

2023

ANNUAL COUNCIL

CHURCH MANUAL AGENDA

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GPS	402.	A Divinely Appointed Ministry - <i>Church Manual Amendment (404-23GS)</i> [4]	CM 32-35
GPS	403.	Credentials and Licenses - <i>Church Manual Amendment (405-23GS)</i> [7]	CM 35-36
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GPS	405.	How Tithe Is to Be Used - <i>Church Manual Editorial Amendment (407-23GE)</i> [9]	CM 143
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1 SEC/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC+25GCS

2
3 406-23GS MAKING CHANGES (WHY A *CHURCH MANUAL*?) -
4 *CHURCH MANUAL* AMENDMENT

5
6 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 1, *Why a Church Manual?*, pages
7 18-19, Making Changes, to read as follows:

8
9 Making Changes

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

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

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

37
38 Revision of a note follows the same procedure. The General Conference Executive
39 Committee may approve changes to the notes at any Annual Council.

40
41 The *Church Manual* Committee reports proposed nonsubstantive editorial changes to the
42 main content of the *Church Manual* to an Annual Council of the General Conference Executive
43 Committee, which may give final approval. However, in the event the Annual Council
44 determines by one-third vote that an editorial change substantively alters the meaning of a
45 passage, the proposed change must go to the General Conference Session.

406-23GS MAKING CHANGES (WHY A *CHURCH MANUAL*?) -
CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT - 2

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

4

5 A new edition of the *Church Manual* is published after every General Conference
6 Session. The most recent edition should always be used. This edition incorporates amendments
7 made at the postponed 2020 General Conference Session, which took place in 2022.

1 PRE/BRI/MIN/401-17GS/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/419-17GS/BRI/ChManSub/ChMan/
2 ADCOM(Steering)/18AC/418-18GS/NAD/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/ChMan/
3 19AC/418-19GS/418-20GS/417-21GS/417-22GS/ChManSub/400-23GS/ChMan/
4 ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC+25GCS

5
6 404-23GS A DIVINELY APPOINTED MINISTRY - *CHURCH*
7 *MANUAL* AMENDMENT
8

9 RATIONALE: This amendment expresses how important it is for pastors to focus on training the
10 local church leadership in the mission and work of the church.

11
12 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 4, Pastors and Other Church
13 Employees, pages 32 to 35, A Divinely Appointed Ministry, to read as follows:

14
15 A Divinely Appointed Ministry
16

17 Seventh-day Adventist ministers bear the God-given responsibility of proclaiming the
18 everlasting gospel, making disciples, and equipping the saints according to their spiritual gifts in
19 order to equip them for service (Eph. 4:11, 12; 2 Tim. 4:2). As Ellen G. White stated: “It was at
20 the very beginning of His ministry that Christ began to gather in His helpers. This is a lesson to
21 all ministers. They should constantly be looking for and training those who they think could help
22 them in their work. They should not stand alone, trying to do by themselves all that needs to be
23 done” (Letter 53, 1905). In addition, pastors are commanded to do the work of an evangelist,
24 reading God’s word publicly and teaching obedience to it (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 4:2, 5).
25 They are to encourage and exhort the believers (1 Tim. 5:1, 2; 6:2), and rebuke sinners (1 Tim.
26 5:20); ordain elders (1 Tim. 5:22; Titus 1:5); uphold the truth and take a firm stance against false
27 doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3, 4; 4:7; 6:20, 21; Titus 1:9). They should be examples to the believers in all
28 matters of faith and practice (1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3). Another important part of the pastoral
29 work is the visitation ministry. Ellen G. White stated: “Remember that a minister’s work does
30 not consist merely in preaching. He is to visit families in their homes, to pray with them, and to
31 open to them the Scriptures. He who does faithful work outside the pulpit will accomplish
32 tenfold more than He who confines his labors to the desk” (9T 124).
33

34 “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion
35 but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you,
36 but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3).
37

38 All believers have the privilege of being part of “a royal priesthood” that proclaims “the
39 praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:5-9). To
40 support and guide this work God “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists,
41 and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the
42 edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).
43

44 The New Testament describes how the leadership of the church was established. During
45 His ministry on Earth, Jesus appointed twelve apostles to accompany Him on His travels and
46 sent them out to preach the Gospel and heal the sick (Mark 3:14, 15; Luke 6:13). He also sent out

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MANUAL AMENDMENT - 2

1 a larger group of seventy (Luke 10:1-23). This indicates that the organization of the church was
2 initiated by Jesus Christ Himself in order to fulfill the mission of making disciples and teaching
3 Bible truth (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8).
4

