

2025

ANNUAL COUNCIL

CHURCH MANUAL AGENDA

GPS	401.	Inter-American Division - <i>Church Manual Supplement (417-25G)</i> [2]	IAD Supp
GPS	402.	South American Division - <i>Church Manual Supplement (419-25G)</i> [8]	SAD Supp
GPS	403.	South Pacific Division - <i>Church Manual Supplement (420-25G)</i> [13]	SPD Supp

IAD/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/24AC/419-24G/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to
GPS-25AC

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL* SUPPLEMENT

RECOMMENDED, To endorse the *Church Manual* Supplement of the Inter-American
Division, which reads as follows:

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION SUPPLEMENT

Title Deeds of Church Properties

The designated corporation must have its name on all church properties. This is the only means of ensuring effective property deeds for denominational real estate. This method prevents a few persons who may have distanced themselves from the church from misappropriating from the body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church the property that belongs to the church. In the history of this movement there is no record of any misappropriation of property that has been in the name of the General Conference or legal corporations of local conferences.

Legal Documents—All legal documents, including life insurance policies, wills, documents, trust services minutes, must be filed for its custody and preservation in the conference or mission office.

Insurance—The church, through its administrators, is obligated to ensure denominational properties, such as church buildings, homes where the workers live and which belong to the organization and their contents, and school buildings are adequately insured by a reputable, trustworthy company.

Someone has been designated to be in charge of insurance, usually it is the treasurer of the local field, who is always ready to give counsel relative to insurance and how to secure the most ample protection possible for the institutions and properties of the church against multiple risks, in companies of good reputation. The General Conference suggests that the properties be insured based upon what it would cost to replace the buildings and their contents whenever feasible. All church property insurance policies shall be in the name of the corporation. Provision shall be made in the local church budget to cover these expenses.

Repairs and Conservation of Buildings

God's church must always be well-maintained. The foundations, roofs, and paint shall receive attention in such a way that they will be preserved in the best condition. This same care should be taken of the properties and furnishings that belong to the denomination. Funds for this purpose must come from the expense budget of the church or from special contributions. Under the general direction of the church board, this work is normally supervised by the deacons.

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 2

Suggestions Relative to Wills

Wills, Legacies, and Testaments—The love of God constrains all who await His soon appearing to give Him part of their goods so that His truth can prosper on earth. The spirit of sacrifice is fundamental for Christian service.

Funds that cannot be given immediately to the cause can equally be dedicated to the cause of God through wills, legacies, lifetime income, and trust agreements.

Laws Must be Strictly Followed—The laws regarding the manner of the disposal of a property belonging to an individual, be this prior to or after death, must be strictly followed according to the rights of the country where the testator or donor resides. If the transfer of a person's real estate is done through a title deed, the country where the property is located establishes the requirements for writing the document. If the donation of a property by an individual, be this real estate or personal goods, is to become effective after his death, this can be done through the means of a will, or by a title deed, or other instrument.

The elaboration of a plan for even the most simple wills require adequate counsel. To find the counsel of servant of the Lord relative to wills and legacies, read *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 476-485.

Who Can Make a Will—It is important that every will, donation, lifetime revenue or trust agreement be done with the assessment of a professional in the area, be it the director of Trust Services of the local organization, if he or she is competent to do so, an attorney they or a notary public. In any case, it is necessary to strictly and faithfully follow the local laws.

Wills must always be kept in a safe place, known as a vault, so that they can be presented as proof upon the death of the testator. Whenever there are different parcels of real estate, each shall be described relative to its location. This also applies to personal property.

To Make a Change in a Will—Frequently, circumstances arise through which the testator desires to make some alterations to his or her will. No changes should be made in a will by erasing or crossing out. Any change or addition to the document shall be made by an appendix or postscript, which must be done with the same formalities with which the will was prepared, and shall include a statement that it is a part of the will.

Suggested Sample of a Simple Will—"I of the city of ... in the province of belonging to (name of country) in full use of my mental faculties and memory, by means of the present, I publish and declare that this is my LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT, through which I revoke any and all previous wills made by me on any previous occasions.

"First. It is my will and desire that all my just debts be paid.

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 3

“Second. I grant, give and leave to (if it is a real estate, it is best to describe it and explain where it is located; personal property must always be clearly described so that it can be easily identified).

“Third. I grant, give and leave to the Seventh-day Adventist Church with headquarters in

(The fourth paragraph may be used to any attempt to refute a will).

“Fourth. I establish that if one or more of the named beneficiaries in this will object to the distribution just as it has been done, or claim to refute it for any reason, or make an attempt to annul the provisions of this will, such person or persons will each receive the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) and no more, and whichever and all other provisions made by the present in favor of such litigants, apart from the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) as has been established, be annulled and revoked.

“Fifth. By this instrument, I appoint, constitute and assign a as executor of this my LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT IN TESTAMENT OF WHICH, I sign and seal this document on this day of A.D. 20....

The previous instrument was signed, sealed, published and declared by as his/her LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT, before us and in the presence of each of us. We, at the same time, and at his petition and before him, in our presence, sign our names as eye witnesses and leave proof of our residence.

