock hours of continuing education for ministry each year, or an average of 20 clock hours for each year of licensure. (For example, if the minister’s license/credential is voted for three years, he should, during that time, accumulate 60 clock hours of credit.) Courses taken by a minister for academic credit in connection with a formal education program approved by the employing organization may be accepted in lieu of continuing education units (CEU). If at the time of the renewal of a minister’s license/credential the annual average of their CEU records is less than the standard 20 clock hours indicated, a representative from the employing organization [should] personally counsel with and encourage them to become involved in the Continuing Education Program for Ministry.”

This continuing education may come in the form of an approved degree program, individual class intensives, or ministers’ meetings

that include continuing education courses. In addition, the General Conference Ministerial Association has prepared courses for this purpose. Resources are available through the General Conference Ministerial Resource Center or through division ministerial associations.

### HOW TO GROW

**Reading.** — Read widely. A local library will have a significant number of helpful books and magazines, and if not available locally, often these are available through interlibrary loan. Share books with fellow pastors. Visit bookstores, including those offering secondhand books. Schedule time for reading and set a monthly goal of books and magazine articles to be read. With a significant amount of such useful materials published within Adventist circles, as well as wisely selected materials from other sources, ministers can easily find an adequate supply. *Ministry* magazine and the Ministerial Association Book Club also provide a wealth of materials for professional growth. Include some secular reading in that menu of material in order to keep abreast of current events and trends in society.

**Evaluation.** — Pastoral skills are best learned by practice, followed by evaluation, followed by a plan for improvement. Evaluation may at times seem threatening, but refusing evaluation hides not only weaknesses but also strengths. Evaluation provides encouragement, pointing out areas of talent and success while at the same time providing insight into areas of weakness and failure, which then may be addressed in such a manner as to improve performance in ministry.

**Spiritual growth.** — In ministry “the secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort. Those who achieve the greatest results are those who rely most implicitly upon the Almighty



Arm. . . . The men of prayer are the men of power” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 509).

# CHAPTER 11

## RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCH ORGANIZATION

### ORGANIZATION IS NEEDED

Structure and organization, an observable reality in both the physical and social worlds, remains as the basis of all creation. From the minutest particles of an atom to the grand design of the cosmos, the structuring hand of God is observed. “Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God’s people on the earth” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 26).

***Biblical basis of church organization.*** — Throughout biblical history God seeks to provide order and structure for His people. He gave ancient Israel an intricate system of organization, calling them from dysfunctional slavery in Egypt to become His chosen nation. Jesus founded the church, appointing His disciples as its leaders, and the Holy Spirit led the New Testament church as it grew in its mission and structure.

Christ called the church into being, and while demonstrably evident that the church exists as an imperfect organization (being made up of imperfect people), yet “enfeebled and defective as it may be, [the church] is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 15). To be Christian means to love His church, for Christ “loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

***Practical basis for church organization.*** — A nation, a business, or even the human body would fail without organization. The church, with the task of proclaiming God’s saving grace to the world, would

surely also fail without organization. Early in Adventist history the need for structure was clearly observed. “As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 26).

### BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATION

Many and varied forms of church structure can be found in the world of the Christian church. Unless a church operates as a stand-alone unit, there will be need for leadership of, and association among, the churches of a given denomination. Adventist Church polity is based on a representative form of governance, with the church unit as part of the sisterhood of churches in a conference, as delineated in the *Church Manual* and the *General Conference Working Policy*.

Conferences depend almost totally on pastors for both church growth and nurture, since conference funds come from churches. Evangelism and church growth occur in the local congregations. Pastors and elders lead the local congregation, and they shepherd the flock. “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

**Administrative support.** — Through actions of the conference executive committee, administrators assume the responsibility of providing pastors for the churches in their territory. In Adventist policy, employing entities have the responsibility of providing secure salary delivery systems for their pastors.

**Departmental resources.** — Departmental directors serve as spe-

cialists and make their expertise available to pastors as they work with them in training their members. They do not have line authority over pastors, but serve as advisers and resource providers. Departmental leaders should make pastors aware of programs and materials available for church ministry, which will assist in the development of pastoral objectives and plans.

**Ministerial association secretary.** — The ministerial association secretary serves as the pastor's pastor and provides specific services that include: a listening interest, a supervised internship, training in pastoral and evangelistic ministries, soul-winning tools to aid in ministry, continuing education opportunities, assistance in training church elders, support for the pastor's family, and a subscription to *Ministry* magazine.

## Church is outside interference to Pac

### COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

Ministry, as an intensely personal calling and service, must be performed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accord with one's conscience. However, this does not give the minister license either to lead the church counter to its principles or to espouse positions contrary to the stated fundamental beliefs of the church. "Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body" (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 260). An Adventist pastor may make an individual choice in accepting church employment. However, upon becoming an employee and leader in the church, the pastor accepts certain obligations to the church body.

1. *Trust leadership.* While church leadership cannot be described as perfect, it remains as the duly constituted authority in the church. While dialogue on variations in opinion is both permissible and good, when decisions are reached it becomes the responsibility of the pastor to support leadership. "Let us cherish a spirit of confidence in

the wisdom of our brethren” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 500).

2. *Consult leadership.* Counsel with leadership before you enter into any activity that makes inroads on time normally meant for regular ministry. It may be helpful to get advice before buying or building a house, enrolling in an academic study program, or inviting guests to speak in the church.

3. *Hold leadership accountable.* The Adventist form of church governance is representative rather than congregational, providing a democratic process that is both a privilege and an obligation to its members. While sensitive to individual church needs and wishes, it takes into account the broader perspective of both the sisterhood of churches and the worldwide work.

# CHAPTER 12

## DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES

The General Conference offers many departmental services designed to provide programs and resources to assist pastors and churches. Most of these departments have representatives at the division, union, and conference levels, although these departments should initially be contacted at the conference level. If not available, contact should be made with the next level of the church organization.

The *Adventist Yearbook*, available online ([adventistyearbook.org](http://adventistyearbook.org)), provides a directory of church organizations worldwide, such as:

The General Conference Headquarters: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600; telephone: (301) 680-6000; Web site: [www.adventist.org](http://www.adventist.org).

Ministerial Association Web site: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

A listing of the departments that responded to a request for information follows in alphabetical order, with a brief statement of the purpose of each. For updates from the various departments, go to [www.adventist.org](http://www.adventist.org) and then the specific departments.

### ADVENTIST CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department (ACM) extends the presence of the church into settings beyond the local church, where people are in crisis and in need of the good news of the gospel. This department encourages and helps equip the church to care effectively for the needs of these communities and their ministers as well as specialized populations both inside and

outside the church. These include students on Adventist and public educational campuses, inmates in correctional facilities, patients in health-care facilities, military personnel, and others.

***Programs/Resources.*** — Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, endorses and supports theologically trained and credentialed Adventist ministers to serve as chaplains on educational campuses, correctional institutions, health-care facilities, military branches, volunteer services, and other settings, and provides a variety of support functions.

*Ecclesiastical Endorsement.* This process is a formal program that grants endorsement for chaplains: the voted affirmation of the church required by many employers and certifying bodies.

*Education.* The department provides and/or coordinates many continuing education activities for chaplains worldwide, and works to establish indigenous chaplaincy training programs in the divisions. Pastors also are often able to participate in these programs. All of these educational offerings are provided under the auspices of the Institute for Chaplaincy Education—a curriculum of educational opportunities offered throughout the world church.

*The Adventist Chaplain* is a quarterly publication designed for chaplains and church leaders.

*The Chaplain's Manual* is a publication that provides an overview of the principles of chaplaincy ministry in a variety of settings. An interactive DVD presents an overview of chaplaincy for seminarians, pastors, church leaders, and others. Educational programs are offered to help chaplains meet ongoing professional development requirements. In addition, other brochures and materials are produced to meet needs as they arise. In some divisions, members in military service are also cared for.

*For God and Country* is a publication that provides both printed and electronic educational resources dealing with issues related to the military.

In addition, Adventist Church members in uniform have other church publications and spiritual-care programs available.

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries offers career guidance for chaplains and prospective chaplains, counsel and education for youth considering military and public service, and other related issues. ACM provides assistance for ministers helping parishioners dealing with these matters. The department often works with pastors and other departments, such as Public Affairs and Religious Liberty and the Office of General Counsel, to address religious accommodation issues that Adventists face in the settings in which chaplains serve.

### **ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY**

Present in 125 countries, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) serves people who need help securing basic needs such as food and water, establishing livelihoods, obtaining health care, achieving literacy and numeracy, and in surviving and thriving against disaster long after the world's attention has shifted elsewhere. Projects address sustainability as the key principle of development. Beyond providing temporary relief, ADRA also works to create long-term solutions. Through these programs, people claim ownership of their own development, leading to lasting stability and prosperity.

***Food and water.*** — Working in concert with communities, ADRA seeks to make available a dependable supply of food, including maize, beans, rice, vegetable oil, canned foods, and high-nutrient cookies, which help supplement caloric intake. In addition, ADRA provides information and instruction regarding the production of reliable crops and the availability of clean drinking water by drilling new wells, refurbishing old ones, and improving irrigation systems to allow people and their animals an adequate supply of water.

***Literacy and numeracy.*** — Breaking the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty for many requires literacy and numeracy training. As ADRA's



programs have demonstrated, learning these basic skills, including reading, writing, and mathematics, fundamentally transforms lives while also improving the ability to function in day-to-day activities.

***Establishing livelihoods.*** — Working with individuals, especially poor women who have routinely been denied credit, helps them reach self-empowerment. By providing small loans and teaching them how to create and manage small business enterprises, they are placed on the road to prosperity, allowing them to take control of their own financial well-being. This provides a ripple effect while promoting more opportunities for entrepreneurship and stimulating the regional economy.

***Health care.*** — Basic treatment and health-care instruction address issues such as high infant mortality rates, maternal health, AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and poor access to medical care. These health issues are addressed by training health-care volunteers to teach communities about AIDS prevention, family planning, literacy, and the effects of poor health on the financial well-being of the family. This integral view acts as a catalyst to improve health awareness and attitudes throughout a community.

***Emergency response.*** — Disasters, whether natural or human-made, can strike at any moment. For this reason ADRA prepares ahead of time to deliver assistance—food, clothing, water, shelter, and medical needs—well before problems arise. Then, after disaster strikes, help is provided in rebuilding homes and infrastructure and in development programs that assist those affected to become financially independent again.

## ADVENTIST MISSION

***Purpose.*** — The Adventist Mission Department (AMD) seeks to establish an Adventist presence in all people groups where presently none exists, with the goal to reach the unreached with hope. AMD

raises mission awareness through materials, resources, and programs designed to inform and inspire church members regarding the full range of mission activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This includes reporting to church members the results of mission offerings and the vital importance of continued support of these offerings.

***Programs/Resources.*** — Resources are provided for pastors to share the challenge and opportunities of mission around the world. These include missionary diaries, photos, podcasts, PowerPoint presentations, video productions, newsletters, *Global Mission Pioneer*, and mission stories. The Adventist Mission quarterly DVD, sent free to every division for distributing to local churches, contains reports of varying length about Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects, as well as the broad range of mission work supported by mission offerings.

*Adventist Mission for Children* and *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults* are quarterly magazines that contain mission stories with a special focus on Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects. These are provided in a format that can be presented in Sabbath school programs and elsewhere.

Three quarterly full-color Global Mission newsletters, *Frontline Edition*, *Prayer Calendar*, and *Picture Story*, contain stories, reports, and pictures of Global Mission work around the world.

*Mission Week* is a curriculum of five daily devotional programs with mission emphasis created for children in grades K-8 (ages 5-14). These programs contain video stories, scripts, and activities designed to teach, inspire, and motivate children to get involved in the mission work of the church.

SEEDS conferences are conducted annually at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, and in other locations by invitation. The purpose of SEEDS is to cast the vision and provide resources for church planting and for ministries that support church planting.

ChurchWorks conferences are conducted at the invitation of local conferences. These programs are designed for pastors and core lay leadership teams from their churches. ChurchWorks casts the vision and helps leaders create strategy for reaching every person in their territory, using every member's spiritual gifts and every ministry of the church in outreach.

Five Global Mission Religious Study Centers are developing methods, approaches, and tools to help the world church witness effectively and appropriately to people from other religious traditions, including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, secularism, and postmodernism. Available to pastors, missionaries, Global Mission pioneers, and other church members, these services include programs, training sessions, seminars, Web sites, and various written and electronic materials.

### **ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO**

***Purpose.*** — Adventist World Radio, the mission radio arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, uses shortwave, AM/FM, satellite, Internet broadcasts, and podcasting. These programs carry the gospel to people difficult to reach because of political restrictions, cultural barriers to Christianity, and geographic obstacles. The mission focuses on broadcasting the Adventist hope in Christ to the hardest-to-reach people groups of the world in their own languages. This primary target expects to share the gospel with people living in the 72 countries within the 10/40 window that contains two thirds of the world's population, of which less than 2 percent are Christian. Broadcasts also reach Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Programming, developed by native-speaking staff in each country, is designed to connect with non-Christian listeners.

***Programs/Resources.*** — Broadcast schedules may be found on Adventist World Radio's Web site. The schedule may be searched for

a particular country, or the entire schedule may be obtained.

Podcasting provides various language broadcast availability anywhere in the world by means of the Internet. The podcasting information can be advertised widely or shared personally as a means of witness.

Exciting and inspirational mission stories that can be shared in Sabbath school programs, worship services, or on other occasions are available. The e-mail newsletter *Inspirations* is available on the Web site, as well as the printed newsletter *Transmissions* and DVDs.

Resources promoting the annual offering are available from the Adventist World Radio office or on the AWR Web site.

Contact the AWR office to arrange for a speaker for church programs, camp meetings, or other occasions, or for brochures, videos, or PowerPoint programs for public presentation, children's activity sheets, or other new resources. Pastors who work in territories where AWR broadcasts are available may receive names of interested listeners for follow-up.

### **BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**Purpose.** — The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) promotes the study and practice of Adventist theology and lifestyle as understood by the world church. The institute provides theological resources for the administration and departments of the General Conference and the church. BRI identifies areas of doctrinal and theological discussion, seeking to enhance understanding and build commitment to the truths of Scripture.

BRI encourages and facilitates dialogue with the Seventh-day Adventist theological community, endeavoring to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. The institute also directs the work of the Biblical Research Institute Committee, which consists of members from around the world.

**Programs/Resources.** — The Biblical Research Institute provides many resources for pastors, including books from the Web site bookshop. Also available are documents on the Web site that deal with Adventist doctrine and theology and other issues of interest to pastors. In addition, the institute conducts seminars in biblical studies and theology.

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Children's Ministries Department seeks to nurture children, from birth to 14 years of age, into a loving, serving relationship with Jesus by developing (1) grace-oriented ministries, wherein children experience the unconditional love of Jesus; (2) inclusive ministries, which value all children and volunteers regardless of race, color, gender, language, or abilities; (3) leadership ministries, in which volunteers are empowered, trained, and equipped for effective ministry to children; (4) service-oriented ministries, wherein children are given hands-on service to reach out to the community; (5) cooperative ministries, in which the department works closely with other ministries to further shared goals; (6) safe ministries, whereby churches adopt safeguards to protect children from physical, spiritual, emotional, and sexual abuse; and (7) evangelistic ministries, in which children, not enfolded in the church, are introduced to Jesus through such outreach programs as Vacation Bible Schools and Story Hour.

**Programs/Resources.** — Children's Ministries has joined with the Ministerial Association to publish the *Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Children's Ministries*. This practical guide for pastors and elders assists in providing help, support, and motivation for children's leaders to maximize their gifts and time in developing the faith of the children within the church.

The publication *God Loves Me 28 Ways* serves as a useful tool

for pastors who are giving children's Bible studies or studying the fundamental beliefs of the church with children. The Web site contains additional information regarding other resources of the department, as well as information to help train children's ministry coordinators for organizing children's ministry in the local church.

## COMMUNICATION

**Purpose.** — The Communication Department seeks to build bridges of hope while endeavoring to create a favorable image of the church and its mission, life, and activities that will encourage people to become followers of Christ. These bridges may be accomplished by building trust among groups of people by the sharing of accurate information, using contemporary technologies and methods of communication to reach the diverse audiences, both within and without the church, with an open, responsible, and hope-filled communication program.

**Programs/Resources.** — The Adventist News Network offers information about the international denomination that exists beyond the walls of a single church. Pastors, administrators, and church members may receive and offer news regarding the church's successes, challenges, and opportunities. This news can be used to inform and inspire church members, as well as connect with the communities served.

## EDUCATION

**Purpose.** — Responsible for the coordination, promotion, and quality of the church's educational program, the Education Department works in cooperation with education directors at the division level. The purpose of the department is carried out through its role in coordinating the functions of the International Board of Education, the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education, and the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges,

and Universities, the three boards that authorize new institutions and programs and assess the extent to which schools support the mission and accreditation standards of the church.

The department offers services to boards, administrators, and faculty of Adventist colleges and universities by providing faith and learning seminars for teachers, workshops for administrators, and advice to institutions. The department assists church and school leaders as they address school board governance issues, strategic planning, and accreditation matters.

Education Department publications (the *Journal of Adventist Education*, providing information regarding the most important issues to Adventist teachers and administrators; and *Dialogue*, targeting Adventist college and university students who may or may not currently attend Adventist colleges/universities) serve as vehicles to connect the church to Adventist students and teachers worldwide. These journals are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

The department works in cooperation with the Youth Ministries and Chaplaincy Ministries departments to maintain contact with Adventist higher education students in educational institutions not affiliated with the Adventist system. This work is best carried out in connection with local church pastors whose churches are in close proximity to public higher education institutions that have Adventist students in attendance.

**Programs/Resources.** — The department provides several resources: (1) *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education*; (2) *A Guidebook for Creating and Implementing a Spiritual Master Plan on Seventh-day Adventist Campuses of Higher Education*; (3) *Quality Management in Higher Education*; (4) *Strategic Planning in Higher Education*; (5) *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*; (6) *In Passion for the World: A*

*History of Seventh-day Adventist Education*; (7) a 35-volume series entitled *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*.

In connection with Andrews University, the department manages a human resource database of Seventh-day Adventist professionals who have baccalaureate and/or graduate degrees.

### FAMILY MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Family Ministries Department seeks to strengthen the home as a discipling center, the primary setting in which spiritual and other life values, and the development of close relationships with God and people, are learned. Family Ministries focuses on relational connections in marriage, between parents and children, and among siblings and others in the wider family circle.

As a ministry of grace, Family Ministries endeavors to enable families to stretch toward divine ideals while understanding that they will experience brokenness in a fallen world. Family Ministries seeks to aid in the growth of wholesome, emotionally healthy families, resulting in families able to help build strong churches and present a winsome witness to society. Family Ministries fosters competence in the interpersonal skills needed in relationships and provides growth opportunities through family life education and enrichment. While not responsible for counseling, the department encourages individuals, couples, and families to avail themselves of professional help when needed.

**Programs/Resources.** — An adequate ministry to families will include premarital guidance available to all couples; regular marriage-strengthening events; parent education; ministry to the special relational needs of single adults, single parents, and stepfamilies; instruction in family-to-family evangelism; and support ministries to help families with extraordinary needs. To accomplish such ministry



more effectively, church boards may establish a family ministries committee. To assist pastors, local church leaders, and family ministries committees, the department offers the following:

*Family Ministries handbooks.* The General Conference Family Ministries Department and its division associates have produced such manuals for conducting the ministry as *Caring for Families Today; The Pastor's and Elder's Handbook for Family Ministries* (published by the Ministerial Association) provides orientation and guidance for facilitating family ministries in the church.

*Curriculum framework books.* The department coordinates development of the world church curriculum framework for comprehensive family life education presented in books that summarize core teaching content in family life for pastors and family life leaders, such as *Human Sexuality: Sharing the Wonder of God's Good Gift With Your Children*.

*Annual planbooks.* A book of resources containing sermons, mini-seminars, stories, leadership articles, and book reviews is produced each year by the department to support churches in planning and programming for the annual Christian Home and Marriage Week (February) and Family Togetherness Week (September).

*Specific program resources.* The department has produced specific program resources that pastors or church leaders can adapt for local use, such as *Preparing for Marriage* (premarital guidance); *Caring for Marriage* (marriage enrichment); *You Are Not Alone* (singles ministry); *Peace and Healing: Making Homes Abuse Free* (family violence); *Jumpstart Connections* (short scripts for mini-sermons, audio broadcasts, etc.).

*Leadership development.* The department provides leadership development through its family life education certificate program. Course resources for division, union, and conference department directors are available through the General Conference. Contact

conference family ministries directors for availability of a lay leaders' family ministries development program and certificate.

**Contact Information.** — For more information on the department and available resources, contact conference family ministries directors or the General Conference Family Ministries office: Family Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA.

## HEALTH MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — Health Ministries' goal includes revealing the compassion and care of our Lord Jesus through concern for the well-being of the whole person. The blessing of health is to be nurtured, shared, and celebrated among members and the community. Health ministry, an integral part of gospel ministry and the mission of the church, incorporates preaching, teaching, and healing. While part of this work will help restore health, the essence of this ministry reveals Christ in all His beauty.

Health Ministries seeks to be the active expression of caring concern. This gospel ministry of health seeks to embrace the church congregation and the wider community within which the congregation lives.

**Programs/Resources.** — The Health Ministries Department, at every level of church organization, either produces or distributes a wide variety of resources. These include youth mentoring programs, stress management, smoking cessation, lifestyle modification, health expo materials, prepared lectures, and educative courses. Information regarding these and other materials and programs can be found on the department Web site.

**Contact Information.** — Visit either the department or Health Connection Web site for hundreds of health materials, DVDs, CDs, and health aids.

## MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

**Purpose.** — The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists provides support, continuing education, encouragement, and resources to ministerial workers, accomplished by providing and participating in seminars, in meetings for ministers, and in a variety of resources.

**Programs/Resources.** — A summary of resources provided by the Ministerial Association is listed below. Contact the Ministerial Association for the most current list.

Evangelism/Church Growth provides evangelism support and resources to pastors.

The Ministerial Resource Center publishes books, pamphlets, CDs, and DVDs on a variety of topics. In most instances organizations need to place an order in advance so that the cost will be minimal.

*Ministry*, an international journal for pastors, has been published since 1928 and is currently made available to both Adventist ministers and clergy of other denominations. Adventist ministers usually obtain the journal through their employing organization.

*Ministry* Professional Growth Seminars provides seminars by satellite and Web site to ministers around the world. It also coordinates the providing of *Ministry* to clergy of other denominations.

Resources for Elders provides a variety of information for church elders, including *Elder's Digest*, a journal for elders available worldwide through local conferences. Also provided are training seminars for elders, in cooperation with other church organizations.

Shepherdess/Ministry to Clergy Families provides seminars and resources to clergy spouses and families. In addition to providing events throughout the world, it publishes *Shepherdess Journal*, available in various conferences.

**Contact Information.** — Each entity of the Ministerial Association may be contacted directly, or contact the central Ministerial Association

office in order to have your request directed to the appropriate person.

### **PLANNED GIVING AND TRUST SERVICES**

**Purpose.** — A highly specialized ministry, Planned Giving and Trust Services helps members and friends of the church prepare such planned gifting instruments as wills, trusts, annuities, pooled income contributions, and outright gifts. The mission encourages and facilitates the expanding of God's work through planned gifts adapted to donors' local jurisdictions. In order to help members accomplish their giving and financial goals, Planned Giving and Trust Services personnel collaborate with other professionals, including attorneys, accountants, financial planners, and others.

Two major general types of trusts are available: (1) revocable, and (2) irrevocable. A revocable trust allows the grantor to withdraw any or all assets, as well as to have full enjoyment of the property during the individual's lifetime. At death the assets flow efficiently to the beneficiaries, saving probate and administrative costs. An irrevocable trust titles assets to the church, providing immediate tax benefits along with income for life.

**Programs/Resources.** — A series of eight *Planning for the Cycle of Life* brochures focusing on differing ages and family and life situations present how the department can help. In connection with the brochures, a series of display advertisements in various sizes from full page to one-eighth page are available, as well as suggestions for church bulletin and bulletin board, and tithe envelopes, church periodicals, and other means of communication.

