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Subject

Policy Number

**6600-1**

**CHURCH PLANTING POLICY**

Effective Date

November 1, 2013

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The Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists recognizes that one of its major responsibilities is to establish healthy mission-driven churches which have Christ's passion for lost people. The Savior's commission to carry the gospel to all the world (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15), and the urgency of His three angels messages (Rev. 14:6-12) means going to preach the message and ensuring the welfare of those who accept the message.

It is with this responsibility in mind that the following policies are put in place which allow us to do the Savior's work in a systematic, cost effective and efficient manner. They are incorporated in the Working Policy of the Pennsylvania Conference.

Expanding God's kingdom is fundamental to being Christian. When an individual or group of individuals desires to foster a new congregation, counsel from the Church Planting Coordinator and approval from the Conference Administration Committee or the Conference Executive Committee is required, so it can be coordinated within the overall Conference Mission Strategy.

**Approval Procedure**

1. When a new Mission Group is ready to be formed the planter(s) should contact the Conference Church Planting Coordinator or his designee. The Planter(s) are required to fill out a Mission Group Proposal. This will be reviewed by the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee and presented to either Administrative or Executive Committee.
2. All church plants, no matter what status (Mission Group, Company, or Church) if primarily drawn from a church with a church school, are strongly encouraged to support the school, whether they are sponsored by that church, another church, or the conference.
3. A Mission Group is a formal unit of organization, prior to Company status, it consists of thirteen members including the planter. All of these members should be baptized adult Seventh-day Adventist members in regular standing who have been a part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a reasonable amount of time. The members shall have demonstrated in the past a willingness to adhere to the Biblical beliefs and policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Pennsylvania Conference. Half of these members should possess leadership skills or potential. The leadership should also demonstrate maturity of faith and the ability to inspire other believers.

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4. Mission Group Proposal shall be submitted to Administration or Executive Committee for approval by the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee for recognition and resources as a Mission Group. These include a recommendation for an Elder, Deacon, and Treasurer, who fit the spiritual and leadership qualities as outlined in the Church Manual, to serve the group for communion and stewardship. The conference administration will arrange for an authorized person to conduct baptisms. See page seven of this document.
5. Geographic location in relation to other Seventh-day Adventist Churches should be taken into consideration along with the long term evangelistic growth potential in the community in which the congregation will be located will also be considered.
6. No matter what the initial size and situation, a mission group shall follow this church planting process as outlined in this document for eventually reproducing another Mission Group. However, dependent upon the initial size and situation, adaptations in organization can be made in consultation with the Conference Church Planting Coordinator or his designee, and if necessary the Administration Committee.
7. The Treasurer of the Mission Group may initially be the mother churches Treasurer. An apprentice Treasurer will be recommended in the Mission Group Proposal. This person will be trained and then become the Mission Group Treasurer. If there is a fully qualified individual they can also be recommended to be the Mission Group Treasurer. Please refer to "Treasury Process" at the end of this document. The Treasurer shall inform the members of the group in regard to their financial status on a regular basis. The Treasurer will also act in accordance with accepted practices and policies and be subject to audit. If this option is not exercised all tithes and offerings are to be sent to and receipted by the mother church. Offerings which are to be credited towards the Mission Group should be marked as such on the tithe envelope. Funds designated for the Mission Group shall be disbursed upon the Mission Groups request and the approval of the church board. The Mission Group is expected to keep a conference and world church perspective by contributing to conference advance, and world budget.
8. Upon review by the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee, the proposed Mission Group, if there is a very serious problem with the mother church, may have the option for requesting its memberships being transferred to the Conference Church. If this

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option is chosen, a clerk shall be recommended by the prospective Mission Group to the Conference Executive Committee.

9. Mission Group status will be evaluated and reviewed annually.
10. The sponsoring entities (mother church or conference) will exercise the same authority that a church board has over its congregation. The Mission Group Leader shall have the option of being a member of the mother churches board.
11. A Mission Group may not purchase property. If a Mission Group purchases property without prior approval from the Conference Association they will be subject to dissolution.
12. Mission Groups should enter into rental agreements only with approval of the sponsor. Long-term rental agreements should be avoided.
13. If a Mission Group falls below thirteen attending members for one year, or maintains an attendance of thirteen members for two years, it may, after consultation with the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee, be recommended to the Conference Administration Committee or the Executive Committee for dissolution. This is in accordance with the Church Manual, p 212 "Loss of Members" (17th Edition). Factors such as adherence to core values, mission, vision, and non-SDA attendance will also be considered.
14. After the Mission Group is established and functioning, holding its own Sabbath services, has met on a regular basis for an adequate amount of time, and is showing signs of longevity; it may seek to be organized as a Company.
15. The Mission Group is to submit a formal request to the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee to be considered by the Conference Executive Committee or the Administration Committee between Executive Committee meetings for Company status. See "Mission Group Proposal Guidelines."
16. Company status will be evaluated and reviewed every three years.
17. If a Company falls below twenty-five attending members for two years, or maintains an