.....of
.....of
.....of”

In Favor of Whom Should Wills Be Made—Wills can be made to benefit the local conference or mission, the union or the General Conference, Inter-American Division. In this respect, upon each individual rests a grave responsibility, which is revealed in the following admonition: “God is displeased with His people for becoming surety for unbelievers. They seem to have lost all sense of the fact that the property they are using belongs to God, and that they must render to Him an account of their stewardship.

“...Some leave their worldly business in perfect confusion. Satan has his eye on it all, and he strikes at a favorable opportunity, and by his management takes much means out of the ranks of Sabbath-keepers.

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 4

1 And this means goes into his ranks...“I was shown the awful fact that Satan and his
2 angels have had more to do with the management of the property of God’s professed people
3 than the Lord has... Satan and his angels exult over their success in this matter. And those who
4 should be wise heirs of salvation almost willingly let their Lord’s money slip out of their hands
5 into the enemy’s rank. In this way they strengthen Satan’s kingdom, and seem to feel very easy
6 about it! (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 199, 200)

7
8 The leaders of the church can help their members to get in contact with the administrators
9 of the conference or mission to ensure that the Lord’s money that He has committed to His
10 church, be assured for His cause.

11
12 Practical Instructions for the Communion Service

13
14 Preparation of Communion Bread—In preparing for the Lord’s Supper, it is necessary to
15 take into account the bread to be served. Because of the nature of the sacred service and the
16 protection of the participants’ health, the following recipe for the bread is VOTED to be used in
17 the Lord’s Supper. Under no circumstance should ingredients that can negatively affect the
18 health of the participants be used, and it is necessary to avoid all types of leaven or anything
19 similar.

20
21 COMMUNION BREAD RECIPE

22 1 cup fine-ground flour
23 1/8 cup olive oil
24 1/8 cup water
25 Pinch of salt

26
27 Method: Put the flour in a bowl. Pour the water into the oil, but do not stir. Add the flour. Mix
28 these ingredients and the salt and mix with a fork until all the flour is uniformly dampened. Roll
29 out all the dough between two sheets of waxed paper to the thickness of fine dough. Place on a
30 floured baking sheet, and mark off with a sharp knife into squares of sides measuring
31 approximately 1 ½ centimeters, being careful to prick each square to prevent blistering. Bake at
32 375-390 degrees Fahrenheit (190-198 Celsius) for 15 to 20 minutes. Serves 150 persons.

33
34 SALT-FREE COMMUNION BREAD RECIPE

35 3 cups whole-wheat flour
36 . cup olive oil
37 ¼ cup water

38
39 Method: Put the flour in a bowl. Pour the water into the oil, but do not stir. Add the flour. Mix
40 the ingredients with a fork until all the flour is uniformly dampened. Roll out all the dough
41 between two sheets of waxed paper to the thickness of fine dough. Place on a floured baking
42 sheet, and mark off with a sharp knife into squares of sides measuring approximately 1 ½

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 5

centimeters, being careful to prick each square to prevent blistering. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit (175 degrees Celsius) for 10 to 15 minutes. Serves 300 persons.

Special Cases of Ordination

Ordination of Women as Church Elders (Voted at the 1984 General Conference Annual Council)—Each congregation is free to elect a male or female as church elder. Such a person must fulfill the requirements for such a position. However, because the ordination of women as church elders can be something which may cause division, no church should plan such action before consulting with the administration of the local field. Such consultation is to preserve the unity of the church.

1. The concept should be carefully examined, discussed, and properly accepted at the local church level.

2. If a church contemplates such an action, the entire matter should be discussed and approved by the conference committee after the conference administration has sought counsel from the union leadership. The negotiation between the church and the conference should occur in advance of the final decision and vote by the local church.

3. The action to elect and ordain a woman as a local church elder must not be taken unless a clear consensus exists that the ministry of a woman elder is desirable and even essential to the spiritual well-being of the local church family. It should also be the consensus of the church that a woman elder will be respected as a spiritual leader and soul-winner. The church should also express its belief that there are dimensions of spiritual service and counsel that cannot be properly fulfilled by a male elder.

4. A clear majority of the voting members of the local church must be in favor of the action. The matter should be considered at a specially called church business meeting. Every church member should be given the opportunity to vote on this issue rather than only the few who might be present at a regular meeting where routine items of business are on the agenda. Although preliminary study could be given to this question by the church board, any final action should be taken by the church in a business meeting.

5. Whatever the decision of the church, it should result in unifying the members and not be the source of divisiveness or alienation. The body of Christ, the Church, must not be tarnished in any way. In this important issue, as in all things, the name of our Lord and Saviour must be exalted.

417-25G INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 6

Criteria for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons Who Have
Been Disfellowshipped but Have Returned to the Church

If a local church elder or deacon returns to the church after being removed from fellowship and was later rebaptized and his or her congregation feels that he or she has given signs of genuine conversion, and desires to elect him or her once again to a leadership position requiring ordination, it is recommended that in such cases they consult with the administration of the local field.