The department provides a wide range of seminars suitable for pastors' meetings, camp meetings, and wills and family finance planning weekends for churches and other venues. Planned Giving and Trust Services personnel often team with attorneys, accountants,

financial planners, and other professionals to provide seminars for church and/or retreat venues.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

**Purpose.** — The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department (PARL) seeks to promote and defend religious liberty. Religious liberty includes the right to have or adopt the religion of one's choice, to change religious belief according to conscience, to manifest one's religion individually or in community with fellow believers, in worship, practice, witness, and teaching, subject to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

Involved in government relations and interchurch contacts, the department also networks with nongovernmental organizations that have kindred goals in upholding religious freedom. PARL not only works for the religious liberties of individual church members and organized entities of the church, but also supports freedom of belief for all people everywhere.

In view of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the great controversy and the climactic events of human history involving union of church and state that will eliminate the free exercise of religion and result in persecution of the faithful remnant, the department seeks to monitor and interpret current trends that may reflect the prophetic scenario.

**Programs/Resources.** — Festivals of Religious Freedom; regional Religious Liberty Congresses; annual Liberty Awards Dinner; IRLA Meeting of Experts; television presentation *Global Faith and Freedom*; World Congress on Religious Freedom; conferences/seminars; Religious Liberty Emphasis Sabbaths; *Religious Liberty Leader's Handbook*; *Fides et Libertas* (the journal of the International Religious Liberty Association); *Religious Freedom World Report*, *Liberty* magazine.

## PUBLISHING

**Purpose.** — The Publishing Department serves members of the church and the broader general market, providing primarily printed material for spiritual nurture and evangelistic outreach to the community. To accomplish these objectives, the department seeks to (1) motivate church members to participate in sharing literature with others as part of mission outreach; (2) encourage consideration of literature evangelism as a full-time ministry, providing training and supervision; and (3) encourage members to own and study devotional books for spiritual nurture and growth.

**Programs/Resources.** — Publishing Department personnel provide Literature Awareness Seminars and literature evangelism rallies for churches to create awareness among members for literature evangelism involvement. Literature Ministry Seminary programs provide training for literature evangelists on how to assist pastors in church leadership and evangelism. Young people in school are recruited to join in literature evangelism campaigns during vacation periods.

Each year the department, in coordination with Adventist publishing houses, selects the Missionary Book of the Year, which is made available worldwide to share as an evangelistic outreach. Churches are also encouraged to establish a lending library for evangelistic outreach.

Book sale events are sponsored through publishing houses at Adventist Book Centers, at camp meetings, and in churches, providing Adventist literature at special prices. Books of particular interest to literature evangelism include *Colporteur Ministry*, *Publishing Ministry*, and *Miracles of Grace*, a book of sermon illustrations providing 365 literature evangelism experiences.

Other literature evangelism materials available include a manual for church publishing coordinators, literature ministry training materials available in hard copy, PowerPoint presentations, a video

presentation on ways to share books and magazines, and a video regarding recruitment of regular and student literature evangelists. Magazines regarding literature ministry include *Literature Evangelist* magazine and *Publishing Leadership Digest*.

### SABBATH SCHOOL AND PERSONAL MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Sabbath School Department focuses its thrust in both Sabbath school and personal ministries through a balanced and interrelated emphasis on fellowship, outreach, Bible study, and mission. The department also provides leadership, resources, training, creativity, and inspiration for the discipling of the local church membership through the synergistic ministries of transformational religious education for all ages.

**Programs/Resources.** — The most widely recognized and used resource provided by this department is the publication of Bible Study Guides for all age groups. These include: *Beginner* (birth-2 years); *Kindergarten* (3-5 years); *Primary* (6-9 years); *PowerPoints* (10-14 years); *Real-Time Faith* (an alternative for 13-14 years); *Cornerstone Connections* (15-18 years); and *CQ* (19-35 years). Each of these publications has a teacher's guide and other curricular resources. The Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department serves in an advisory capacity in the development of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*.

*Enriching Sabbath School*, a video with a leader's guide, provides a full exploration and development of the four foci that are integral to the vital Sabbath school for adults. Other available media include *Sabbath School University*, a weekly 30-minute video program accessible through satellite broadcast, the Internet, and audio and video podcast.

Resources for programming for the adult Sabbath school are also provided through *Cool Tools for Sabbath School*, available on the department Web site specifically to aid leadership in the various

responsibilities for Sabbath school. Topics include: superintendence, teaching, secretarial, Investment, branch Sabbath schools, music, prayer, fellowship, outreach, and mission. The department also provides training workshops and seminars for the improvement of learning in Sabbath school classes.

The International Institute of Christian Ministries provides coursework and certification in adult religious education, children's religious education, local church leadership, personal evangelism, public evangelism, and youth and young adult religious education.

The *Reaching and Winning* series of booklets makes available a thorough and systematic approach for ways in which to engage members of a specific faith group. Currently there are booklets for those who witness to Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. And more options are being added to this series regularly. Training for personal witnessing techniques, conducting Bible studies, church leadership, and other forms of ministry are presented in workshops and seminars.

Seminars and workshops regarding Adventist Community Services supplies motivation, training, and resources that aid church leaders and members in becoming more involved in their communities. The *Handbook for Community Services* and a Community Services section on the department Web page provide further resources.

Bible correspondence schools provide Bible lessons on request from radio, television, Internet, other media, and various means of advertisement, and these students are placed in contact with church outreach ministries. Churches may establish local-based Bible schools (Discover Bible Schools) for this purpose. Such Bible schools are a means through which members enroll students in the program and provide lessons by one-to-one contacts, small groups, the Internet, video/DVDs, and postal correspondence. The department supplies resources, consultation, and training.



## STEWARDSHIP

**Purpose.** — The Stewardship Department provides and promotes an integrated approach to stewardship education that focuses on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Within this theological framework stewardship equates with a lifestyle of service, sacrifice, and life partnership with God. This includes financial stewardship that seeks to inform, encourage, and remind church members of their spiritual responsibility to return tithe and give offerings of gratitude to God as a consequence of their covenant relationship with Him. These acts of faithfulness and thankfulness are the outward expression of the work of God in the believer's heart and a love response that acknowledges God as Creator, Owner, and Sustainer of life.

**Programs/Resources.** — The department provides ministry resources that can be used for personal study or as tools for teaching stewardship education in the church. These resources are listed under books/booklets, seminar material, or journals, on the department Web site that lists additional and updated resources. These materials may also be ordered from the General Conference Stewardship Department.

Books include *Stewardship Roots*, a theology of stewardship, tithe, and offerings, and *Tithing in the Writings of Ellen G. White*, a study of the influence of Scripture that shaped Ellen White's understanding of tithing. Topics include such subjects as the motivation for tithing and spiritual life, the logistics of tithing, and the uses of tithe. *Tithing in the New Testament and the Christian Church* addresses the issue of early church support of the gospel ministry through tithe. *Strategic Church Finances: A Biblical Approach* is based on a two-day seminar exploring a strategic approach to church finances built on an understanding of biblical stewardship.

The Stewardship seminar *Let God Be God: Biblical Stewardship Foundations* presents a three-DVD set addressing the biblical basis of

stewardship. The stewardship journal *Dynamic Steward* is a quarterly publication with articles, sermons, book reviews, and other ministry tools that focus on a specific topic and theme.

### WHITE ESTATE

**Purpose.** — The Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., was created by Ellen White's will at her death to serve as the custodian of her writings. Its five trustees care for her letters and manuscripts, maintain her copyrights, promote her writings in English, provide for their translation into other languages, and produce compilations as needed. Additionally, at the request of the General Conference, the White Estate provides the church with information about Ellen G. White and Adventist history. The White Estate also operates research centers in each of the world divisions.

**Programs/Resources.** — As the proprietor of the Ellen G. White writings, the White Estate works with the church's publishing houses to keep the books in print and foster their circulation. Since 1990 the White Estate has also made the published writings of Mrs. White available electronically on CD-ROM and since 1995 on the World Wide Web. Estate staff members are available to speak for workers' meetings, camp meetings, and other similar gatherings.

Each year the White Estate prepares a sermon, a children's story, and other materials that pastors can use for the annual Heritage Day in October. These materials are accessible on the White Estate Web site. In addition the Web site contains study guides for many of Ellen G. White's books, access to a large database of historical photographs, the full text of a number of books about Ellen G. White by other authors, and a searchable database of Ellen G. White's complete published writings. Other features include a daily devotional reading and a thought for the day, resources for children and youth, audio stories of the pioneers, and an extensive collection of materials about

Ellen White and the gift of prophecy, including information regarding accusations made by her critics.

## WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Women's Ministries Department upholds, encourages, and challenges Seventh-day Adventist women in their daily walk as disciples of Jesus Christ and as members of His world church. There are six Challenge Issues that guide this purpose: women's health, abuse, poverty, women's workloads, lack of leadership training and education, and illiteracy. These issues affect women of all cultures, social standing, and countries.

The department's objectives include nurturing women in the church and in the community while empowering them to become stronger women of God in the areas of Bible study, prayer, and personal growth, and providing an outreach to women in the community.

**Programs/Resources.** — A four-level training program, the Women's Leadership Certification Program, seeks to educate women in leadership and other related issues, while also providing for confidence in church leadership.

The Women's Ministries Scholarship Program provides support for Seventh-day Adventist women pursuing tertiary education.

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day is scheduled yearly for the fourth Sabbath of August. Women's Ministries spearheads this joint departmental yearly program, with an emphasis on breaking the silence on abuse. The department provides a series of brochures to supplement the yearly materials prepared for this day of emphasis.

The Challenge Issues set of six informational brochures provides information on various topics of significance to women generally. Resource kits address specifically issues of interest to single women, teens, and young women.

Three newsletters are available from the department: *MOSAIC*

presents news from the world of women's ministry; *Scholarshipping Our Sisters* addresses fund-raising support for scholarships; and the *Touch a Heart, Tell the World* newsletter reports on women's ministry projects and aids in fund-raising.

The HIV/AIDS educational flip chart tells the story of HIV/AIDS and provides information regarding the care of those infected with HIV/AIDS.

A variety of seminars designed to assist women in the area of personal development are available. The department publishes a new women's devotional book each year comprised of readings written by women, with the proceeds of this book supporting the Women's Ministries Scholarship Program.

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

**Purpose.** — The Youth Ministries Department, built on salvation and service, seeks to facilitate and support the ministry of pastors and churches in winning, training, holding, and reclaiming youth. The department assists the church in forming objectives, goals, plans, and training that will equip the body of the church to save its youth and prepare them for ministry. The department specializes in activities that foster Christian understanding and participation in church life and community service through four key foci: discipleship, leadership, witnessing, and service.

**Programs/Resources.** — The department provides the *Pastor's and Elder's Youth Ministry Handbook*, the *Youth Ministry Handbook*, The Pathfinder Story, The AY Story, The Adventurer Story, Master Guide, AY Leadership Award, and Pathfinder Leadership Award. The official Youth Ministry Book for Adventist Churches is *Getting It Right*, published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Functions for various age groups include: Leadership for the Senior Youth program, ages 22-30; Ambassador Club, ages 16-21;

Pathfinder program, ages 10-15; Adventurer program, ages 6-9.

*Youth Accent* is a quarterly magazine designed for use by church youth leaders and pastors. Youth Week of Prayer materials are prepared annually for church use, with materials for weekly youth programs prepared on an annual basis.

Multiple manuals provide information for the operation of youth programs, and Pathfinder Club, Adventurer Club, and Ambassador Club organizations. Materials for youth evangelistic programs and mission/service are also available.

A World Conference on Youth and Community Service is scheduled every five years in a selected venue/country. Campus Ministries programs are fostered through the organization of student associations in university centers. These ministries train students for outreach, hold student retreats, and develop materials for use in these venues.

# CHAPTER 13

## CHURCH POLICY

The church, in its broadest sense, exists when people individually respond to the call of God. But God does not call His people to isolation—He calls them to community, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” as Scripture states (Heb. 10:25). In this mode of assembling together, the church as structure comes into existence. For this to occur, it is natural and necessary that some form of agreed-upon structure must and does occur. In order to guide this structure, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has established policies and procedures for the harmonious operation of the church as institution. Three primary publications address these procedures: the *Church Manual*, the *General Conference Working Policy*, and the *Minister’s Handbook*.

### **CHURCH MANUAL**



The *Church Manual* provides policies for denominational operation. Established and revised by the General Conference in session, the *Church Manual* serves as the authoritative voice of the church on matters of organization and operation and can be changed only by the General Conference in session. Pastors are responsible for the application of its policies in churches. “When, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 260).

The *Church Manual* does have flexibility, permitting adaptation

to varying cultures and social settings as reflected in the division editions. From time to time it is good and necessary to change these policies as the need becomes clear. Such changes arise out of recognized need in the church, and are passed on to the conference for process through the organizational structure of the church to the General Conference.



### ***GENERAL CONFERENCE WORKING POLICY***

The *General Conference Working Policy* (and the division and union adaptations of it) provides policies for operation at the various levels of the church institution. This policy is reviewed, modified, and updated at the General Conference Annual Council and at the division year-end meetings.

### ***MINISTER'S HANDBOOK***

The *Minister's Handbook* provides additional ministerial guidelines for church operation. Prepared by the General Conference Ministerial Association in consultation with pastors and other church leaders from the world field, the *Minister's Handbook* is updated as needed.

# CHAPTER 14

## CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES

### PURPOSE

Churches, in their collective capacity through the conference, confer upon certain individuals the authority to represent and speak for the church as authorized ministers, by the granting of credentials and licenses. Together with the union level of governance, they carry the responsibility of overseeing the issuing of these credentials and licenses. “The union and local conferences/missions/fields share the responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of the ministry and are required by denominational action and practice to assure that credentials issued within their respective territories shall indeed certify that the holders are in good and unquestioned standing, properly subject to invitation to any other field of service” (*GC Policy* L 60 05).

**Protection.** — Credentials and licenses protect congregations from those who might mislead, misrepresent, or offend the church. In order that access to the pulpit may be safeguarded, it is urged that only those possessing valid denominational credentials and licenses, or established members of the church, be invited to speak. However, there are times when congregations may be addressed by such others as government officials, civic leaders, or specially recognized guests.

**Disciplined ministers.** — Ministers may be disciplined because of a moral fall, unfaithfulness, apostasy, embezzlement or theft, giving continuing support to an activity subversive to the denomination while persistently refusing to recognize church authority, or contin-



ued and unrepentant dissidence regarding the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church (see *GC Policy* L 60 20).

Such discipline may affect ministers by the (1) withdrawal of credential or license, (2) annulment of ordination, (3) loss of church membership, and (4) loss of employment in gospel ministry, the teaching ministry, or denominational leadership. “Where practical the organization involved shall provide a professional program of counseling and career guidance for the minister and family to assist them in transition” (*GC Policy* L 60 30).

***Credential expiration.*** — Credentials and licenses are issued for the duration of the term for which they are granted by the employing organization and are renewed only by a vote of the appropriate body. If a credentialed or licensed individual ceases to be employed by the issuing organization, or if the credential or license is not renewed for a new term of service by the appropriate body, the employee ceases to function as an authorized employee. The possession of an out-of-date or expired credential or license does not authorize a former employee to function in any of the capacities for which they were issued.

## TO WHOM ISSUED

***Employees.*** — “Credentials/licenses shall be issued only to full-time denominational employees and to those under the supervision of conferences/missions/fields or denominationally owned institutions. They shall expire when denominational employment is terminated. In special cases a credential/license may be issued to a nondenominationally employed individual while serving the church under the supervision of a denominational organization” (*GC Policy* E 10 80). Credentials and licenses may also be granted to chaplains and to ministers attending school (*GC Policy* E 10 85-90). Any organization with authority to issue credentials and licenses has the power to withdraw the papers it has granted.

**Retirees.** — “Honorary/emeritus credentials shall be issued by union conferences and union missions to retired denominational employees who are entitled to such credentials, and who reside within the territory of their unions, except for those provided for in E 10 65” (*GC Policy* E 10 60). In most cases, “employees receiving benefits from the Retirement Plan and retired military chaplains receiving military retirement pay, if entitled to credentials or other papers, are to receive the same from the union conference in which they reside” (*GC Policy* E 10 70).

Retired ministers usually hold their membership in a church near their place of residence, and they should lend support to the pastor as they are needed and able. Their relationship to the church is the same as that of any other church member except that they may still be called upon to baptize, perform weddings, ordain local leaders, and perform the various functions of the ordained minister.

## TYPES OF CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES

Credentials and licenses are given to denominational employees according to the service category in which they are employed. A license is issued to beginning employees; following a period of satisfactory service, credentials are issued.

**Ministerial credential.** — Ministerial credentials are given only to ordained ministers.

**Ministerial license.** — Ministerial licenses are given to nonordained pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers who are on the path toward ordination. “The responsibility and authority of the licensed minister may in certain circumstances be extended to include the performance of specific functions of the ordained minister in the churches to which he is assigned. The authority for extending this responsibility belongs to the division committee which shall clearly outline for its territory the ministerial functions which may be delegated to licensed ministers” (*GC*

*Policy L 25 05*). “The conference/mission/field executive committee shall authorize, in harmony with the division policy, which functions of the ordained minister the licensed minister may perform” (*GC Policy L 25 15*). Minimum requirements to be met by licensed ministers before being given extended ministerial functions include: completion of the ministerial training program, holding a current ministerial license, appointment to a ministerial or pastoral responsibility, election as a local elder in each church to which they are assigned, and ordination as a local elder.

***Commissioned minister credential.*** — Commissioned minister credentials are given to associates in pastoral care; Bible instructors; General Conference, division, union, and local conference treasurers and departmental directors, including associate and assistant directors; institutional chaplains; presidents and vice presidents of major institutions; auditors (General Conference director, associates, area and district directors); and field directors of the Christian Record Services. Some divisions may not participate in granting this credential.

***Commissioned minister license.*** — Commissioned minister licenses are given to employees in the commissioned minister credential categories who have fewer than five years experience. It is not the normal practice to ordain an individual holding this license.

***Missionary credentials and licenses.*** — Employees not involved in the work categories listed above are given a missionary credential or license based on similar criteria.

***Bible instructor.*** — Bible instructors generally carry a missionary license for up to five years, and then receive a missionary credential. Where the commissioned minister license and credential are given, Bible instructors should be included in this category.

## MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP

Ministerial interns are given a ministerial license rather than a

ministerial credential, indicating that their ministerial training is still in progress. It “designates a period of service spent in practical ministerial training, to be entered upon after the completion of the prescribed ministerial training course, this training period to be served under supervision in a local conference/mission/field, at a limited wage, for the purpose of proving the divine call to the ministry” (*GC Policy L 10 10*).

Conference administration should ensure that interns receive adequate, supervised, and varied experience under trained experienced ministers. The General Conference Ministerial Association has developed a *Manual for Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors*. The manual aims to train intern supervisors, and assist them in training interns.

# CHAPTER 15

## ORDINATION AND COMMISSIONING

The spiritual rite of ordination and commissioning constitutes recognition by the church for those who have been called and chosen to serve in capacities of leadership and service in the church. Such spiritual rites extend to service in gospel ministry as well as various church offices.

***Ordination for particular service.*** — While all Christians are called to render spiritual service, the New Testament portrays an organized church, administered and nurtured by persons who are specially called by God and set apart by the laying on of hands for a particular service. Elders and deacons, appointed by the church on the basis of spiritual experience and ability (Titus 1:5; Acts 6:3), and those serving in gospel ministry, are recognized as receiving a special calling from God. Apart from the appointment and ordination of the twelve apostles for their unique, unrepeatable role (Mark 3:13, 14), the Scriptures distinguish three categories of ordained officers:

(1) the gospel minister, whose role may be seen as preaching, teaching, administering the ordinances, and pastoral care of the church (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

(2) the elder, who exercises oversight of a local congregation, performing some pastoral functions as well (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5, 9; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5).

(3) the deacon, to whose care the poor and the benevolent work of the congregation are entrusted (Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

***Ordination and commissioning to gospel ministry.*** — Just as

prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil for special roles, so the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands recognizes that God calls some for special purposes. Ordination and commissioning acknowledge God's call and set the individual apart and appoint that person to serve the church in a special capacity. The person thus set apart becomes an authorized representative of the church. By this act the church delegates its authority to its ministers to proclaim the gospel publicly, to administer its ordinances, to organize new congregations, and, within the parameters established by God's Word, to give direction to the believers.

Ordination and commissioning are not sacramental in the sense of conferring some special character trait or power or the ability to formulate doctrine. The biblical background of the rite indicates that it was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and recognition of one's authority in that office. By this means the church sets its seal upon the work of God performed through its ministers. In ordination the church publicly invokes God's blessing upon those He has chosen and devoted to this special work of ministry.

***Qualifications for ordination and commissioning.*** — Since ministers carry out their ministry within an earthly organization, that organization must determine whether there is indeed a genuine call to the gospel ministry. God's call and His equipping constitute the first step to the ministry. The recognition and confirmation of that call by those authorized to evaluate its validity comprise the second.

Candidates for the gospel ministry should evince:

***Spiritual experience.*** They must have a deep, experiential knowledge of and devotion to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that reveals itself in an exemplary lifestyle and reputation, in sound judgment, in representative home life, and in positive character traits.

***Knowledge of the Scriptures.*** Christian pastors are primarily called to the ministry of the Word. Therefore candidates should have a mind

furnished with the truth, utterly subject to the Word of God, and prepared to penetrate and make plain its right meaning. They will have given evidence that they have mastered and are able to apply the discipline of theology in their preaching, teaching, and counseling.

*Competence for the tasks of ministry.* Candidates must manifest that God has equipped them with the gifts necessary to the ministry—gifts of intellect and utterance that enable them to proclaim, defend, and teach the faith, and the gift of leadership that enables them to guide, motivate, and train the congregations entrusted to their care.

*A fruitful ministry.* While Christ would naturally call and equip His servants and bless their efforts, candidates will reveal their call to the ministry both by soul-winning success and by their ability to nurture those in their care.

***Responsibility of ordination and commissioning.*** — Though ordination and commissioning convey no special powers upon the recipient, this action does impose solemn responsibilities and for that reason should not be accepted lightly. Gospel ministers are not their own, but God's. They dedicate their time, talents, and lives to Him without reservation, for they are His mouthpiece and representatives of His church, with the care and salvation of souls as a weighty commission entrusted to them.

### **AUTHORIZING ORDINATION**

The *General Conference Working Policy*, section L 35-50, clearly and extensively delineates both the standards and procedures to be taken in the process of ordination to gospel ministry. Some divisions authorize ordination for men in ministry and commissioning for women in ministry. While the policy L 35-50 is directed primarily toward the ordination of men, it reasonably applies to the commissioning of women as well. The entire section is not here reproduced, yet a few of its principles are listed.

**Preparation.** — Recognizing that the divisions establish policy governing the suggested ordination track, it is recommended that each division require four to six years of field work beyond the approved educational standard for pastoral preparation. The preferred timetable for ordination is within a 10-year track from college through field work, including four years of undergraduate studies, two years of graduate education, and four years of field work. An alternative to this outline is four years of formal education followed by six years of field work.

If at the conclusion of this timetable it is determined that a candidate is not properly prepared for ordination, the candidate's call to ministry should be reviewed. If there is widespread failure on the part of the conference to prepare candidates in a timely manner for ordination, the union conference should evaluate the situation.

**Authorization procedure.** — Ordination and commissioning to gospel ministry is the setting apart of the employee to a sacred calling. It is neither a reward for faithful service nor an opportunity to add title and prestige to an employee. It must be done with wide counsel, following the procedures outlined in the *General Conference Working Policy* L 45 05. Pastors not yet ordained should be evaluated annually by a committee made up of conference administrators, the ministerial secretary, and several other individuals appointed by the executive committee regarding their progress toward ordination. Helpful tools in this process are available in the *Manual of Evaluation Instruments* prepared by the General Conference Ministerial Association.

**Examination process.** — “The examination of candidates for ordination is conducted by ordained ministers. Ordained representatives of conferences/missions/fields/institutions/unions/divisions/General Conference who are present may be invited to assist in the examination. Where it is deemed advisable by the conference/mission/field executive committee, one or more laypersons may be selected to



participate” (*GC Policy L 50*). The process leading to ordination is as follows:

1. Examination by a committee made up of the conference administrators, ministerial secretary, and several other individuals appointed by the executive committee.\*

a. It is recommended that the union conference ministerial secretary—or another representative designated by the union administration if the ministerial secretary is not available—be a part of this examination process.

b. During this process it is also recommended, if the candidate is married, to invite the spouse to participate in the examination, inasmuch as an ordination to the gospel ministry involves more than just the candidate.

