



CHURCH PLANTING & VOLUNTEER LAY PASTOR **GUIDELINES**

For Lay Pastor Coordinators,
Church Planters, and Volunteer Lay Pastors



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

TEXAS CONFERENCE



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The Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists takes the Savior's commission to carry the gospel to all the world (Mathew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15) very seriously. This means taking the gospel message to all who live within the geographical borders of the Texas Conference and beyond. As the gospel is preached in churches and more disciples are developed, they will desire to take that same gospel to even more places, resulting in new churches being planted. This requires administration and organization.

The Church Planting Department/Volunteer Lay Pastor Program (VLP) exists to multiply leaders, missional groups and churches. The Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists recognizes that Jesus' words found in Luke 10:2 are still true today: "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." To continue furthering the Gospel, the CP/VLP Department will select, equip and mobilize volunteer leaders to meet the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of their communities.

The Texas Conference has established policies for mission groups, companies, and churches, which are in place to facilitate church growth. These new mission groups, companies, and churches may be led by a lay leader/Volunteer Lay Pastor, under the supervision of the sponsoring church pastor and/or the CP/VLP Director.

The following guidelines are in effect to facilitate the volunteer work of lay leaders and lay pastors.



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CHURCH PLANTING AND VOLUNTEER LAY PASTOR DIRECTOR

Mission Statement

“Mobilizing and equipping lay people to provide consistent and loving servant leadership to congregations and communities.”

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:1-4 NIV)

Accountability Structure

The CP/VLP Director is accountable to the Executive Secretary and the Texas Conference Executive Committee.

Position Description

The role of the CP/VLP Director is to:

- Build, train, manage, and oversee the CP and VLP committee.
- Manage and oversee the progress and direction of mission groups, companies, and churches led by volunteer lay pastors.
- Align lay leaders with the purpose, values, and strategies of Texas Conference.
- Ensure that systems, practices, and policies of these congregations follow the Texas Conference’s guidelines.
- Offer pastoral leadership to Volunteer Lay Pastors.



Key Responsibilities

- 1. Mentoring and Coaching.** The CP/VLP Director serves as mentor, coach, and guide for Volunteer Lay Pastors as needed. The Director observes Volunteer Lay Pastors in their ministry context as scheduling permits.
- 2. Preaching and Teaching:** The CP/VLP Director will be available to speak and worship in 30 or more congregations a year during Sabbath church service in addition to midweek meetings. Also, seminars and instruction meetings may be arranged that same day as scheduling permits.
- 3. Volunteer Lay Pastors' Continuing Education Program:** The CP/VLP Director oversees the training and development of Lay Pastors. There will be two Continuing Education Retreats (Spring & Fall) in which seminars will be taught in eight different areas: Spiritual Vitality, Discipleship, Growing Young, Evangelism and Church Growth, Team Building and Leadership, Church Administration and Treasury (including Adventist Screening Verification), Community Impact, and People Skills. The Director is responsible for organizing these retreats.
- 4. Mission Group Expansion:** The CP/VLP Director directs and oversees the expansion of new mission groups in new areas. The CP/VLP Director offers motivation to help these mission groups become companies and eventually churches in accordance with Texas Conference policies. The CP/VLP Director will be available to provide general and specific vision, direction, and outreach strategies for new mission groups.
- 5. Point Person between Volunteer Lay Pastors and Conference:** The CP/VLP Director will serve as a point person between the Volunteer Lay Pastor, his or her church, and the Texas Conference. The CP/VLP Director will encourage and supervise the monthly reporting of attendance, baptisms, tithe, and visitors.
- 6. Evaluation of Volunteer Lay Pastor:** The CP/VLP Director will review and evaluate Volunteer Lay Pastors every year using the following parameters:
 - a. Evidence of growth in their local congregation
 - b. Evidence of potential to move on to the next congregation organizational level
 - c. Evidence of growth in the eight areas of the Continuing Education Program
 - d. Attendance at meetings, gatherings, and retreats
 - e. Review of monthly reports from Volunteer Lay Pastors and quarterly reports from the church as applicable



MISSION PLAN OVERVIEW

Texas Conference's desire is to equip, support, and resource you as effectively as possible so your church plant will be successful. With that in mind, there are three key areas that need to be addressed comprehensively for you to have the greatest opportunity to thrive as a church plant. These areas are vision, discipleship, and evaluating progress.

1. Vision

A vision is a compelling and inspiring picture of a preferred future. Having vision may be a gift of the leader. However, if only the leader sees the vision, not much will happen. There is an old proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go with someone." Creating a "shared vision" with your core team is an essential component for catalyzing action which will be lasting and not just temporary enthusiasm. The following resources are recommended for helping you and your core team discover, develop, and create a "shared vision" that will guide your church plant in the years to come:

"Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend." *Andy Stanley (Zondervan 2010).*

"Vioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision." *Andy Stanley (Multnomah 1999).*

"Revolution in the Church." *Russell Burrill (Hart Research Center, 1994).*

"Evangelism." *Ellen White (Hagerstown 2002).*

"Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement." *Will Mancini (JosseyBass 2008).*

"Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-centered Ministry in Your City." *Timothy Keller (Grand Rapids 2012).*

2. Discipleship

Biblical discipleship portrays the Christian as one who has a dynamic and growing experience of following and obeying Christ as well as inviting others to also follow and obey Him. Within the principle of discipleship three key areas are present as well: evangelism, leadership, and spiritual disciplines. In order to create a comprehensive strategy for these essential components, the following resources are recommended:

"Discipleship Handbook: A Resource for Seventh-day Adventist Church Members." *General Conference of SDA (Review and Herald 2018).*

"Real Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples." *Jim Putman, Bill Krause, Avery Willis and Brandon Guindon (NavPress 2010).*

"The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ." *Bill Hull (NavPress 2006).*

"Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community." *Ed Stetzer & David Putman (Broadman & Holman 2006).*

"Protege: Developing Your Next Generation of Church Leaders." *Steve Saccone (InterVarsity 2012).*

3. Strategic Plan & Evaluation Process

Continuing to do the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, as some have said, is the definition of insanity. That's why assessing where you are in comparison to where you want to be is critical for every church plant. The following resources are recommended for your church plant to get a better picture of the current reality on the journey towards your goal as a church plant.

The Planter Plan - www.planterplan.com

"Launch." Nelson Searcy (Regal 2007).

"Activate." Nelson Searcy (Regal 2008).

"Leading Missional Communities." Mike Breen (Zondervan 2013).

"Steps to Church Planting: From Inception to Launch." Tom Evans.

"Simple Church." Thom S. Rainer (B & H Publishing Group 2014)

"Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches." *Christian Schwartz* (1996).





VOLUNTEER LAY PASTOR

Ministry Description

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as *“His body, the fullness of him who filleth everything in every way”* (Eph. 1:22).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church. Thus, the church is a creation of the Spirit.

We experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world through our church, and the world experiences the living presence of Jesus Christ through the witness of our church. When a local church serves the world, it is an expression of the love of Christ to the World. It is the body of Christ serving the world’s needs used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation.

Thus, the church is a servant body. Created for service, the church serves the Lord in praise, one another in love, and the world in humility. *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to minister effectively for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other, to the church, and to the world. A volunteer lay pastor is a ministering servant of God, and, like every Christian, is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and ordained for ministry through baptism (Eph. 4:11–12).

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry: scripture, spiritual power, God’s character, and spiritual gifts. A volunteer lay pastor is equipped for his or her ministry by the gifts received through the Holy Spirit.

Description of Volunteer Responsibilities

A Volunteer Lay Pastor is a lay leader (i) who volunteers to serve, (ii) who has been recommended by the sponsoring church board or group and approved by CP/VLP department, (iii) who has completed certification by the Texas Conference through training and demonstrations of fitness for ministry, and (iv) whose appointment has been approved by the CP/VLP department and the Texas Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM). Annual recertification for Volunteer Lay Pastor status is contingent upon attending annual recertification training, an annual review, and recommendation of the sponsoring church board. Volunteer Lay Pastor status must be the result of a continuing training process for annual recertification. The Volunteer Lay Pastor must demonstrate character, leadership, spirituality, a collaborative spirit, and loyalty to the church organization and its theology. To be considered for company status, a mission group should have a Volunteer Lay Pastor leading the group.

For a full description of the NAD guidelines for Volunteer Lay Pastors see **Appendix A**.