Re: Dress

The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let “the dress question fill the mind.”—Ev 273. “To dress plainly, abstaining from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind, is in keeping with our faith.”—3T 366. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God. The apostle Paul admonishes us to dress ourselves “in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing” (1 Tim. 2:9). The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness. In some countries and cultures the custom of wearing the wedding ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence it is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we do not condemn the practice. P.153

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419-25G SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL* SUPPLEMENT

RECOMMENDED, To endorse the *Church Manual* Supplement of the South American
Division, which reads as follows:

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION SUPPLEMENT

LEGAL ENTITIES ESTABLISHED TO CARE FOR CHURCH PROPERTIES AND TO RECEIVE DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

Legal Entities

Unions, fields, institutions, or local churches are not authorized to constitute a legal entity
to host the activities of pathfinder clubs, university associations, entrepreneurs, health, education,
social assistance, or any other, without the prior approval of the South American Division
Executive Committee (*South American Division Working Policy*, B 115).

Property Titles of Church Buildings

Real estate must be deeded and registered in the name of the legal entity with legal
personality representing the Church in the country or in the Union where the entity is located,
and never in the name of individuals, asset custodians, or local congregations (*South American
Division Working Policy*, S 60).

Control and Preservation of Legal Documents

All legal documents, including insurance policies, deeds, and receipts for the purchase or
sale of all real estate, including churches and schools; registration certificates, authorized
construction projects, final work certificates, trust agreements, wills, and legacies, etc., must be
filed for safekeeping and preservation in the office of the corresponding legal entity.

The minutes of the local church board must be properly preserved and archived
in the church office, as well as historical documents, photographs, among others.

Building Restoration and Maintenance

The church or chapel, its dependencies, its furniture, and equipment must
always be kept in good and representative conditions. Funds for this purpose shall
come from the church budget or special contributions. This task is usually overseen
by deacons under the general direction of the Church Board.

419-25G SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 2

Building and Equipment Insurance

The board of the local church, through its treasury, has an obligation to ensure that the church or chapel and its facilities are adequately covered by insurance. Arrangements must be made to include such expenses in the church budget.

1. The South American Division suggests that insurance be contracted based on what it would cost to replace the building and its contents, if feasible.

2. These insurances are managed by the local Field, in mutual agreement with the local church.

3. All insurance policies for churches, chapels, and church school buildings must be in the name of the corresponding legal entity and be filed in the local field.

Suggestions on Wills and Legacies

The spirit of sacrifice and dedication is fundamental to Christian service. Money from real estate, which cannot be given immediately to the work, can later contribute to the good of God's work through wills, legacies, and trust agreements.

Laws Must Be Strictly Followed

The person who wishes to donate his/her property or assets to the Church must take the necessary steps while he/she is still alive, because otherwise, upon his/her death, his/her assets will be distributed in accordance with the laws governing inheritances in the country where they resided, and this may not represent the person's wishes when he/she was still alive.

The laws concerning the way in which a person's property is disposed of, before or after his/her death, must be strictly followed according to what the testator's or donor's country of residence determines. If the transfer of the property is made through a deed, the law establishes the requirements for the deed and its registration. If the donation of a person's property, whether real estate or personal property, takes place after his/her death, it may be done through a will, a document of trust, or another legal instrument. Therefore, it is important to make a will.

Preparing what will be done with what someone owns and taking care of dependent family members, as well as the Church and the cause of God, is part of the most important and responsible acts of life.

“Our brethren should feel that a responsibility rests upon them, as faithful servants in the cause of God, to exercise their intellect in regard to this matter, and secure to the Lord His own” (*Testimonies for the Church*, v. 4, p. 478; see also p. 554-557).

419-25G SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 3

In Favor of Whom Wills or Legacies Should Be Made

Wills or bequests must be made in the name of the legal entity that the Organization has in the corresponding country or Union. Local church leaders can help members establish contact with the administrators of the Conference/Mission, to ensure that the Lord's money, which He has entrusted to His people, is used for His cause.

Note of CHAPTER 7

Detailed Instruction and Public Examination Before Baptism (see p. 51)—In addition to the determination regarding the instruction and public examination of baptismal candidates mentioned in Chapter 7, p. 51, 52, their names must be recommended by the Church board to the floor before the baptismal ceremony so that they can be received as members through baptism.

Notes of CHAPTER 8

1. Members Who Change Residence and Do Not Report (see p. 73)—In the case of the South American Division, due to the widespread use of ACMS and social media in local churches, the period of waiting and searching for missing members before they are removed from the membership record will last for one year, provided that every effort is made to locate them and all steps established in this Manual are followed.

2. Notification to Those Removed from Church Fellowship (see p. 74)—If the pastor who presided over the business meeting visits the member accompanied by another member of the board, to personally communicate the reasons for the discipline, the written communication provided for in this Manual will be provided.

Notes of CHAPTER 9

1. Commissioned Pastor (see p. 82, 138)—In the territory of the South American Division, there is no role as a commissioned pastor.