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attendance of twenty-five members for three years, it may, after consultation with the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee be recommended to the Conference Administration Committee or the Conference Executive Committee for dissolution or decommissioning to Mission Group status. Factors such as adherence to core values, mission, vision, and non-Seventh-day Adventist attendance will also be considered. If decommissioned and the trend of attending member losses continues it could eventually result in dissolution. This is in accordance with the Church Manual, p 212 “Loss of Members” (17th Edition).

18. Mission Groups will be organized into Companies and will be in the Conference Directory when evidence of adequate stability and strength include:
  - a. When a Mission Group has met on a regular basis for an adequate amount of time and shows signs of permanence;
  - b. There is generally a regular attendance of at least 35 and an official membership of at least 25 active baptized adults (age fifteen and up).
  - c. There is non-transfer, non-biological growth.
  - d. There is the development of adequate leadership for shared responsibilities; the members are involved in the life and mission of the Mission Group. They are member-driven rather than pastor/ mission pastor dependent.
  - e. Evidence is presented to show that they are working their plan in harmony with their mission in order to fulfill their vision while adhering to their core values, and the policies of the church manual.
  - f. There is evidence of the beginnings of financial stability by being able to pay for its own expenses and the systematic return of tithes and offerings, including conference advance, and world budget. Annual tithe should be at least \$25,000.
  - g. There are good working relationships with adjacent, established churches and the Conference.
19. A Company may not purchase property. If a company purchases property without prior approval from the Conference Association they will be subject to dissolution.
20. When a Company has met on a regular basis for an adequate amount of time, and has established stability and strength, it may be organized as a Church.
21. The Company is to submit a formal request to the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee to be considered by the Conference Executive Committee or the

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Administration Committee between Executive Committee meetings for Church status. See page “Company Proposal Guidelines.”

22. When the request is approved by the Conference Executive Committee the Company will be notified and plans made for their organization as a Church according to the guidelines outlined in the Church Manual.
23. A Church may purchase land or facilities, but only with the approval of the Conference Association and Executive Committee. They must pass a financial review before purchasing land or facilities.
24. Church status will be evaluated and reviewed every five years
25. When a Church established through the church planting process falls below forty attending members for two years, it may, after consultation with the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee be recommended to the Conference Administration Committee or the Conference Executive Committee for dissolution or decommissioning to Company status. Factors such as adherence to core values, mission, vision, and non-Seventh-day Adventist attendance will also be considered. If decommissioned and the trend of attending member losses continues it could eventually result in dissolution. This is in accordance with the Church Manual, p 212 “Loss of Members” (17th Edition).
26. Companies will be organized into Churches and listed in the Conference Directory when evidence of adequate stability and strength include:
  - a. A regular attendance of at least 50 individuals and an active membership of at least 40 active baptized adults (beginning at age fifteen).
  - b. The Company has functioned on a regular basis for an adequate amount of time and has shown growth and evidence of longevity.
  - c. It demonstrates baptismal growth by winning souls to Christ, not just by transfers or biological growth.
  - d. It is financially self-sustaining, shows a steady tithe increase, as well as the ability to help to support the broader work of the Conference and World Church. It should have an annual tithe of at least \$40,000.
  - e. It has enough gifted and trained leaders to carry out the functions and obligations of a church.

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- f. It's members are involved in the life and mission of the Company. They are member driven rather than pastor/ mission pastor dependent.
- g. It is working its plan in harmony with its mission in order to fulfill its vision while adhering to its core values, and the policies of the church manual.
- h. A Church is organized by the Conference according to the guidelines outlined in the Church Manual.

Exception:

A Pennsylvania Conference Simple Church is a part of the World Seventh-day Adventist Simple Church Network. It is overseen and held accountable by this network. As such it is not subject to the provisions of this policy. However, the Pennsylvania Conference Church Planting Coordinator or designee will coordinate and cooperate with the Simple Church Network in order to encourage and empower kingdom growth.