Key Responsibilities

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a Volunteer Lay Pastor can best be described in the following ways:

1. Teamwork: Volunteer Lay Pastors work under the supervision of a senior pastor/coach, district leader, or CP/VLP area coordinator, and they must work closely with the local church board and officers. A “lone ranger” style of leadership will only create problems and not build up the congregation. Volunteer Lay Pastors must arrange to meet on a regular basis (refer to the pastor/coach VLP agreement, **Appendix B**). Only in this way will Volunteer Lay Pastors ensure that they are supporting one another and working together.

2. Preaching and Worship Leadership: A primary responsibility of the Volunteer Lay Pastor is to fill the pulpit, perhaps three out of four Sabbaths a month. This includes attention to the entire worship service, not just the sermon. The elders are the worship committee in small churches, and it is essential that Volunteer Lay Pastors work with them as co-leaders in worship. Any changes in the order of service need to be voted by the elders.

3. Visitation: Volunteer Lay Pastors cannot do an adequate job of preaching unless they have regular contact with the congregation in their homes and places of work. The Volunteer Lay Pastor is usually expected to systematically visit the church members, give Bible studies to interested persons, and make contact with Sabbath visitors. Volunteer Lay Pastors need to clarify with the senior pastor/coach and the church board what is expected of them regarding visits to the sick, funerals, and referrals for pastoral counseling.

4. Chairing the Board: The Volunteer Lay Pastor is expected to chair the church board half the time or two out of three meetings while the senior pastor is present. The senior pastor chairs it once a quarter. Other times, the local church elects a board member as chairperson. Volunteer Lay Pastors should clarify this responsibility with their supervisor and the board.

5. Midweek Meetings: Volunteer Lay Pastors should conduct a prayer meeting, a Bible study group, a seminar, or a lay training class one evening a week. This is a vital part of a healthy, growing church. In many churches, there is no longer one general midweek meeting but a number of Home Bible Fellowships and seminars offered on different days and in various locations. This allows for a greater attendance and the meeting of a wider range of needs.

6. Planning: Every congregation needs to have a yearly plan for church growth to ensure an ongoing, balanced program of outreach, soul-winning, and nurture. The process by which these plans are developed is as important as the actual plan. If the church leaders and members do not participate in planning, they may not support the plans. This happens when the church board or Church Ministries Council has a planning council each year and then presents the plan to a general church business meeting along with the church budget. Volunteer Lay Pastors should determine whether it will be their responsibility to act as facilitator for this process or whether the senior pastor will take this responsibility.

7. Training Programs: Volunteer Lay Pastors must cooperate and participate in Conference-scheduled programs and activities, including specified training programs, as directed by Conference officers. The Volunteer Lay Pastor must be involved in a continuing training process for certification as a lay pastor. Recertification for lay pastor status will be contingent upon attending annual recertification training. There will be two Continuing Education Retreats per year (Spring & Fall). All Volunteer Lay Pastors are required to attend both retreats in order to renew and retain credentials.

8. Ministry Coach: Having a mentor in pastoral ministry is one of the best prescriptions for healthy growth in competence and protection from vulnerabilities. Becoming a “loner” in pastoral ministry is not only burdensome, but it can also be perilous. A Volunteer Lay Pastor must meet with a designated pastoral mentor (in most cases, their local pastor) each month, either by phone or in person, to discuss professional effectiveness in active ministry, to strengthen their personal and spiritual health, and to affirm their gifts for ministry (**see the pastor/coach VLP agreement, Appendix B**).

9. Reports: Volunteer Lay Pastors must ensure that membership, baptism, and financial reports are submitted on a monthly basis by the church clerk, treasurer, or assistant treasurer.

10. Tithe and Offering: It is the responsibility of the Volunteer Lay Pastor to see that all tithes and offerings received by the mission group, the company, or the church where the Volunteer Lay Pastor is serving are sent on time to the sponsoring church or the Conference on a monthly basis as follows:

- All tithes and offerings from the mission group are to be sent to and receipted by the sponsoring church or by the Texas Conference if previous authorization is emitted. The sponsoring church shall assume all administrative responsibilities for the mission group, and its board will exercise over the group the same authority that it has over its congregation.
- All tithes and offerings of a company are to be sent to the Conference, with the exception of the local expense offering which is to remain with the mission group or company. It is understood that a company has an acting board.
- All tithes and offerings of a church are to be sent to the Conference, with the exception of the local expense offering which is to remain with the church.

Authorization to Conduct Certain Activities

Texas Conference will authorize a credentialed Volunteer Lay Pastor to conduct all the functions of a local elder with the additional authorization to conduct baptisms. (Baptisms are to be conducted within their assigned congregation and with prior authorization).

Duration of Appointment

A Volunteer Lay Pastor is appointed for two years contingent upon an annual review and reaffirmation. Annual recertification is contingent upon attending recertification training twice each year, annual review by the CP/VLP Director and the Texas Conference, and the recommendation of the sponsoring church. A VLP may decide to at any time to discontinue his or her service, without penalty, voiding his or her **Volunteer Lay Pastor Agreement (see Appendix C)**.

No Compensation

The Volunteer Lay Pastor is a volunteer and not an employee of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Volunteer Lay Pastors serve without compensation or wages in any form. However, provision is made, as specified in the Volunteer Lay Pastor Agreement (Appendix C), to reimburse some travel and ministry related expenses (**see VLP Expense Reimbursement Form, Appendix D**).

Training Curriculum

The Volunteer Lay Pastor Training Program is designed for Volunteer Lay Pastors appointed to mission groups and those who are already functioning as Volunteer Lay Pastors in Texas Conference. There will be two yearly Continuing Education Retreats in which seminars will be taught in different areas: Spiritual Vitality, People Skills, Evangelism and Church Growth, Church Administration and Treasury, Discipleship, Team Building and Leadership, Community Impact, and Growing Young. (This curriculum was developed by consulting with pastors regarding the skills most essential to pastoral success.)

The educational philosophy that guides this training includes three related principles:

1. Each Volunteer Lay Pastor in training already has certain elements of knowledge, experience, and natural skills that can be applied to ministry.
2. Each ministerial competency has basic foundational elements which, if taught and practiced, will guide a natural and personalized development in that competency.
3. These competencies are best developed through practice in a real ministry setting.

Volunteer Lay Pastor Training Program Objectives

1. Encouragement, care, and growth of churches in need of lay pastoral leadership through the provision of approved lay persons trained and equipped as Volunteer Lay Pastors, thereby strengthening the life of our church and advancing the Kingdom of God.
2. Continuing training and development of Volunteer Lay Pastors already involved in ministry.
3. Development of a clear biblical basis for Adventist doctrines explicitly based on the teachings of Scripture.
4. Development of a firm understanding of Adventist identity and church operations and procedures.

Curriculum

There are eight areas of training for the Volunteer Lay Pastor Training Program with the following designations:

1. Spiritual Vitality

Spiritual Development for Ministry: This area explores the role of personal spirituality in effective ministry. It offers insights for developing a stronger personal bond with God and fostering spiritual growth in others.

Recommended seminars:

- Practicing Spiritual Disciplines
- Growing in the Fruit of the Spirit
- Growing Faith in God
- Authentic Fellowship
- Becoming Vulnerable
- Forgiveness in the Hands of God
- Growth Through Mentoring

Spiritual Servant Leadership: This area outlines both biblical perspectives and recent thinking on leadership theory. It provides principles and tools that help leaders lead in godly ways and in godly directions.

Recommended seminars:

- Spiritual Growth Inventory
- Awakening of Your True Self: "Exploring Consciousness"
- When Being "Nice" Isn't Enough
- Leaders are Made, Not Born

2. Discipleship

Being a Disciple: This area outlines the basics of Bible Christianity and following Jesus. It offers insights into spiritual practices necessary for developing a strong foundation for continued spiritual growth.

Recommended seminars:

- Abiding in Christ
- Christian Character Development

Making Disciples: This area outlines the process of leading others to Christ and encouraging them to lead others to Christ themselves.

Recommended seminars:

- Engaging with the Secular World
- Practices for Witnessing in Day-To-Day Settings

3. Growing Young

This area teaches the relevance of creating a church environment in which young people can thrive spiritually.