2. Ordination of Elders (see p. 78)—With respect to ordination of elders, as referenced in Chapter 9 (pp. 78) of this *Church Manual*, the guidelines established by vote 2021-121 of the South American Division Executive Committee must be observed:

Considering that spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit to men and women according to His will (1 Cor. 12:11); that the Bible presents women as protagonists and spiritual leaders; that the General Conference, after thoughtful and extensive theological analysis, through vote 272-84GN Women (Local Church) Elders—Election and Ordination, authorized the divisions to study the issue and implement the vote, according to local need; that the South American Division, following the recommendation of the General Conference, conducted a dialogue with

419-25G SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 4

representative leaders of the churches of all the unions in their territory; and that the commission established to assess the issue analyzed the results of the consolidated report and, after evaluating biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical arguments, concluded that the appointment of women elders strengthens the leadership of the local church, values discipleship, and contributes effectively to the mission;

Thus, the local church in the territory of the South American Division is authorized to appoint and ordain women as elders, according to its own needs, following the guidelines of the *Church Manual*, considering that what this Manual establishes for the elders, also applies to the women who serve as elders.

3. Marriage Ceremony—Regarding the marriage ceremony mentioned in chapter 9, p. 82, of this *Church Manual*, the following must be considered:

a. The “exhortation” is what the pastor says to the couple just before taking their vows. It is not a sermon, but a specification of the responsibilities that each of the bride and groom acquires towards their spouse and their future family.

b. The South American Division, with the express authorization of the General Conference Executive Committee, did not approve the exception” mentioned, referring to the officiant at the wedding ceremony. Therefore, in the territory of the South American Division, this ceremony must always be performed by an ordained pastor.

c. In some regions of the world, the wedding ceremony begins with a prayer and ends with a final prayer giving blessings to the congregation, as in any of the other church meetings. In South America, these prayers are generally not included in the wedding program; but if they are included, it is not necessary for them to be done by an ordained pastor.

d. The order of the wedding ceremony suggested in the Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook does not include this initial prayer, nor the final one, thus eliminating the problem regarding who should or should not say them.

e. The center of the wedding ceremony consists of: 1) exhortation, sometimes also called commitment or responsibility; 2) marriage vows; 3) words declaring the couple husband and wife; and 4) pastoral prayer on behalf of the couple. All of this must be carried out only by an ordained pastor (see, in this manual, p. 82, 184). It is evident that, even if there are no other parties, the ceremony will be complete, and the marriage will be held.

4. Ministry of Reception—Regarding the reception of members and guests at church programs, mentioned in chapter 9, p. 86, 88 of this *Church Manual*, it should be considered that action 2012-173 of the South American Division Executive Committee establishes the appointment of a coordinator for the Ministry of Reception in each church and organized group.

419-25G SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 5

1 It is important to organize this ministry based on the guidelines and materials offered by the
2 South American Division and available at: adv.st/recepcao.

3
4 5. Adventurers Club (see p. 115, 118)—Regarding the age of the Adventurers
5 mentioned in chapter 9, p. 115, of this *Church Manual*, it will remain from 6 to 9 years old in the
6 territory of the South American Division, maintaining the existing organization through the four
7 preliminary classes.

8
9 “Occasional programs involving families and children under six years old must be
10 coordinated by the Children's Ministries and the respective Sabbath School classes” (action
11 2015-103 of the Executive Committee of the South American Division).

12
13 6. Adolescent’s Ministry (see p. 145)—Adolescent’s Ministry (AM) department was
14 created in the South American Division to facilitate the deepening of the spiritual experience of
15 teenagers (ages 13 to 16); with the aim of attracting them to a redemptive friendship with Christ
16 and a lifelong commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

17
18 The AM, like the Children's Ministries, cooperates with the Sabbath School and other
19 departments providing the development of gifts in the context of family, church, and society. The
20 AM coordinator works with the support of the pastor and the Church board.

21
22 The objectives of the AM are the following:

- 23
24 a. Teach the Bible with a methodology that allows the teenager to get closer
25 to Christ.
26
27 b. Help church leaders and members recognize the importance of this age
28 and the appropriate time to attract teenagers to Christ and His Church.
29
30 c. Encourage the inclusion of teenagers in church programs and activities.
31
32 d. Prepare leaders who are qualified to work with teenagers.
33
34 e. Work closely with other church departments; especially Sabbath School,
35 Family Ministries, Youth Ministries, and Pathfinder and Adventurer Ministry.

SPD/ChManSub/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering)/422-24G/ChMan/ADCOM(Steering) to GPS-25AC
420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT

RECOMMENDED, To endorse the *Church Manual* Supplement of the South Pacific Division, subject to the affirmative vote of the South Pacific Division Executive Committee, which reads as follows:

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION SUPPLEMENT

MISSION

A. The South Pacific Division Vision, Mission and Purpose Statements

Vision—A thriving Adventist movement, living our hope in Jesus and transforming the Pacific.

Mission—Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation of His soon return (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev 14:6-12).

Purpose—To Inspire Hope and Wholeness of Life in our Communities.