2. Consideration by the conference committee and recommendation to the union committee.

3. Approval by the union committee.

a. Official communication of approval should be communicated to the candidate, along with the date and location of the ordination ceremony.

b. Any further examinations should focus primarily on affirming and encouraging the candidate.

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\*In some instances, ordination may occur at other levels of church structure, such as unions, divisions, the General Conference, or in educational institutions. In such cases, similar procedures should be followed involving the personnel of these institutions as directed by *General Conference Policy L 45 05*.

# CHAPTER 16

## ORDINATION AND COMMISSIONING SERVICES

Ordination and commissioning comprise the formal dedication by the church of individuals placed in positions of leadership and service. In the Adventist Church these include ministers of the gospel, elders, and deacons. For ministers, the service is instituted by the employing organization, and for elders and deacons, by the church in which they are elected to serve. Though similar in some respects, the service for ministers is usually a longer, separate service, while for elders and deacons it is usually included as part of a Sabbath worship service.

### MINISTERS

Ordination and commissioning services generally occur either at a conference function, such as camp meeting, or in the church that the minister currently serves. While the camp meeting setting provides a wider audience representation from the sisterhood of churches, it does tend to limit the opportunity of participation by the congregation that the minister serves.

***Order of service.*** — Following is a typical order of service:

- opening hymn
- prayer
- presentation of candidate(s)
- special music
- homily
- candidate's response

- ordination prayer
- charge
- welcome
- benediction
- receiving line

*Ordination prayer.* With the congregation usually seated with bowed heads for the ordination prayer, the ministers and the candidate kneel, the latter in the center of the group. Those who have a part in the service, and as many others as may conveniently do so, kneel close to the candidate so as to join in the laying on of hands.

The ordination prayer recognizes God's call of the minister to this sacred work and the need of divine strength to fulfill that call. This prayer asks that, as the hands of the ministers are laid upon the candidate in recognition by the church of the divine call, the Lord may bestow the blessing of the Holy Spirit's power. With the laying on of hands mentioned in the prayer, each ordained minister places a hand on the candidate, or on those laying hands on the candidate, so that all are joined in the laying on of hands.

*Charge.* Rising from prayer, the ministers stand while the charge is given:

God has called you to the work of the ministry, and the church, in recognizing that call, has set you aside by the laying on of hands. You are now invested with full ecclesiastical authority. No higher honor can come to any person. But such honor also involves great responsibility.

I charge you to minister as a servant, making the Master your lifelong study. By spending time with Jesus, you will become like Him, for it is by beholding that we become changed. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matt. 10:24, 25).

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:5-7).

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3, 4).

“Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

I charge you to minister as a shepherd. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. . . . The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep” (John 10:11-13).

I charge you to minister as a watchman. “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. . . . But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

I charge you to minister as a teacher. “If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. . . . Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:6-16).

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, KJV).

And when your work is ended, may you say with Paul,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

*Welcome.* The platform participants remain standing during the welcome. The welcome may be given by one person, or by representatives of the various groups mentioned.

It is my privilege to extend to you a welcome into the ranks of the gospel ministry. I welcome you on behalf of your conference and the world church. Be loyal to its leadership. Make use of its services to assist in your work.

I welcome you on behalf of your fellow ministers, who share with you the joys, the rewards, and the burdens of ministry. Having experienced these before, they are a source of wise counsel and experience that will assist you in your ministry.

I welcome you on behalf of the congregation you serve, who hold you up before God in their prayers, and who serve as coworkers in His service. And when at last you stand victorious with those for whom you have labored and prayed, you will hear the voice of your Redeemer say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:21).

*Receiving line.*

- conference, union, division, or general officers giving ordination certificates
- ministers
- elders from churches presently served
- family and special guests
- audience

**Commissioning.** — In divisions in which women receive commissioning to ministry, this same order of service may be used for the commissioning service, or the ordination and commissioning service may occur in the same service.

## ELDERS AND DEACONS

Soon after the church elects new elders and deacons a service of ordination should be scheduled to dedicate them to this task. Such ordinations are to be performed by an ordained minister. Elders and deacons should be persons of experience, chosen wisely. By action of the Annual Council of 1975, reaffirmed at the 1984 Annual Council, both men and women are eligible to serve as elders and receive ordination to this position of service in the church.

**Elders.** — A proper form of elder ordination embraces the following features:

With an ordained minister in charge, other ordained ministers and elders in the congregation are invited to participate in this service. At the time selected, usually during the Sabbath morning worship service, candidates and participants are invited to join the minister before the congregation. Fitting scriptural passages, such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7, are read, with brief comments included regarding the work of an elder in the church.

The candidate and participants kneel together. The minister prays that God will bless the recognition the church gives that the Holy Spirit has called the candidate to this office. The hand of ordination is laid on the candidate's head during the prayer. Assisting ministers and elders may join in this laying on of hands.

After prayer the minister and those assisting clasp the candidate's hand and share a word of blessing. A certificate of ordination may be given. The one newly ordained then may return to the congregation or be seated on the platform to take part in the remainder of the service.

Having once been ordained as a church elder, the church officer does not necessarily need to be ordained again upon reelection or upon election as elder of some other church. One who has been ordained as elder may later function as a deacon without further ordination.

***Deacons and deaconesses.*** — The ordination service for a deacon is much the same as that for an elder. The suggested scriptural passage is 1 Timothy 3:8-13. According to the *Church Manual*, “the church may arrange for a suitable service of induction for the deaconess by an ordained minister holding current credentials.” The suggested scriptural passage is Romans 16:1.

# CHAPTER 17

## CHURCH PLANTING, ORGANIZING, UNITING, AND DISSOLVING

With the passage of time, shifts in population, demographics, church membership, and finances may impact the need for established churches to also serve another geographic area. As a result of these variables, it may be wise to plant a new congregation and ultimately organize a new church. Or uniting two or more churches into one congregation may be the wise course of action, or perhaps at times it may be necessary to dissolve a previously existing church. The *Church Manual* addresses these policies and procedures at length. For the purpose of this handbook, primarily the programmatic aspects of these activities will be addressed.

### **PLANTING A NEW CHURCH**

One of the most productive methods of church growth is the planting of new congregations. Established churches that purposely seek to foster new congregations as a means of evangelistic outreach are themselves strengthened in the process. When a church reaches the size at which its officers can best perform their task of shepherding, nurturing, and training members, the church could well foster a new congregation. Under ordinary circumstances, churches that have grown to 300 to 500 members generally are large enough to consider planting a new congregation.

Planting a new church will have the double effect of involving more members in the work of the church and establishing a congregation



in a new area needing to be served. New churches win new members. Generally, unchurched people are difficult to attract to a church more than a half hour away from their residence. Church growth studies also indicate that new churches tend to revive inactive members more readily than do old churches. Ideally, the planting of new churches should be based on outreach ministry and not on self-interest or splits in an existing church.

### **HOW TO START A NEW CHURCH**

In close consultation with the local conference, determine the location of the greatest need for a new church through the study of demographics and population growth. Locate the new church in a place that will serve a significant unserved population, and design its culture and services to meet the needs of that population group.

Develop interest in the proposed area through home Bible study and small group ministries that could develop into home churches. Start a branch Sabbath school. Hold evangelistic meetings in the area and form a company made up of volunteers from the established church who offer to attend and support the new organization for a specified time, perhaps two or three years. The *Church Manual* provides specific procedures for organizing a company.

### **PREPARATION FOR ORGANIZING A NEW CHURCH**

When it becomes evident that the new church can thrive, request formal organization approval from conference administration. The organization of the church is to be presided over by an ordained minister. Although the authorization to form new churches is granted to all ordained ministers, the conference president should, “whenever possible, be invited to be present” (*Church Manual*).

Provision should be made for a charter member signing list. Transfers of membership for those wishing to join the new church from

previous congregations must be processed through regular channels. Arrange for necessary record books and materials to be available for the new treasurer, clerk, and other officers to be chosen.

Provide Communion equipment for this church function. Although conducting a Communion service at the time of the organization ceremony may make the program too long, a Communion service should be held soon thereafter, perhaps at the first regular worship service.

### **ORGANIZING SERVICE FOR A NEW CHURCH**

The following suggested order of service makes provision for the process outlined in the *Church Manual*, for the organization of churches:

- opening song
- prayer
- brief review of fundamental doctrines
- forming of nucleus
- accepting of membership by vote of nucleus
- forming of nominating committee
- congregational singing and testimony  
(while the nominating committee meets)
- voting of new officers
- ordination of new elders and deacons
- challenge to the new church and its members
- church's response
- prayer of dedication

If desirable, several meetings might be held to organize a new church. These could include a Friday evening Communion at the new church, with the established church invited; a Sabbath morning commissioning service, as the established church acknowledges departing members; a Sabbath afternoon organization ceremony, as

the new church is established; a Sabbath evening fellowship meal and social event.

### UNITING CHURCHES

The uniting of churches involves more than merely the transfer of members from one church to another and the closing of the former facility. Rather, in the uniting of churches, the previous churches cease to exist, and a new church is formed. The process for this action is provided in the *Church Manual*.

Prior to the meeting for the uniting of churches, careful counsel with conference leadership and the uniting churches must take place. The churches involved should individually engage in extensive exploration of the uniting option and be in agreement that this constitutes the wise and desirable course of action to take. Only at a duly called church business meeting can such a choice be made by the church. Upon mutually reaching the decision to unite, the churches then request authorization from the conference executive committee to proceed with uniting.

After receiving the recommendation from the conference committee, the churches prepare a unification agreement document that includes the reason for uniting, plans for the disposal of property, financial arrangements, a new church name, and items relevant to the union. In a joint meeting presided over by an ordained minister, the churches vote the acceptance of the unification document, and the unification is consummated. A request is then submitted to the next conference session for acceptance of the new church into the sisterhood of churches in the conference.

With the forming of the new church, all previous church officer positions are vacated, with a nominating committee chosen for the selection of new church officers to fill leadership positions for the remainder of the church year. Records, books, and bank accounts

from both of the churches become a part of the new church.

### **DISSOLVING CHURCHES**

The action of dissolving churches rarely occurs in Adventist congregations. Reasons for dissolving include loss of members, church discipline, and apostasy or rebellion. When such an action becomes necessary, it is important to know that every effort has been made to avoid the process. Careful counsel with conference leadership must be taken into account.

No precise criteria for deciding when a church becomes too small to continue effectively exist. The *Church Manual* suggests that this occurs when “so many of the members may move away that the number remaining is not sufficient to support the organization.” Yet if the members are content and deeply loyal to their church, dissolving becomes very difficult and perhaps unwise. Members whose leadership potential is not being tapped in another congregation might be willing to transfer their membership and provide leadership. When dissolving is the chosen course of action, members seek transfer to other churches or, if unavailable, to the conference church. With all membership having been thus transferred, the church is effectively dissolved.

Churches moving toward apostasy usually have some theological or procedural disagreement with the church. Among them may be individuals whose dissidence is extreme and whose influence has confused others. Every effort must be made to bring them into harmony and fellowship with the church. If these efforts prove unsuccessful, the conference committee, after careful consideration, will recommend to the conference session that the church be expelled from the sisterhood of churches. The matter of individual membership will be handled according to church policy.

# CHAPTER 18

## CHURCH LEADERSHIP

To establish the kingdom of God in the earth and press back the forces of evil, all the while looking to the realization of the full coming of the kingdom in its ultimate triumph at the second coming of Christ, describes the purpose of the church. With this as its reason for existence, the church does not become static but dynamic in its growth and movement. The church has a vision for the future and direction in its work. As with any group working together, a need for leadership exists in order to reach its objectives cohesively. In the church the pastor is appointed and expected to be that leader.

On assignment to a church, the pastor assumes principal leadership of the congregation. Such assignment authorizes ministers to function in all areas of pastoral responsibility both personally and by delegating and overseeing the responsibility to other church leaders. "All branches of the work belong to the ministers" (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 375). This does not mean that they must personally attend to the entire work of the church, but that all work does come under their supervision. They are responsible for overseeing and fostering every department and program while working in cooperation with the local elders and other duly elected officers of the body.

***Servant leadership.*** — Christian leadership is servant leadership. Healthy, growing churches usually have strong and effective pastoral leadership. But strong does not mean dominating or manipulative leadership. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you,

let him be your servant” (Matt. 20:25, 26).

Personality and leadership style are intimately related to the natural way ministers lead, yet leaders should adapt to different settings and the needs of those to whom they direct their ministry. Servant leadership demands adaptation and flexibility. The apostle Paul gives the example of this adaptation, saying, “Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; . . . to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

***Visioning.*** — Without a vision of its mission and future, a church tends to stagnate, ritualistically repeating its past behaviors. But the vision of the future does not ignore the past. The church must visualize both what is and what ought to be. Pastoral leadership calls for casting a vision that not only addresses what the church ought to be, but also moves the members to ownership of the objective. By powerfully preaching the Word, and the winsome motivation of the membership, this can be accomplished.

***Organization.*** — A church gets from where it is to where it wants to be by consciously organizing its resources and personnel to accomplish specific plans and objectives. There is little value in making plans unless the church has the personnel with the skills and interest to carry them out. This entails recruitment, training, and commitment to the task.

***Delegation.*** — Much of the work of the church can and should be accomplished by church members. Servant leadership does not become compromised with the sharing of authority. Often leadership in the church fails to be delegated because the pastor finds it easier to do the work than to recruit, motivate, and train leadership. This might be a valid notion if the primary business of the church was

getting work done. But the primary objective of church business is the spiritual growth and well-being of church members, and members involved in the work of the church are most likely to remain spiritually strong in the church.

**Supervision.** — Once work has been delegated it needs supervision—not in a meddling, micromanaging manner, but in supportive encouragement and evaluation of performance. Reward and recognize good work. Assist and support when needed, and be willing to allow others to receive the credit when the job is well done.

### SETTING OBJECTIVES

Objectives clarify what the church needs to do and how the members plan to accomplish them. At least once a year, and preferably once a quarter, the church should review the goals it has set for itself and how they are being achieved. The most important time for a review of previously chosen objectives and for the forming of new ones is the time church officers are being elected for a new church term. Leaders chosen and committees formed should depend not just on what was done in the past but also on what was planned for the future. Objectives grow best out of dialogue within the congregation. Pastors and church board members should seek congregational participation regarding the needs and aspirations of the membership, thus providing buy-in from the congregation.

**Attainable objectives.** — Set objectives that are attainable. Projecting financial plans that are unrealistic not only risks withering debt but also creates disillusionment among members. Likewise, promoting unrealistic expectations in membership growth or church program accomplishments will produce discouragement and destroy participation.

**Measurable objectives.** — Not all aspects of church life and spirituality are easily measurable. Because of the difficulty in assessing

success or failure without measurability, seek some form of indication regarding the accomplishment of objectives.

## COMMITTEES

The apostle Paul invokes the metaphor of the human body in portraying the function of the church. The harmonious cooperation of the various parts of the body, or the church, equals success. Like the body, the church is not all of one part or of one opinion, but through the committee system these various functions and opinions can contribute to a harmonious and productive whole. “In counseling for the advancement of the work, no one man is to be a controlling power, a voice for the whole. Proposed methods and plans are to be carefully considered so that all the brethren may weigh their relative merits and decide which should be followed” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 259).

Like the body, the church operates on the basis of group participation. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14). All of us together are wiser than any one of us alone.

**Committee structure.** — The church business meeting is the highest authority in the local church. A church business meeting “may be held monthly or quarterly according to the needs of the church” (*Church Manual*). In addition, votes on membership issues are frequently processed during the Sabbath worship service.

The church board stands as the next-highest authority of the local church committee system. The pastor generally chairs the church board, but may pass this position to another church member. Beyond these two positions, the pastor should avoid chairing a large number of additional committees, but the pastor or a designated elder should serve as an ex-officio member of every committee.

A quorum for the enacting of business should be established for the work of the various committees and boards of the church.



**Levels of decision-making.** — Decisions should be made by the most appropriate committee. Each committee should have clearly defined terms of reference and authority and should operate within these definitions. Because of the waste of time and talent to duplicate responsibility for decision-making between various committees, each committee should know its areas of concern and its authority to act or to recommend for approval by another body.

**Chairing committees.** — Committees function best when the members are informed as to the purpose of the committee and the agenda to be addressed. Listed below are suggestions for the preparation and operation of committees:

**Agenda preparation.** An agenda lists items for the committee to consider and upon which to act. Each committee member should receive a copy of the agenda. If practical, this should be done before the meeting date so that members can come prepared with input and information. Depending on the agreed-upon rules for the committee, additional items may be added by the members. If the agenda is established in advance, it may be modified only by a committee vote.

**Punctuality.** Committees should have a dependable time schedule. Both starting and ending at a preset time builds attendance by committee members. Committees that exhaust both the physical and emotional limits of members do not often come to good conclusions. “In the hope of reaching a decision, they continue their meetings far into the night. . . . If the brain were given proper periods of rest, the thoughts would be clear and sharp, and the business would be expedited” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 256).

**Cooperation.** Members should be led into a spirit of teamwork and cooperation. The chair has much to do with creating this kind of spirit. Dialogue should flow freely and directly from person to person. Understand and at least informally observe the rules of parliamentary procedure, establishing a sense of fairness and democratic process.

*Participation.* Ensure a broad spectrum of participation, and encourage everyone to join in the discussion. Avoid domination of the process by any one individual or group. Specifically seek the inclusion of the more timid, inviting them to share their thinking.

*Respect of ideas.* As chair, remain as unbiased and neutral as possible. On occasion it may be wise to pass the chair to someone else in order to enter the discussion more directly. Advocate and practice committee confidentiality. Frank discussion of delicate issues should not be carried outside the committee.

*Focusing on the issue.* At times the attention of the committee will wander from the issue being considered, and a discussion of unrelated items will break in. The chair must bring the committee back to the issue at hand.

*Summary.* Rephrase and summarize the discussion and work toward consensus. Generally there will be agreement on an issue when all sides have been examined. The call for a vote is not for the purpose of stifling discussion, but for reaching consensus on a decision.

*Recording and providing of minutes.* Minutes of a meeting should be read and approved by the committee at the next meeting. Records should be maintained as a reminder of what action and assignments are needed for implementation following the meeting and as a source of evaluation of the effectiveness of the committee and its decisions.

*Supporting the decision.* When an action is taken, the duty of all members of the committee includes supporting the action, regardless of whether they voted for or against it.

# CHAPTER 19

## MINISTRY FOR ALL MEMBERS

The gospel commission was clearly intended for all Christians, not just the disciples to whom it was first addressed, nor to a select group of professional ministers. Likewise, the gifts of the Spirit are given to all “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Everyone receiving the Holy Spirit receives ministering gifts designated to be used in ministry for Christ.

The Greek word *laos*, from which the word “laity” is derived, has nothing to do with an amateur or secondary status within the church. Rather, it includes the entire people of God. A false and artificial distinction separates the work of the church from the laity and places it in the hands of clergy, as if the work of ministry is the responsibility of a paid professional. Leadership in the church becomes the responsibility of those called and appointed to these unique roles, yet ministry in the broadest sense should be recognized as the work of the entire church membership. “Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 110).

**The challenge.** — At His ascension Jesus gave to His church the assignment to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). To His small group of followers the work must have seemed an impossible assignment until they understood His plan for its fulfillment. The work must be accomplished, not by

our own individual will and prowess, but by the Holy Spirit working through us. In this plan no hierarchy exists, for everyone is a minister performing some ministry for which they have been specially gifted.

It is easy to think of the church primarily as an organization or institution, rather than as a fellowship or community of faith, which is the predominant meaning of “church” in the New Testament. We sometimes assume that the role of church members is merely to help professional ministers do their work, when in fact the function of ministerial leadership includes helping the people do their work. “If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting, and also avoid many causes of friction” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 198).

Everyone receiving the Holy Spirit receives a gift for ministry, but not everyone receives the same gift. Each person should accept the responsibility for the gifts God provides for ministry. To presume that everyone should perform the same ministry comprises a misunderstanding of the gifts of the Spirit. “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers” (*Christian Service*, p. 68). A test of evangelism is not only how many come into the church to worship, but how many go out into the community to serve.

### **MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS**

Leading volunteers in the church is very different from managing paid employees, who have to do a job whether they want to or not in order to earn a living. Servant leaders do not presume authority over church workers. They work because they want to. Success in pastoral leadership is tied to the ability to motivate volunteers.

***Preach inspirationally.*** — Christ-centered, biblically-based preach-

ing inspires people to do church work for altruistic, spiritual reasons. Christian service should be performed, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. True service motivation is based on thankfulness, not guilt.

***Involve members in planning.*** — Imposing assignments on people who have not been a part of the planning process leads to resistance. If people are involved in the planning, they will treat the project as a personal challenge. Planning clarifies the mission and purpose of a project and gets people involved. When the planning process gets members enthusiastic about a given program, they'll want to help lead it.

***Include Job descriptions.*** — With no clear understanding of what a given task requires, there is little likelihood that people will want to accept the job. Ill-defined assignments lead to frustration, both for those attempting to do the task and those trying to motivate them to work. Job descriptions for positions of service in the church should be clearly stated.

***Recognize and appreciate faithful service.*** — Church leaders may not be looking for a compliment, but they do look for indicators regarding the success of their work and for appreciation of their service. They need to know that their work is valued.

***Protect leaders from overload.*** — Often willing helpers in the church are overloaded to the point of exhaustion. People lead busy lives and have many work, community, and family responsibilities. Overworking church leaders may lead them to drop out of church work altogether.

***Share the responsibility.*** — Working with volunteers over whom the pastor has little direct control becomes a challenge. At times it may seem easier just to do a specific task, rather than depend on the work of volunteers. But the ministry of the church belongs to everyone. Ellen White states, "The burden of church work should be distributed

among its individual members” (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895).

## WORKING WITH CHURCH LEADERS

***The church as a body.*** — With the range of the church’s work so broad and the needed skills so many, no one person, including the pastor, has all the gifts needed to accomplish it. Rather, through the gifts of the Spirit God provides for the church’s needs. No individual alone represents the whole of the body of Christ. “If you carry lines of work for which you are not adapted, your efforts in presenting the word will prove unsuccessful” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 246).

***Working with elders.*** — “The minister should not gather to himself all lines of responsibility, but should share these with the local elder(s) and other officers. . . . The elder(s) should, in counsel with the minister, assist in the pastoral responsibility, which includes visiting the church members, ministering to the sick, arranging or leading out in anointing services and child dedications, and encouraging those who are disheartened” (*Church Manual*).

***Matching gifts and assignments.*** — When the church program is planned, attention should be given as to what gifts are available in the congregation. Recognize abilities, and match those gifts with the program. Working with the church nominating committee provides the opportunity to structure an officer group in the church matched to the plans and programs to be accomplished. When the committee meets, plans and job descriptions of offices that need to be filled should be made available, thus providing the committee with lists of the type of personnel needed for church offices.

***Installation of officers.*** — A formal installation service for church leaders at the beginning of the officer year emphasizes the significance of church offices and provides an occasion for the church to recognize and dedicate its leadership. The following litany of dedication is an example of the kind of service that could be used.

- Leader:** To the worship of God and the work of the church—
- Officers:** We dedicate ourselves.
- Leader:** To the fulfilling of our assigned duties under the guidance of God, and for the edification and leadership of young and old—
- Officers:** We consecrate our services.
- Leader:** To the setting of a right example of Christian living in our homes, at our work, and before all with whom we come in contact—
- Officers:** We commit our lives.
- Leader:** Your chosen leaders have promised, by the grace of God, to faithfully fulfill the duties of the offices to which they have been elected. Will you pledge your support, assistance, and prayers as they work with you in doing Christ’s work in the church?
- Congregation:** We will.
- Leader:** [Dedicatory prayer.]

### TRAINING MEMBERS

“Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149).

**Conference resources.** — The conference leadership and departmental structure have both materials and personnel available to assist in the training of members for service. They are specialists in their fields, and can provide valuable help in conducting seminars and training schools.

***Congregational resources.*** — Use the expertise within the congregation. Some in the congregation may have filled church leadership positions for many years. This experience can be shared and passed on to new officers; others may have special training in areas useful to church offices. These can also be enlisted in the training process.