Recommended seminars:

- Integrating Youth and Young Adults into Church Leadership
- Strategies for Developing a Sustainable Youth Ministry
- Strategies for Creating a Youth and Young Adult Evangelistic Work Force

4. Evangelism and Church Growth

Evangelistic Approaches: This area explores some of the most time-tested approaches to sharing the truth of Adventism, offering principles and tools for effective evangelism.

Recommended Seminars:

- Biblical Foundation for Evangelism: "The Church in the N. T."
- The Formation of Small Companies: "A Plan Presented by One that Cannot Err" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 7 p. 22)
- Strategic Planning and the Church
- Methods to Reach Younger Generations
- How to Assimilate New Members into the Congregation
- How to Plan and Conduct Evangelistic Events

5. Team Building and Leadership

A Theology of Church: This area develops a biblical understanding of church function and structure, providing a framework for building the church into a biblical team.

Recommended Seminars:

- Adventist Beginnings and Development of Adventist Organizational Distinctives
- Global Mission of the Church vs. A Mentality of Local Consumerism
- Abilities in Financial Management (budgeting, etc.)
- Conducting Effective Meetings (boards, committees, etc.)
- Ability to Plan and Conduct Worship, Communion, Baby Dedications, and Baptismal Services

Becoming a Ministry Mentor: This area presents methods for developing others in ministry.

Recommended Seminars:

- Becoming a Ministry Mentor
- Paul Charges Timothy to Step Up
- "The Passing of the Torch"
- The Marks of a Good Ministry Mentor (*specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, challenging, memorable*)
- How to Lead a Spiritual Small Group

6. Church Administration and Treasury

Adventist Screening Verification

A Theology of Church: This area develops a biblical understanding of church protection and confidence. Everyone has to feel and be safe within the church property and or church activity.

Recommended Seminars:

- Abuser Characteristics
- The 'Grooming Process' Utilized by Offenders
- Common 'Grooming Behaviors'
- Peer-to-Peer Sexual Abuse
- Reporting Responsibilities
- Changes in Current Legislation
- Description of an Effective Safety System
- Description of an Effective Screening Process
- Tools and Resources for Reducing the Risk

Church Treasury and Administration: This area explains the correct procedures for managing church finances and other administration procedures.

7. Community Impact

Community Service and Outreach: This area explores creative ways for engaging with the local community.

Recommended seminars:

- How to Become a Relevant Community Church
- How to Reach the Unchurched (How to Reach the World Next Door)

8. People Skills

Emotional Intelligence in Ministry: This area explores how to develop the people skills necessary to thrive in ministry. It identifies the often sensed but unnamed skills of ministers who win the hearts of their parishioners.

Recommended seminars:

- Becoming a Resonant Leader
- Coaching Skills (Listening, Intuition, Curiosity, Naming, Affirming, Fulfillment)
- Ability to Use Methods to Reach Younger Generations
- The Motivation to Change

Pastoral Counseling: This area provides tools to meaningfully counsel those in crisis. Also, it helps Volunteer Lay Pastors know when to refer a person to a professional counselor.

Recommended seminars:

- Fundamentals of Pastoral Care
- What Constitutes Successful Pastoral Care?
- Human Relation Skills for Pastoral Care
- When to Refer a Person to Look for Professional Help
- The Goal of Counseling is to Move from One Level of Change to Another

Managing Conflict: This area teaches skills for defusing and resolving conflicts in the church. It provides principles and models for managing conflict.

Recommended seminars:

- Biblical Principles for Conflict Resolutions
- Engaging Cultural and Demographic Realities
- Becoming a Calm Leader
- "Holy Habits" and the Process of Transformation



PURPOSE OF GROUP ORGANIZATION

At every level of organization, our church has been called to evangelize and spread the gospel. This is fundamental to our Christian vocation. When an organized church reaches a size at which its leaders can no longer best perform their task of discipling, nurturing, and/or training members, it is recommended to extend the ministry of the church. However, counsel and approval from the CP/VLP Department in coordination with the Texas Conference Administration is necessary.

General issues to consider prior to consideration of a new organization.

1. Geographic location in relation to other churches. New congregations should not be located within five miles of an existing church, which could negatively impact the operations of the existing church.
2. A sponsoring church willing to guide the new group. If necessary, the Texas Conference itself may be the sponsoring organization.
3. An appropriate number of baptized adult members who have been established in the church for a reasonable period of time.
4. Evangelistic growth potential in the community in which the congregation will be located.
5. Adequate lay leadership.
6. Adherence to the teachings, standards, and policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Texas Conference.
7. Ability to assume financial responsibility.
8. Reasons for wanting to start a new congregation. New groups should not be formed because of internal church disputes.
9. Selection of a Volunteer Lay Leader by the sponsoring church. The Volunteer Lay Leader will be willing to go through a Volunteer Lay Pastor training program and will agree to attend recertification meetings. A VLP must be in place before a group will be recognized as a company.
10. Direct supervision by a Texas Conference employed pastor during the mission group and company status. While the VLP will serve in a pastoral role during the mission group and company time period, it will be under the direction of an employed pastor/the sponsoring church pastor/district pastor.



ORGANIZATION WORKBOOK

This workbook has been compiled to assist in the organization of mission groups, companies, and churches as described below:

Mission Group

The objective of the mission group is to expand the ministry of a local church to a different population group (differentiated by geographic area, ethnic, cultural, or social identity).

Company

The purpose of developing a mission group into a company is to take steps toward church status. Company status exists to show that the group can function in spiritual leadership, ministry structures, finances, membership, strategically planned outreach, and faithfulness to biblical principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These elements are essential to all churches within the Conference sisterhood of churches.

Church

The fully autonomous church has its own relationship to the sisterhood of churches.

Using this Organization Workbook

The Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has established policies for mission groups, companies, and churches to facilitate church growth and planting. Before filling out the application forms for your group, it is essential that all members involved in the formation of the group read and understand the policies on this workbook. Once the required application and forms are completed with the help of the pastor of the sponsoring church, the pastor will arrange for the request to be submitted to the CP/VLP Committee.

The CP/VLP committee will review the application in coordination with the Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM).





CHURCH PLANTING POLICY GUIDELINES

When God calls a person, a group of people, or a congregation to plant a new church, this calling is confirmed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Texas Conference through the following process:

I. Initiation by the Local Church

- A. The idea of planting a new congregation is presented to the pastor.
- B. A core group, which will be the nucleus of the new congregation, is identified within the membership of the sponsoring church or those who share the same vision.
- C. A shared vision for the new congregation is created.
- D. The pastor presents the vision and plan for establishing the new congregation to the church board of the sponsoring church or to the CP/VLP department.
- E. The sponsoring church gives its blessing and commits its support to the new congregation with prayer, leadership, and finances.
- F. The core group goes through training on mission and policies that is required by the Texas Conference CP/VLP Department for new congregations.
- G. The pastor or group submits an application on behalf of the church or group to the CP/VLP Department.
- H. The CP/VLP Department designates a coach and a leader of the new mission group. The sponsoring church pastor, an area pastor, or someone from the CP/VLP Department may serve in this capacity.

II. Establishment and Growth of a New Congregation: “Mission Group” Status

- A. The Texas Conference Executive Committee votes the new congregation into existence. At this stage they are referred to as a mission group.
- B. The pastor, the sponsoring church board, and Texas CP/VLP Department give leadership to the new mission group.
- C. The new mission group forms strategies for discipleship, outreach, evangelism, and other areas of ministry.
- D. In time, the new congregation is expected to grow and mature in leadership, attendance, member involvement in service and discipleship, and in financial solvency.
- E. Remittances of tithe and designated offerings are done through the sponsoring church. The sponsoring church board may allow the mission group to have its own subaccount.
- F. The lay leader is required to attend the Volunteer Pastor’s training that the Texas Conference offers twice a year and other Conference-sponsored training events.
- G. The new congregation is expected to be a faithful member of the Seventh-day Adventist worldwide movement.