PREPARE THE SOIL

Build relationships and community with people using these steps:

- Seek the best for them
- Eat with them
- Listen to their stories
- Work with them to do good in the community by serving others
- As appropriate, pray with them

Continue to teach other people how to prepare the soil

SOW THE SEED

Sow the life-changing word of God into people's lives using these steps:

- When appropriate, share Bible verses and/or stories that are meaningful and relevant in their lives
- After listening to their story, share your own story of faith
- Show how their story and your story fits within God's story
- Read the Bible together, such as the Gospel of Mark, Acts, Ephesians, Daniel etc.

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 2

- Share the gospel – the good news of God’s work of salvation – and its benefits, and explain how your friends can respond to the gospel
- Help teach your friends how to Prepare the Soil and Sow the Seed.

Continue to sow the word of God into other people’s lives

CULTIVATE THE PLANTS

Grow new disciples to become more like Jesus in every way using these steps:

- Show your friends how to pray and read the Bible so they can grow
- Introduce your friends to the key teachings of the Bible
- Make sure your friends make friends with other Christians for spiritual support and to be equipped as disciple-makers
- Help your friends discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry

Continue to spiritually cultivate new disciples

HARVEST THE CROP

Bring new disciples to make decisions and build church community using these steps:

- Invite your friends to be baptised into Christ and join His Body the church
- Involve them in the 5 purposes of the church
- Let the Holy Spirit lead your friends to use their spiritual gifts
- Plant a church where appropriate and as led by the Holy Spirit

Continue to lead disciples to make decisions and build more church communities

The 5 purposes of church are:

1. Worship—Love God (Matt 22:37)
2. Ministry—Love your neighbour (Matt 22:39)
3. Evangelism/Witness, Go... (Matt 28:19)
4. Community—Love your church, invite commitment through baptism (Matt 28:19)
5. Christlikeness—Teach people to obey Christ, to become like Him as lifelong disciples (Matt 28:20)

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - CHURCH MANUAL
SUPPLEMENT - 3

MULTIPLY THE HARVEST—TO MAKE DISCIPLES

Grow the movement by multiplying disciple-makers and leaders using these steps:

- Identify disciple-makers and leaders
- Train disciples to become disciple-makers
- Develop leaders who train leaders
- Equip and resource disciple-makers and leaders to make disciples and establish new groups and churches
- Support disciple-makers and leaders in their mission strategies

Continue to be a disciple-maker and a leader yourself

The process for developing leaders who train other leaders is

1. Teach
2. Model, let them watch
3. Watch them do it
4. Let them do it

Values—Based on Scripture and the life of Jesus Christ, all are called to live by some core values, including: Faithfulness, Integrity, Respect, Serve and Courage.

Faithfulness: We are committed to do God's Mission.

- a. We remain dedicated to mission beyond our preferences (Mk 10:28-31)
- b. We uphold commitments and keep promises (Ps 119:57,58)
- c. We foster growth in each other's spiritual lives (Rm 13:8-10, 15:1-4)

"But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded." 2 Chronicles 15:7

Integrity: We Walk the Talk

- a. We are consistent and reliable (1 Tim 1:5)
- b. We hold ourselves to account (Ps 139:23,24)
- c. We do the right thing (Mic 6:8)

"For the LORD gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless." Proverbs 2:6-7

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - CHURCH MANUAL
SUPPLEMENT - 4

1 Respect: We value all people

- 2
3 a. We treat all people with dignity (1 Peter 3:15)
4 b. We recognize the contributions and expertise of others (1 Peter 4:10,11)
5 c. We create a safe space for others to share (James 1:19)
6

7 *“Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.” Romans*
8 *12:10*
9

10 Service: We are here to serve others

- 11
12 a. We build relationships and seek to understand needs (1 Thess 5:11)
13 b. We are responsive and reliable (Mk 10:45)
14 c. We are self-disciplined and deliver quality outcomes (1 Cor 15:59)
15

16 *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the*
17 *Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”*
18 *Col 3:23-24*
19

20 Courage: We stand for what is right

- 21
22 a. We speak up when we need to be heard (Eph 4:15)
23 b. We proactively address conflicts (Ps 34:14)
24 c. We challenge the process, not the person (Mk 10:17-22)
25

26 *“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave*
27 *you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever*
28 *you go...Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do*
29 *not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua*
30 *1:7,9 NIV*
31
32

33 B. Safeguarding Mission in the Social Environment

34
35 Seventh-day Adventists are engaged in a mission to communicate to all peoples the
36 everlasting gospel of God’s love, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Saviour and Lord, to
37 unite with His remnant church and to prepare for His soon return. This mission is advanced
38 through many and varied methods of preaching, teaching and healing. A worldwide
39 infrastructure links local churches as part of a global faith community. The Church has also
40 established numerous educational, publishing and healthcare institutions that perform a vital role
41 in demonstrating and communicating the Church’s focus on mission and witnessing to the gospel
42 through service to others.

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 5

Seventh-day Adventist churches and institutions operate in diverse social, political and religious environments. The development of national and local legislation in many parts of the world has been influenced by, or is compatible with, Christian worldview and morals. More recently, concern for social policy is becoming a dominant factor in the development of laws. This results in new, and at times challenging, environments for the practice and advocacy of historic Christian beliefs and values relating to morality. The actual situations vary widely around the world making it difficult to outline a single global response.