## **PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE**

### **Mission Group Proposal Guidelines**

1. Date of this Proposal.
2. Have you read and do you understand the Pennsylvania Conference Church Planting Policy?
3. Proposed name, location and mailing address of Mission Group. For banking purposes please choose a permanent name with the word "church" in it instead of Mission Group. This will simplify the financial processes (see Treasury Process on page 13). Please do not choose a name that is already part of another conference churches name. This can be confusing in the conference office and contribute to mistakes and delays.
4. Why have you chosen this mission area and your meeting place? Describe.
5. Why start a new church? Write a brief justification involving an expression of your calling, motivations for this project, and why a new church is needed.
6. Have you been meeting regularly for prayer, unity, and spiritual growth?
7. Recount the evidences of God's providential leading in this project.
8. Names of your Mission Group Members with addresses, telephone numbers, birth dates, and home churches. There should be a minimum of 13 members who are baptized adult Seventh-day Adventist members in good and regular standing, and who have been a part of the church for a reasonable amount of time. The members shall have demonstrated in the past a willingness to adhere to Biblical beliefs and the policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Pennsylvania Conference. Please indicate with an asterisk which of these members possess leadership skills or potential.
9. If there is a very serious problem with the mother church, the mission group may request sponsorship by the Pennsylvania Conference. In this case the memberships will be transferred from the mother church to the Pennsylvania Conference Church. Please recommend a Clerk.
10. Who do you recommend to be appointed by your sponsor as the Group Leader?
11. Who do you recommend to be appointed by your sponsor as the Group Deacon? This person must have been previously ordained by a local church.
12. Who do you recommend to be appointed by your sponsor as the Group Elder? This person must have been previously ordained by a local church.

13. Who do you recommend to be appointed by your sponsor as the Treasurer? If necessary this person is to be mentored by the mother churches treasurer or the Conference Financial Liaison for Church and School Treasurers.
14. State your financial situation, i.e. the anticipated tithes and offerings of your group based upon past giving patterns or stated commitments and present balance of seed monies.
15. Have you established core values, mission and vision statements that are reflective of the Seventh-day Adventist calling to preach the gospel, seek the lost, and proclaim the Three Angels Message of Revelation 14? Do you have a three to five year plan? Are all of these in harmony with the policies of the church manual? Please attach copies.
16. How will each one of your members be involved in this plan? List names and involvement beside each one.
17. Include a budget, showing sources of income and expense, and which reflects planned giving to the conference and world church via the Pennsylvania Conference Advance and the World Budget.
18. Do you have a projected faith date to be organized as a Company?
19. Mission Group status is granted upon approval of the Conference Executive Committee, or Administration Committee between Executive Committee meetings.

## **PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE Company Proposal Guidelines**

1. Date of this Proposal.
2. Have you read and do you understand the Pennsylvania Conference Church Planting Policy?
3. Name, location, and mailing address of Company. For example: "Anytown Seventh-day Adventist Church"
4. List the names, addresses, phone number, birth dates, and home church of at least 25 active baptized adults (age fifteen and up), who are members of your Mission Group. The members shall have demonstrated in the past a willingness to adhere to Biblical beliefs and the policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Pennsylvania Conference.
5. What is your average attendance per Sabbath? How many are Seventh-day Adventist and how many are not?
6. How long have you been meeting as a Mission Group?
7. Have you been meeting regularly for prayer, unity, and spiritual growth?
8. Recount the evidences of God's providential leading in this project.
9. How many people with non-Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds have you baptized?
10. How many inactive or former Seventh-day Adventists have you reclaimed?
11. List how each one of your members are involved in the company with a responsibility and/or ministry.
12. List the ongoing ministries, events, and the time frame and/or dates that you have conducted them. Show that these are part of your plan, in harmony with your mission and vision statements, and your core values.
13. Have you been adhering to your core values? How? Any challenges? Any triumphs?
14. Have you been adhering to the policies of the church manual? Any challenges? Any triumphs?