III. The Mission Group Becomes a “Company”

- A. After an appropriate time of existence as an approved mission group, having established the previous criteria, having at least thirty-five active Seventh-day Adventist members and a projected annual tithe of thirty-five thousand dollars (35K). The leader of the mission group and the core team may send an application for company status to the CP/VLP Department of the Texas Conference.
- B. The Texas Conference Executive Committee considers and votes company status for the mission group.
- C. When the mission group becomes a company, it detaches administratively from the sponsoring church, and it attaches to the Texas Conference. The following steps must take place, some of which may have already taken place with the sponsoring church’s approval:
 - 1. Membership is transferred from the sponsoring church to the Texas Conference Church through the normal member transfer process.
 - 2. The Texas Conference membership clerk provides materials and training to the new clerk with the support of the sponsoring church clerk.
 - 3. The Texas Conference Treasury Department trains the new treasurer.
 - 4. Church accounting software is obtained from the Texas Conference Treasury Department.
 - 5. The new company will need bank authorization and 501(c)(3) Letters, federal tax ID number (EIN), and a Consumer’s Certificate of Exemption. These are applied for and obtained through the Texas Conference Treasury Department.
 - 6. The new company opens a bank account using their own EIN number.
 - 7. The new company starts direct remittances of tithe and designated offerings to the Texas Conference Treasury Department.
 - 8. A Ceremony of Organization is conducted by the CP/VLP Department of the Texas Conference in coordination with the Conference administration.
- D. Through time, the new company will show growth and maturity in the areas of leadership, membership growth, and member involvement in service and discipleship. It will become financially solvent, and it will show faithfulness to the organization and the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist worldwide movement.

IV. The Company becomes a member “Church” of Florida Conference

- A. Once the previous criteria are established and the company has at least seventy members and a projected annual tithe of seventy thousand (70K), the pastor/volunteer lay pastor, on behalf of the company, sends an application for church status to the Texas Conference CP/VLP Department.
- B. Texas Conference Executive Committee considers and votes the status of church for the company.
- C. Once the company becomes a church, it becomes a member of the sisterhood of churches within the Texas Conference. At such point, a Ceremony of Organization is conducted by Texas Conference CP/VLP Department in coordination with the administration. The new church may continue to be led by a Volunteer Lay Pastor.



OFFICIAL GROUP NAME:

1. At least 15 baptized members

☐ **The mission group has a total of _____ members.**

2. The mission group has less than \$35,000 in annual tithe.

☐ **The mission group has an annual tithe of _____.**

3. The mission group has been assigned a coach.

☐ **Our assigned coach is: _____.**

4. The mission group has been assigned a sponsoring church.

☐ **Our assigned sponsoring church is: _____.**

5. The sponsoring church has opened a special Jewel (treasury) line item for the new mission group.

☐ **Our assigned sponsoring church has opened a special treasury line item for the mission group.**

☐ **A special provision has been made with the Church Planting & VLP Department or Conference Treasury Department.**

6. Collaboration and support with local district

☐ **The mission group has reached out the local district pastor for ministerial support and collaboration in outreach.**



ORGANIZING A MISSION GROUP POLICIES

The following applies for the official approval of a mission group (church plant) by the Texas Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM):

1. The Process

1. Sponsor church pastor or church planter utilizes the Texas Conference Guidelines Handbook for the process of establishing a mission group.
2. Sponsor church pastor submits this mission group's application to the CP/VLP Department along with the following attachments:
 - a. Church Planting Coaching Agreement (**See Appendix B**)
 - b. Mission Plan (**See Appendix E**)
 1. Recommendation for the new mission group plant
 2. Name of recommended Volunteer Lay Leader for new mission group
3. Summary of the requirements for a Mission Group to become official and thereby added to eAdventist: (**See Appendix F**)

A Mission Group must be voted by Executive Committee, contingent upon:

- An attendance of about 15 members
- The group should be meeting on a regular basis in their own location (rent not required)
- The group must submit 2-3 names, for the designation of a leader, to the Church Planting and VLP Director
- These names are taken to Administration for a decision

Once the Mission Group is voted through Executive Committee, the group will be added to eAdventist and an ORGCODE is assigned.

Once the ORGCODE is assigned, the group can be added to the Sterling Volunteers platform, in the location drop down box.

Note: At this point it is required for the leaders of the Mission Group to go through the process of volunteer verification through the Adventist Screening Verification Program. (See Appendix G for guidelines.)

4. The CP/VLP Department reviews and proceeds with the organization ceremony accordingly.

2. Mission Group Goals

The primary goals for a mission group are community outreach and growth through engagement with the community. Ideally, a mission group should not be organized as the result of any internal church disputes.

3. Leadership

The Volunteer Lay Leader or Volunteer Lay Pastor of a mission group shall be recommended by the sponsoring church or group and appointed by the CP/VLP Department and Conference Administration. The mission group will be led by a Volunteer Lay Leader or Volunteer Lay Pastor under the supervision of the sponsoring church pastor and their board.

The sponsoring church board/group and the CP/VLP Department recommends a lay leader for consideration to enter the Volunteer Lay Pastor training which is conducted by the CP/VLP Department.

A Volunteer Lay Pastor (VLP) is one who has been recommended by the sponsoring church board and the CP/VLP Department. A VLP is an ordained elder willing to complete a twice-a-year training by Texas Conference. Through this training the VLP will be equipped for ministry in his or her local church. Recertification is contingent upon attending the annual trainings under the supervision of the director the CP/VLP Department and the Volunteer Lay Pastor's character, leadership, spirituality, loyalty to the church, theology, and demonstration of a cooperative spirit.

4. Long-term Rental Agreements

Mission groups should not enter into long-term rental agreements of any kind without consulting the sponsoring church and the CP/VLP Department.

5. Membership

Membership of those attending the mission group is held in the sponsoring church.

6. Objective

The mission group should be organized for taking the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church into new areas, for ministry, and solely for evangelistic reasons. Mission groups will not be started for the purpose of creating employment opportunities for pastors.

7. Tithes and Offerings

The mission group must designate from within its leaders an Assistant Treasurer to function under the Treasurer of the sponsoring church. All tithes and offerings from the Mission Group are to be sent to and receipted through the sponsoring church. Mission group funds will only be processed through the sponsoring church bank account. The treasurer of the sponsoring church keeps separate accounting for both tithe and offerings from the mission group to enable financial progress reports. The offering funds of the mission group should be available for its ministry needs.

If a mission group has no sponsoring church, the assistant treasurer is accountable to the CP/VLP Department Director of the Texas Conference. This action must be approved by the Texas Conference ADCOM.

8. Financial Responsibilities

The sponsoring church should collaborate financially with the mission group. While financial support will vary in each case, the specific commitments should be articulated in friendly agreement.

9. Administrative Responsibilities

The mission group should form its own ministry team (core team) and bring major decisions to the sponsor church board or CP/VLP committee for recommendations. The authority for the mission group resides in the sponsoring church board or CP/VLP in special situations.

Mission groups do not qualify on their own to obtain a loan for church property.



OFFICIAL COMPANY NAME:

1. 35 baptized members

☐ The company has a total of _____ members.

2. 70 to 80 percent of membership in average attendance

☐ **Average attendance of** _____.

3. \$35,000 in projected annual tithe

☐ **The group's projected tithe for the current year is \$**_____.

4. Local Church Finances

- The group's treasurer must complete the Texas Conference Treasurer Certification process and contact the Texas Conference Treasury Department (817-783-2223 ext. 2120) about the steps to set up the company's church account and accounting system.

☐ **The group has contacted the Texas Conference Treasury Department and received its account set up package.**

☐ **The Treasurer has finished the Certification Process.**

The group must establish a budget line item for Long-term Place of Ministry (Building Project) that receives a monthly allocation from the combined budget.

☐ **A budget line-item, Place of Ministry (Building Project) has been established**

5. The group must take their 1st NCD survey.

☐ **Date of NCD survey:** _____ **Average score:** _____

6. The group must develop a one-year Outreach & Discipleship Ministry Plan.

☐ **The group submitted its one-year plan**

7. Texas Conference has assigned a pastor/coach to the company.

☐ _____ **is their assigned coach.**



ORGANIZING A COMPANY POLICIES

The purpose of developing a mission group into a company is to take steps toward church status. Company status exists while the group works to demonstrate that it is capable of all of the many actions of a fully trusted church in the Conference sisterhood of churches. This is a time when the mission group proves that it can successfully function in spiritual leadership, ministry structures, finances, membership, strategically planned outreach, and faithfulness to biblical principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. The Process.

- a. The group leader and the group coach submit the application for company status of the mission group to the Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department.
- b. The Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department reviews and submits the application to the Executive Committee for approval.
- c. The Executive Committee grants authorization to organize a company. It is understood that a company has an acting board.

2. Conference Directory.

Authorized companies will be listed in the Conference directory.

