



ORGANIZING AN OFFICIAL CHURCH

The Working Policies of the Southern New England Conference (SNEC) (pp. 104-105) and the Church Manual (pp. 37-43) serve as localized applications of the principles outlined in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual and the Working Policies of both the Southern New England Conference and the North American Division. These documents are designed to guide the practices of church employees and volunteers, thereby supporting the ministry of the local Seventh-day Adventist congregations within the territory of the SNEC.

When an organized company experiences healthy growth due to successfully fulfilling its objectives within a community, it is encouraged to submit a formal application for interim approval to be organized as a church. This step can facilitate further development and enhance its ability to serve the community effectively.

The company aims to position itself as a thriving entity within the Seventh-day Adventist community, emphasizing growth in numerical, spiritual, and relational dimensions. It is committed to evolving into a Church within a reasonable timeframe by actively pursuing the expanded objectives set forth in the Guidelines for the Working Policies of the Southern New England Conference (pages 104-105) and the Church Manual (pages 37-43). This strategic approach not only reinforces community engagement but also fosters a supportive environment for collective development and spiritual enrichment.

- 1. Application.** The application form, available through the office of the Secretariat for Administration or the Conference website must be completed by the board of the sponsoring church and the company, reviewed by the Office of Pastoral Ministries, Vice President of Mission Development, Secretariat, and approved by the Administrative Committee for recommendation to the Conference Executive Committee.
- 2. Conflict.** For a company to successfully achieve organization, it is essential to ensure that it is free from internal disputes and adverse church growth conditions.
- 3. Authorization.** Only the SNEC Conference Executive Committee may grant authorization to organize as a church.
- 4. Conference Directory.** Authorized churches will be featured in the SNEC Conference Directory, providing attendees with valuable resources and connections.

5. **Financial Responsibility.** To gain authorization for organizing as a company, a congregation must demonstrate its capability to operate on a robust financial foundation. This is evidenced by a robust tithe record and a consistent track record of timely payment of bills and financial commitments. Additionally, before applying to the organization, the company must show it has achieved at least \$75,000 in total tithe receipts over the 12 months leading up to the application. This commitment to financial responsibility reflects a dedicated and thriving community, paving the way for growth and stability.

6. **Membership.** The congregation is seeking authorization to establish itself as an organized church. To meet this requirement, it must comprise at least sixty-five (65) baptized members who actively attend Seventh-day Adventist services. Furthermore, it is essential that no less than one-quarter of the overall membership consists of newly baptized individuals from within the target community. Concurrently, the names and addresses of these members will be submitted with the application for church status, ensuring a comprehensive and organized process.

7. **Plan for Church Facility.** It is essential to recognize the challenges stemming from the congregation's size and the financial limitations of a company. Therefore, a strategic plan for acquiring property or a building to establish a permanent location for worship and ministry is essential. This plan should include realistic future growth projections. Continued reliance on the sponsoring church's facilities or temporary accommodations, without a long-term strategy for permanent housing, is discouraged. Before a company can be considered for church organizations, a comprehensive plan for permanent housing must be submitted to the Administrative Committee for review.

8. **Pastoral Assistance.** The responsibility for assigning pastoral coverage within a the organized church rests with the Conference. The Conference undertakes this assignment while giving due consideration to the conference budget, as well as various other factors that affect the alignment of pastoral assignments within the district.

9. **School Subsidy.** If applicable, the newly organized congregation must have the financial capacity to assume its proportional share of the subsidy for the school linked to its sponsoring church. This obligation begins upon the congregation's formal establishment as a company and continues until both the sponsoring church and the company agree to dissolve the arrangement.

10. **Approval Process.** Authorization to establish a church shall be granted upon the recommendation of the board of a sponsoring church, subsequent approval by the Administrative Committee and a vote conducted by the Conference Executive Committee. In certain instances, the conference itself may act as the sponsoring organization as it seeks to initiate new churches in alignment with its KPI's strategic growth plan for the conference.

11. Time Frame. A company must be organized for at least one to two years and meet all requirements before it can apply to become a church. A newly organized church is expected to grow and work towards becoming a healthy, laity-driven, financially strong, well-organized, and spiritually solid congregation. If the new church does not establish a new church plant within five years of its organization, despite support from its members, the sponsoring church, and the Conference, disbandment, or revocation of its church status may be considered.

12. Tithes and Offerings. Per established policy, it is required that a company's tithes and offerings be submitted to the designated Sponsor Church or Southern New England Conference monthly. No mission group or church plant will be permitted to initiate the process of establishing itself as an official organization if it is in arrears on financial tithe remittances.

13. Organizing an Official Church

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Criteria for an organized company to go from company to a church, a company must:
Have a membership of 55 members in regular attendance and to have been organized as a company for a minimum of 12 months.

- Demonstrate baptismal growth by winning souls to Christ in the past 12 months.
- Demonstrate potential leadership in important areas of church.
- Have a steady tithe increase over the past 12 months.
- Submit a letter of request to the conference to become a church with a proposal similar to that described in Section 3 under "Organizing into an official group."
- Send names and addresses of charter members for Executive Committee approval.
- Send names of church officers for Executive Committee approval.
- All this information must be received in time for the conference executive committee to approve the organization.