

New Church Organization Policy

Introduction

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:40, *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* It is our sincere hope that this document will help achieve this worthwhile biblical goal when it comes to organizing God’s church.

The Purpose of Church Organization

Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. He created the church. The church is His body on earth. Today we are His hands, feet and mouth. This implies that we need to do what Jesus says.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus stayed focused on His task, *“to seek and save the lost”* (Luke 19:10). After His resurrection He commissioned the church to accomplish His mission (Matthew 28:19-20). Additionally in John 20:21, Jesus said to His original disciples, *“Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”* We, His modern day disciples, must be faithful to this same specific high calling.

Why does the church exist? The correct biblical answer is to fulfill the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; to make disciples of all peoples (Matthew 28:19-20).

The leaders of the Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventist’s understand that form is to follow function. Our heart’s desire is stated in our conference mission statement: *“To grow healthy disciple-making churches.”*

Church growth studies reveal that planting churches is one of the most effective ways to make disciples. Thus we want to encourage as many new healthy groups to be organized as possible in strategic places.

In order to insure success and health the following are principles and guidelines to help groups of believers grow the body of Jesus Christ.

General Issues for all New Organizations to Carefully Consider

1. **Geographic location in relationship to other churches.** Churches should not be located in close proximity to an existing church unless they have a totally different target group.
2. **Growth potential in the community.** Is there a strong population base to attract?

3. **Adequate leadership.** Everything rises or falls with leadership. Simply put, no leader = no group, no company, no church. God always raises-up a visionary leader before He births a church.
4. **Adherence to the teachings and policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.**
5. **Alignment with the mission and vision of the Illinois Conference.**
6. **Ability to assume appropriate financial responsibility.**
7. **Missional reason for wanting to start a new congregation.** A new group should not be formed because of internal church disputes.
8. **Partnership with the Conference's strategic plan for church planting.**

Three Types of Church Organization

1. **MISSION GROUP:** This is the first step in church planting. A mission group must be sponsored by either a local church, a group of local churches, or by the conference. The sponsoring organization(s) will help in the important areas of prayers, finances and personnel.

The following recommendations apply for the organization of a Mission Group.

- a. **Authorization.** The Conference Executive Committee will vote to authorize the formation of Mission Groups.
- b. **Application.** An application form must be completed and signed by the sponsoring church(es) or organization and then sent to the conference's Executive Secretary.
- c. **Mission.** The mission of the Mission Group is to make disciples of Jesus Christ through baptisms of community members where the group is planted.
- d. **Leadership.** The leaders of the Mission Group are appointed by the sponsoring church(es) or organization.
- e. **Long-term Rental Agreements.** The leaders of the Mission Group should not enter into long-term rental agreements of any kind without the approval of the sponsoring church or organization.
- f. **Membership.** Church membership of those attending the Mission Group is held in the sponsoring church(es) or in the conference church.
- g. **Objective.** The Mission Group must be organized for a specific stated reason.
- h. **Tithes and Offerings.** All tithes and offerings from the Mission Group are to be sent into and receipted by the sponsoring church(es) or organization.

- i. **Process.** To start the process, an appropriate application form, available through the Executive Secretary's office, must be completed, signed and submitted.
 - j. **Financial Responsibilities.** The sponsoring church(es) or organization must assume all financial and administrative responsibilities for the Mission Group.
 - k. **Pastoral Services.** Some pastoral coverage (possibly a lay pastor) will be assigned the spiritual leadership of the Mission Group.
 - l. **Size.** A Mission Group generally has between 5-25 attendees.
2. **COMPANY:** When a mission group grows and matures to the point where it desires to join the sisterhood of churches in the conference it applies to become a Company.

The following recommendations apply for the organization of a Company.

- a. **Application.** An application form, available through the Executive Secretary's Office, must be completed by the sponsoring church(es) or organization. The conference's Executive Committee will then review the application. A Mission Group should be organized at least one year before applying to be a Company.
- b. **Leadership.** The conference appointed pastor continues to give spiritual leadership to the company. Now all of the offices (i.e. treasurer) must now be held by members of the Company. In other words, there must now be independence demonstrated from the sponsoring church(es) or organization. The Company needs to be healthy enough to stand alone.
- c. **Conference Directory.** Authorized companies are listed in the Conference Directory.
- d. **Mission.** The primary mission of the company is to make disciples of the people from the community where it is located.
- e. **Financial Responsibilities.** Before authorization is granted to form a company it must demonstrate the ability to function on a sound financial basis. The Company must be able to meet all of its financial responsibilities independent of the original sponsoring organization(s). A Company needs to attain and maintain an annual tithe of \$25,000. Local financial obligations are generally 20-25% of annual tithe.
- f. **Tithes and Offering.** All tithes and offerings of a Company are sent to the Conference, with the exception of the local expense offerings, which are to remain with the Company.
- g. **Organization Service.** After the Executive Committee grants the request to be organized into a Company, the Conference Executive Secretary will communicate and plan with local leaders the date and organizational service.
- h. **Size.** A Company generally has between 30-55 members.

3. **CHURCH:** To be organized as a fully autonomous Seventh-day Adventist Church within the Illinois Conference should be the desire and goal of every Company. As part of the worldwide denomination, all churches must adhere to its biblical teachings, standards and practices.

The following principles must be kept in mind when a Company wishes to become an organized church.

- a. **Application.** The Company's spiritual leader must complete an application form, available through the Executive Secretary's Office. The conference's Executive Committee will then review the application. A Company should be organized at least one year before applying to be a church.
- b. **Authorization.** Only the Conference's Executive Committee may grant authorization to organize a church. Then this action is ratified by vote at the next scheduled conference constituency meeting. Then the church is officially part of the conference's sisterhood of churches with all the rights and responsibilities.
- c. **Conference Directory.** All organized churches will be listed in the Conference Directory.
- d. **Financial Responsibility.** Before authorization is granted to organize a Company into a Church, the Company must demonstrate the ability to function on a sound financial basis.
- e. **Mission.** Every church that takes the name of Jesus Christ must be about their Father's business. That means making disciples for Jesus. Every church must have a disciple-making system.
- f. **Tithes and Offerings.** All tithes and offerings of a church are sent to the Conference, with the exception of all local expense offerings, which remain with the church.
- g. **Organization Service.** After the Executive Committee grants the request to be organized into a Church, the Conference Executive Secretary will communicate and plan with local leaders regarding the date and the organizational service.
- h. **Size.** To be organized into a church generally there should be a minimum of 60 members attending. Why? In a word – momentum. To be healthy and grow it takes a large group of dedicated disciples.

4. Summary: Guidelines

	Organization	Tithe	Attendance
1	Mission Group		5-25
2	Company	\$25,000	30-55
3	Church	\$50,000	60+