The following principles should be weighed in determining an appropriate course of action in those situations in which the Church encounters tension with obligations imposed by the state:

1. The ability to maintain mission and witness—Christian mission, witness and proclamation take place in a fallen world, amidst circumstances that are not always favourable or neutral. In such situations, the Christian response is not to retreat or abandon mission, but to find ways of bearing a witness in spite of circumstances. The ability to bear witness and to carry on mission should be an important consideration in determining how to respond in difficult situations.

2. Demonstration of good citizenship—Christians live simultaneously in two communities, the secular state and the kingdom of God, and have loyalties and obligations to both. Christians should be good citizens of both communities. In situations where tension arises between the two, a Christian will demonstrate allegiance to faith convictions informed by the Bible. In all other matters, the Christian is advised, by teachings of the Bible itself, to accept and discharge the obligations of earthly citizenship.

3. Realisation that boundaries exist and cannot be breached if mission is to be sustained—Church members and church organisations live in the world but are not “of the world.” This constant reality explains why the Church cannot always accommodate itself to the prevailing customs of society. Faithfulness to its understanding of Bible teaching will require the determination of boundaries beyond which the Church cannot and will not go. To do so would render its efforts at mission contradictory and meaningless. The particular course of experience through which an organisation is brought to that point will vary from place to place. Each situation needs to be assessed in the light of its presenting circumstances.

4. Adjusting practices to comply with legislation does not redefine denominational positions—There is every likelihood that response patterns from various entities will differ somewhat before reaching the boundary—the point beyond which the Church would be in denial of its convictions and abandoning its mission and witness. The central concern in these situations is not one of questioning or redefining the Church’s position, but of finding a way to translate that position into practices that safeguard the mission of the Church.

5. Consultation rather than unilateral action—A Seventh-day Adventist organisation will not act unilaterally in such matters. Its executive committee or board will seek counsel from the administration of supervisory organisations (conference, union, division), before deciding the nature of its response to legislation that obligates the organisation to practices deemed in conflict with its beliefs and values.

6. Counsel before entering into litigation—In situations where litigation is contemplated by a denominational entity, or where an entity must defend itself in a lawsuit regarding practices deemed in conflict with the Church's beliefs and values, the administration of the entity shall consult with SPD in-house counsel, and the General Conference Office of General Counsel, before initiating or responding to litigation.

South Pacific Division Executive Committee, 13.3, November 9, 2022

THEOLOGY

C. Sabbath in the Pacific

The Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division was asked by the Trans-Pacific Union Mission to make an assessment of principles and practices for Sabbath-keeping in the Pacific in relation to the date line.

This statement is the result of wide consultation. The Biblical Research Committee has listened to and received advice from a number of sources, such as theologians both inside and outside of the Division, Trans-Pacific Union Mission administration, ministers and members. The issue has also been presented and discussed at the Pacific Islands Administrators' Council, among others. Finally, it has been shared with the Biblical Research Institute Committee of the General Conference (BRICOM), and the statement includes in the present form, the recommendations from this body.

In the process of reaching a conclusion, the Biblical Research Committee has made the following observations in regard to the divine origin of the Sabbath and the keeping of the Sabbath during the time of the Bible and in various cultures and historical eras.

1. The biblical Sabbath was established by God at the time of creation to be celebrated by all people (Genesis 2:1-3), and the Adventist understanding of the importance of the Sabbath is closely linked to our belief in creation as revealed in the Word of God.

2. Among the central purposes of the Sabbath is individual and communal fellowship with, and worship of, God (Revelation 14:6-7).

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 7

1 3. As sin entered the world and the toil and hardship of human existence became our
2 reality, other elements of God's intention were highlighted, such as trust in God's providence by
3 resting from labour and work, faith in God's forgiveness and redemption in spite of our sins
4 (Exodus 20:11; Isaiah 58:13).

5
6 4. One of the purposes of the Sabbath highlighted by Scripture with special
7 significance toward the end of earth's history, is for the Sabbath to be a sign of loyalty toward
8 the Creator. The believing community is to worship on the Sabbath day, even during times of
9 opposition and persecution (Revelation 14:6-12).

10
11 5. At Sinai the Sabbath commandment was given as part of the Ten
12 Commandments, built upon the laws of love (Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 22:35-40; Deuteronomy
13 6:4-5; 10:12-13).

14
15 6. Though some details in the specific laws for Sabbath-keeping given in the broader
16 Mosaic code were unique to the people of Israel, the principle of Sabbath-keeping as part of the
17 Ten Commandments belongs to God's universal law for all mankind everywhere on earth
18 (Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8-12; Deuteronomy 4:13-14; Isaiah 56:3-7).

19
20 7. Both at creation and in the laws given to Israel, the Bible makes it clear that the
21 Sabbath lasts from sunset to sunset, and Seventh-day Adventists around the world have come to
22 follow that principle in their Sabbath-keeping (Genesis 1:5 ff; Nehemiah 13:19; Luke 4:40).

23
24 a. In arctic areas where the sun does not set for periods of the winter, there is
25 still a darkest and a lightest time of the day, and the Adventist Church has on that basis been able
26 to maintain the principle even in these remote areas of the earth.