3. Financial Responsibility.

Before authorization to organize into a company is granted, the congregation shall demonstrate ability to function on a sound financial basis as proven by its tithe record and the existence of a strong stewardship program. These shall testify to the ability of the congregation to meet all its financial obligations.

4. Membership.

The congregation seeking authorization to organize into a company shall have at least thirty-five baptized attending members. Once approval has been voted by the Conference Executive Committee for organizing the company, the members who join the organized company will hold membership in the organized company.

5. Leadership.

The company will be led by a Certified Volunteer Lay Pastor under the supervision of the district pastor.

6. School Subsidy.

The congregation shall be financially able to assume its pro rata subsidy to the school of the sponsoring church. This financial responsibility will begin at the time the congregation is organized into a company. It will continue in effect until the sponsoring church and company mutually agree to the dissolution of the arrangement.

7. Time Frame.

A mission group shall be organized for at least six months before it may apply to become a company. Company status will be granted for a minimum of six months with a quarterly review of growth.

8. Tithes and Offerings.

The congregation seeking authorization to organize into a company shall have a projected yearly tithe of \$35,000. The company's tithes and offerings should be sent to the Conference with the exception of the local expense offerings, which remain in the company.



OFFICIAL COMPANY NAME:

LOCATION:

1. 70 baptized members.

☐ **The company has a total of _____ members.**

2. 70 to 80 percent of membership in average attendance.

☐ **Conference records show an average attendance of _____.**

3. 10+ individuals have joined by baptism or profession of faith since the company was organized.

☐ **The conference records show there have been _____ baptisms/POF's since the company has been established.**

4. The company has submitted a One Year Outreach and Discipleship Ministry Plan and the company has held at least one public evangelistic series.

☐ **The company has submitted a one-year plan for outreach**

☐ **Dates of your company's recent public evangelistic event: _____.**

5. \$70,000 in projected annual tithe.

☐ **Conference records total tithe income of \$ _____ since _____ (month & year).
Average projected annual tithe: \$ _____.**

6. A strategy and timeline have both been established for fundraising and the eventual securing of a long-term place of worship.

☐ **A plan for fundraising and securing a long-term ministry facility has been voted by the church board.**

7. Treasurer has completed certification process with the Texas Conference treasury department.

☐ **Our treasurer was certified on _____**

8. Completion of the Natural Church Development survey with minimum average score of 50. (The Texas Conference Church Planting and Volunteer Lay Pastor Department will cover the cost for the survey.)

☐ **NCD survey taken on _____ Average score _____**

9. Voted commitment to support Adventist education. This can be done through a monthly subsidy for children to attend an Adventist church school, or through a constituent relationship (monthly financial subsidy and representation) with an Adventist church school.

☐ **A specific plan for assisting Adventist education was voted by the board on** _____.

10. Assigned pastor or pastor-coach if the church is lay led.

☐ **Pastor/VLP name** _____

☐ **Assigned Coach** _____





ORGANIZING A CHURCH POLICIES

Once a company has proven to be fully functional and ready to be organized as a church it may apply to join the sisterhood of churches of the Texas Conference. Reaching church status is a moment to be celebrated as it the accomplishment of much work and following a thorough process (from mission group to company). However, this is not the end in itself since our desire is for healthy churches to work missionally and intentionally to repeat the process of church planting.

1. The Process:

- a. The company leader/VLP/coach/or district pastor submits the application for church status of the company to the Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department.
- b. The Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department reviews and submits the application to the Executive Committee for approval.
- c. The Executive Committee grants authorization to organize a church.

2. Conference Directory

All organized churches will be listed in the Conference directory.

3. Financial Responsibility

Before authorization to organize into a church is granted, the congregation shall demonstrate ability to function on a sound financial basis as proven by its tithe record and the existence of a strong stewardship program. These shall testify to the ability of the congregation to meet all its financial obligations.

4. Membership

The congregation seeking authorization to organize into a church shall have at least seventy baptized attending members.

5. Leadership

The church will be led by a Certified Volunteer Lay Pastor or a district pastor.

6. School Subsidy

It is encouraged for new congregations to continue supporting Adventist education.

7. Time Frame

A company shall be organized for at least six months before it may apply to become a church.

8. Tithes and Offerings

The congregation seeking authorization to become a church shall have a projected yearly tithe of \$70,000. The church's tithes and offerings should be sent to the Conference with the exception of the local expense offerings, which remain in the church.

VOLUNTEER LAY PASTORS (VLP)

Introduction—In order to fulfill the North American Division (NAD) goal of planting new churches, additional personnel is needed and that can be partially met by using volunteers to assist regular pastoral teams. Additionally, due to the trend of assigning more churches to conference-employed pastors, volunteer lay pastors can perform a valuable service to the churches in the NAD.

A volunteer lay pastor is an individual who has not been professionally trained for ministry, has not worked as a licensed or ordained/commissioned minister, and is not a ministerial retiree. These guidelines are provided so that the church in the NAD recognizes the valuable service of VLPs and, at the same time, follow denominational policies, laws, and regulations.

Role and Function of a VLP

1. *Purpose*: The purpose of the VLP program is to provide pastoral assistance to a church or company under the oversight of a designated supervising pastor.
2. *Focus*: The specific function of a VLP depends on the needs of the congregation or group where the VLP serves. In consultation with the supervising pastor, the VLP needs to focus on areas such as preaching, conducting the Lord's Supper, visitation, evangelism, planning, and overseeing other church meetings and programs.
3. *Teachings and practices*: The VLP needs to know and follow the teachings and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This includes, but is not limited to, believing in and supporting the Fundamental Beliefs and following Seventh-day Adventist practices, such as faithful stewardship.
4. *Reports to supervising pastor*: The VLP reports to the supervising pastor. The supervising pastor will give leadership to the VLP by adhering to these guidelines, conference policies, and input from the CP/VLP Director who is the conference director of VLPs. Since the VLP is under the direction of the supervising pastor, the function and contact information for the supervising pastor needs to be communicated in bulletins, web listings, etc.
5. *Ordained elder*: The VLP must be an elected elder of the congregation (if it is a company or group, then of the sponsoring church). It is recommended that the VLP not serve as the head elder.
6. *Relationship to head elder and other elders*: The VLP functions under the direction of the supervising pastor and is an extension of the supervising pastor's ministry. In view of that relationship, the VLP needs to follow the policies and guidelines defining the relationship between pastor and elders. These policies and guidelines are stated in the *Church Manual* and amplified in the *Minister's Handbook and Elder's Handbook*.
7. *Limitations of role*: The VLP is not authorized to organize or disband churches, officiate (though may participate) in the ordination of elders, deacons, or deaconesses, or conduct counseling therapy. The VLP may participate in weddings, only as permitted by conference policy and applicable laws and regulations.

8. *Baptizing*: The VLP, who is also an ordained elder, may baptize as recommended by the supervising pastor and approved by the conference president, as stipulated in the *Church Manual*.
9. *Church Board*: As an elder, the VLP is a member of the Church Board. The pastor, according to the *Church Manual*, is the chair of the Board. The pastor has the authority to appoint an elder to serve as the chair and thus the supervising pastor may designate the VLP (who is an elder) to be board chair. The chairing of the Board by the VLP is at the sole discretion of the supervising pastor.
10. *Tithe, offerings, and reports*: The VLP will follow the denominational policies regarding the receiving of tithe and forwarding tithe and non-local offerings to the conference. The VLP will also work with the congregation to make certain reports, such as clerk and baptismal reports, are submitted to the conference.
11. *Not a Path to Ministry*: The VLP is a volunteer and recognizes that the VLP program is not a path to ministry. The path to ministry is outlined in NAD Working Policy and those wishing to enter full-time ministry need to follow it.
12. *No remuneration*: The VLP is not a conference employee and will not receive any compensation from the conference, congregation, or individuals for pastoral functions. The conference may arrange to reimburse the volunteer for travel and other approved expenses. Any such arrangements must be stated in the Condition of Volunteering form that will be signed by the conference and the VLP.
13. *Denominational policies*: The VLP needs to know appropriate policies and procedures (such as the *Church Manual*, *Minister's Handbook*, *Elder's Handbook*, and conference policies) and follow them.

Qualifications and Ethical conduct of a VLP

1. *Theological*: The VLP, under the leadership of the supervising pastor, will exercise great care to use resources that are in harmony with denominational teachings. This includes, but is not limited to, resources for sermons.
2. *Background check*: The VLP will undergo a background check as stipulated in the *NAD Working Policy*.
3. *Financial integrity*: The VLP will neither solicit nor accept financial gifts from members or visitors.