5 Soon after Christ’s ascension, the apostles faced increasing demands with the
6 fast-growing church in Jerusalem. To cope with these challenges, they divided the leadership
7 responsibilities in the local church into different areas. Seven men were chosen to “serve tables,”
8 caring mainly for the practical and material needs of the church, while the apostles confined
9 themselves “to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:2, 4). Both leadership groups were
10 involved in serving or ministering, but the manner of their involvement differed significantly.
11 These avenues of ministry reflect the offices of deacon and elder/overseer described in Paul’s
12 writings (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9). While most elders and deacons ministered in
13 local settings, some elders, such as Timothy and Titus, were itinerant and supervised greater
14 territory with multiple congregations (1 Tim. 1:3, 4; Titus 1:5).
15

16 In harmony with the leadership model of the Jerusalem church, the apostles appointed
17 elders as spiritual leaders in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). This practice explains why
18 apostles, when they left Jerusalem to preach the Gospel, did not leave a leadership vacuum in
19 this major center of the early church. Several years later, Barnabas and Saul delivered to the
20 elders the relief contributions they had collected from far-flung churches for the needy believers
21 in Judea (Acts 11:29, 30). As Ellen G. White indicates, the “organization of the church at
22 Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where
23 messengers of truth should win converts to the Gospel.”—AA 91.
24

25 These New Testament principles of church organization guided Seventh-day Adventists
26 in the years prior to and the decades following its official organization as a church in 1863.
27 During this time, ministers were employed by the various conferences as administrators and
28 evangelists, raising up churches, and visiting established churches that needed counsel.
29 Following the model of ministry of Timothy and Titus, Conference-employed ministers almost
30 never functioned as resident or “settled” pastors of a local church, in contrast to the practice in
31 most Protestant churches then and now. In this regard, Ellen G. White wrote: “Instead of keeping
32 the ministers at work for the churches that already know the truth, let the members of the
33 churches say to these laborers: ‘Go work for souls that are perishing in darkness. We ourselves
34 will carry forward the services of the church. We will keep up the meetings, and, by abiding in
35 Christ, will maintain spiritual life. We will work for souls that are about us, and we will send our
36 prayers and our gifts to sustain the laborers in more needy and destitute fields.’”—6T 30. “As a
37 general rule, the conference laborers should go out from the churches into new fields, using their
38 God-given ability to a purpose in seeking and saving the lost.”—Ev 382.
39

40 As a divinely appointed ministry, ministers are “to sow the seeds of truth. Place after
41 place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. Those who take their stand for the
42 truth are to be organized into churches, and then the minister is to pass on to other equally

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MANUAL AMENDMENT - 3

1 important fields.”—7T 20 “Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members
2 at work. They will need to be taught how to labor successfully. Let the minister devote more of
3 his time to educating than to preaching. Let him teach the people how to give to others the
4 knowledge they have received. While the new converts should be taught to ask counsel from
5 those more experienced in the work, they should also be taught not to put the minister in the
6 place of God. Ministers are but human beings, men compassed with infirmities. Christ is the One
7 to Whom we are to look for guidance.”— 7T 20. “Our ministers should plan wisely, as faithful
8 stewards. They should feel that it is not their duty to hover over the churches already raised up,
9 but that they should be doing aggressive evangelistic work, preaching the Word and doing
10 house-to-house work in places that have not yet heard the truth. . . . They will find that nothing is
11 so encouraging as doing evangelistic work in new fields.”—Ev 382.

12
13 These inspired counsels remain just as relevant today. Our ministers have the solemn
14 responsibility of leading their congregations in the mission of reaching others for Christ.
15 As Ellen G. White stated, “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and
16 women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of
17 ministers and church officers.”—9T 117. And “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will
18 receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 1:4).

19
20 ~~“God has a church, and she has a divinely appointed ministry. ‘And He gave some,~~
21 ~~apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the~~
22 ~~perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till~~
23 ~~we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect~~
24 ~~man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. . . .’~~

25
26 ~~“Men appointed of God have been chosen to watch with jealous care, with vigilant~~
27 ~~perseverance, that the church may not be overthrown by the evil devices of Satan, but that she~~
28 ~~shall stand in the world to promote the glory of God among men.”— TM 52, 53.~~

29
30 Conference President—The conference president should be an - No change

31
32 Conference Departmental Directors—Conference departmental directors - No change

33
34 Ordained Pastors—Ordained pastors appointed by the conference committee - No change

35
36 Licensed Pastors—To give individuals an opportunity to demonstrate their - No change

37
38 Bible Instructors—The conference may employ Bible instructors and assign - No change

39
40 Conference Directs Church Employees—The conference president in - No change

1 PRE/BRI/MIN/401-17GS/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/419-17GS/BRI/ChManSub/ChMan/
2 ADCOM(Steering)/18AC/418-18GS/NAD/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/ChMan/
3 19AC/418-19GS/418-20GS/417-21GS/417-22GS/ChManSub/400-23GS/ChMan/
4 ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC+25GCS

5
6 405-23GS CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES - *CHURCH MANUAL*
7 AMENDMENT

8
9 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 4, Pastor and Other Church
10 Employees, pages 35 and 36, Credentials and Licenses, to read as follows:

11
12 Credentials and Licenses

13
14 God's work is to be jealously safeguarded by responsible leaders from the local church to
15 the General Conference. Official credentials and licenses are issued to all authorized ~~full-time~~
16 Church employees and are granted by controlling committees for limited periods.