27
28 8. The Bible contains no statements regarding the date line and the challenge of
29 keeping the Sabbath around the date line, yet it contains principles that must guide practice.

30
31 9. The date line, which is necessary because the earth is round, is not established by
32 any divine principle, but solely on the basis of historical and practical human considerations.

33
34 a. While choosing the 180th meridian is practical, it has never been
35 consistently followed by human authorities and societies, and the deviations from it are all
36 generally accepted by the same authorities which established and accepted the position of the
37 date line in general.

38
39 b. The Seventh-day Adventist pioneers coming to the Pacific understood,
40 however, the 180th meridian to be the natural date line and chose to keep the Sabbath in
41 accordance with that. They observed that the sunset moved in a consistent line across the globe
42 without any random deviations, and the setting of the sun implied to them a biblical principle.

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - *CHURCH MANUAL*
SUPPLEMENT - 8

1
2 c. For various historical and practical reasons, a few societies deviate from
3 the general date line at the 180th meridian and follow an Eastern hemisphere calendar, even
4 though they are positioned in the Western hemisphere. As a consequence, Seventh-day
5 Adventists in those places today face a choice either to celebrate the Sabbath on the Sunday of
6 their nation's calendar by selecting a different date line than commonly accepted, or to drop the
7 allegiance to the 180th meridian and keep the Sabbath on the Saturday of their national calendar.
8 This is the challenge for Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Kiritimati (Christmas Island) of Kiribati, and
9 more recently, Samoa.

10
11 i. A few nations cover areas on both sides of the 180th meridian and
12 choose to follow the same calendar for all of their territory. These are the United States of
13 America (Alaska), Kiribati and Fiji (Lau Islands).

14
15 ii. We cannot take for granted that the situation in any of these places
16 will remain as it is. A change of Adventist Sabbath practice might, therefore, lead to considerable
17 tension if Tonga, for instance, as a state, decides to change to a calendar which follows the
18 meridian and the Adventists had to change once again. Such a scenario could cause people to
19 lose respect for the Sabbath-keeping practices of the Church and, consequently, for the very
20 message of the Church.

21
22 iii. At least in one of these nations, namely Kiribati, the calendar has
23 actually only recently been changed for Kiritimati (Christmas Island) in the Line and Phoenix
24 Island Group located to the east of the 180th meridian. These islands are so far away from the
25 rest of Kiribati that for all practical purposes they function as an isolated society. The calendrical
26 change happened primarily in order to be the first country into the 3rd millennium. It created a
27 challenge for the Seventh-day Adventist community which for generations have kept the Sabbath
28 in sequence on Saturday, but due to the calendrical shift either had to change the sequence in
29 accordance with the culture or as chosen by the Adventists on Kiritimati (Christmas Island) in
30 the Line and Phoenix Group of Kiribati, to keep their Sabbath on what is now the national
31 Sunday.

32
33 iv. Any change under such circumstances would create serious
34 pastoral problems.

35
36 d. Seventh-day Adventist pioneers who brought the Advent message to the
37 Pacific Islands, from the very beginning of our presence as a Church, decided to follow Western
38 hemisphere time in Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands and Tahiti, in spite of the fact that these areas in
39 the early days of Western colonization all followed Eastern hemisphere time.

40
41 i. When all of these areas, except for Tonga, in the late 19th Century,
42 changed to Western hemisphere time, it was generally recognised by these countries and

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - CHURCH MANUAL
SUPPLEMENT - 9

1 throughout the Polynesian culture that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was correct on this
2 point.

3
4 10. The Seventh-day Adventist Church focuses on the unbroken observance of the
5 “seventh day” in the biblical weekly cycle. Consequently, the calendrical changes created by
6 Pacific nations have resulted in the seventh day being identified as “Sunday” in these situations.
7 The Church is the “Seventh-day Adventist” Church, not the “Saturday Adventist” Church.

8
9 On the basis of these observations and the wide consultation sought, the Biblical
10 Research Committee of the South Pacific Division states that:

11
12 1. As there is no clear “Thus saith the Lord” for the establishment of the date line
13 and the keeping of the Sabbath around the date line, it is important to listen to the local Seventh-
14 day Adventist community and its leadership,

15
16 2. And as there is general agreement in the Pacific Islands regarding the biblical
17 seventh day,

18
19 3. And as the present calendar is subject to change by any future government at any
20 time, as has recently occurred in Kiribati and Samoa,

21
22 We recommend that the present practice of Sabbath-keeping in the Pacific Islands around
23 the date line be maintained (namely Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Kiritimati (Christmas Island of
24 Kiribati), and that Sabbath-keeping in Samoa (due to Samoa’s recent calendrical changes) be
25 consistent with other Pacific countries in similar circumstances, and

26
27 Further, that initiatives be taken and a strategy developed to teach the theology and
28 existential meaning of the Sabbath in the areas involved in order to maintain a clear
29 understanding of this important aspect of Seventh- day Adventist identity in present and future
30 generations, and that the principles contained in this document relating to Sabbath observance
31 and the date line be shared with the membership of the Church.