The Conference and the VLP—1. *Administrator of the plan*: The conference is the administrator of VLPs. It is the responsibility of the conference director to explain the VLP program to the volunteer, the supervising pastor, and the congregation.

2. *Conference CP/VLP Director*: The Conference CP/VLP Director is the conference coordinator for VLPs.
3. *Training and evaluation*: It is the responsibility of the CP/VLP Department to provide training and resources to the VLPs and supervising pastors. Initially the VLP shall receive a minimum of 20 hours training and thereafter at least 20 hours of training each year. Additionally, the conference CP/VLP Director, in consultation with the supervising pastor and congregation, shall conduct an annual evaluation of the VLP. If needed, the evaluation may be conducted more frequently.
4. *Length of appointment*: The conference executive committee appoints a VLP for a period of one year. With input from the supervising pastor and conference ministerial secretary, the appointment may be renewed. Either party may terminate the agreement with notice to the other. VLP will sign an initial VLP Condition for Volunteering form and a Reaffirmation form every year thereafter for continuation.
5. *Communicate with the congregation*: It is the responsibility of the conference, along with the supervising pastor, to explain the role of the VLP and make certain that the VLP is properly introduced to the congregation.

6. *Identification card*: The conference will provide a completed identification card for each VLP (template provided by NAD).

7. *Business card*: The conference will provide a business card template.

The Division and the VLP—1. *Provide guidelines*: The North American Division will provide and update, as needed, guidelines for the VLP program.

2. *Advisory Committee*: The Division will appoint a VLP advisory committee. The committee chair will be the division ministerial secretary; the secretary will be the division associate ministerial secretary who coordinates the VLP program.

3. *Resources*: The Division ministerial association will provide training resources, Condition of Volunteering form to be completed by the conference and the VLP, identification cards template for the conference to complete, and business card template.





What is Coaching?

Every church planter, whether a paid or volunteer lay pastor, must have a coach. The coach is neither a specialist telling the planter what to do (that's mentoring) or a Holy Spirit replacement. Instead, effective coaching provides accountability to the self-identified goals of the planter. The coach also provides emotional and spiritual support during the journey. Good coaching involves asking the right questions and not having the right answers.

Where Does the Planter find a Coach?

Ideally, the coach has been through the Texas Conference coach training program. If the sponsor church pastor has received coaching training, he or she become the coach. If this arrangement will not work or the sponsor church pastor has not received coaching training, then the Pastoral Ministries Department will assign a different coach. If the pastor/coach is someone besides the sponsor church pastor, the relationship between sponsoring pastor and church planter must continue.

What are the Specific Commitments?

1. **Monthly Conversation** between the pastor/coach* and church planter.

Purpose: Support the church planter, his or her goals (Mission Plan Template), challenges, etc.

Time: No more than 60 minutes per month. Communication through emails or telephone between monthly meetings is also assumed as needed.

Location: A restaurant is recommended in most cases. Up to \$20 per meal is provided.

Receipts must be submitted by the sponsoring pastor to the Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department.

Initiate: The pastor/coach initiates communication and arranges for the meeting.

2. **Monthly Visit** by the pastor/coach* to the mission group / company / church.

Purpose: Observation, training, advice, and support.

Time: Once a month.

Location: Some suggestions: leadership meeting, elders, small group, ministry event, worship services, etc.

Initiate: The pastor/ coach will determine when the visits will take place depending on his/her calendar of activities. The church planter will indicate the dates that need support from pastor/coach.

3. **Ongoing Training** opportunities for pastor/coach and the church planter.

Purpose: Specific training for church planters and coaches.

Time: Once a year. It might be a weekend, weekday, Sabbath afternoon, (per schedules).

Location: To be determined by the Texas Conference church planting ministry.

Initiate: The Church Planting & Volunteer Lay Pastor Department.

Note: The relationship between the pastor/coach and church planter may change after the mission group is approved as a company.

* If the sponsoring pastor is different than the pastor/coach, the three commitments still apply to the sponsoring pastor. In that case, a conference-trained coach will be provided whose sole responsibility is twelve phone coaching sessions (50 minutes max).

Name of sponsoring pastor

Name of church planter

Name of pastor/coach (if not sponsoring pastor)





Appendix C: Volunteer Lay Pastor Agreement

I, _____, desire to serve as a Volunteer Lay Pastor of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventist.

The services you will provide are strictly voluntary and are performed for civic, religious, charitable, and humanitarian reasons. You have chosen to volunteer as a Lay Pastor for your own personal purposes and pleasure. You expect no benefits or other consideration from the Conference in exchange for the services you provide as a volunteer.

You will receive no remuneration, wages, paid benefits, fees, or other consideration for your services as a volunteer Lay Pastor.

Only fully trained and certified Volunteer Lay Pastors are eligible for reimbursement of designated out-of-pocket expenses that are incurred while traveling for official ministry purposes. You must document any reimbursable expenses you incur on a Volunteer Lay Pastor Expense Reimbursement Request form, attach receipts, and submit the form to the Church Planting & VLP Department.

Your activities and services as a Lay Pastor are strictly voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue your volunteer services, you may do so. You will not suffer any penalty if you elect to stop volunteering your services as a Lay Pastor.

The services you provide as a volunteer will not displace other employees of the Conference.

Volunteer services do not constitute employment with the Conference. Similarly, volunteer services are not a precursor to or “try-out” for employment. If you decide to cease providing services as a volunteer, future employment opportunities with the Conference will not be adversely affected because you ceased volunteering as a Lay Pastor. If you become interested in employment with the Conference, you must fulfill the Conference’s standard hiring requirements and procedures.

I have read, understand and agree with the statements in this acknowledgment. I acknowledge that all the activities and services in which I will engage as a volunteer Lay Pastor are strictly voluntary. I have not been encouraged, forced or coerced in any form to volunteer my services as a Lay Pastor by anyone associated with the Conference. I do not expect to receive any remuneration or benefits for my voluntary activities or services.

Volunteer Lay Pastor Signature

Date

Appendix D: VLP Expense Reimbursement Form

Volunteer Lay Pastor Name: _____

Address: _____

Group/Company/Church Name: _____

Please review reimbursement guidelines before completing this form.

Mileage: (\$.44/Mile) Number of miles _____ X \$.44\$ = _____

Cell phone allowance: (not to exceed \$100/month) = _____

Per diem: (\$54/day; up to 10 days per month) days _____ x \$54 = _____

Ministry enrichment: (not to exceed \$100/month) = _____

Total Reimbursement Amount = _____

*I certify that the expenses reported on this form were necessarily
incurred for Volunteer Lay Pastor*

Signature _____ Date _____

VLP Reimbursement Guidelines: The Church Planting and VLP department will reimburse based on three levels.

Level 1: For congregations, mission groups, or companies composed by refugees, the VLP will receive up to \$400 per month in reimbursement.

Level 2: For congregations with 20K–60K in tithe, the VLP will receive up to \$800 per month in reimbursement.

Level 3: For congregations with 60K–120K in tithe, the VLP will receive up to \$1,000 per month in reimbursement.

For Office Use Only

Church Planting & VLP Director

Treasury Authorization



Appendix E: Mission Plan Template

1. VISION: What is the vision for the new church?

2. DISCIPLESHIP: Describe your discipleship process. What are the steps you will use to move someone who is far from God to being a fully devoted disciple of Jesus who makes disciples?

3. STRATEGIC PLAN & EVALUATION: Based on the composition of your community, describe how you will implement your vision and evaluate progress over the next twelve months? This strategic plan should be given to your coach as a springboard for ongoing conversation and support.



Appendix F: eAdventist Information for Mission Group

Mission Group Name (begin with city): _____

Mother Church: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Language: _____

Region: _____

Church Street Address: _____

Church Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ Website: _____

Service times – Sabbath school: _____ Church service: _____

Prayer Meeting (day/time): _____

Primary Officers (include name, full address, phone & email)

Pastor/Coach: _____

Leader Elder: _____

Treasurer: _____

Clerk: _____

Head Deacon: _____



Managing the Adventist Screening Verification Program for the Local School/Church

Why do we screen our volunteers?

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a moral and civil duty to protect the children and youth entrusted to its care. The local community also has an expectation that the church will provide a safe haven for children who participate in its ministries."---North American Division (NAD) Working Policy, FB 20.