## CHAPTER 20

# LARGE DISTRICTS

Most Adventist churches are in some form of multi-church district configuration; relatively few churches stand alone. In some divisions a pastor with associates may be assigned as many as 15 or 20 congregations. Pastoral leadership in such settings requires special skills in delegation, training, and administration. In such a setting pastors can meet with a congregation only a few times a year and cannot closely relate to each congregation. In these areas careful thought should be given as to the location of the pastor's living quarters in order to optimize both travel considerations and family interests.

***Leadership training.*** — In these churches the training of church officers and the delegating of leadership responsibilities become necessary. These leaders do most of the preaching, lead out in evangelism, care for nurturing the members of their congregation, and administer the various functions of the church. Pastors in these settings operate primarily in the areas of planning, administrating, vision casting, and educating. Working with and training these church officers is of primary importance. Such training should include instruction in:

- sermon preparation and presentation
- conducting committee meetings
- visitation
- departments of the church
- care of church property
- Adventist history and its message
- care of new members

It is recommended that congregations or conferences conduct a minimum of one training seminar for elders each year. Congregations should cover the travel expense of elders attending these meetings. In addition, pastors should plan quarterly meetings with the elders in the district. These meetings will focus on plans for the district as well as for individual congregations, addressing such issues as evangelism, sermon planning, visitation, district and church goals, and the pastor's itinerary. Elder training can also be conducted during these quarterly meetings.

***Itinerary planning.*** — The pastor's itinerary should be planned far enough in advance so that each congregation will know when to expect a visit and speaking appointment from the pastor. This will provide opportunity for personal contact with members and for the scheduling of baptisms during these pastoral visits. There will be occasions that emergencies, such as illness and funerals, will interrupt the planned itinerary, but other special services can be planned in advance and included in the schedule.

### **DISTRICT MEETINGS**

A quarterly meeting during which the district membership meets together for an entire weekend provides an additional opportunity for the pastor to experience fellowship personally with members of the churches in the district. These meetings are similar, in fellowship and worship, to the experience of a camp meeting, providing opportunity for:

- fellowship among members from various congregations
- coordination of evangelism plans in the district
- sharing one another's joys and concerns in the various churches
- strengthening the work of church departments
- planning joint ventures, such as the construction of a building or an evangelistic outreach
- programs for children and youth groups

Members of the district select leaders for these meetings. Working with the pastor, these leaders plan the district meeting programs. Conference leaders should be invited to participate, providing their influence, expertise, and guidance in planning these events.

# CHAPTER 21

## CHURCH GROWTH

### NEW MEMBERS

Churches continue to exist only by receiving a steady growth of new members. Without this growth, membership will decline, not only because of people moving away from the area, but, over time, by aging and death of its older members, until finally no one is left in the church. Without new membership the church will be doomed to extinction. There are three sources of membership growth—biological, transfer, and evangelism—and each one is vital and important to the future of the church.

***Biological growth.*** — The children of the church are its most treasured resource. The fondest desire of both the church family and the nuclear family centers on its children, with the prayer that they will be part of the kingdom of God both in the present and in the kingdom to come. As important as other means of growth may be to the future of the church, none can be more important than the saving of its own children. It would be a travesty if the church were to expend efforts to save the outside world at the expense of saving its children. The heritage of the church is best preserved by those who have grown up in its care. The church provides Sabbath school programs and materials for its children from their earliest age, and continues on in their development with Christian education and youth ministries to secure their growth in grace.

The church must be mindful and have intentional oversight of its developing children while providing at the proper time preparation for baptism and a full joining of the membership of the church. “Children

of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ" (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 400). In settings with a church school available, it works well to schedule a baptismal class in connection with worship and spiritual emphasis in the school schedule. With no church school available, arrangements should be made to provide the baptismal class in connection with family and church activities.

***Transfer growth.*** — When members move from one location to another, contact should be maintained with them by assisting in the transfer of membership to a sister church in the new area. Procedures for the transfer of membership are given in the *Church Manual*. Both the church and the individual member benefit when an active and intentional plan is put in place in the facilitating of membership transfer. Notification of a member's moving to a new area should be given to the nearest church in order to maintain contact and assist in their welcome to a new church family.

***Evangelism growth.*** — A pastor is an evangelist, and the church is an evangelistic center. In the worship service, the Sabbath school, and every other program, the church must continuously keep in mind visitors and guests who are not members. Everything said should be passed through the soul-winning filter "How will this sound to one who is not a member? How will this be perceived by one who is not a Christian?" While correct doctrine and scriptural understanding are of critical importance, yet warm fellowship is more important. In such a setting people move from new conversion to full discipleship.

The members of the New Testament church went everywhere telling the story of Jesus. Most new converts are won by members

relating to people at work and in their neighborhoods. This can be accomplished through a multitude of outreach programs, including cooking and health classes, youth ministries, women's ministries, community services, and recreational activities. "Let church members during the week act their part faithfully, and on the Sabbath tell their experiences. The meeting will then be as meat in due season, bringing to all present new life and fresh vigor" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 199).

If every church program—Vacation Bible School, cooking schools, health events, youth and children's Sabbath school programs, participation in ADRA missionary trips, church social events, community involvement, youth programs—were considered and funded as an evangelistic event, evangelistic meetings would be even more productive.

Be aware of people in the area who are experiencing such transitions as births, deaths, and graduations, and acknowledge this event by sending a congratulation or sympathy card. Obtain information regarding new residents coming into the area, and send them a letter welcoming them to the community, including a list of services offered by the church and an invitation to attend the worship service. Engage in some form of evangelistic meetings or seminars on a regular basis.

***Inactive membership concern.*** — Active members, especially elders, can be effective in reclaiming inactive members because they have been friends in the past and understand some of the reasons that caused them to drop out of fellowship. Those working for inactive members must be prepared to listen to pain without becoming either discouraged or defensive. People often drop out because of some hurt perceived or experienced within the church or from influences outside the church. Often they may be reclaimed simply by a listening ear and a loving heart.

## ESTABLISHING NEW MEMBERS

The Great Commission calls the church to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). Poorly prepared members make weak churches. “The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. Those who accept the truth are not taught that they cannot safely be worldlings in conduct while they are Christians in name” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 172).

***Instruction before baptism.*** — Those seeking membership in the church need to know the principles for which the church stands. They should not be asked to commit themselves without knowing what their commitment includes. Baptismal instruction should include personal reading and study, Bible studies, public meetings, and baptismal classes. One of the most productive means of instruction in a church’s evangelistic program focuses on the pastor’s Bible class. The class often meets during the regular Sabbath school class time and is designed specifically for nonmembers and new members. The class studies special doctrinal lessons and spiritual life issues. The same series can be repeated from time to time, since class members, as they mature in their Christian experience, graduate into regular Sabbath school classes.

Each baptismal candidate should be examined concerning the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church as stated in the baptismal certificate. No person or group outside the congregation has authority to add or drop a name from church membership. That responsibility rests solely with the church body.

***New-member guardians.*** — Christian fellowship and community prevails as central to stability in the church. However, new members

may not know anyone in the church and find it difficult to integrate into a well-established social order. To overcome this disadvantage, the church needs an intentional network of spiritual guardians for new members—a friendship system whereby each new member is coupled with an experienced one. “Those who have newly come to the faith should be patiently and tenderly dealt with, and it is the duty of the older members of the church to devise ways and means to provide help and sympathy and instruction” (*Evangelism*, p. 351).

***Encourage participation.*** — Encourage new members to discover their spiritual gifts and engage in ministry that fits those gifts. “When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger” (*Evangelism*, p. 355). Those newly converted are in a unique position to reach out to family and friends who are not part of the Adventist community. The combined effect of the new member’s influence on old friends and the attractive example of a changed life makes powerful soul-winning tools. This kind of opportunity relates to Jesus as He instructed the former demoniac, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you” (Mark 5:19).



# CHAPTER 22

## THE WORSHIP SERVICE

### CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Throughout Scripture God calls His people to worship, and this worship experience should be both an individual and a corporate act. A person does not necessarily have to be part of a congregation to worship; still, the Bible clearly calls for group worship. In order to worship together, some amount of order and planning is needed. Biblical models of worship present four primary actions on the part of the worshippers, with singing, praying, giving, and proclaiming included. These contribute to the individual's personal worship experience in a corporate setting. Such worship emphasizes both the transcendence and immanence of God. God is great and God is here; God is above us and God is among us.

While worship ought not to be for religious entertainment, it should captivate and hold the interest of the congregation as they are led into an encounter with God. While worship ought not to be only for doctrinal exposition, purity and clarity of doctrine should be an integral part of true worship. While worship ought not to be only for the purpose of making an evangelistic appeal, worship should lead worshippers to commit their lives to God. The purpose of corporate worship is simply: to come into fellowship before God, our Maker and Redeemer, with praise, rejoicing, contrition, and humility.

***Inspiring worship.*** — The angel of Revelation 14:6, 7 declares, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” This calls worshippers to respect, reverence,

and awe; corporate worship leads people into the throne room of God. “Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 500).

***Joyful worship.*** — Psalm 100 calls the people to “make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.” Heartfelt emotion is integral in true worship, and its expression may be openly and unabashedly displayed.

***Meaningful worship.*** — Worship appeals to the mind and is always intellectually sound. God invites His people, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18).

***Experiential worship.*** — Worship is not done by proxy; it is experiential. No one else can worship for us. Worship should not be a routine or ceremony performed for us by another. Worship is not a tradition, nor is it a passive spectator event. Worship comprises a personal interaction between the Creator and the created—an encounter with God.

***Participatory worship.*** — Those in charge of the worship service should include as many participants as possible, including youth and children. Worship leaders should be representative of Seventh-day Adventist principles and values. When members feel they have a ministry to offer the congregation, their commitment to the church and church programming increases. Elders should not feel that they should introduce and perform every aspect of the worship service. Involvement of the members will increase the joyful spirit of worship. Youth should be invited to offer prayer, call for the offering, read the scripture, etc.

## ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Congregational worship calls for careful planning, and the better the planning, the more comfortable and relaxed the worship service. Though the purpose of planning should not be to establish rigid formats, it should provide for a smooth flow of the worship elements. “Is it not your duty to put some skill and study and planning into the matter of conducting religious meetings—how they shall be conducted so as to do the greatest amount of good, and leave the very best impression upon all who attend?” (Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 14, 1885).

Pastors have a direct responsibility for Sabbath worship and should enlist the aid of church leaders in both the preparation and execution of the service, involving them as worship coordinators and worship committee members. With the pressure of the delivery of the sermon as a primary responsibility of the pastor, the details of preparing the personnel and facilities of the church for worship can wisely be given to able associates. A Sabbath morning checklist reviewing the preparation of scheduled music, sound system needs, platform personnel, platform arrangements, and other details will assist in this process.

***Preparing the congregation.*** — As people enter the church sanctuary, there will necessarily be some movement and conversation as part of the fellowship and activity of the congregation. Live or recorded prelude music may assist in making this time more comfortable. Attempts to stifle this activity in the name of reverence becomes unnecessary and unrealistic and may create a tension among the worshippers. However, a reverent attitude in preparation for worship should be maintained. A welcome and announcements period may serve to focus the attention of the congregants and draw them into an attitude of worship. Such announcements should focus on church life and avoid becoming promotional and fund-raising campaigns. Let

the announcements create an atmosphere of warmth and fellowship, making them a part of church life, and then close the announcement period with a call to worship.

***Singing.***— Congregational singing and special music are vital parts of the worship experience. Inspiration arises not only from the words employed and the emotive power of the music, but from the shared experience of singing as a worshipping community. Songs from the perspective of children and youth should be included, providing them with an involving and important part of the worship service. “Music should have beauty, pathos, and power” (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 71). Choirs, while a blessing in worship, must not replace congregational singing. “The ability to sing is a talent of influence, which God desires all to cultivate and use to His name’s glory” (*Evangelism*, p. 504).

With a great variety in musical tastes and traditions reflected in different cultural backgrounds, age groups, and church personalities, establishing rigid standards and formulas for acceptable music often becomes a divisive and futile exercise. What one perceives as worshipful another may regard as inappropriate for worship. While causing offense to anyone should be avoided as much as possible, congregations should recognize the importance of providing a variety of musical options that serve different groups in the church. Music chosen should reflect biblical teachings.

***Praying.***— Several occasions for prayer exist in a worship service. Each has a specific purpose and meaning that should be considered in advance and reflected in the wording chosen for the prayer.

***Invocation.*** The service is usually opened with a brief prayer of invocation, with the congregation standing, that recognizes and invites the presence of God.

***Pastoral prayer.*** Further into the service, usually following a congregational hymn or the reading of scripture, a person prays the pastoral prayer. The elements of this prayer include praise and

thanks to God for His grace and blessings; confession of sin and the seeking of forgiveness; general and specific requests for guidance, grace, and healing mercy; intercession in the affairs of the church, the community, and the nation; and commitment to service.

This prayer is usually the longest of the worship service prayers. Frequently modeled in Scripture, the congregation generally kneels for the prayer. However, there may be settings and situations in which kneeling is not a practical option. Some, because of physical condition, may not be able to kneel, and these should not be made to feel inferior or sacrilegious in assuming another prayer posture. “It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 510).

Careful planning in advance provides for what needs to be included in the prayer and maintains a reasonable length of time for the prayer. “One or two minutes is long enough for any ordinary prayer” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 581). “Prosy, sermonizing prayers are uncalled for and out of place in public. A short prayer, offered in fervor and faith, will soften the hearts of the hearers; but during long prayers they wait impatiently, as if wishing that every word might end it” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 179).

*Thanksgiving.* The prayer of thanksgiving may occur prior to the giving of the offering or at its conclusion as the deacons bring forward the collected gifts of the congregation. The prayer, usually of short duration, includes praise for the blessings experienced by the congregation and the individual. If initiated prior to the offering, the congregation usually remains seated. If following the offering, some congregations stand and sing the doxology as the offering is brought forward, followed by the prayer of thanksgiving.

*Benediction.* The word “benediction” literally translated means “words of blessing.” This prayer has a unique purpose—to dismiss the congregation with the blessing of God. Not a summary of the

sermon or an occasion for specific requests that should already have been covered in the pastoral prayer, this prayer should be of short duration and may come directly from Scripture. The hymnal contains benedictions that will appropriately serve this purpose.

**Giving.** — As a direct part of worship, giving has great potential for teaching basic Christian concepts of self-denial, sacrifice, and trust. The offering appeal must emphasize a spiritual motivation and should also explain the financial need and how giving supports the work of the church. The appeal should be brief, intelligent, and worshipful. Rather than a fund-raising event, the offering provides a tangible opportunity for the congregation to express praise to God by returning to Him a tithe of His blessings and offerings of appreciation for His sustaining grace. Through the tithe and offerings the congregation acknowledges God's blessings during the week, that He is Lord, and that all we have belongs to Him. These gifts indicate that our love for Him flows freely from a grateful heart.

**Proclaiming.** — Worship, centered in the self-disclosure of God through Scripture, becomes a rational act because the divine is being revealed in words intelligible to human minds. We learn from these words and receive instruction in Christian service and discipline. And we rejoice in the good news of salvation. This revelation of God places a heavy responsibility in worship on both those who proclaim the message and those who hear. Proclamation allows the congregation to hear the message of the Lord through the Scriptures.

**Preparation.** In order to address the spiritual needs of the congregation properly, leaders must plan the sermonic year in a careful manner. This includes looking at not only what should be presented in the future, but also what has been presented during the past year or two. Look for what has been addressed, what has been neglected, and what has been overemphasized. Topics should also coincide with events of the calendar and with the church and school schedules.

Yearly planning provides several benefits for preaching. It leads to balance in subject selection and allows for advance planning with those who contribute to the worship service in such areas as music, scripture readings, and children's stories. Planning ahead gives opportunity for those who invite guests to the worship service to select services that would appeal to specific people. In addition, yearly planning gives individuals time to develop the planned sermon topics, significantly reducing the pressure of last-minute sermon preparation. Obviously this annual plan will need to be flexible, as current events and emergencies may occasionally intrude on the schedule.

Look for creative ways to express the sermon material. Creativity seems at times to come as a unique inspiration, but most often comes from diligent effort. It may be easier to fall into modes of expression with which we are familiar, but these also may become tiresome to the hearers week after week. In the area of creativity the worship committee can do some of its best work. No one person has all the fresh ideas, but in shared thinking, creativity can flourish.

*Scripture.* The reading of scripture as proclamation has significant power in worship and presents the word of the King of the universe to the congregation. Scripture also calls, in a powerful way, to worship, and directs the mind to the theme and emphasis of worship for the day. Careful planning, selection, and rehearsal needs to be given to this reading of the Word of God. Responsive readings directly involve the congregation, providing an opportunity both to hear and repeat scripture. There are many such readings in the hymnal, but it may be that a specifically prepared reading placed in the bulletin or projected on a screen will more directly relate to the message of the day.

*Ministering to children.* The interest of children should be kept in mind throughout the worship service. Obviously, with the age spread of infants to adults, every age level cannot be addressed at all times. Yet with careful planning, even small children can find moments of

interest in the service. Some have found that a story for children prior to the sermon addresses this concern. Children are invited to come forward and sit together during the storytelling time, and the story may appropriately fit the theme of the day. Only individuals who have a particular love for children and who have the ability to tell the story effectively should be chosen for this portion of the worship service. This time must be carefully guarded to keep it within a time frame of five minutes or less.

Many churches take a children's offering at the time of the children's story and use the funds to support the educational and children's programs of the church. Some may be averse to receiving more than one offering in the service, but others enjoy giving to the children and seeing them take the offering to the front, and the offering provides the additional potential of orienting children to the habit of giving.

*The sermon.* The sermon must always be Bible-centered. Biblical sermons do not just include the Bible—rather, they begin with the Bible. Biblical preachers come to the Bible first in their sermon preparation. Biblical preaching does not look for a text that agrees with what the speaker wants to say. Rather, biblical preaching seeks to find what the Bible says. Many biblical topics lend themselves to series preaching, particularly studies of a given book, or topics such as the Ten Commandments, the seven last words of Christ, or the Beatitudes. But generally speaking, it is wise to keep series preaching to three or four sermons. In the case of a longer series, it may be broken up with another topic partway along.

Although the message of the sermon should be considered of primary importance, even the finest of messages poorly delivered is ineffective. Even though we recognize that entertainment is not the objective of the worship service, using this as an excuse for poor preaching cannot be thought of as acceptable.



### ORDER IN WORSHIP

To think of worship as consisting of the preacher as actor, God as prompter, and congregation as audience is common. Actually, true worship consists of the congregation as actor, the preacher as prompter, and God as the audience. “Much of the public worship of God consists of praise and prayer, and every follower of Christ should engage in this worship” (Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1886). Thus, for each worshipper, worship becomes a participation event. Sample worship formats may be found in the *Church Manual*.

## CHAPTER 23

### FELLOWSHIP AND VISITATION

Central to the community of the early New Testament church was the concept of shared fellowship, or *koinonia*. Of the growing membership in the church, Luke reports that “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. . . . So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

Within this fellowship Christian association strengthens both the individual and the church. While the importance of church attendance should in no way be minimized, we must recognize that this activity in itself is not enough to fulfill the need for contact and interaction between members. Associating together for an hour or two at the Sabbath worship does not represent all the benefits and joys the Christian experiences in fellowship. The writer of Hebrews admonishes us to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:23-25).

Christian fellowship and visitation encompass vital aspects of the ministry of the church and should be considered, not a duty to be

performed by any single individual, but a lifestyle to be enjoyed by the entire church community. In some ways smaller church groups may naturally find fellowship more inclusive of all members, while larger churches may need to provide small group networks that will allow for inclusion of members that may otherwise be overlooked. Five primary concerns on which the church and the pastor need to focus their visitation follow:

- (1) Christian fellowship
- (2) spiritual needs and encouragement
- (3) shut-ins
- (4) hospital visitation
- (5) bereavement and end-of-life support

***Christian fellowship.*** — A wide variety of activities, both social and spiritual, gather under the heading of Christian fellowship. And these serve the purpose of not only church member fellowship but also outreach to the greater community. Included in this context are group activities, such as Bible study, prayer, recreation, hobbies, music, community service, garden clubs, and a host of other activities limited only by the imagination. The church thus serves as the connecting point for such fellowship, not only strengthening its members but reaching out to the community as well.

***Spiritual needs and encouragement.*** — Elders assigned to assist the pastor in member support should maintain vigilant watch over the spiritual needs of the members, visiting and encouraging those who are discouraged or lax in their Christian experience and commitment to Christ. At times they may recommend that the pastor make a visit.

***Shut-ins.*** — Members who are unable to attend services and participate in the fellowship activities of the church can easily be overlooked. Careful planning should be made to provide regular contact

with them, providing information, encouragement, and materials of interest from the church. They should receive regular copies of the church bulletin and newsletter, and an audio or video recording of the worship service (or, where possible, live electronic media presentations of the worship service). The quarterly Communion service is to be provided for them by the church.

***Hospital visitation.*** — When members are ill, particularly during hospitalization, visitation by the pastor and elders becomes highly important. When requested, the pastor and elders are to provide an anointing service, as described further in chapter 34. Often the pastor does not know when members are in the hospital. Thus a good network should be established to provide this information. Hospital stays tend to be short, so quick action is needed to make contact before patients are dismissed.

Hospital visits should be short, particularly when the patient is experiencing pain, recovering from surgery, or under the influence of heavy medication. Speak a few well-chosen words of support and encouragement followed by the reading of scripture and prayer. While hospital stays usually are stressful times for patients and their families, the birth of a child is generally a joyful occasion at which the pastor can lead the family in giving thanks for new life.

***Bereavement and end-of-life support.*** — Short of the second coming of Christ, all will face the issue of life ending on this earth. For some death will come in an instant, but for most there will be a time of decline and recognition that life is ebbing away. During this time, especially, the support and assurance of the church family is needed. These are times of sorrow and loss that should be recognized and accepted, but in Christian fellowship we do not “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). The assurance of salvation and restoration found in Scripture, and words of comfort from the pastor and church members, are the last, best gifts of love that can be given.

At the time of the loss of a loved one, pastoral and elder support and visitation becomes crucial to the surviving family. Customs for the handling of funeral arrangements vary widely, and the pastor must know how, where, and when to serve the needs of the bereaved. Generally speaking, a home visit is appropriate, bringing comfort and support to the family. People handle their grief in different ways. Sensitivity to this reality helps in encouraging them to put their hope and trust in a loving heavenly Father. Chapter 35 deals further with the funeral service.

### **SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR VISITATION**

#### *General Scripture texts:*

Psalms 23; 46; 103; 121  
 Jeremiah 30:17  
 Matthew 11:28-30; 15:30, 31  
 Romans 5:3-5; 8:16-39  
 James 5:13-16  
 3 John 2

#### *Before surgery:*

Psalms 91; 103:1-5  
 Isaiah 43:1-3; 58:8, 9

#### *In pain:*

Isaiah 26:3, 4  
 Matthew 11:28, 29  
 John 14:27

#### *Facing death:*

Psalms 23; 90:1-6, 10  
 Isaiah 56:11

John 3:14-16

John 14:1-4, 25-27

Romans 8:35-39

2 Corinthians 5:1-4

*On recovery:*

Psalms 34:4-8; 107:1-9

Luke 17:12-18

*Birth of child:*

Matthew 18:1-6

Mark 10:13-16

Luke 1:46-49

## **PASTORAL VISITATION**

Many church members perceive regular home visitation as one of the pastor's responsibilities. And indeed such a practice helps to encourage the spiritual life of the members and maintain a firsthand knowledge of the spiritual needs of the church. In some settings, because of the size of the congregation or district, or because of geographic spread, the pastor will need assistance in maintaining this visitation contact with members. And in some large city settings, many members live in high-rise apartments or gated communities where visitation seems more challenging.

In such situations a parish plan that organizes members into units under the direction of an elder, assisted by deacons and deaconesses, makes this visitation contact more feasible. The elder leads in planning visitation and group gatherings that build the spiritual strength of the members. From time to time the pastor may be invited to meet with the group and share fellowship with them.

# CHAPTER 24

## COUNSELING

Although pastors offer primarily spiritual resources to those seeking counsel, guidance in other areas of interest may be requested as well. Many see pastors as persons of experience and wisdom in areas that may include family concerns, decisions in planning for the future, financial matters, social issues, and emotional stresses, to name a few. While experience and spiritual guidance are of great importance in these matters, individuals must plainly recognize that professional counseling is not the calling of the pastor. Making a clear distinction between pastoral concern and the need for referral to a professional counselor becomes crucial as pastors interact with troubled parishioners.