32
33 *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Pacific) Ltd Members Meeting of the South Pacific Division 8.7,*
34 *November 16, 2016.*
35

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

D. Nurture, Protection and Empowerment of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Our Commitment

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific Division (the Division) has zero-tolerance for abuse and is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults. The Division affirms the dignity and worth of every person and condemns all forms of abuse, including but not limited to physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual, neglect, coercive control and family violence.

In Christ we are a new creation. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and one another. Differences in gender, race, class, disability, age or religion do not diminish this equality in Christ. Human equality affirms that the interests, needs, and rights of all people are of equal value. God endows dignity and equality on every human being: “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 3:28 NKJV). This means that all human beings are equal and precious in God’s created order.

This belief compels us to create environments where all people are safe, valued and respected.

Learning from the Australian Royal Commission

The proceedings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia (the Royal Commission) provided critical insight into systemic failures and resulted in landmark recommendations for safer institutional practices. The Royal Commission heard from 6,875 survivors in private sessions, of whom 4,029 (58.6 percent) described child sexual abuse in religious institutions¹. The courage of survivors in sharing their experiences has been instrumental in shaping policy and legislative reform, including the development of national and state/territory child safe standards.

As a result, there is a heightened societal expectation for vigilance and accountability from faith-based organisations. These expectations continue to shape our safeguarding framework.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia (2017). The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Final Report—Religious Institutions, Volume 16, Book 1, p23.

The Role of Adsafe

The formation of Adsafe in 2016 marked a critical step in the Division's commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Adsafe was established to serve denominational entities of the Division through advising and guiding the Church on preventative measures, responding to and managing risks related to physical and sexual abuse.

Adsafe's safeguarding framework reflects recommendations of the Royal Commission and aligns with current legislative and regulatory obligations, including Australian national and state/territory child safe standards. It includes:

- The development and implementation of policies and procedures to mitigate risk,
- Survivor-centred and trauma-informed responses to disclosures and allegations of abuse,
- A risk-based approach to managing persons of concern,
- Education and awareness to support safe church communities.

Adsafe works in harmony with the *Church Manual* and provides practical guidance for local churches and Church entities to implement child and vulnerable adult safeguarding best practice.

Impact of Abuse

The effects of abuse in a faith-based organization are profound. Survivors may experience shattered trust, spiritual confusion, and alienation from God and community. Abuse distorts their view of Christ as a loving Saviour and thus can irretrievably damage their relationship with God. Many face long-term mental health impacts including anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. Abuse can severely disrupt relationships, employment, and a person's ability to function day-to-day.

The impact extends to their families and communities. Families often struggle to support survivors without fully understanding their traumas. Church members may be confused or distressed by the survivor's behaviour without recognising the underlying causes. The family of the person who caused harm can also experience shock, grief and disorientation. In some cases the consequences of abuse can be fatal.

Together, Creating Safe Faith Communities

There is no priority higher than the safety of children and vulnerable adults in our faith communities. This priority is not only a legal and moral obligation, it is something close to the heart of God, a sacred calling grounded in the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 18:6) and cannot be done through wishful thinking or vague aspirations. In order to intentionally protect children and

420-25G SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION - CHURCH MANUAL
SUPPLEMENT - 12

vulnerable adults from abuse and be admitted to membership, or maintain membership of the sisterhood of churches, local church congregations must comply with Adsafes child safe policies. These policies are periodically reviewed and updated in line with best practices and legal requirements. Churches must ensure they are using the most current policies and procedures.

Responding appropriately to both historical and current disclosures of abuse is essential. All members of our faith communities - leaders, volunteers, and members alike - have a shared responsibility to foster cultures of safety, transparency and accountability. Tragically, all forms of sexual abuse (including incest), family violence and the inappropriate discipline of children remain far too prevalent, both in our Church and in society at large. This reality calls for both vigilance and action.

This may include:

- Recognising and responding appropriately to abuse,
- Reporting concerns in line with legal requirements and the
- safeguarding processes adopted by the local church, Conference/Mission, Union and the Division,
- Creating safe physical and emotional spaces,
- Upholding equality between men and women, standing against gender-based violence and fostering respect for all,
- Challenging harmful attitudes, beliefs and practices.

Each member in our Church community must actively support a culture where the best interests of children and vulnerable adults are the priority, through the implementation of safeguarding best practices, ensuring appropriate governance practices and following proper complaint handling processes.

Church leaders, in particular, must be intentional in addressing inequality between men and women and other systemic issues that create environments where abuse can occur or be concealed. Ensuring equality requires the courage to authentically challenge and change the biases and perceptions that persist within our Church and the wider community.

Protecting the vulnerable from abuse is a shared concern and joint responsibility. In partnership with God, we are called to be agents of change to build safe Adventist communities where abuse has no place and where healing begins, empowering lives so that all people can equally experience the love of God. Let us work together with Adsafes, local churches and Conferences/Missions to fulfill this mission. Through education, compassion, procedural fairness and survivor empowerment, we can build a Church where abuse has no place and the dignity of every person is upheld.

South Pacific Division Executive Committee, 1.23, August 20, 2025.