"Church should be a safe place to bring our children." --Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, Edition 18, pages 168-169.

Included in this packet:

- Selection of a "Sterling Volunteers Local Coordinator" and Job Description
- Steps for Local Church/School Implementation
- First-time Registrants Guidelines
- Guidelines for Volunteers for the Church/School

*Please work with your local board in the selection of a
Sterling Volunteers Local Coordinator.*

If you have any questions or need technical support, contact:

Irene Lazarus - Volunteer Screening Coordinator
Office: 817.790.2255 ext. 2212
email: ilazarus@txsda.org



STERLING VOLUNTEER LOCAL COORDINATOR

JOB DESCRIPTION

SDA church working policy:

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a moral and civil duty to protect the children and youth entrusted to its care. The local community also has an expectation that the church will provide a safe haven for children who participate in its ministries."

Need for a local STERLING VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR (SV) coordinator:

This is a church board/school appointed position.

- To actively keep adults responsible for children in the local church to be aware of proper behavior while working with them.
- To keep those working with children in currently "Eligible" status.
- To be attentive to all events/situations where approved adults are needed or processed to that description.
- To keep record of adults with "Eligible" status and when that expires, every three years, so that new applications/reminders to renew with SV digital system.
- To be aware of every area in the church/school life where "Eligible" adults are required.
- To be available and organized to handle large groups of adults at events to get criminal background clearance to work with children and get this done in a timely manner BEFORE the event happens.
- To understand how the process of approval works and can answer basic questions when needed.
- To understand and instruct applicants on using the SV digital system.
- To oversee the local environment in close up to ensure safety of children.
- To be the liaison between the local church and TXC Volunteer Screening Coordinator.
- To notify TXC of dates of upcoming events where adults will need screening.
- To provide needed information to local church Pastor.
- To understand the nature, extent, limits of confidentiality.

Everyone involved with children who are minors must meet all church and legal standards and requirements." SDA Church Manual, Edition 18(2010) pp168-9.



Minimum qualifications of local SV coordinator candidate:

- Must have a serious interest/passion for the safety and protection of children and those adults who work with them.
- Must correctly understand and model the behavior as outlined in "Guidelines for Volunteers and Caregivers", which is found in the SV system.
- Be available for all local church/school events involving children to be sure all adults are "Eligible". (preferred but not mandatory)
- Must be a trained and "Eligible" adult.
- Must have computer access.
- Basic computer skills of accessing the internet, email, sending faxes/scans, doing simple spreadsheets (optional)

Guidelines for Volunteers and Caregivers

It is found on the conference website: <http://texasadventist.org/> under Employees/Volunteer Ministries and the Sterling Volunteers Website.

If you have any questions regarding this job description, please call Irene Lazarus, Texas Conference of Seventh Day Adventists Volunteer Screening Coordinator, at 817-790-2255 ext. 2205, Monday to Thursday.

Volunteer Pledge:

"Because I want the best possible environment for our children and youth ministries, it is important that we who work with the children and youth have guidelines for conduct to protect both ourselves and those under our care. As a ministry volunteer, I want parents and all others to feel comfortable, safe and confident with me." —Adventist Risk Management



Local Church Implementation Process

Adventist Verification Program

Step 1 – Local board to organize and appoint the Volunteer Service/Safety Committee to give oversight to the volunteer screening process.

Step 2 – Review with the Volunteer Service/Safety Committee the recommended Child Protection Plan document and modify in accordance with local needs and guidelines.

Step 3 – Select the Sterling Volunteers program administrator, Local Volunteer Screening Coordinator, who will complete the online training and screening and oversee the online process for volunteers.

Step 4 – Present the Adventist Verification Program to the church board for approval and implementation.

Step 5 – Announce to the church the adoption of the new Adventist Verification Program in providing a safe place for children with a proactive approach in preventing child abuse.

Step 6 – Conduct an Adventist Verification Program Orientation Session for all Ministry Volunteers, explaining the plan and outlining the Code of Conduct that will be expected of all adults who work with children and youth.

Step 7 – Explain the Sterling Volunteers online registration process and training course with background screening requirements. Require all current church volunteers to participate in the Sterling Volunteers program. Encourage all ministry leaders to set the example by being the first to register and complete the Sterling Volunteers training and background check for the Adventist Verification program.

Step 8 – Monitor the results of the implementation of the Adventist Verification Program by reviewing the Sterling Volunteers compliance reports and share the compliance data with your ministry leaders, lay pastor, and church board.

Step 9 – Ensure that your church continues to practice steps in proactively providing a safe place where children are valued and supported with a Christ-centered ministry.



Seventh-day Adventist® Church

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

FIRST-TIME REGISTRANT

Step 1: Go to <https://www.nadadventist.org/asv> and click on the **FIRST-TIME REGISTRANT BUTTON**

Step 2: Select the state where your program is located and then select the conference

Step 3: Create a user ID and password you can easily remember. It's recommended to use your email address for your user name.

Sterling Volunteers

Please create a user id and password that you will use to access your account

Common names like Mary and John are not good choices as they are most likely already in use.
Common abbreviations like "jennish" and "injunes" are also likely to already be in use.
We suggest using your full name (without spaces) or email address as they are more likely to be unique.

Create a User ID:

Create a Password:

Your user id is case sensitive. We recommend that you use all lower case letters and avoid spaces and punctuation. Email addresses are ok. Your user id must be at least 4 characters long.
Your password must be at least 8 characters long.

[Important note about selecting passwords](#)

Already have an account?

[Click here](#)

[Registro en español](#)

Step 4: Please provide the information requested on the screen. (Note: Do not click the back button or your registration will be lost).

Step 5: Select your primary location where you work or volunteer and click continue. If you work or volunteer in another location, please select 'Yes' and then select the location.

Sterling Volunteers

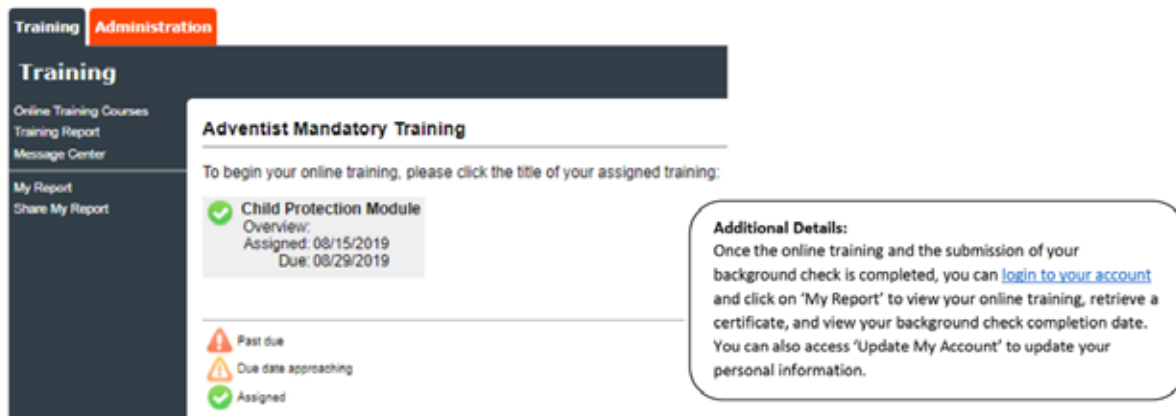
Please select the primary location where you work or volunteer.

Location:

If you are associated with multiple locations, please choose the primary (work) location first.
Then click the continue button to select additional locations such as those where you volunteer

Step 6: Select your multiple role(s) within the organization (multiple roles may be selected).

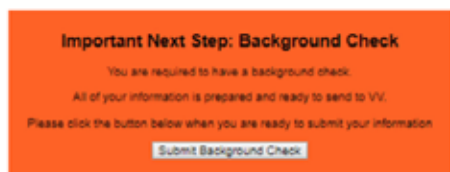
Step 7: Click on the green circle to begin the online training. Upon completion, the last screen will allow you to print a certificate.



The screenshot shows a web interface with a sidebar on the left containing links: Training, Administration, Online Training Courses, Training Report, Message Center, My Report, and Share My Report. The main content area is titled 'Adventist Mandatory Training'. It includes a message: 'To begin your online training, please click the title of your assigned training:'. Below this is a green checkmark icon next to 'Child Protection Module Overview' with assigned and due dates of 08/15/2019 and 08/29/2019 respectively. There are also status indicators: 'Past due' (red exclamation mark), 'Due date approaching' (orange exclamation mark), and 'Assigned' (green checkmark). A callout box on the right titled 'Additional Details:' explains that after completing the online training and background check, users can log in to their account to view training, retrieve a certificate, and update their personal information.