When pastors offer counseling beyond their training and expertise, they endanger the person being counseled, and also risk encountering legal problems. Mental illness and psychotic behavior, for example, are not in the purview of pastoral counseling. Few pastors are adequately trained to work in these areas, and such matters should be referred to mental health professionals.

### CRISIS COUNSELING

Generally, counseling for pastors should be limited to short-term or crisis counseling. Providing support and encouragement for members facing difficult decisions or stress in their lives is part of ministry.

**Listen.** — Listening shows the counselee that someone cares. Talking through the problems with someone who has another

perspective helps clarify the issues for the counselee. By putting their feelings into words, people move from emotional responses to a more rational level of thinking, where they begin finding answers for themselves. Careful listening also clarifies the problem for the counselor. In relational problems, however, avoid assuming that what only one person states gives a complete and accurate understanding of the issue.

***Concentrate on solutions.*** — Spend counseling time on seeking solutions, not rehearsing problems. Some people tend to go over and over a problem, wanting only sympathy and resisting help toward solutions. Even so, do not try to solve people's problems. Clarify and define the real problem and help them work through to a solution.

***Guide in choosing a plan.*** — Counselees find it easier to concentrate on solutions if they can see various options. Help them decide which option seems best, and form a plan for putting it into operation. The pastor's task should encourage them to implement their own decision. If counselees don't follow through on their plan, it may be wise to question spending additional time in counseling with them.

***Pray with counselees.*** — Prayer focuses the attention of the counselee on the surest, most lasting source of help by the commitment of one's life to service and the will of God.

***Practice confidentiality.*** — Confidentiality is both an ethical and legal requirement. Yet in some settings there is a legal requirement to report certain activities that a counselee may reveal in a counseling session, such as child or elder abuse, etc. Also, counselors may be held liable for failing to warn of a threat against someone's life.

## COUNSELING ASSOCIATES

***Professionals.*** — In some congregations there may be members who are professionally trained in some area of counseling. The



pastor may tap this expertise and use such persons not only for referring counselees but also for training members willing to share the counseling needs of the church.

***Congregation.*** — Church members have a Christian responsibility to assist other members. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Some in the congregation may have already faced and resolved the problems that counselees are experiencing. Support groups are helpful when people with similar needs not only share and seek solutions to their problems but pray for and support one another. In addition, a church resource center can provide books, pamphlets, and video presentations with practical information and guidance on how to cope with typical problems.

# CHAPTER 25

## CHURCH COMMUNITY

Church communities result from individuals responding to the call of God to be His people and build His kingdom. And while corporate worship may be the most visible and most attended group activity of the church, it certainly is not the only activity. The diversity of interests and spiritual gifts in the church is no accident. Thus various groups will naturally gather around different activities and groups in the church. In order to serve this need, ongoing and conscious effort must be made to create a network of activities and groups in which members will be served, and those outside the church community will also be attracted.

Christian love produces unity. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). “When there is harmonious action among the individual members of the church, when there is love and confidence manifested by brother to brother, there will be proportionate force and power in our work for the salvation of men” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 188).

### COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS

Fellowship grows when people hold much in common. Some people attend church not so much for doctrinal reasons as for a Christian support system. Alternatively, some people stop attending church not because they disbelieve the doctrines but because they do not find the support and fellowship they seek. Good communication between members facilitates better understanding and commonality between them, increasing fellowship.

**Church bulletin.** — Printed church bulletins provide the outline of the Sabbath programs, announcements and information regarding the program of the church during the week, and such standard information as a listing of staff and church office contact information and a summary statement of beliefs. Bulletins also often provide a tear-off section for the communication of information and needs to the pastor.

A section or page of the bulletin may include items that will interest children, providing a puzzle to solve, a picture to color, or a sermon outline that encourages the taking of notes.

**Telephone.** — Automated telephone messaging systems provide many delivery options. When rapid conveying of a prerecorded message becomes necessary, electronic delivery is quick and efficient. However, members organized in a telephone tree system provide a more human touch. Mobile phones are also very useful tools.

**Church newsletter.** — Newsletters help members keep in touch with the church program, plans, and activities and also provide a method of sharing items that may be of a more secular order than would be fitting for Sabbath morning presentation. Newsletters may be distributed by postal service or by e-mail—the latter being much less costly and not as time-consuming. However, virtually all members have a postal mailing address, but not all have e-mail service available. In order to assure that all members are receiving church communications, some combination of the two may have to be arranged. Sending a letter by regular mail will also assist in maintaining current addresses of members. In addition, a church Web site can be an efficient time-saving means of communication.

**Pastor's greeting/message.** This may be a spiritual challenge, an encouragement, a report of church activities, or an inspiring story. But it should be brief and engaging.

**Schedule.** Coming events for the month not only serve as a

reminder of the schedule of church activities but also spark interest in attending. Given that some may post the calendar at home so as not to miss these activities, it should be prepared in an attractive format. A Sabbath worship sermon title prepares worshippers for the theme of the day and may also help to spark interest in attending and inviting visitors.

*News.* News of both church and personal events are of interest to church members, including such matters as weddings, births, baby dedications, baptisms, graduations, anniversaries, illnesses, and deaths. A listing of upcoming birthdays and wedding anniversaries encourages members to send personal greetings or plan celebrations together. Accuracy of news items should be confirmed before publication, and in the case of illnesses, those with the illness should be consulted before publication.

*Children and youth items.* Information regarding the accomplishments of children and youth, particularly school-related, attract the interest of a wide audience and keep the church family apprised of the development of its children. When possible, pictures accompanying reported events and information greatly enliven the story. This also communicates to the younger ones the love and caring interest of their church family. A children's page with Bible quizzes, puzzles, and games will broaden interest in the newsletter.

***Church directory.*** — Church directories effectively develop and encourage fellowship in the church community, and this applies particularly to a pictorial directory. Having the names of fellow members enables members to become better acquainted with each other. A good time to publish the church directory is following church elections and during the planning for the upcoming church year; an outline of the year's program can be included. Features might include:

- the mission statement of the church
- a brief historical sketch of the church

- a message from the pastor
- a schedule of Sabbath services, including an offering schedule
- special events, seminars, and programs
- names of the church officers
- regularly scheduled committees and boards
- birthdays of members
- the pastor's regular schedule
- frequently used e-mail addresses and telephone numbers
- names of conference officers and departmental directors
- addresses and phone numbers of local businesses, services, or institutions operated by church members

### GROUP MINISTRIES

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also” (*Evangelism*, p. 115). Interest in forming such group ministries will vary widely in different locations. Interest and creativity will open opportunities to a host of possibilities for church activity and fellowship. The following list includes a few of the most obvious categories of small groups.

**Prayer groups.** — The traditional midweek evening prayer meeting of the church, known as the longest-standing tradition of group ministry, remains an ideal for many. However, the standard scheduling and format may not best fit the interest of many who would like to be involved in a prayer group but find its timing unworkable. Some may prefer a prayer breakfast before going to work; others may favor a lunch prayer group. Encouraging various times and interest groups for prayer ministry will greatly enhance participation.

**Bible study groups.** — The longest-standing Bible study group in

Adventist circles is the Sabbath school class lesson study. Properly extended beyond the Sabbath morning class time, this fellowship functions as an ideal small group for tracking the needs of its members. As with prayer groups, others may also attend Bible study groups at other locations and at other times of the day and week. Some groups may develop around shared issues of interest, some through friendship bonds, and some around schedule and locality convenience.

***Seminar and support groups.*** — People tend to show interest in church attendance following life-changing events, such as marriage, the birth of a child, a change of residence, divorce, the death of a loved one, and other such points of transition. A regular program of seminars designed to support and assist those with such special interests will likely attract participants to attend family life seminars, parenting classes, coping seminars, and a wide range of programs covering physical, mental, and spiritual needs. The cornerstone of society has always been the family, both the nuclear family and the extended family of the church and the community. God created family in the Garden of Eden and charged it with the responsibility to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). Enriching marriage and family not only fulfills this charge but in turn strengthens the church.

***Community outreach and service.*** — Through a survey of needs and interests in the community, small groups can be formed to provide fellowship and instruction addressing those expressed needs. Not all members are gifted in or enjoy the same kind of ministry. Those who share similar abilities and interests can multiply their effectiveness in joint efforts. The Dorcas Society, now generally called Community Services, is one of the longest-standing groups in this category. The options for service are virtually limitless, such as play groups that bring together families with small children for recreation and

fellowship, yard work, auto repair, visiting seniors or those whose health is fragile, to name only a few possibilities.

***Social gatherings.*** — The power of fellowship may be found in a shared meal, or a shared concert, or a picnic in the park. Social gatherings do not need to have an ulterior motive to be enjoyed. We are created social beings, and celebrating our God-given social nature is reason enough to fellowship together. School, church, and community programs all provide ideal occasions for social gatherings.

***Recreation and hobbies.*** — Some like to run. Some like to walk. Some like to swim. Some enjoy sports activities. Some enjoy stamp collecting, or gardening, or sewing, or bird watching—the list is limitless. But most enjoy engaging in these activities with others. Fellowship in the church should be broad enough to unite people in such activities and thus enhance the joy in Christian fellowship.

***A welcoming church.*** — When visitors come to the church, they are looking for something, and church attendance becomes an opportunity as well as the responsibility of the church to help them find it. Church services should be planned with the intent and assumption that visitors will be present. While greeting them at the entrance to the church is good and proper, hospitality can extend well beyond the door. Assistance in parking may be needed in large churches. During inclement weather, special care may be given to keep people warm and dry as they go from their vehicles to the church. Children should be directed and taken to the proper Sabbath school division, and the names of guests should be recorded in a guest registry. While genuine warmth and fellowship cannot be organized and manufactured, having a plan that allows these qualities to flow easily and comfortably will set visitors at ease and encourage their participation in the fellowship of the church.

***Fellowship dinners.*** — Sabbath fellowship dinners provide hospi-

tality to guests and fellowship for church members. Not all members will wish to attend a fellowship dinner every week, but by dividing church membership into teams on a rotating schedule, the responsibility becomes a joy and privilege.

### PROGRAM PROMOTION

To take advantage of the vast array of activities and programs available, it is necessary to make intentional choices that fit the mission of the church. Also, planning and timing the various activities in such a way that they do not undermine one another's success or weary the members with too much promotion should be considered. Yet without promotion, few will become aware of the activities, and a lack of participation will result. That which gets promoted gets supported. The issue is not whether to promote, but how to promote.

***Program planning.*** — In making plans for the church year, seek the counsel of the church board and prepare a calendar that includes the major programs planned. Then through the various communications media available to the church, keep the membership apprised of upcoming events, with adequate time to prepare. Details are easier to understand when written, and are also available to be reread. Make information available through use of the church bulletin and newsletter, or perhaps with a visible goal device in the church.

***Promotion in the worship service.*** — Given that the Sabbath worship service is generally the most heavily attended gathering of the church, individuals promoting their programs may take time from or use the entire worship service for promotion. Even while avoiding promotional excess, it should be remembered that church work develops as the natural outgrowth of worship. Promotion should never crowd out spirituality, but involvement in such church activities as Vacation Bible School, Pathfinder Sabbath, or religious liberty could very well be presented so as to give spiritual benefit to all members.



# CHAPTER 26

## CHURCH FINANCE

Christian stewardship as a biblical principle teaches that life is a divinely appointed opportunity for learning to be faithful stewards in temporal matters, thus showing readiness for higher stewardship in eternal matters. As Jesus taught in the parable of the talents, the returning master says, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:21). Tithes and offerings are not church fund-raising but a voluntary recognition of God’s ownership of all and His blessings on His people.

### MOTIVATION FOR GIVING

***Gospel motivation.*** — People give as they are motivated by the grace of God and the gift of salvation. The expenses of church operation should be met by those whose hearts have been changed, not by human persuasion, but by the gospel.

***An act of worship.*** — People give as an act of worship. Any other motivation, such as fear, guilt, or attempts to buy favor, perverts and distorts the will of God.

***Mission support.*** — People give if they understand and believe in the mission of the church, and they see that their support advances both local and world church mission. “Systematic benevolence should not be made systematic compulsion. It is freewill offerings that are acceptable to God” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 396).

## GIVING STYLES

**Systematic giving.** — As in personal finance, the most effective way of handling funds is to have a plan and a budget. By careful planning in advance, the work of the church at home and around the world functions efficiently and effectively. With such a plan communicated to the church membership, people are able to make wise giving choices. Systematic giving through approved offering systems is the ideal way of supporting church ministries. “Making urgent calls is not the best plan of raising means” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 511).

**Deferred giving.** — Long-term church stewardship plans should also include information regarding wills and trusts, thus encouraging members to leave a gift to the work of the church in their will or trust.

**Project giving.** — From time to time special needs and projects will arise, and appeals will be made to the church for support. While an occasional need is often a valid opportunity for giving, frequent appeals will undermine the broader mission of the church and will direct funds in an unbalanced manner to the projects that have the most articulate presenter or the strongest emotional attractiveness.

**Impulse giving.** — Giving on impulse may, on occasion, be done, but like impulse spending of one’s personal funds, it may lead to depletion of funds that could have been put to wiser use.

## CARE IN HANDLING CHURCH FUNDS

Pastors should be seen as models of careful and faithful stewardship who promote sound financial management in the church while clearly recognizing that funds given as an act of worship to God should be managed in a way He would approve. Members of the church who have financial management and accounting skills should be enlisted to assist in the handling of church funds.

**Internal control.** — A system of internal control reduces the risk

of assets being stolen, removes unnecessary temptation, improves the accuracy of financial records, and protects treasurers and pastors from false accusations. Offerings should be counted by two or more unrelated people and recorded separately by each. All funds are to be processed through the treasurer's books, and no one should borrow from the offering. Expenses incurred in the approved budget are to be reimbursed by the treasurer upon receiving receipts, stating which fund should be charged and to whom it should be paid. Expenses not included in the budget must be approved by the treasurer or church board, depending on set preestablished amounts.

***Church treasurer.*** — The treasurer's direct line of responsibility is to the church board; the treasurer looks to the board for approval of regular and open financial statements. Some churches may also work with a finance committee giving guidance to the treasurer, but the finance committee is also subject to the church board. The pastor also will work closely with the treasurer, but, like the finance committee, is subject to the church board in financial matters of the church. In addition to reports to the board, the treasurer also carries the responsibility for reporting to the church in business session. The board may vote certain funds to be used at the pastor's discretion, but pastors are not free to use church funds outside these parameters.

***Budget preparation.*** — The annual church planning program should precede the preparation of the annual budget. This protects the budget from being based on "circular progress"—using last year's program and budget to determine next year's program and budget. The budget should be voted at a business meeting at which all members have the opportunity to express their views and accept ownership of the plan. A sample church budget is given in the *Church Manual*.

***Church indebtedness.*** — Church policy guidelines regarding the incurring of debt are given in the *Church Manual*. Carefully following

these guidelines will help prevent long-term church indebtedness. Implementations of these recommendations promote healthy financial conditions conducive to the ongoing mission of the church in the world.

**Commitment.** — The following Statement on Personal Commitment to Financial Integrity and Transparency, voted by the General Conference Annual Council in 2002, should be read and signed by all individuals in church leadership positions.

### **STATEMENT ON PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

The role of leadership is critical for developing the confidence of church members in their church and in strengthening their relationship with God. It is the responsibility of church leadership to be transparent and credible in all its dealings.

The apostle Paul provides a biblical example of this type of leadership: “And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” (2 Cor. 8:18-21, NIV).

Ellen G. White states, in the context of dealing with tithe and the financial side of church leadership, that “those in responsible places are to act in such a way that the people will have firm confidence in them. These men should not be afraid to open to the light of day everything in the management of the work” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 198).

Church leadership considers itself accountable to God, to His

church, and to the church's published policies in the use of its financial resources. Thus, the church is committed to integrity and an open leadership that will encourage confidence in God and His church. It is the responsibility of Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership to provide information regarding the financial dealings of the church organization in a way that is clear and understandable. Details regarding an individual and his/her finances are to be respected and kept confidential. All other dealings and appropriate financial information of the church organizations are to be reported regularly and completely to the respective organizational constituencies.

Recognizing that the church has entrusted me with a leadership position, accepting my role as a model to other members, and recognizing my accountability to God and to the church, I affirm the Statement on Personal Commitment to Financial Integrity and Transparency, and will keep this document as a reminder of my personal commitment.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# CHAPTER 27

## CHURCH FACILITIES

Technically speaking, a building can be called just a physical structure. Yet with the passage of time a dedicated church building takes on more meaning than merely the construction materials. The investment of personal finance and effort, the experiences of fellowship and worship, the child dedications, baptisms, graduations, marriages, funerals, and spiritual experience of the congregation—all contribute to a love and respect for the building far beyond its mere structure. As the physical home of the congregation, the church building should be treated with care and respect.

### EXISTING FACILITIES

Deacons direct the care of the church building. While custodial and maintenance personnel may be employed to care for facility needs, the deacons must assume responsibility to oversee this work. Poorly maintained facilities are unattractive to visitors and the surrounding community and negatively impact the outside perception of the church. Individuals may easily become so accustomed to the appearance of the building that care and maintenance needs are overlooked. Churches often are unattractive, not so much because they are old or poorly built, but because of poor maintenance.

Neatness, cleanliness, and tastefulness in decorating must be carefully guarded. Deacons and other church leaders should periodically view the building as though they were visitors experiencing their first impression of the facilities. Using a checklist in this review may help in the evaluation. Items to be considered include the yard, sign,

exterior finish, foyer, interior decorating, restrooms, fire protection, and others. Church facilities should be insured in accordance with conference policies.

### **RENTING FACILITIES**

From time to time Adventist congregations find it necessary to rent facilities. Given that Adventist use of the church building falls primarily on Saturday, the opportunity exists for shared use with those who use church facilities primarily on Sunday, renting either from or to such groups. While renting facilities from other churches may be a useful stopgap for Adventist congregations in transition, for the long term members usually see this as an unsatisfactory arrangement. Over time the desire and convenience of owning one's own church building usually brings the congregation to the decision to obtain their own property.

However, if another church group in the community has lost their place of worship, allowing or even inviting them to rent the church for a period of time may be the Christian thing to do. In such circumstances every part of the rental agreement should be clearly stated in a legally binding document signed by the renters and by the conference officer in charge of church properties, and approval from the conference should be received. Counsel from the conference attorney should be sought in preparation of these documents. Rental income may be taxable under certain circumstances. Be certain that the church insurer knows about this rental agreement and has insurance policy coverage. Renters also must obtain renter's insurance to cover the possibility of an accident while they are renting the property.

Long-term rental of church buildings to other churches or organizations should be approached cautiously. The practices and reputation of some groups may adversely affect both the comfort level of the congregation and the perceptions of the community.

Such rentals may lead to misunderstandings, cause extra wear on buildings, and increase maintenance and utility costs. Congregations that rent their church in order to raise additional income are frequently disappointed with the results.

## NEW FACILITIES

From time to time churches need to move to a new location for various reasons. Churches in this situation should consult with their local conference leadership. They may have experienced growth that necessitates the development of larger facilities, or they may be planting a new church. They may be seeking to serve a given target audience better, or perhaps they have experienced the loss of existing property. This transition may be accomplished either by building a new facility or by the purchase of an existing one. Whichever option they choose, the issues addressed in the decision are much the same.

**Centrality and accessibility.** — A study of demographics will assess whether the land is centrally located among the people the church plans to win and serve, focusing more on the people to be won than on the present members being served. Issues to be considered include the growth patterns and stability of the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation and parking in the area. The right location might make church facilities usable on weekdays as a day-care center or medical clinic, or a place for seminars, counseling, or other programs.

**Visibility.** — An attractive building, visible from a well-traveled thoroughfare, comprises a perpetual and positive advertisement for the church and what it stands for.

**Affordability.** — While working within the range of what the congregation can afford is important, allowing costs to outweigh all other considerations incorporates a shortsighted method of planning.



Churches built in poor locations because land was donated or purchased cheaply may ultimately be just as expensive as one built on better property.

**Size.** — Building too small leaves no room for expansion; building too large becomes expensive to maintain. The long-term plans of the congregation must be taken into consideration. The potential for other facilities on the site should also be considered, such as a school, Community Services center, and recreational facilities.

**Restrictions.** — Zoning ordinances, covenants, and building restrictions must be carefully researched and recorded. In Adventist policy church properties must be held in the name of the legal association set up by the conference for this purpose. The transfer of property should be done with the assistance of an attorney or other appropriate professional or entity as recognized by local law and licensed in the jurisdiction of the property.

## DESIGN

**Attractive.** — The balance between attractiveness and extravagance in design must be carefully measured. “Vain pride, which is exhibited in gaudy trappings and needless ornaments, is not pleasing to God. But He who created for man a beautiful world, and planted a lovely garden in Eden with every variety of trees for fruit and beauty, and who decorated the earth with most lovely flowers of every description and hue, has given tangible proofs that He is pleased with the beautiful” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 258).

**Functional.** — In addition to functionality for worship, consideration should be made as to other services the building will provide. Ample provision ought to be made for meeting the social and outreach needs of the church, as well as the needs of children and youth. A good architect will assist the church in avoiding later disappointment by designing a building considered both beautiful and func-

tional. Care should also be taken to address the needs of worshippers with disabilities.

***Flexible.*** — The traditional style of immovable pews and sloping floors makes using the sanctuary for any kind of activity other than a lecture- or concert-style gathering difficult. Permanent choir loft pews inhibit use of that space for other purposes as well. A small audience in a large room dampens enthusiasm and makes the meeting seem like a failure. When the room size matches audience size, the spirit of the meeting becomes greatly enhanced. The ideal sanctuary has portions that can be opened or closed depending on the size of the audience. Smaller rooms for smaller groups double as Sabbath school rooms.

Sound amplification should be flexible. Music and preaching tend to compete with each other in their sound needs. Acoustics should be live enough so that music is bright and people will sing well, yet softened enough so that speaking does not create an unpleasant echo. Provision should be made for an attractive video projection system without the need for putting up and taking down projection equipment.

***Designed for worship and fellowship.*** — Church sanctuaries have often been designed as long and narrow rectangular-shaped lecture halls, thus separating the worshippers from each other and from their worship leaders. Part of worship comprises fellowship, people getting together with one another and with God. Ideally, sanctuaries should be shaped so that worshippers are close to one another and close to their worship leaders. Usually located in the center of the platform, the pulpit in Adventist churches emphasizes the centrality of the preaching of the Word in worship.

# CHAPTER 28

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Pastors and congregations have responsibility for discipline in the church. God calls them “watchmen” as in His charge to Ezekiel: “I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul” (Eze. 33:7-9).

Church discipline requires a delicate balance between standing for principle and extending forgiving, loving kindness. “We must guard against undue severity toward the wrongdoer, but we must also be careful not to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There is need of showing Christlike patience and love for the erring one, but there is also danger of showing so great toleration for his error that he will look upon himself as undeserving of reproof, and will reject it as uncalled for and unjust” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 503, 504).

### IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE

The church in a permissive society must recognize that standards unenforced are standards abandoned. In church discipline two extremes are often practiced: neglect on the part of some and harshness and severity on the part of others. But neither of these extremes consists

of an excuse for failing to exercise discipline in the church. Discipline is essential for preserving the integrity of the church.

### PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline should be considered, not an act of punishment, but an attempt to restore people to discipleship. Discipline functions as a safeguard in the church while preserving the purity of doctrine and behavior in its members.

***Discipline honors Christ.*** — “If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1, 2).

***Discipline restores sinners.*** — The Good Shepherd gave first priority to the one sheep that was missing. He went after it, not to shame it nor to punish it, but to bring it back to the fold. The act of discipline ought to be a way back for one who has wandered.

***Discipline shows care.*** — Love precedes chastening. God says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev. 3:19).

### ADMINISTERING DISCIPLINE

The *Church Manual* deals extensively with church discipline, providing definitions, causes, and procedures to be followed. Without repeating this information in detail, the following guidelines provide counsel in addressing the process of discipline in the church.