15. Include copies of your last six tithe and offerings summaries, and/or your budget. Show that you are meeting your budget with a list of the last six months of expenses and income. Are all your leaders and congregation being faithful in returning tithe and giving offerings to the Mission Group, the Pennsylvania Conference, and the world church?
16. If sponsorship and accountability has been with a mother church, is the mother church in agreement with this step and willing to transfer all of the above memberships to the Conference Church? Copies of a Board action or a letter of recommendation should be included.
17. If sponsorship and accountability has been with the Pennsylvania Conference, is the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee in agreement with this step? Copies of a letter of recommendation should be included.
18. Do you have a projected faith date to be organized as a Church?
19. Company status granted upon approval of the Conference Executive Committee.

## **PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE Church Proposal Guidelines**

1. Date of this Proposal.
2. Have you read and do you understand the Pennsylvania Conference Church Planting Policy?
3. Will you continue to meet at your present location? If not, where will you be meeting and why?
4. Name, location and mailing address:
5. List the names, addresses, birth dates, and telephone numbers of at least 40 active baptized adults (age fifteen and up), who are members of your Company. The members shall have demonstrated in the past a willingness to adhere to Biblical beliefs and the policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Pennsylvania Conference.
6. What is your average attendance per Sabbath? How many are Seventh-day Adventist and how many are not?
7. How long have you been meeting as a Company?
8. Have you been meeting regularly for prayer, unity, and spiritual growth?
9. Recount the evidences of God's providential leading in this project.
10. How many people with non-Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds have you baptized?
11. How many inactive or former Seventh-day Adventists have you reclaimed?
12. List your members and how each one is involved in the company with a responsibility and/or ministry.
13. List the ongoing ministries, events, and the time frame and/or dates that you have conducted them. Show that these are part of your plan, in harmony with your mission and vision statements, and your core values.
14. Have you been adhering to the policies of the church manual? Any challenges? Any triumphs?

15. What are your future outreach plans? How are they in harmony with your mission and vision statement, and your core values?
16. Have you been adhering to your core values? How? Any challenges? Any triumphs?
17. Include copies of your last six tithe and offerings summaries, and/or your budget. Show that you are meeting your budget with a list of the last six months of expenses and income. Are all your leaders being faithful in returning tithe and giving offerings to the Company, the Pennsylvania Conference, and the world church.
18. If sponsorship and accountability has been with a mother church, is the mother church in agreement with this step? Copies of a Board action or a letter of recommendation should be included.
19. If sponsorship and accountability has been with the Pennsylvania Conference, is the Church Planting Coordinator or his designee in agreement with this step? Copies of a letter of recommendation should be included.
20. Do you have a projected faith date and/or membership goal to become a mother church?
21. Church status granted upon approval of the Conference Executive Committee and formal organization.

## **Treasury Process**

1. Upon approval by Administrative or Executive Committee the Mission Group should request the “Bank Packet” from the Conference Treasury Department. This will include a letter stating that the Mission Group is a part of the Pennsylvania Conference and that the Pennsylvania Conference is under the umbrella of the General Conference 501(c)3 status. This information, a copy of the 501(c)3, and other information in the “Bank Packet” is needed to open a proper bank account.

An EIN is also needed to open a bank account. This can be applied for at the IRS.GOV website, for banking purposes only. It is recommended that the Mission Group open the bank account with the name of their future church i.e. “Anytown SDA Church” instead of “Anytown SDA Mission Group”. This will avoid the necessity of notifying the IRS of a name change (see notes below). A copy of the letter from the IRS stating what the number is should be sent to the conference.

2. The Mission Group should request that the Conference apply for a State Tax Exemption Number.
3. The Conference Financial Liaison for Church and School Treasurers should be contacted to set up the LUCIS treasury program for the Mission Group Treasurer. The Mission Group Treasurer should report their tithe and offerings to the Conference with help from the Mother Church’s Treasurer. The Conference Treasury Department will use the Mother Church’s identification number to enter all offerings at the Conference office level.
4. If there is a name change the LUCIS program should be updated with the new name change.

### **Notes:**

If a Mission Group uses another entity’s EIN they will have to close their bank account and reopen a new one when they get their own EIN number.

If an entity changes their name from ‘Anytown Mission Group’ to ‘Anytown SDA Church’, a bank can make them close their current account and open an entirely new account.

If an entity has their own EIN under ‘Anytown Mission Group’ and changes it to ‘Anytown SDA Church’, they must submit the name change to the IRS. They should receive a letter from IRS stating that this change has been made and share it with the Conference.

Do not choose a name such as Maranatha, which is part of another conference church’s name. This contributes to mistakes and delays at each Conference office.