17
18 In a local conference, the committee confers authority upon individuals to represent the
19 Church as pastors and gospel workers. This authority is represented by the granting of
20 credentials and licenses, which are written commissions, properly dated and signed by the
21 officers of the conference. The authority thus conveyed is not personal or inherent in the
22 individual but is inherent in the granting body, which may recall the credentials for cause at any
23 time. Credentials and licenses granted employees are not their personal property and must be
24 returned when employment is terminated or at the request of the organization that issued them.

25
26 ~~No one should be allowed to speak to any congregation unless he/she has been invited by~~
27 ~~the church in harmony with guidelines given by the conference. It is recognized, however, that~~
28 ~~there are times when congregations may be addressed by government officials or civic leaders;~~
29 ~~but all unauthorized persons shall not be given access to the pulpit. (See pp. 126-127.)~~

30
31 Expired Credentials and Licenses—Credentials and licenses are granted - No change

32
33 Retired Employees—Retired employees deserve honor and consideration - No change

34
35 Former Pastors Without Credentials—Individuals previously ordained as - No change

1 NAD/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC+25GCS

2

3 409-23GS SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS - *CHURCH MANUAL*

4 AMENDMENT

5

6 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 11, Services and Other Meetings,
7 page 139, School Board Meetings, to read as follows:

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9

School Board Meetings

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16

The church school is usually supervised by a church school board. The church elects a chairperson to preside over meetings and a secretary to keep records of meetings and actions. The principal of the school generally is appointed secretary of the board. This board should meet at regular times. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson. Some churches prefer to have the church board, or a subcommittee of the church board, also serve as the school board. (See also pp. 97-98.)

1 SID/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC

2

3 407-23GE HOW TITHE IS TO BE USED - *CHURCH MANUAL*

4 EDITORIAL AMENDMENT

5

6 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 12, Finance, page 143, How Tithe
7 Is to Be Used, to read as follows:

8

9 How Tithe Is to Be Used—Tithe is held sacred for the work of the ministry, for Bible
10 teaching, and for the support of conference administration in the care of the churches and of field
11 outreach (missionary) endeavors. Tithe shall not be spent on other work, on paying church or
12 institutional debts, or on building programs, except as approved under General Conference
13 *Working Policy*. For more information on the use of tithe, review Stewardship Ministries
14 Resources, see Notes, #1, p. 190-191.

15

16 “A very plain, definite message has been given to me for our people. I am bidden to tell
17 them that they are making a mistake in applying the tithe to various objects which, though good
18 in themselves, are not the object to which the Lord has said that the tithe should be applied.
19 Those who make this use of the tithe are departing from the Lord’s arrangement. God will judge
20 for these things.”—9T 248.

1 SEC/TRE/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-23AC+25GCS

2
3 408-23GS REGULATION OF SOLICITING FUNDS - *CHURCH*
4 *MANUAL* AMENDMENT

5
6 RECOMMENDED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 12, Finance, pages 145-146,
7 Regulation of Soliciting Funds, to read as follows:

8
9 Regulation of Soliciting Funds—The following are regulations for soliciting funds:

10
11 1. No conference, church, or institution, without special counsel and arrangement,
12 shall plan work requiring solicitation of funds from outside its territory. Any solicitation within
13 its territory shall be in harmony with local, union, division, and General Conference policies. No
14 authority is granted to denominational employees representing special interests in one part of the
15 field to solicit help in any other part of the field or in any other conference without arrangement
16 with and written authorization from conference officers where the fund-raising would take place.

17
18 2. The following principles protect churches from unauthorized, fraudulent, and
19 undenominational solicitation:

20
21 a. Pastors and officers shall not grant the privilege of the pulpit to persons
22 for fund-raising who have not been recognized or recommended by the conference. (See pp. 126-
23 127.) No permission shall be granted to solicit funds either publicly or privately without such
24 recognition.

25
26 b. All funds contributed for any cause in response to appeals shall be passed
27 through regular church channels.

28
29 c. Conference and church officers shall take such steps as may be necessary
30 to prevent unauthorized or illegal public solicitation.

31
32 3. No campaign other than the Annual Appeal (Ingathering or equivalent appeal),
33 which involves using Appeal literature and containers with authorized Appeal labels, shall be
34 conducted for the solicitation of money for either home or overseas mission work. Unions and
35 conferences should prevent violations of this regulation.

36
37 ~~4. Interdivision employees visiting their home churches or otherwise communicating~~
38 ~~with their home bases are asked to solicit funds only for enterprises included in the budget of~~
39 ~~appropriations, working in cooperation with churches and conferences to raise the funds required~~
40 ~~to meet the appropriations on which our world mission work depends. All such funds shall be~~
41 ~~passed through regular channels.~~