***Follow the Church Manual.*** — The *Church Manual* represents both the Adventist understanding of the biblical principles of discipline and its wisdom, developed through practice and discussion. To ignore the manual means to go contrary to the official position of the world church. Use the manual as both a guide and protection for those who must deal with discipline issues. Failure to follow these procedures can, in some instances, be subjected to legal liability.

**Emphasize forgiveness.** — People being disciplined may see this process as rejection and punishment rather than an attempt at restoration. They may find it difficult to believe that God forgives them when church members apparently do not. Thus, any act of discipline must be accompanied by an emphasis on forgiveness. “If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (Luke 17:3, 4). “If your brethren have erred, you must forgive them. You should not say, as some have said who ought to know better, ‘I do not think they feel humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession.’ What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart?” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 184).

**Discipline biblically.** — The words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 18:15-17 outline the procedure to be followed in dealing with sin in the church. Go to the person and address the issue directly. If this does not resolve the matter, go with one or two witnesses. If the problem is still not resolved, take the matter to the church. If the person will not hear the church, consider them as outside the church. “No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrongdoer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 262). Under certain circumstances the risk of physical misconduct exists; at these times it may be inadvisable for the aggrieved party to go alone seeking such resolution.

**Discipline promptly.** — Confronting sin promptly may lead to repentance. However, because of the distastefulness of confrontation, the issue may not be addressed until months or even years later. Then when the individual asks for a transfer of membership to another church, the church denies the recommendation on the basis of what

happened a long time before. The church, unwilling to act when the sin becomes obvious, has thus placed itself in both a negligent and unforgiving stance. “In dealing with the erring, harsh measures should not be resorted to; milder means will effect far more. After the best means have been perseveringly tried without success, wait patiently and see if God will not move upon the heart of the erring” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 197).

***Discipline voluntarily.*** — If discipline seems unavoidable, the offender, if given opportunity, may choose to withdraw voluntarily. Under some circumstances this may save unnecessary public discussion of the issue and embarrassment to the individual. A person volunteering to withdraw may feel less rejection than when forced to do so. It may be, however, that it is necessary for the church to take a stand on widely known and flagrant violations of church standards. This should be done firmly, but as graciously as possible.

***Discipline impartially.*** — Discipline must not be based on how many friends or how much position an offender has in the church and the community. Those involved in the offender’s problem or closely associated with it should be excluded from deciding the case. Only a church business meeting is authorized to make final discipline decisions.

***Protect confidentiality.*** — In a business meeting members have a right to ask detailed questions. Usually, however, they will allow embarrassing details to remain with a smaller group, such as the church elders or the church board. The pastor should not be alone in knowing the full details of the disciplinary issues. The procedure for handling such matters, outlined in Matthew 18, states that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (verse 16). Public confession has its place if the offense has been public, but the church must receive this in a spirit of forgiveness and acceptance rather than punishment.

***Maintain contact.*** — While the goal of Christian discipline includes drawing an erring member back into the community of the church, at times a rebellious heart may reject the kindest of efforts at reconciliation. From time to time caring members should endeavor to maintain contact, and let former members know that they are remembered and missed. This may be particularly important when the wrongdoing has resulted in imprisonment.

# CHAPTER 29

## CHURCH SCHOOLS

The church operates a school system to ensure that its children may receive a balanced physical, mental, spiritual, social, and vocational education in harmony with denominational standards and ideals, with God as the source of all moral value and truth. The interest of the church includes the restoration of the image of God in humanity, resulting in the optimum development of the whole person for both this life and the life hereafter. A true knowledge of God, fellowship, and companionship with Him in study and service, and likeness to Him in character development, are the source, the means, and the aim of Adventist education.

Schools operated by the church will endeavor to provide for their students an education within the framework of the science of salvation, including command of the fundamentals of the learning process, vocational skills, civic education, and ethical maturity. They will aim to reach the objectives of spiritual dedication, self-realization, social adjustment, economic self-sufficiency, civic responsibility, and world mission and service through high-quality Christ-centered teaching.

### **IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

What the church does about its children is of paramount importance to Christ, for He instructed His disciples, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). The apostle Paul admonishes fathers to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). “In the highest



sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one" (*Education*, p. 30). For some congregations church school operation will be a major part of the church budget in order to provide this vital service to the children of the church.

### **PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH**

***Annual Christian education Sabbath.*** — Before the beginning of the school year, center an entire worship service on Christian education. Invite teachers from the church school to come before the congregation for a prayer of dedication. Church school children and their parents may also be included in this dedication ceremony. In addition to this annual Sabbath education day, individual students and groups from the school should regularly be featured as part of the worship service.

***Support of teachers.*** — Pastors and teachers are partners in ministry. Pastors should be involved with the school program, visiting the classroom frequently, teaching Bible classes and joining in school programs and activities. Children of school age are primary interests for baptism. Working with teachers in the conducting of baptismal classes and spiritual emphasis will capitalize on this prime age for commitment of the children's lives to Christ. The pastor's children should be in attendance in the church school as an indication of school support from the pastoral family

***Day-care centers.*** — Many parents look for a well-qualified, trustworthy place to provide care for their children while they are at work. The church and school might have facilities usable for this purpose. Providing day care may be a feeder both to school attendance as the children become of school age and a feeder for Sabbath school attendance. The resulting friendships and goodwill engendered provide a strong evangelistic influence on the parents as well.

***Parallel religious education.*** — In settings in which the avail-

ability of a church school does not exist, provide a structured program that brings children together before school, after school, or on weekends to get the Bible instruction and spiritual nurture they would receive if a church school were available.

# CHAPTER 30

## BAPTISM

In His final words to the disciples, Jesus instructs them to go and make disciples of all nations, with baptism serving as the symbol of joining the kingdom of God. This sacred rite of initiation involves teaching (Matt. 28:20), repentance (Acts 2:38), belief (Acts 8:12), a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4), and fellowship with His people (Acts 2:46, 47). As such, this event becomes major in both the life of the individual and the church and should be given due recognition worthy of the significance it represents.

Two commitments are experienced at the rite of baptism: the candidates commit themselves to Christ and His church, and the congregation commits to loving, befriending, and enfolding the candidates into the church. When conducted as part of a Sabbath worship service, baptism should be given major importance so that the candidates fully understand the act's meaning. When a baptism is conducted as a separate service, a short homily on the ordinance's meaning is in order.

### BEFORE BAPTISM

**Schedule.** — Baptism entails an individual choice. The experience of Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer indicates the immediacy of the choice for baptism. “As they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still.

And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:36-38).

Perhaps not many baptisms occur with this immediacy, given the need for appropriate preparation, not the least of which is an adequate water supply. Yet long delays in arranging for baptism are not indicated in the biblical model. Churches should not only schedule baptisms regularly but should also be prepared to arrange for a baptism on short notice. A regular schedule and plan for baptisms in the church not only opens the way for those seeking this sacred rite but also encourages the church to be seeking people for baptism. Churches should plan for a baptism at least once a quarter, and larger churches could well schedule a baptism once a month or more.

**Venue.** — Baptism consists of both an individual and community event. Families and friends of those being baptized generally wish to celebrate the baptism with them. While most baptisms occur in the church baptistry before the congregation, some elect to be baptized in other bodies of water, such as a stream or a lake. Some wish to be baptized alone; others may choose to be part of a mass baptism of hundreds or even thousands.

**Facilities preparation.** — In preparation for a baptism, the pastor, deacons, and deaconesses have the responsibility of arranging for the physical needs of the occasion. In a baptistry, water must be drawn and warmed in advance. Particular care should be taken involving electrical equipment near the water. Sound and video equipment, lights, and heaters must be checked and installed in such a way that they cannot be reached by those in the water.

Baptismal robes, towels, and facilities for changing are to be provided. While facilities will be quite different for outdoor baptisms, yet the same level of care and support should be provided as far as possible. Those with disabilities may need to be assisted or even carried into the water, perhaps being immersed while sitting in a

chair. In extreme medical situations the service may take place in a home or hospital, making use of a bathtub.

**Personal preparation.** — The procedures of baptism should be clearly rehearsed with those being baptized. Some are fearful of being in front of the congregation. Some are afraid of being submerged in water. Assurance regarding these issues becomes vitally important to them, and knowing precisely what will take place will help to allay these concerns.

**Baptismal attire.** — Where possible, the church should provide appropriate baptismal attire, such as robes. Dark robes are suggested, since white material is more revealing when wet. Hem weights help prevent flotation of the robe when entering the water. Candidates should bring underclothing or a swimsuit to wear beneath the robe. If baptismal robes are not available, candidates should bring a complete change of clothing that may be worn for the baptism.

**Authorization to baptize.** — The *Church Manual* stipulates, “In the absence of an ordained minister, the elder shall request the president of the conference . . . to arrange for the administration of the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with the church.” The determination as to who in addition to the ordained minister may be authorized to perform baptism is governed by the *Church Manual* and the *General Conference Working Policy* L 25.

**Receiving into membership.** — Voting candidates into membership may be done before or after the baptism. If done before baptism, the vote is taken subject to baptism. Candidates may be asked to step to the front when being voted, and welcomed into membership.

## DURING BAPTISM

**Introduction.** — As the candidate enters the baptistry and the person performing the baptism presents the individual to the congregation, family and friends who have been influential in their life may

be invited to stand in honor of the occasion. A few words about the candidate's background and how they came to accept Christ are a fitting introduction. When multiple members of a family are to be baptized at the same service, it is appropriate for them all to come into the water together if the baptistry facilities are adequate enough to accommodate them.

***Immersing the candidate.*** — The person performing the baptism must recognize the importance of maintaining a solid grasp on the one being immersed while at the same time allowing them to grasp firmly the arm of the one performing the baptism. This provides a sense of security particularly for those with some fear of the water. Carefully placing a cloth over the nose and mouth of the one being baptized prevents the discomfort of allowing water to run into the nose and mouth while submerged. Given the natural properties of flotation, the weight of the individual is not of particular concern in either the immersion or restoration to a standing position when accomplished in a slow and gentle motion. Particularly tall individuals may be instructed to bend their knees to assist in the immersion.

Recognize the commitment of the one being baptized in a brief statement, such as: "Because of your profession of faith in Christ as your Savior and your desire to live a new life in Him, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

***Announcement and invitation.*** — The close of the baptism provides an opportune time for an invitation to be given for those who wish to be included in the next baptism and to announce the time of the next scheduled baptism. The baptismal ceremony is then closed with prayer from the baptistry.

## FOLLOWING BAPTISM

***Welcome.*** — At the close of the service a designated location should be indicated to the congregation where they may welcome the

ones who have been baptized into church fellowship.

***Fellowship dinner.*** — When possible, the provision of a fellowship dinner honoring those being baptized gives opportunity for further minutes of introduction and family celebration.

***Appoint spiritual mentors.*** — New members need the support, friendship, and encouragement of established members of the church. Particularly the elders of the church should be assigned this responsibility as spiritual mentors to watch over the newly baptized, but others with the gift of help and encouragement may be included as well.

# CHAPTER 31

## COMMUNION

Instituted by Christ at His last supper with the disciples, the Communion service functions as an occasion for remembering the sacrifice of Christ and for founding the community of the church. The solemnity of the occasion and the fellowship it engenders make it an encouragement to and spiritual renewal of the congregation. Conducting a Communion service is one of the most sacred duties of a pastor or elder. “Everything connected with it should suggest as perfect a preparation as possible” (*Evangelism*, p. 277).

Traditions regarding the observation of this sacred service vary from location to location, and although these may not necessarily have a biblical basis or mandate, yet conducting the service in a manner that is comfortable to the participants is wise and proper.

**Frequency.** — It is customary in Adventist churches to hold Communion at the worship service once a quarter, usually on the last Sabbath of the closing quarter or on the first Sabbath of the new quarter. However, these are not rigidly set times. Clearly Scripture does not determine the frequency or timing of this service, stating, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

In addition to the quarterly services, Communion may be observed at other occasions, such as an evening candlelight service, a New Year’s service, or in the setting known as an agape feast, frequently used as the closing event of a Week of Prayer.

The Communion should be included in the annual church calendar and announced well in advance, providing church leaders with



adequate time for preparation of the emblems and equipment needed for the service.

**Officiants.** — Ordained ministers or elders are authorized to conduct the Communion service, assisted by deacons and deaconesses in the handling and distribution of the elements and provision of equipment needed for the ordinance of humility.

**Participants.** — Adventists practice open Communion, inviting any who have committed their lives to Christ to participate. “Christ’s example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord’s Supper. It is true that open sin excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. But beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart?” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 656). Individual conscience is the guide for participation. There is no authority for imposing other restrictions.

According to the apostle Paul, “whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:27). This reference addresses particularly the manner in which this commemoration is observed. While fellowship is part of the occasion, it is a spiritual fellowship. It is an opportunity for members to renew their faith in Jesus and their fellowship with other believers.

No specific age is established at which children are encouraged to participate. Awareness of the significance of the service comes at different times to different people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has collectively agreed that children are entitled to participate actively in the Communion service when they have made “their commitment to Jesus in baptism” (*Church Manual*). For further information regarding the participation of children in Communion services, please consult the *Church Manual*.

**The sermon.** — Because of the additional elements of a Com-

munion Sabbath worship service, the regular order of worship may be shortened, including the sermon, in order to fit the time allotted for the service. This is particularly important in churches that provide multiple worship services, requiring careful timing of each. The Communion sermon is usually given just before participating in the ordinance of humility. Total sermon time should probably not exceed 10 minutes. Communion is not primarily a preaching service.

***The ordinance of humility.*** — The narrative of the foot washing, reported in the Gospel of John, is an integral part of the Last Supper. Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded” (John 13:4, 5). Completing this task, He returned to the table and said, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you” (verses 14, 15).

Provision should be made for men and women to participate in this ordinance in separate rooms if they so choose, or, as stated in the *Church Manual*, “in places where it is socially acceptable and where clothing is such that there would be no immodesty, separate arrangements may be made for husband and wife or parents and baptized children to share with each other in the foot-washing ceremony.” Care should be given to assist those with physical limitations to allow for participation in this rite.

Deacons and deaconesses are responsible for providing basins, water, and towels for this service. In addition, a hand washing basin should also be provided, along with soap and towels so that all may wash their hands following the ceremony. Participants return to the sanctuary when finished. For children not participating in the service, a story time may be provided.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

The singing of Communion hymns by the congregation, or the playing of other appropriate music, aids in creating a spirit of quiet contemplation as the service leaders prepare and take their place at the Communion table. Emblems on the Communion table should be covered before and after the service. The officiating minister or elder uncovers the bread and reads an appropriate text, such as 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24. The congregation remains seated with bowed heads and those at the table kneel as an officiating elder asks God's blessing on the bread.

Rising from their knees, the minister and elders symbolically break a portion of the bread, most of which has already been broken before the service. As an indication of care in sanitation, a bowl of water and a towel may be placed on the table for washing hands prior to the breaking of the bread. The serving trays are then given to the deacons, who distribute the bread to the congregation. When the deacons return from serving the congregation, the elders and minister serve them and one another. The one officiating repeats an appropriate phrase, such as the words of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 11:24, and leads the congregation in the partaking of the bread, followed by silent prayer.

The leader then covers the bread, uncovers the wine, and reads a text such as 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26. An elder offers a prayer of blessing on the wine, and the distribution process is repeated. The leader repeats a phrase such as the words of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 11:25, and leads the congregation in the partaking of the wine, followed by silent prayer. If cup racks are provided in the pews, the used cups are placed there by the participants. If these are not available, the deacons return to the congregation, and the cups are placed back into the trays from which they were served, returning them to the Communion table, where they are again covered.

Some Communion service equipment provides for the serving of both bread and wine simultaneously. In such instances the service continues as stated above, with the prayer of blessing being pronounced on both emblems prior to the distribution, at which time the participants receive both at once. It is recommended that individual Communion cups be used, enabling the entire congregation to partake of the wine in unison, and providing protection against the health hazard inherent in the use of a common cup.

A hymn is sung in closing, following the pattern of the supper with the disciples, during which they sang a hymn and went out. Often this is one stanza of a well-known hymn sung unaccompanied, providing for more spontaneity and immediacy in the singing. As the congregation leaves, it is the custom in many churches for the deacons to stand at the door and receive an offering designated for the poor.

### **POST-COMMUNION ACTIVITY**

Leftover Communion emblems not consumed in the service are to be disposed of in a respectful manner. There is no biblical instruction or injunction as to the process for this disposal, but it is customary that the wine be poured out on the ground and the bread be burned.

Elders, deacons, and deaconesses are responsible for serving Communion to those physically unable to attend the service. Foot washing may not be included in this service if circumstances indicate it to be unwise.

### **EMBLEM PREPARATION**

Unleavened bread and unfermented grape juice are to be used in the Lord's Supper. Where it is impossible to obtain grapes or grape juice, the juice of raisins may be used. In isolated areas where none of these are readily available, the conference will provide information regarding a suitable substitute.

***Communion bread recipe.*** — Congregations may have a Communion bread recipe that is preferred, but the ingredients are basically those in the following recipe:

1 cup flour (preferably whole grain)

1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)

2 tablespoons water

1/4 cup olive or vegetable oil

Sift flour and salt together. Pour the water into the oil, but do not stir. Add this to the dry ingredients and mix with a fork until all the flour is dampened. Roll out to a thickness of approximately 1/8 inch or 3 millimeters. Place on an ungreased, floured baking sheet, and score into bite-size squares. Bake at 450 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Watch carefully during the last few minutes to avoid burning the bread. Serves 50 persons.

# CHAPTER 32

## WEDDINGS

Weddings generally are among the most joyful celebrations of the church and a delightful pastoral responsibility. They afford the opportunity to minister in a joyful and spiritual celebration for couples and their families and friends. “The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing whenever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 18).

### PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Though varying circumstances of time and distance may make it difficult for the pastor to arrange a schedule of premarital counseling, this vital step in preparation for marriage should not be overlooked. Engaged couples usually plan and schedule their wedding well enough in advance to provide ample opportunity for the pastor or some other qualified counselor to make this service part of the marriage planning. The Family Ministries Department of the General Conference provides material for premarital counseling made available through Adventist Book Centers.

“Worship of God, Sabbathkeeping, recreation, association, use of financial resources, and training of children are responsible components of happy family relationships. Because differences in these areas can often lead to a deterioration of these relationships, to discouragement, and even to a complete loss of Christian experience,

an adequate preparation for marriage should include premarital pastoral counseling in these areas” (*Church Manual*).

With the widespread practice of premarital sexual contact, HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases are rampant worldwide. Virginity prior to marriage, and faithfulness to the marriage vow after marriage, are vital in protecting the marriage partners from these dangers. If these have not been observed in a partner, full honesty and a careful medical examination should be advised prior to marriage.

### LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The person who officiates at a wedding has the responsibility to be informed regarding marriage laws and requirements in the jurisdiction in which the marriage occurs, complying with requirements for registration and licensing procedures. In locations in which the minister does not have authorization to perform the legal ceremony, the marriage couple may follow the legal ceremony with a religious service provided by the pastor.

### DENOMINATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

**Authorized officiants.** — “In the marriage ceremony the charge, vows, and declaration of marriage are given only by an ordained minister except in those areas where division committees have taken action to approve that selected licensed or commissioned ministers who have been ordained as local elders may perform the marriage ceremony” (*Church Manual*).

**Inadvisable marriage.** — “Marriages are more likely to endure, and the family life to fulfill the divine plan, if the husband and wife are united and are bound together by common spiritual values and lifestyles. For these reasons, the Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly discourages marriage between a Seventh-day Adventist and a non-Seventh-day Adventist, and strongly urges Seventh-day Adventist

ministers not to perform such weddings” (*Church Manual*).

“The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one’s principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 174).

***Inappropriate remarriage.*** — The *Church Manual* addresses the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, listing 10 qualifications regarding the propriety of remarriage after divorce. This statement follows these qualifications: “No Seventh-day Adventist minister has the right to officiate at the remarriage of any person who, under the stipulation of the preceding paragraphs, has no scriptural right to remarry.”

***Inappropriate ceremony.*** — A church wedding is primarily a spiritual commitment and an act of worship. A wedding ceremony in which secular interests overshadow spiritual matters comprises an inappropriate ceremony for a Christian minister to perform.

## CHURCH REQUIREMENTS

***Wedding ceremony guidelines.*** — A church should recognize the advisability and appropriateness of establishing wedding ceremony guidelines for the use of its facilities. Such guidelines should be provided to those requesting the use of the church for a wedding ceremony. These guidelines may vary widely in different locations, but should include such issues as:

- who may use the church facilities for a marriage ceremony
- who may officiate at a marriage ceremony
- appropriate decorations



- appropriate music
- what constitutes appropriate dress standards
- photography guidelines
- reception guidelines if held in the church
- usage fees
- equipment and services available

**Participants.** — Of all church ceremonies and events, a wedding may involve more people who are not members of the church than any other function. Some such friends and family members may be invited to participate in the ceremony as part of the wedding party or in the performance of the music. So long as this participation meets the standards of the church, there should be no restrictions placed on this activity.

## PLANNING THE WEDDING

**Simplicity.** — While the minister should not seek to control the details and planning of a marriage ceremony, simplicity and economy should be encouraged. “Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 359).

**Advance planning.** — The minister, early in the planning of a marriage, should discuss with the bride and groom specific plans for the ceremony, assisting them in a well-planned order of service. Some couples will have detailed plans for the ceremony; others will not have much of an idea of what is involved. The minister should avoid the role of wedding coordinator, although the flow of the ceremony may to a significant degree be influenced by the minister providing counsel regarding matters such as the placement of families in the audience, position of the platform participants, and other details of the service.

**Rehearsal.** — Most of the participants in a marriage ceremony

are not accustomed to being in front of an audience, and may well be insecure and nervous at the prospect. Many of them may also be unacquainted with one another. The rehearsal can greatly lessen these tensions and bring a level of assurance to the wedding party. In cooperation with the wedding coordinator, assembling the participants for organizing the process, creating a sense of fellowship, and giving spiritual direction to the proceedings become quite valuable.

After a few opening words of encouragement, a scripture, and prayer, the easiest approach may be to place all the participants in the location they will be during the ceremony while explaining each part of the service. After this explanation they should exit to the locations from which they will be entering into the ceremony, and then make the entrance to their assigned positions. The pastor should once again go through the flow of the ceremony, and then the wedding party should exit as they will at the close of the ceremony.

### **ORDER OF SERVICE**

Adventists have no prescribed nuptial liturgy. Customs regarding marriage ceremonies vary widely according to cultural traditions. In settings in which wedding customs differ from the one outlined below, divisions or unions might suggest adaptations that produce a more appropriate order of service. Home weddings are typically much simpler than ceremonies conducted in churches and as such are planned according to the taste and circumstances of the parties concerned. Home weddings usually include personal invitations, while attendance at church weddings may be open to anyone.

The following suggested order of service will probably not be used in its entirety or in the exact order as outlined, but it may be adapted for use as needed and fitting:

### **Musical prelude**

**Guestbook signing:** The guestbook is usually signed in the foyer as guests enter. For large numbers of guests, pages may be separated and signed in different locations, reducing delay for those entering.

**Seating of guests:** Ushers generally seat the friends and family of the bride on the left side of the sanctuary and the groom's friends and family on the right. Special seating may be reserved in the front rows for the parents and the grandparents of the bride and groom.

**Parents enter:** The entrance of the parents of the bride and groom signals the beginning of the ceremony.

### **Special music**

**Minister and groom's party enter:** The minister enters (usually from the right side near the front of the room), goes to the center of the platform, and faces the audience. The groom follows and stands to the left of the minister, with the groomsmen following to their locations to the left of the groom. The pastor should assume the responsibility of quietly prompting the wedding party in the various parts of the ceremony.

**Bridal party enters:** The bridesmaids, maid of honor, Bible boy, and flower girl (if all these are included) enter down the aisle from the back of the sanctuary.

**Bride enters:** Bride enters on the arm of her father or guardian. Though it is not mandatory to stand for this entry, if the bride's mother stands, the audience should stand with her.

**Groom meets bride:** The groom walks to the head of the center aisle to meet the bride, where she and her father stand beside the family pew.

**Presentation of bride:** see below.

**Special music**

**Bride and groom proceed to platform:** Bride and groom proceed to platform as the processional continues, coming to the center of the platform and turning to face each other in front of the minister.

**Homily:** see below.

**Vows:** see below.

**Declaration of marriage:** Customs and legal procedures vary regarding the declaration of marriage as a spiritual or legal statement, or as a combination of both.