Step 8: Please read the instructions regarding the details of the online training and then proceed. Select 'Click Here' to begin the online training (Note: Training can take up to one hour).

Step 9: Upon completion of your online training, you will be instructed to complete your background check. Please complete the steps within the background check process.



The screenshot shows an orange box with the text: 'Important Next Step: Background Check. You are required to have a background check. All of your information is prepared and ready to send to VIV. Please click the button below when you are ready to submit your information.' Below the text is a button labeled 'Submit Background Check'.

Step 10: From here, you should be automatically routed to a page with the consent form to be read and some information to be filled out, which will look like this: (depending on the background check package associated with your role).



The screenshot shows a consent form titled 'Important Next Step: Background Check'. It includes a section for 'Your background check will include:' with a list of items. Below this is a section for 'I acknowledge receipt of the preceding Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's "A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE FAIR CREDIT REPORTING ACT" and "Security Freeze Notice"'. The form also includes a section for 'I have read the Disclosure Regarding the Employment and/or Volunteer/Service Position Background Report provided by Sterling Volunteers and this Authorization to Obtain Employment and/or Volunteer/Service Position Background Report. By my signature below, I hereby consent to the preparation by Sterling Volunteers, a collection reporting agency located at 101 South College Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80526, U.S. www.sterlingvolunteers.com, of background reports regarding me and the release of such reports to any organization I authorize and its designated representatives, to assist the organization in making an employment and/or volunteer/service position decision, including me at any time after receipt of this authorization and throughout the employment and/or volunteer/service position, to the extent permitted by law. To this end, I hereby authorize, without reservation, any state or federal law enforcement agency or court, educational institution, motor vehicle record agency, credit bureau or other information service bureau or data repository, to furnish any and all information regarding me to Sterling Volunteers and/or the organization itself, and authorize Sterling Volunteers to provide such information to the organization. I agree that a facsimile ("fax"), electronic or photographic copy of this Authorization shall be as valid as the original (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 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STERLING VOLUNTEERS GUIDELINES

VOLUNTEERS

100% COMPLIANCE

All employees and volunteers must complete *The Adventist Verification Program* and submit to a background check utilizing the Sterling Volunteers website.

ALL VOLUNTEERS, whether they volunteer one time or many times per year as a leader or team member, must complete his/her training and background check prior to volunteer duty.

"Volunteer" includes, *but not confined to the following:*

CHURCHES:

Lay Pastors

Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, Assistants and Treasurers

All ministry leaders and team members (including Praise Team, Sound Booth, Musicians)

Club Ministries Directors: Master Guides, Pathfinders, Adventurers

Adult, Youth, Teen, New Beginner, Sabbath School Teachers, Assistants and Helpers

Children's Division – Sabbath Teachers, Assistants and ALL helpers

Special Event Staff and Assistants (Church sponsored, Outreach, Social and Recreational Events)

Greeters, Welcome Reception Staff and Assistants

Cleaning Staff

Landscape and Building Maintenance (paid staff or volunteers)

Volunteer Guidelines, page 2

Each entity should prepare a list of known individuals who will be on campus and know whether or not they are compliant with SV policy. Early completion of the requirements will help to avoid compliance issues leading up to school activities. If a person does not comply, he/she is not allowed at any time on campus outside of his/her vehicle.

POLICY: Each employee and volunteer are required to re-train and re-screen every three years.

The School Board and Church should determine who the school's point of contact should be. The **Local Volunteer Screening Coordinator** should be voted through the local School Board Committee. The Principal or Pastor should notify, via email, the Texas Conference Volunteer Screening Coordinator as to the name, phone and email, of the Local VSC so that he/she can be assigned view only rights to the SV database. The Local VSC will have access to the names and dates of individuals within his/her assigned organization. **The Local VSC will not have access to actual background check results.**

Statement on Adventist Verification Program Training and Background Checks-For Club Ministries:

The Texas Conference requires all individuals, age 18+, regularly attending club ministry events, to complete the *Child Protection* training and submit to a background check through the Sterling Volunteers website. A one-time attendee may not be required to complete the training and background check. Those who are regularly attending club ministry events must train and screen.

Adults who are allowed to participate in club ministry as a volunteer, parent or visitor will spend consistent intervals of time with children. They are likely to have significant interaction with children because they are physically present in lodging and other facilities and can see, hear, direct, and assess the activities of the child/children as a trusted authority.

Authorization to attend an overnight event will require completion of the *Child Protection* training and receipt of the background check results with an "eligible" status. Please allow 72+ hours for background check processing. Each attendee must be pre-authorized to attend club events, including day events and/or overnight campouts with their name listed on the club ministry master list.

If a volunteer's background check results are determined to be **non-eligible for duty**, the Pastor or School Principal will be notified directly. The volunteer will also have access to the background check results through his/her nadadventist.org/asv login.

Individuals who are visiting from other countries must be pre-authorized for an international background check and will be responsible for all fees associated with their background check which is currently estimated around \$300. Individuals who are new to the U.S./living in the U.S. must wait 12 months to be a part of volunteer ministry and then submit to a background check.

Training should take about 45 minutes.

Screening Results should be available within 48-72 hours.

Costs associated with Training and Screening:

Background Check: \$13 + Child Protection Training: \$1

The cost associated with the training and screening will be billed back to each entity.

The primary location selected by the registrant is the information used for billing.

Technical Support issues associated with training and background check submission should be resolved by calling:

Sterling Volunteers
Customer Service - 855-326-1860, Option 3



Appendix H: Lay Pastor Annual Reaffirmation of Volunteer Status

I, _____ desire to continue to serve as a volunteer Lay Pastor of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The services you have provided, and will continue to provide, are strictly voluntary and are performed for civic, religious, charitable, and humanitarian reasons. You have chosen to volunteer as a Lay Pastor for your own personal purposes and pleasure. You expect no benefits or other consideration from the Conference in exchange for the services you provide as a volunteer.

You will not receive remuneration, wages, paid benefits, fees, or other consideration for your services as a volunteer Lay Pastor.

Fully trained and certified Volunteer Lay Pastors are eligible for reimbursement of designated out-of-pocket expenses, that are incurred, including transportation mileage (at the rate established for VLPs), Career Enrichment, Cellphone bill and up to 10 per/diem per month. You must document any reimbursable expenses you incur on a Volunteer Lay Pastor Expense Reimbursement Request form, attach receipts, and submit the form to the Church Planting & VLP Department.

Your activities and services as a Lay Pastor are strictly voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue your volunteer services, you may do so. You will not suffer any penalty if you elect to stop volunteering your services as a Lay Pastor.

Volunteer services do not constitute employment with the Conference. Similarly, volunteer services are not a precursor to or “try-out” for employment. If you decide to cease providing services as a volunteer, future employment opportunities with the Conference will not adversely affected because you ceased volunteering as a Lay Pastor. If you become interested in employment with the Conference, you must fulfill the Conference’s standard hiring requirements and procedures.

I have read, understand and agree with the statements in this reaffirmation. I acknowledge that all the activities and services in which I have engaged, and will engage, as a volunteer Lay Pastor are strictly voluntary. I have not been encouraged, forced or coerced to volunteer my services as a Lay Pastor by anyone associated with the Conference. I do not expect to receive any remuneration or benefits for my voluntary activities or services.

Volunteer Lay Pastor Signature

Date



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TEXAS CONFERENCE

Appendix I: Volunteer Lay Pastor Information

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Date of birth: _____

Name of spouse: _____

Date when the VLP was ordained as an elder: _____

Place where the VLP was first ordained as an elder: _____

What church is your membership held at:

Church's name where the VLP will be serving at:



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Appendix J: Sample VLP Identification Card

Front



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Texas Conference

TX
Volunteer Lay Pastor

VLP-ID John Smith

Back

This is to verify that John Smith is a certified Volunteer Lay Pastor of the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and is authorized to perform the said duties commencing January 1, 2020 and ending January 1, 2021.

President

Secretary

VLP Director



*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under
your care, watching over them...*
- 1 Peter 5:2





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VOLUNTEER LAY PASTORS