

Carolina Conference

Guidelines for Planting a Church

Last Revision Voted April 6, 2023, by Church Planting Committee

It is the purpose of the Carolina Conference to foster the growth of Seventh-day Adventist churches in our territory by strategically planting churches in areas targeted and approved by the Church Planting Committee. To assist mission groups in becoming successful, healthy, growing churches, the following guidelines have been adopted based on a demonstrated history of church plants.

Church Planting Resources Provided by the Carolina Conference:

- Church Planting Coordinator
- A.C.T.S. (Assessment, Coaching, Training, Support) Workbook
- Reimbursement for your first Natural Church Development (NCD) Survey.
- NCD coaching to assist in processing the results from the NCD assessment.
- Carolina Evangelism funding for outreach events.
- Conference departmental resources (contact individual departments)

PLEASE NOTE: *The responsibility of hiring and placement of pastoral employees lies solely with the Carolina Conference. Mission groups, companies and churches may not hire pastors, Bible workers, teachers, or any employee in any capacity.*

THANK YOU!

For your commitment to church planting! We are praying for God's blessing as we join hands with Jesus in this God-inspired endeavor.

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Mission Group Status

1. Weekly meetings for the purpose of spiritual fellowship and strategic church plant planning. This “incubation” period should continue for a minimum of six months before the Mission Group begins Sabbath worship service.
2. The sponsoring church in business session must vote to sponsor the church plant and elect its lay leader or volunteer lay pastor (VLP). The VLP or lay leader will work with the district pastor for mentoring/coaching.
3. VLPs will remain a part of the leadership structure of the church plant through church status.
4. Once the new plant is granted church status, the church will cease to be a part of the VLP program and will simply function under the leadership of the district pastor and first elder as outlined in the *Church Manual*. It may be a good idea for the VLP to become the first elder to facilitate a healthy transition to church status.
5. New plants will develop a 2-year plan for church growth that includes outreach events, stewardship plans, etc. These plans will be submitted to the Church Planting Committee.
6. We will seek to establish new plants in communities within a 25-minute-drive of a population center of at least 25,000 and be demographically viable for long-term growth.
7. Each plant must originate with and maintain a positive relationship with a sponsoring Carolina Conference church.
8. The new group will take counsel from the mother church, and the district pastor must support the effort and he or she serves as the conference liaison for the plant.
9. For a non-English speaking plant originating in an English-speaking church, there should be a bi-lingual VLP or lay leader to facilitate communication between the district pastor and the plant.
10. The key leaders of the plant should be established Seventh-day Adventist members in regular standing.
11. All Adventist Mission Group members need to hold membership in the sponsoring local church of the Carolina Conference.
12. The mother church should elect the lay leader or VLP of the Mission Group as a board member of the mother church.
13. The lay leader or VLP must be elected during each nominating process of the mother church with approval from the district pastor, the Mission Group, and the Conference VLP coordinator.
14. All finances of the Mission Group shall be managed by the treasurer of the sponsoring church, and all group funds will be held in the mother church’s bank accounts.
15. The treasurer will account for all tithes and offerings and disburse funds in harmony with the will of the Mission Group, the guidelines of the sponsoring church and the policies of the Carolina Conference.
16. While Mission Groups shall not have separate bank accounts, Mission Groups may maintain some Petty Cash or a similar arrangement for limited expenditures when coordinated with the sponsoring church and the district pastor. The petty cash amount should not exceed \$1,000.
17. A treasurer’s assistant for the Mission Group shall be elected to be accountable for the finances of the Mission Group, convey tithes and offerings to the mother church treasurer, and be the custodian of Petty Cash. The conference auditor or their representative will be available for training and support. Records will be available for the Mission Group from the mother church treasurer.
18. All Mission Groups are asked to designate a minimum of 30% of their budgets to outreach (i.e., public evangelism, Bible studies, and other events focused on reaching non-Adventists).
19. The Carolina Conference Church Planting Committee must vote to recognize a new Mission Group.
20. Buildings and land should not be purchased for or by congregations while they are at Mission Group status.
21. Organized Mission Group leaders should make it a priority to attend annual 1.) conference church planting rallies, 2.) lay-leader/pastor training events, and 3.) other training events as directed (i.e., elders’ or deacons’ retreat).