**Prayer:** Having pledged their love and faithfulness to each other, the couple kneel as the minister prays for the power of God to enable them to keep that pledge and to fill their hearts and home with divine love, joy, and peace.

**Special music:** While the bride and groom kneel, musical pieces such as “The Lord’s Prayer” or “Wedding Prayer” are particularly appropriate.

**Marriage embrace**

**Introduction:** Introduce the bride and groom now for the first time as a married couple. Invite the guests to the reception if the bride requests this.

**Recessional:** The bride and groom exit down the aisle as the recessional music begins. The wedding party follows in reverse order of their coming in, with the minister departing last.

**Parents ushered out:** Parents of the bride and groom are ushered out, in reverse order of their coming in.

**Audience dismissed:** Audience dismissed by row or en masse.

**PRESENTATION OF BRIDE**

Some couples or their families may prefer to omit this tradition,

seeing it as demeaning to a woman as being the possession of her father or husband. For those who wish to preserve this traditional question, the officiant asks, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” which may be answered by the father saying, “I do,” or her parents may say in unison, “We do.”

### HOMILY

The wedding homily should take no longer than five or 10 minutes and should address the plan of God for marriage and family unity, the love in marriage for one another, and the imagery of Christ’s love for the church as a model of that love. While some personal information and sharing may be a valid part of this address, it should be remembered that this sacred service does not call for jocularity and secular behavior. Some suitable passages of Scripture addressing the topic of love and marriage follow:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Genesis 1:26-28        | created in God’s image                     |
| Genesis 2:18-24        | the first wedding                          |
| Song of Solomon 2      | the song of love                           |
| Song of Solomon 8:6, 7 | many waters cannot quench love             |
| Mark 10:6-9            | they are no longer two, but one flesh      |
| John 2:1-10            | the wedding at Cana                        |
| John 15:9-12           | love one another that your joy may be full |
| 1 Corinthians 13       | love never fails                           |
| Ephesians 5:22-28      | duty of husbands and wives                 |
| Hebrews 13:4           | marriage is honorable                      |

### VOWS

The bride and groom join hands for the exchanging of vows. They may formally join right hands, or in a more intimate manner they may prefer to join both hands.

**Traditional vows.** — In the traditional vow the minister addresses the groom, “Before God and in the presence of these witnesses, will you, [groom’s name], have this woman, [bride’s name], to be your wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the sacred estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor her, cherish her, in sickness and in health, in prosperity or adversity; and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her so long as you both shall live? Do you now so declare?”

The groom answers: “I do.”

Then the minister addresses the bride: “Before God and in the presence of these witnesses, will you, [bride’s name], have this man, [groom’s name], to be your wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the sacred estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor him, cherish him, in sickness and in health, in prosperity or adversity; and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto him so long as you both shall live? Do you now so declare?”

The bride answers: “I do.”

The minister lays a hand on the joined hands of the bride and groom, saying: “Forasmuch as [groom’s name] and [bride’s name] have consented to be joined together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, and have declared the same by joining hands, I, as a minister of the gospel and by the authority of the law of [legal jurisdiction], do pronounce that they are husband and wife. ‘What . . . God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.’ ”

**Repeated vows.** — If it is preferred, the same vows may be used in a repeated format, providing breaks for the bride and groom to repeat after the minister as indicated in the following presentation:

“I, [groom’s or bride’s name], . . . before God  
and in the presence of these witnesses . . . take you,

[bride's or groom's name], . . . to be my wedded [wife or husband], . . . to live together after God's ordinance . . . in the sacred estate of matrimony. I promise to love you . . . to comfort you . . . to honor you . . . and to cherish you . . . in sickness and in health . . . in prosperity or adversity . . . and, forsaking all others, keep only unto you . . . so long as we both shall live."

***Vows spoken by the couple.*** — Some couples desire to prepare their own vows and repeat them from memory. It is wise to ask them to write out the vows in advance and give a copy to the minister. This serves two purposes: giving the opportunity for suggestions on the text, and providing a method of prompting should they forget their lines under the pressure of the moment. Such vows should include the fact that the commitment is total and permanent, invoking God's help and blessing in keeping the vows. The traditional vow may be provided as a guide in preparation of individualized vows.

### DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

"By the power invested in me as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by [legal jurisdiction], I now declare that [groom and bride] are husband and wife after the ordinance of God and according to the laws of [legal jurisdiction]. 'What . . . God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'"

### LICENSE SIGNING

In jurisdictions in which the signing of the marriage license is required following the ceremony, this may be cared for at the reception. In most cases the bride and groom sign along with witnesses and the person officiating. Preferred witnesses generally include the maid/matron of honor and the best man. In such settings

the minister carries legal responsibility for registration of the marriage license within stated time limitations. Generally the married couple receives one copy; one must be given to the authorizing jurisdiction, and in some instances a copy is provided for the officiant's records.

### **FEES AND EXPENSES**

Churches should establish clearly stated wedding policies for the use of church facilities. Generally members of the congregation are not charged for the use of the church for a wedding, but others who wish to use the facilities may rightly be charged a fee that would cover the expense of the church for both the use of the building and those who are required to work both in advance preparation and cleanup following the wedding ceremony.

Although Adventist ministers charge no fee for the performance of a marriage ceremony, when significant travel becomes necessary it is proper to accept reimbursement for expenses. Also the married couple may wish to provide an appreciation gift to the pastor for these services, and they may be insulted if the pastor refuses this token of gratitude. Personal judgment should be carefully used to assess this matter.



## CHAPTER 33

# CHILD DEDICATION

The dedication of children to God is a practice established in Scripture and in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is conducted by pastors or elders.

Distinct from those churches that practice infant baptism, the dedication of children follows the biblical example of Mary and Joseph dedicating the infant Jesus in the Temple (see Luke 2:22). Ellen G. White says of this: “The priest went through the ceremony of his official work. He took the child in his arms, and held it up before the altar. After handing it back to its mother, he inscribed the name ‘Jesus’ on the roll of the firstborn” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 52).

From the occasion of blessing the children, Jesus gives a further example of this practice when He says, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). “And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:16). “Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them” (*Evangelism*, pp. 349, 350).

This service emphasizes thanks to God for the miracle of birth, covenants the parents in raising the child in the love of Christ, commits the congregation to provide support for the parents in their responsibility, and dedicates the child to the service of God.

## PLANNING A CHILD DEDICATION

When planning the service, it is important to consider the following:

**Place.** — In some cultures this dedication may occur in the home or other settings. However, in most circumstances the ideal would be to integrate the child dedication as part of the Sabbath morning worship service. Since commitment of the congregation signifies one of the purposes of the dedication, it should be held when the largest possible representation from the congregation is available.

**Scheduling.** — Child dedication services may be scheduled and announced well in advance, providing ample time for parents to plan for the occasion. More frequently, however, the service is scheduled around the dates preferred by the family involved in the dedication. By nature of the event, family and friends who are not members of the congregation will likely be invited to witness the dedication. Recognition and a special welcome should be extended to these guests. At times some who are not members of the church may be moved to seek this service of dedication for their children. Because of this request and perhaps through this service, they may be brought into fellowship with the congregation. As Scripture states: “A little child shall lead them.”

**Dedication certificate.** — To commemorate the occasion, child dedication certificates should be prepared in advance and presented to the parents at the time of the service. These certificates are usually available at Adventist Book Centers.

**Age.** — Infants may be dedicated at as young an age as parents desire. Children beyond the age of one or two years are seldom involved in a dedication service; however, no set age limit exists in regard to child dedication.

## CONDUCTING A CHILD DEDICATION

Following are the suggested parts of the child dedication service:

**Invitation.** — Parents are invited to come before the congregation with the child to be dedicated. In some instances, additional family members and friends may accompany them depending on space available and the number of children being dedicated. As the families are coming before the congregation, a fitting hymn may be sung by the congregation. But it must be remembered that the timing of this event should be short, recognizing the potential for distress and crying of the children.

**Homily.** — A brief homily should emphasize the covenant of the parents and the commitment of the congregation, pledging to bring the child up “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Possible scriptures to be used follow:

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Deuteronomy 6:4-7  | “Teach them diligently to your children.”  |
| Psalms 127:3-5     | “Children are a heritage from the Lord.”   |
| Proverbs 22:6      | “Train up a child in the way he should go.”  |
| Isaiah 8:18        | “Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!”                                 |
| Matthew 18:2-6, 10 | “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones.”                            |
| Matthew 19:13-15   | “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray.” |
| Mark 10:13-16      | “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them.”                            |
| Luke 2:22-38       | “They brought Him [Jesus] to Jerusalem.”   |
| Luke 18:15-17      | “Then they also brought infants to Him.”   |

At the close of the homily a statement of commitment such as the following may be used:

“In bringing this child for dedication, you are accepting a sacred responsibility. By this symbolic act you seek to express your belief that this child is not only yours but God’s. The congregation joins you in dedicating this child and pledges to assist you in working toward the day when this act of dedication shall be followed by baptism and a full entering of this child into membership in the church family.

“You, therefore, must promise to do all in your power to bring this child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Do you so covenant with God?”

**Prayer.** — During the prayer of dedication, if only one child is dedicated, the pastor may wish to hold the child. But for some children who are frightened of strangers, it would be best for the parents to hold the child as the pastor places a hand on the child’s head in dedication. When there are multiple children in the dedication service, the pastor and elders assisting in the service may place their hands on the heads of the children. An individualized, relational atmosphere should prevail during the dedication. Mention of the child’s name in the prayer adds a personal touch that parents recognize as important.

**Dedication certificates.** — Certificates of dedication are given to the parents after the prayer, as well as expressions of love and support from the elders for the children and their families. Children’s Sabbath school division leaders may also be involved in this expression.

# CHAPTER 34

## ANOINTING AND DELIVERANCE

In Scripture the act of anointing with oil and other substances connects with many different functions, such as the coronation of kings and the ordaining of priests and prophets.

It is in the realm of prayer for the sick that anointing is presently practiced in the church, but its original significance has at times been distorted or lost in current usage. It was practiced in the early church in connection with prayer and became a comforting medical practice as well as a symbol of the blessing of the Holy Spirit's healing power. James instructs the ill to "call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14, 15).

Anointing addresses not only sickness, but forgiveness as well. It is a time of serious reflection and commitment to the will of God, and it is in the prayer of faith that His restoring power and grace are given. Anointing is not reserved as a last rite for the dying, nor is there mystical power in the oil itself. Both James and the early church were well aware that they were placing themselves in the hand of God in faith, trusting that His will would be accomplished in their lives. It is in this sense that the church continues to practice this sacred rite.

Early Adventist leaders frequently engaged in the practice of anointing. Ellen White and her family were anointed multiple times

for various ailments. It was the practice rather than the exception. Anointing is not a last rite to bless the dying, but an act of faith to heal the living. It recognizes serious health problems and meets them by placing trust in God.

### PREPARING FOR THE SERVICE

**Requesting anointing.** — The sick are instructed to “call for the elders of the church.” While it is generally the practice for the sick individual to request this rite, it may be that illness renders the person incapable of making the request. In such cases, it is acceptable for family or friends to make the request. Generally this request will come from members of the congregation, but on occasion others may request this service as well. It is not the position of the pastor to judge the worthiness of the individual and the request, but to do as Scripture states in praying for the sick. The anointing service is an intensely personal event, addressing the specific needs and requests of one person. It is not designed for mass audiences and healing services. The purpose of anointing and prayer, stated in the Epistle of James, is not designed for attracting large audiences. This is a distortion of the truth.

**Officiating.** — A minister usually leads out, assisted by the presence and prayers of the elders. Church elders may officiate at an anointing service in the absence of a minister, but should do so with the pastor’s approval whenever reasonably possible. Those who lead out should have a serious commitment to Christ, believing firmly in divine healing and having prepared their hearts for the occasion.

**Location.** — An anointing service may be held in a church, home, hospital, nursing facility, or wherever the need may arise. If it is conducted in a hospital, care should be taken to avoid interference with the medical staff. The length and formality of the service depend

on the place it is held and the condition of the recipient.

**Participants.** — In addition to the minister and elders, the recipient may wish to invite friends and family members. Generally those present will be of Christian persuasion; however, those who are not, but wish to be present, should not be asked to leave.

**Recipient.** — It may be that the one being anointed does not wish to reveal details of their illness. This reticence should be respected. The sick person should be encouraged to participate in self-examination before the anointing, being assured of the love, grace, and forgiveness of God. In preparation for the service, it would be helpful to suggest reading the chapter “Prayer for the Sick” in *The Ministry of Healing*. It is always wise to be careful what is said regarding the illness in the presence of the one who is ill, particularly when it is assumed that they are unconscious and cannot hear the conversation. Though there may be no signs of recognition, they may be able to understand what is being said in the room.

### ORDER OF SERVICE

**Preliminary remarks.** — The leader should open with an explanation of the purpose of anointing and how it takes place. The recipient may wish to comment on the sick person’s request for anointing and testify to their faith in God. The reading of scripture should affirm:

- that God can and does heal.
- that sin is confessed and forgiven.
- that God may choose to heal through those to whom He has entrusted gifts of healing.
- that prayer for healing is always answered yes to those who believe, either immediately, over time, or in the final restoration of all things at the second coming of Christ, but always in the affirmative.

**Scripture reading.** — Before the act of anointing, selected scriptures should be read, such as:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| James 5:14-16     | “Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil.”         |
| Psalms 103:1-5    | “Who heals all your diseases.”                            |
| Psalms 107:19, 20 | “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble.”       |
| Mark 16:15-20     | “They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” |

**The anointing prayer.** — While kneeling in prayer is appropriate and preferred in many instances, it may be that doing so around a hospital bed would be impractical. If the one being anointed wishes to pray, allow them to pray first, followed by any others in the group who are asked to pray. The pastor or elder should pray last and, at the conclusion of prayer, place the anointing oil on the forehead of the one being anointed, symbolizing the touch of the Holy Spirit in a specific and special way. It is generally the practice to use olive oil for this purpose. However, this is not mandatory. The oil should be applied to the head and not the affected part of the body.

### DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

The anointing service in James addresses primarily physical illness and forgiveness. However, there is also a ministry in Scripture that addresses possession by demonic powers. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, 13). While this struggle is not manifested equally in all places, there are occasions during which demonic power becomes evident.



To assume that one knows how this power will appear and the precise methodology of how to deal with it ignores the variety of ways it has manifested itself and was dealt with in the ministry of Christ and the early church. Early in His ministry in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus was confronted by a man possessed with a demon who recognized Him as “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). With a simple declaration commanding the demon to “be quiet, and come out of him!” (verse 25) the man was healed. Later that same evening “they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. . . . Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons” (verses 32-34).

The demoniac at Gadara was possessed, as he stated, by a “legion” of demons (Mark 5:1-20), and Luke reports the casting out of a demon that was mute (Luke 11:14). In all these cases the pattern repeats itself. Jesus simply commands them to come out, and they obey His word. In this power the disciples continued the same ministry as “He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1). “Like the twelve apostles, the seventy disciples whom Christ sent forth later received supernatural endowments as a seal of their mission. When their work was completed, they returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name’” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 94).

In the name of Jesus this ministry continued in the early church. New believers brought “sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they all were healed” (Acts 5:16). In response to the preaching of Philip, “unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed” (Acts 8:7). In its current manifestations, demon possession must still deal with the same straightforward command: to come out in the name

of Jesus. For a fuller discussion of demon possession, see the additional note on chapter 1 of the Gospel of Mark in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (vol. 5, p. 575).

# CHAPTER 35

## FUNERALS

**Totally contrary to the nature** of God as the Creator and Life-giver, death equates as the ultimate enemy of all that is good, an intrusion into the perfection of Eden brought on by sin that passed to all humanity. So death reigns as the untimely intrusion that disrupts all of life's joys and plans, demanding immediate attention. Yet even this most difficult and dreaded responsibility of ministry provides an opportunity to honor the memory of a loved one and comfort the bereaved in their loss, pointing them to the day of joyful reunion when "the last enemy," death, will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26).

### **TRADITION AND CULTURE**

Ministry to the bereaved calls for respect of traditions and culture in dealing with death, but always in the context of Christian principles and the biblical understanding of death. Churches tend, in dealing with funerals, to establish customs and procedures that likewise need to be respected and observed. Some deliver food to the homes of those in mourning, while others provide a meal at the church after the funeral. Some prefer to conduct funerals at the church, while others prefer the service at funeral parlors. Some schedule viewing of the body with the family at a wake, some at the beginning of the funeral service, others at the close, while some prefer no viewing at all. The pastor should recognize the importance of knowing traditions of the congregation in conducting funerals. Because cultures and congregations vary so widely, only basic guidelines, which may require considerable adaptation to fit local situations, are given here.

## BEFORE THE SERVICE

***Visiting the family.*** — The immediate visitation in support of the family becomes a time for encouraging words of comfort, scripture, and prayer, not theological discourse. Mourners may remember little of what pastors say during this initial shock, but they will remember the care demonstrated by the support of presence.

***Offering the assistance of the church.*** — Specific suggestions should be given as to how the church might be able to help, such as assisting in the notifying of relatives and friends, answering the phone or the door, arranging for care of the children, providing food, or cleaning the house in preparation for guests.

***Offering pastoral assistance.*** — Few have ever had the responsibility of planning a funeral service, and in the immediacy of death, it may be difficult for the bereaved to consider clearly the options and details of a funeral service. If dying has been a lingering experience, perhaps some thought may have been given in advance, yet even in these situations gentle assistance and guidance is needed.

The choice of who will conduct the funeral service may be influenced by attachments to those who have ministered to the family in previous times, particularly if the current pastor has been in the church for only a short time. It should not be considered a personal affront to the pastor if the family chooses someone else for this service. Assistance may be needed in making arrangements and contacts with those who will be called upon to serve as pallbearers, provide music, and assist the minister in the service. When serving as a guest minister in another pastor's church, the guest should remember the importance of working closely with the pastor while encouraging the family to involve their pastor in the service as well.

***Officiating at funerals.*** — Ordination is not required for the conducting of funerals. In the absence of a minister, an elder may lead out. Frequently a friend or member of the family may be called to

assist the minister in the service by giving the obituary, scripture, prayer, or eulogy. Generally the mortician caring for the body of the deceased will care for the details of proper burial and legal documentation needed in the jurisdiction in which the burial takes place. Seventh-day Adventist ministers do not charge a fee for the conducting of funerals. However, it is reasonable to receive reimbursement for travel expenses.

***Viewing the body.*** — The wisdom of the culture should be respected in viewing the body. In some settings family and friends are invited to the funeral parlor for viewing. For some, families keep the body at home, with a wake held in this location. For others, services are held around the casket in the evening until the day of the funeral. In whatever way the bereaved plan the viewing, it serves a useful purpose. Death must be faced before recovery can begin.

At the funeral service the body may be displayed so that people may pay their respects as they enter. The casket is then closed, and the funeral service, focused on hope and assurance, is not dampened by a final viewing. Other cultures and congregations prefer to have a viewing at the close of the service prior to closing the casket and departing to the gravesite.

### TYPICAL FUNERAL SERVICE

***Conducting the funeral.*** — In settings in which the family chooses the funeral parlor for the service, the funeral director is in charge of funeral arrangements, and the minister takes charge of the religious features of the service. The funeral becomes conducted as a team between the minister and the funeral director. Promptness and planning in the conducting of a funeral service become vital. Delay and indecision increase tension in an already difficult setting.

***Ministering to the bereaved.*** — The bereaved are typically brought together in a side room before being ushered in to their seats in

the funeral parlor. A few words of encouragement, a prayer, and the mutual support of the group help the bereaved brace for the finality of the service. This ministry also serves as a measure of the grief reaction that may be expected from the mourners.

***Order of service.*** — The order of service for a funeral should be straightforward and simple. A suggested order of service, which may be adapted or expanded as fits the situation, follows:

*Seating of the family.* — Participants enter and are seated.

*Scripture reading and prayer.* — The scripture might be taken from those listed below, perhaps combining several of the texts together. The prayer includes thanks to God for the life that He has given the deceased, comfort for those who mourn, and the hope of eternal life through Christ. The one praying usually stands, and the audience remains seated for the prayer.

*Song of comfort.* — Music performed by guest musicians is generally preferable to congregational singing, as this often does not work well in such settings, where emotions may interfere with the ability to sing.

*Eulogy and obituary.* — The eulogy and obituary, designed to bring honor to the life of the deceased, may be combined in one or read separately. A eulogy features a longer remembrance and honoring of the life of the deceased; an obituary addresses primarily the factual data of the dates of birth, death, names of survivors, and a few notable events from the life of the deceased. A bit of recalled joy, and even humor, in these readings helps to ease the tension of the occasion.

*Testimonials.* — Some find it comforting to give or hear testimonials from those in attendance at the funeral. While this may be helpful in some settings, these remembrances may become too lengthy, overly emotional, or inappropriately personal.

*Sermon.* — The funeral sermon should be both realistic about death and hopeful for the resurrection, recognizing the contributions of the deceased and the loss to the family, to the community, and to God.

The use of poetry may be fitting at the close of the sermon. The person presenting the sermon should recognize the importance of keeping the length of the presentation appropriate to the other parts of the program.

*Prayer.* — The sermon closes with a prayer of faith and hope for the future and strength for those who remain.

*Song of comfort.* — As noted above.

At this point in the service the minister customarily moves to the head of the casket, remaining there until after the audience and family have passed by, if the family has requested a viewing. The pastor then leads the pallbearers carrying the casket to the hearse, in which they place the casket for the journey to the gravesite. The minister chooses to ride in the hearse or follows directly behind it on the route to the gravesite.

**Scriptures.** — Sermons and scripture readings can be drawn from the following:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Job 14:1, 2, 14, 15    | “You shall call, and I will answer you.”                      |
| Psalms 23              | “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”    |
| Psalms 27              | “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage.”                       |
| Psalms 46              | “God is our refuge and strength.”                             |
| Psalms 90              | “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”  |
| Psalms 91:1, 2, 11, 12 | “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress.’ ” |
| Psalms 121             | “My help comes from the Lord.”                                |
| Isaiah 33:15-17, 24    | “The inhabitant will not say, ‘I am sick.’ ”                  |
| Isaiah 35:3-10         | “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”                         |
| Isaiah 40:28-31        | “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.”      |

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Isaiah 43:1, 2                 | “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”       |
| John 14:1-6                    | “I will come again and receive you to Myself.”                |
| Romans 8:14-39                 | “All things work together for good to those who love God.”    |
| 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10          | “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard.”                            |
| 1 Corinthians 15:20-26         | “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”             |
| 1 Corinthians 15:51-55         | “This mortal must put on immortality.”                        |
| Philippians 3:20, 21           | “For our citizenship is in heaven.”                           |
| 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18        | “Lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.”                 |
| 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11         | “Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” |
| Hebrews 4:14-16                | “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize.”     |
| 2 Peter 3:8-14                 | “Not willing that any should perish.”                         |
| Revelation 7:15-17             | “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore.”       |
| Revelation 14:13               | “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”                   |
| Revelation 21:1-4              | “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”          |
| Revelation 22:1-5              | “They shall see His face.”                                    |
| <b><i>Funeral of child</i></b> |   |
| 2 Samuel 12:16-23              | David’s grief.  |
| Mark 10:13-16                  | “He took them up in His arms.”                                |



***Funeral of youth***

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Ecclesiastes 11:6-10 | “Rejoice, O young man, in your youth.”                 |
| Ecclesiastes 12      | “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” |
| Luke 7:11-15         | Nain widow’s son. “Young man, I say to you, arise.”    |

***Funeral of godly woman***

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Proverbs 31:10-31 | “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” |
| Matthew 26:10-13  | “What this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” |
| Acts 9:36-42      | Dorcas. “This woman was full of good works.”                       |

***Funeral of elderly individual***

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Genesis 15:15   | “You shall be buried at a good old age.”           |
| Matthew 11:28   | “I will give you rest.”                            |
| 2 Timothy 4:6-8 | “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” |

**THE GRAVESIDE SERVICE**

While leading the casket to the grave, the person who leads in the funeral service should remember to avoid walking on other graves as much as possible. At the graveside, customarily the leader stands at the head of the deceased, facing the family. The use of music at the graveside should be determined by local custom and family wishes, but music generally serves to extend the time beyond what should be a brief service. If the graveside service includes the military or other organizations who participate in the burial, planning and coordination

with them will be required. Inclement weather will make keeping the graveside service succinct even more important.

***Informal committal.*** — A simple, informal committal may consist of a scripture reading and a prayer. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 serve this purpose well, followed by a prayer of faith and hope in the resurrection.

***Formal committal.*** — A formal committal, if used, fits well between the scripture and the prayer. Interment customs vary. In some settings the custom includes the minister dropping a handful of earth or flower petals on the casket as the committal is read. To others, this may be considered a rather harsh reminder of human frailty, which need not be depicted so graphically.

#### ***Sample committal for a Christian***

“Forasmuch as God in His infinite love and wisdom has permitted our dear [brother/sister] to fall asleep in Christ, we do tenderly commit [his/her] body to the ground, in the sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection when our Lord shall return in glory. Then this body of our humiliation shall be changed and made like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

#### ***Sample committal for one not known to be a Christian***

“Forasmuch as God in His goodness and the outworking of His providence has permitted this our friend [brother/sister] to lay down the burdens of this life, we do lovingly commit [his/her] body to the ground, remembering, as we do, that all the issues of life are in the hands of the everlasting Father of love and compassion, and that He has promised eternal life to those who love Him.”

***After the service.*** — Following the prayer and the end of the ser-

vice, the family may be greeted briefly. The pastor should then remain until those in attendance have left the gravesite.

**Interment before funeral.** — On occasion the interment may have occurred prior to the funeral service, perhaps as a private service for the family. From the graveside the family then goes to the church for the public service. In such a setting, the service concentrates more on the celebration of a life than the mourning of a death.

**Cremation.** — Cremation is an appropriate alternative to burial in many settings. Adventists take no theological stand against cremation, believing that God will be no more dependent on preexisting matter at the resurrection than He was at Creation. Local culture and the sensibilities of the family may influence the acceptance of this practice.

### MINISTERING TO THE GRIEVING

**Be present.** — Because the bereaved will continue to suffer from the loss of a loved one after the funeral, continued contact should be scheduled. With the immediate crisis over and the company gone, loneliness sets in. Ministering to those who are grieving only begins with the funeral, and should continue for many months afterward. The church should provide support as an ongoing ministry to the grieving.

**Be patient.** — The process of grieving takes time. Sleeplessness, anxiety, fear, anger, and a preoccupation with sad thoughts may continue on and off for a year or more. Unrealistic expectations that those who are bereaved should “snap out of it” may leave them feeling anxious and guilty and make the process of grieving more difficult. Some may express anger at God, which should be treated kindly and without judgmental comment as the bereaved are brought again to trust and faith.

**Listen.** — Talking and sharing are effective ways of releasing

emotions and undergoing healing. The bereaved usually enjoy talking about their lost loved ones that bring back precious and important memories. In a sense, however, people must say goodbye to the past before they can enjoy the present or look forward to the future. Be sensitive to indications of denial, such as refusal to talk about the death or unwillingness to part with the deceased's personal effects.

***Encourage activity.*** — As soon as possible, the grieving ones should be encouraged to commit themselves to some regular activity that comprises a benefit to others. Becoming active in a grief support group may be helpful.

# CHAPTER 36

## CHURCH OPENING, DEDICATION, AND GROUNDBREAKING

One of the highest of days in the life of a congregation involves establishing a new house of worship. Entering the new church as a congregation for the first time, and inviting the presence of God to reign supreme in the new edifice, comprise a joyful and sacred privilege. The tradition and policy of the Adventist Church, however, entails the holding of the dedication service only after the debt for the new facility has been paid.

Given that the financial realities of building or purchasing a new facility generally involve some long-term debt, this creates certain tensions and difficulties between the fervor of opening a new place of worship and waiting to dedicate the church until the mortgage has been paid. As a result, a ceremony of consecration and ribbon cutting of the new facility may initiate its use, and a ceremony of dedication and mortgage burning celebrates its debt-free ownership.

Guests are an important part of a consecration or dedication service. Former members and supporters of the project as well as conference officials and former pastors should be invited to participate. City leaders and community pastors may also be invited to attend and participate in the service.

## ORDER OF SERVICE

The order of service for either a consecration or dedication may be quite similar, with a few specific distinctions:

- opening hymn
- prayer
- recognition of members, guests, and contributors
- history of the church
- scripture reading
- special song or hymn
- sermon
- act of dedication or consecration
- prayer of dedication or consecration
- hymn
- benediction

***History of the church.*** — An historical sketch may be best presented by someone with recognized longstanding membership in, and support of, the church. Charter or lifetime members and former pastors should be recognized and honored and appreciation expressed to those most directly involved with the new building. The history can climax with an announcement of upcoming plans and programs for serving the community. The church must not only remember the past but also project its future.

***Scripture reading.*** — Relevant scripture readings may be found in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:23-25 or 2 Chronicles 6:14-42). Other passages often used at such occasions include:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Exodus 40:33-35 | “The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” |
| Nehemiah 12:27  | “Celebrate the dedication with gladness.”      |
| Psalms 84       | “How lovely is Your tabernacle.”               |

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Psalm 100 | “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.”                                   |
| Psalm 122 | “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ ” |

**Sermon.** — Any of the texts mentioned above could be developed into a dedicatory sermon, noting particularly that a church consists of not just a building, but a group of people. The congregation has come to dedicate itself, not just its building, to God’s service.

**Act of dedication.** — A burning of the copy of the mortgage serves as the symbolic freeing of the church from debt. This can be a climactic event, especially if the church has been in debt for some time and has recently sacrificed significantly to become debt-free. Many church groups find singing the doxology very appropriate as the mortgage burns. A longer litany, prior to the prayer of dedication, involving the congregation may be used at this point. An example provided below may be used in its entirety or excerpted and adapted to fit the local situation.

**Prayer of dedication.** — The dedicatory prayer may well be modeled after that of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple recorded in 2 Chronicles 6. This prayer deserves careful planning and preparation. The prayer should include:

- thanks to God for providing through His people the means and the desire to build
- confession of sin and plea for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the congregation
- guidance for the work of the church in building the kingdom of God in this place
- a blessing for the members and guests

The prayer concludes with specific words of dedication, such as:

“We now dedicate this building to You, O God,  
 as a light in this community,  
 as a house of prayer for all people.  
 For the worship of God,  
 for the conversion of sinners,  
 for the preaching of Christ and His Word,  
 for the fellowship of the family of God,  
 for the saving of our children,  
 for the dwelling place of God,  
 we dedicate this house, in the name of the Father,  
 and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

## LITANY

### ***Let Them Build a Sanctuary***

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden. And there He put the man He had formed.

**And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.**

In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**When the woman saw that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate it.**

So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which they had been taken.

**Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. And in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned.**

Iniquity has separated you from your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you.



**“Then have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them.”**

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

Singing Hymn 376 (*The SDA Hymnal*) — “All Things Are Thine”

All things are Thine; no gift have we,  
 Lord of all gifts, to offer Thee;  
 And hence with grateful hearts today,  
 Thine own before Thy feet we lay.

Thy will was in the builder’s thought;  
 Thy hand unseen amidst us wrought;  
 Through mortal motive, scheme and plan,  
 Thy wise, eternal purpose ran.

No lack Thy perfect fullness knew;  
 For human needs and longings grew  
 This house of prayer—this home of rest.  
 Here may Thy saints be often blessed. . . .

O Father! deign these walls to bless;  
 Make this the abode of righteousness,  
 And let these doors a gateway be  
 To lead us from ourselves to Thee!

### ***Let Them Build a Community***

As you come to Him, the Living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may

declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into this wonderful light.

**Once we were not a people, but now we are the people of God. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy.**

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue in Him,

**Rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as we were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

Singing Hymn 348 (*The SDA Hymnal*) — “The Church Has One Foundation”

The church has one foundation, 'tis Jesus Christ her Lord;  
 She is His new creation, by water and the word;  
 From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;  
 With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.  
 Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,  
 Her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
 One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,  
 And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

### ***Let Them Build a Character***

(children invited to the front for singing following this section)

You have heard it said, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, “Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

**“And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.”**

“If someone forces you to go one mile, go two miles.”

**“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”**

You have heard it said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”

But I tell you, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”

**“He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”**

Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

**The rain came down, and the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.**

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

**The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.**

Children singing “The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock”

The wise man built his house upon the rock,

(repeat three times)

And the rains came tumbling down.

O the rains came down and the floods came up,

(repeat three times)

And the house on the rock stood firm.

The foolish man built his house upon the sand,

(repeat three times)

And the rains came tumbling down.

O the rains came down and the floods came up,

(repeat three times)

And the house on the sand fell flat.

(children return to their seats)

Singing Hymn 531 (*The SDA Hymnal*) — “We’ll Build on the Rock”  
We’ll build on the Rock, the living Rock,

on Jesus, the Rock of Ages;  
 So shall we abide the fearful shock,  
 when loud the tempest rages.

**Refrain:**

We'll build on the Rock, we'll build on the Rock;  
 We'll build on the Rock, on the solid Rock,  
 on Christ, the mighty Rock.

Some build on the sinking sands of life,  
 on visions of earthly treasure;  
 Some build on the waves of sin and strife,  
 of fame and worldly pleasure.

O build on the Rock forever sure,  
 the firm and the true foundation;  
 Its hope is the hope which shall endure,  
 the hope of our salvation.

Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**CONSECRATION OR DEDICATION BOOKLET**

A consecration or dedication booklet becomes a treasured memento to church members and may include the following:

- the order of service for the occasion
- pictures of the construction process to its completion
- the litany used during the act of dedication
- names of the present and former pastors, if possible, with pictures and dates served
- names of conference leaders participating
- an abbreviated history of the church, including pictures of

former church buildings

- names of the architect, builder, and building committee
- significant facts about the building—dates of groundbreaking, beginning construction, project completion, cost, seating capacity, and floor plan that identifies the location and purpose of each room

## GROUND BREAKING

A groundbreaking service encourages congregational involvement and unity in supporting a building project engendering enthusiasm, especially when the church has been planning, praying, and giving in preparation for building.

***Setting the time.*** — Groundbreaking should not necessarily be considered a religious service and generally does not fit into Sabbath activities. Given that such activity occurs outside, issues such as weather and available light must be taken into consideration. In order to make it possible for the most people to attend, the choice of a day and time must be considered.

***Inviting the guests.*** — Conference representatives and local political and community leaders may be invited to attend, and representatives of news media should be notified and encouraged to give coverage of the event.

***Preparing the site.*** — The site should be cleared. Perhaps a platform should be erected and a sound system installed. Should the service be envisioned as a lengthy one, chairs may need to be included. Architectural drawings of the building should be displayed. A mock-up of the proposed structure will help in visualizing the completed structure.

If the groundbreaking includes the use of shovels, enough should be supplied for those involved in the breaking. Alternatively, earth-moving machinery may be used to turn over the first dirt. An

additional variation involves the use of a plow attached to a long rope. The congregation pulls the plow through the ground as a symbol of pulling together in the building project. A furrow can be plowed around the perimeter of the new building, providing easy visualization of the site of the structure when finished.

### ORDER OF SERVICE

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>opening song</b>   | Because of the difficulty of singing outdoors, this portion of the service may be omitted, especially if the group is small.  |
| <b>prayer</b>         | If possible, involve guest personnel.   |
| <b>scripture</b>      | Texts and litanies listed above contain passages fitting for this event.  |
| <b>speeches</b>       | Guests may be invited to speak, and a statement of church history, the reasons for building, and plans for the future may be given.   |
| <b>groundbreaking</b> | Participants in breaking the first ground usually include the pastor, the head elder, the building committee chair, and some representatives from the conference and the community. Should the building be a school, the participants should include the school board chair, the principal, a teacher, and a student. |
| <b>benediction</b>    |   |

### STONELAYING

Similar to a groundbreaking ceremony, a stonelaying service may be held after the building has begun and features the laying of a stone

that will become part of the foundation. The service can follow the same general order as for groundbreaking. Recommended scriptures include: Ezra 3:10, 11; 6:14; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Corinthians 3:9-11; and 1 Peter 2:4-8.

# CHAPTER 37

## HOUSE BLESSING

The practice of house blessing varies according to culture and the wishes of each individual family. The world church does not have any regular tradition for such services. This service may be requested when a new home has been built, purchased, or leased, or with the final payment of the mortgage. Typically the house blessing is conducted after the completion of the house or when the occupants first move in. Such a service provides an opportunity to invite neighbors and friends for the occasion and to establish the home as a Christian witness in the neighborhood. Attendees often include neighbors of various religious backgrounds and some who are not practicing Christians.

Differentiation should be made between a house blessing and a church dedication. A house may be set aside to be of spiritual service to its family and neighborhood, but the church is set aside particularly for the worship of God. A house may be blessed, but the church is dedicated. House blessing sets the building apart for nurturing the love, unity, and spiritual growth of the family living there and witnessing to the neighborhood of the saving love of Jesus.

### WHO OFFICIATES

No license or ordination is required for house blessing services. An elder may perform the service, but should do so with the knowledge and cooperation of the pastor.



## ORDER OF SERVICE

Guests typically gather in a large room of the home, and, depending on the number in attendance, the room may be crowded. Some may be seated; others will likely be standing. Thus, the service should be brief, usually 30 minutes or less in length. The following order of service is suggested:

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>group singing</b>    | Singing as a group should be considered optional depending on the situation. Appropriate songs include “Happy the Home” and “Love at Home.”   |
| <b>opening prayer</b>   | This first prayer seeks God’s presence in the home. Since there are three prayers in this service, the first and last should be brief and not repeat the prayer of blessing.  |
| <b>history of house</b> | Given by a family member, perhaps the head of the household, this serves as a brief review of how this house came to be the home of the new family.   |
| <b>homily</b>           | The address should open with scripture and refer to biblical themes of establishing homes, families, and communities according to the plan and laws of God, stressing the need for interdependence and support of one another. Suggested scripture references are listed below. |

- prayer of blessing** Standing or kneeling in the center of the room, surrounded by the guests, the family joins hands with the guests as the service leader prays for the blessing and protection of God over the house, the family, and the surrounding neighborhood and community.
- special song** With available accompaniment, “Bless This House” is an ideal song for this occasion.
- benediction** This prayer should be brief and not repetitious of the prayer of blessing. A scriptural benediction may be appropriate, such as: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26).
- house tour** The host may wish to invite guests to tour the house. Refreshments are optional.

## SCRIPTURES AND LITANIES

### *Suggested Scriptures*

- Genesis 24:67 Home a place to find love and comfort.
- 2 Samuel 23:15 Home a precious place of refreshing.
- Psalms 127 The Lord should build the house.
- Isaiah 65:21-24 They shall build houses and inhabit them.
- Micah 4:4 Everyone shall sit under his vine.
- Luke 10:38-42 The place of work and worship in the home.

***Suggested Litany***

- Leader:** Eternal God, for this home committed to Your service and offered to Your honor and glory,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** For Your presence whenever two or three have gathered in Your name,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** For making us Your children through Jesus Christ our Savior,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** For giving us families in which to love and to be loved,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** For providing shelter, and food, and friends,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** For Your promise to dwell with us in peace,
- People:** We thank You, Lord.
- Leader:** Everything in heaven and on earth is Yours,
- All Together:** And we exalt Your name above all. Amen.

***Alternate litany.*** — The family may be addressed directly in a written litany, giving answers and commitment to such questions as:

Do you pledge to make this house a place of prayer, where devotions are revered?

Do you pledge to make this house a place of family love and unity?

Do you pledge to make this house a light to the community?

# CHAPTER 38

## PASTORAL INSTALLATION

With pastoral transition an integral part of ministry, terms of service for a pastor tend to be in the range of three to six years on average, with some as short as a year or two and rarely longer than 10 or 15 years. This exists as an occupational expectation in ministry and church life but is not unique to it. Those who work in such careers as military service, politics, the entertainment industry, professional sports, and many others also live with the expectation that changes in location and leadership will be part of their lives.

Such transitions can be both an opportunity and a hardship on the pastoral family. Generally speaking, moving to a new location becomes stressful emotionally, physically, and financially. Given this reality, both conferences and churches have a responsibility to endeavor, as far as possible, to alleviate these stresses for the pastoral family.

The transition can also be stressful for the church. The departure of a loved and faithful pastor creates insecurity and disruption in the fellowship and program of the church. Yet it also opens the way for new ideas and fresh thinking that can bring renewed vision to the fellowship. No one person, no matter how gifted and loved, has all the ideas and abilities needed for the ongoing life of the congregation.

### INSTALLATION SERVICE

***Celebrate the new.*** — Conferences and congregations have the responsibility of providing the installation service for the new pastor

as an important symbolic act, publicly establishing a new pastorate. Pastors cannot plan their own installation. Church leaders and conference officials must take the cooperative initiative to prepare such an event. The installation should be part of the Sabbath worship service, when most members are present. The service should emphasize the introduction of the entire pastoral family, with respect given to their level of comfort in public recognition.

***Introduction of conference representative.*** — The conference representative may not be well known to the congregation and should be introduced by the elder in charge, who expresses appreciation for the work of the conference officials in selecting and providing leadership for the church.

***Conference representative's remarks.*** — The conference representative provides background information regarding the process by which the new pastor was selected and how this appointment serves the needs of the congregation and community, and gives a brief biographical sketch of the pastoral family.

***Welcome by elder.*** — The elder in charge speaks for the congregation in welcoming the pastor. The entire pastoral family may be invited to the platform to join the elder if they are comfortable doing so. With children in the pastor's family, a word of welcome may be given from a Sabbath school teacher, church school teacher, youth or Pathfinder leader, or children of the church of similar age. A small token welcoming gift may be given as well.

***Litany.*** — The following litany is a suggestion that may be used and adapted as needed to fit the installation service:

**A Litany of Service and the Word\***  
**On the Occasion of the Installation of**  
**[name of pastor] as Pastor of**  
**[name of church]**

**HEARING THE WORD**

- Elder:** Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- Congregation:** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly the faith we profess.
- Conference leader:** Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Everyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame. The same Lord is Lord of all, and He richly blesses all who call on Him.
- Congregation:** How can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?

**ACKNOWLEDGING THE CALL**

Pastor: I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to comfort all who mourn. And to provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

**JOINING THE SERVICE**

Deacon: Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke?

Deaconess: Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter?

Deacon: When you see the naked, to clothe him, and not turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Congregation: Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear. Your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

### **KNOWING THE MISSION**

- Pastor: And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations,
- Congregation: And then the end will come.

### **SINGING**

“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

### **CATCHING THE VISION**

- Conference leader: God says that in the last days “I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” What is your vision for ministry in this congregation in word, worship, fellowship, and service?
- Pastor: I see the church as God’s redemptive and unified community, presenting to the world a seeking church, open to God’s self-disclosure in His Word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit; a spiritual church that worships God as Creator and knows Christ as Savior, Friend, and soon-coming Lord; a mission-oriented church that proclaims the gospel in ways relevant to people everywhere; a united church that values the richness of diversity within the body of Christ; and a discipling church that equips believers for service and leadership.



**ENTERING THE JOY**

- Conference leader: When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you blessed of My Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.”
- Congregation: Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?”
- Pastor: The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.”

**RECEIVING THE BLESSING**

- Conference leader: Before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name, I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that

Christ may dwell in your heart through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

\*Scripture texts taken and adapted from the New International Version include the following:

Deuteronomy 8:3

Isaiah 6:8

Isaiah 58:6-8

Isaiah 61:1-3

Matthew 24:14

Matthew 25:31-40

Matthew 28:19, 20

Acts 2:17, 18

Romans 10:11-17

Ephesians 3:14-21

Ephesians 5:27

Hebrews 4:12-14

***Installation prayer.*** — Facing the congregation, the pastor kneels (the family may be included), with the conference representative on one side and the elder in charge on the other. Other elders and church leaders may be invited to join in the prayer as well. The elder prays, inviting the congregation's commitment in supporting the new pastor. The conference representative prays, officially installing the pastor as congregational leader. The conference representative then leads the elders and church leaders in welcoming the new pastoral family.

***Church welcome.*** — After the close of the worship service, members of the congregation may greet and welcome the pastor as they leave the sanctuary. Additional opportunity for welcoming may be provided in a fellowship dinner.

## CHAPTER 39

### RETIREMENT

As the apostle Paul comes near the close of his ministry, he accurately and succinctly sums up the challenges of his noble calling as he passes the torch on to the young Timothy. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering. . . . Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Even though the call of God to Christian service never ends, still the day comes when a minister should pass the responsibility of leadership in the church on to others.

Church workers who, on account of age or condition of health, have retired from active service deserve honor and consideration. “The Lord would have our people understand that the pioneers in this work deserve all that our institutions can do for them. God calls upon us to understand that those who have grown old in His service deserve our love, our honor, our deepest respect” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 430).

**Personal identity.** — Naturally, one who spends many years in ministry will come to be identified with this role, and perceive their own identity in this context. However, to become so identified in the role of ministerial leadership that at its closing a loss of personal identity exists constitutes a mistake. Roles of family life, friends, and outside interests must be developed along with the identity that comes from ministerial roles, so that at its close there is still a sense of personal worth and usefulness.

**Physical health.** — Given the basically sedentary nature of the work of ministry, pastors should keep up a regular program of

physical activity, not only to increase their ability to function during the time of church employment, but in order to enjoy a measure of health, allowing for an active retirement. “Without physical exercise, no one can have a sound constitution and vigorous health; and the discipline of well-regulated labor is no less essential to the securing of a strong and active mind and a noble character” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 601).

**Financial security.** — Ministers should consult with their employing organization to determine which retirement plan is available to them. “Because of increased governmental control of retirement plans and changing financial and social circumstances in many countries, ability to maintain a uniform world retirement policy is not possible” (*GC Policy Z 05 05*).

Denominational employees must carry the responsibility to be aware of retirement plans available from the church and governmental retirement systems and to participate in these plans in building toward a financially secure retirement. Such planning and saving should begin at the outset of ministerial service and continue through to its conclusion. In addition to church and governmental funds, personal savings are a vital part of retirement income.

Although Jesus cautioned, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matt. 6:19), He also says to “do business till I come” (Luke 19:13). In the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25) the wise made provision to wait for the coming of the bridegroom while the foolish did not.

**Transition.** — A distinct transition needs to occur between full-time pastoral leadership and the status of a retired minister who no longer directs the activities of the congregation where they reside. There are ministerial functions in the church in which a retired minister can be of great benefit to both the congregation and the pastor

and find personal satisfaction in continued service.

**Recognition of service.** — In order to recognize the contribution that retired workers have made through their leadership roles, to foster appreciation and acknowledgment of their continuing service to the church, and to enhance their continuing effectiveness, the Ministerial Association makes the following recommendations:

1. The employing organization should host a special recognition event that clearly marks the transition from active to retiree ministry.

2. Union or conference leaders are responsible for ensuring that the names of the retirees are listed in an appropriate publication.

3. The denomination should follow the policy of issuing honorary ministerial credentials that will permit the retiree to function in various pastoral roles even after they are no longer full-time ministerial employees of the denomination. Retirees should respect the policies concerning honorary credentials.

4. Conference leaders may recruit retirees to serve as supply preachers during pastoral interims, and as assistants in planning special functions. Retirees may be delegated assignments in which age and wisdom will combine to provide good counsel. They may be given short-term responsibilities that will expand the evangelistic, teaching, nurture, or organizational work of the church.

5. Conference leaders should instruct and, if necessary, admonish retired workers not to attempt to control the activities of churches that they once served but that now have new pastoral leadership.

**Honorary credentials.** — Union conferences, upon the recommendation of the local conference, may issue honorary credentials to retired employees corresponding to the ones held during active service. Credentials are granted for the duration of the conference term and must be renewed by a vote of the conference in session. The possession of out-of-date or expired credentials does not authorize a retiree to function in any of the offices of a minister.

A retiree's relationship to the church, as a carrier of an honorary credential, remains the same as that of any other member, except that they may still perform baptisms, weddings, and ordinations of church leaders, especially when the pastor is not available or not yet authorized to do so. In order to perform such functions the retiree needs to make the proper arrangements with conference or district leaders.

***Joy of service.*** — As his ministry draws to a close, Paul looks back on it all and without regret says to Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

Ministry has its struggles and pains, but the joys and triumphs far surpass its difficulties, rendering them insignificant. The faithful servant receives, far beyond any earthly reward, the approbation of the Master: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:21).

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