Company Status

1. To progress to “company” status, a Mission Group must have at least 30 baptized members with an average attendance of at least 30 attendees for the previous 3 months.
2. Mission Groups desiring “company” status will work under the leadership of the district pastor.
3. The Mission Group must maintain a positive relationship with the sponsoring church and district pastor. The district pastor will continue to serve as a coach/mentor to the lay leader.
4. Upon receiving “company” status, membership will be transferred from the sponsoring church to the Carolina Conference Church, which is governed by the Conference Executive Committee.
5. The Mission Group must have committed Seventh-day Adventist lay leadership ready to serve in a minimum of two key offices: lay leader/VLP and treasurer.
6. These offices should be filled during each nominating process. While most decisions will be made by local leadership, the Executive Committee of the Conference serves as the board for the company, granting transfer requests and voting on church discipline issues. (See *SDA Church Manual*, “Organizing a Company” for details).
7. The Mission Group must also present a two-year plan for church growth. (Include outreach events, stewardship plan, etc.)
8. Approval for “company” status must be voted by the Conference Executive Committee at the recommendation of the Church Planting Committee.
9. Leaders of Mission Groups desiring to become Companies should make it a priority to attend annual 1.) conference church planting rallies, 2.) lay-leader/VLP training events, and 3.) and other training events (i.e., elders’ or deacons’ retreat) to enhance their experience.

Company Finances:

1. They must have at least \$30,000 in projected annual tithe.
2. They must have a balanced budget.
3. They must have a record of faithful remittance of tithe and offerings to the Carolina conference through the sponsoring church.
4. Once company status is voted, a bank account is to be set up in the company’s name in consultation with the Conference Treasury department. The Conference auditor should also be contacted about the approved accounting software and financial procedures.
5. The newly established company then agrees to establish a line item in their budget for a building fund which will receive a monthly allocation from the combined budget. However, purchases of land or buildings is not recommended before reaching “church” status. The Carolina Conference must authorize such purchases or projects.
6. At least 30% of the company’s budget will continue to be designated for outreach.

Church Status

1. For a company to progress to “church” status it needs to have at least 55 baptized members and an average attendance of at least 60 for the previous 3 months.
2. The Company must maintain a positive relationship with the sponsoring church and district pastor. The district pastor will continue to serve as a coach/mentor to the lay leader.
3. A minimum of 10 individuals shall have joined by baptism or profession of faith since the company was organized.
4. The company shall have held at least one evangelistic series.
5. The company must have completed an NCD survey with a minimum average score of 65. The conference will cover the cost of this first survey once the church health team begins to meet. An action plan will be created to address the minimum factors.
6. The company must have committed Seventh-day Adventist lay leadership in key offices: elder, deacon, treasurer, and clerk. These offices should be filled during each nominating process.
7. The company must provide a three-year plan for church growth. (Include outreach events, a stewardship plan, etc.)
12. The company should have voted a commitment to support Adventist education in their annual budget with at least one of the options below:
 - Option #1:** Monthly subsidy for members’ children to attend an Adventist school.
 - Option #2:** A constituent relationship with an Adventist school. Once the subsidy reaches an acceptable level, voting representation on the school board will be granted.
 - Option #3:** To fund a new Adventist school within their territory.
13. Wherever viable, companies should have plans in place to plant a new church within 5 years in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines.
14. All policies outlined in the *Church Manual* must be followed.
15. Leaders of Companies desiring to become churches should continue to make it a priority to attend annual 1.) conference church planting rallies, 2.) lay-leader/pastor training events, and 3.) and other training events (i.e., elders’ or deacons’ retreat) to enhance their experience.

Church Finances

1. They must have at least \$60,000 in projected annual tithes.
2. They must have a balanced budget.
3. At least 30% of the church’s budget will continue to be designated for outreach.
4. They must have a record of faithful remittance of tithes and offerings to the Carolina Conference.
5. The newly established church agrees to maintain the line item in their budget for a building fund which will receive a monthly allocation from the combined budget.
6. The Carolina Conference must authorize the purchase of land, buildings, or related projects.