

Start or revitalize a ministry in your church

QUICK START GUIDE



CHURCH CLERK



Quick Start Guide for the Church Clerk

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Introduction

As members of the body of Christ, we are called to use the talents God has given us. Your church nominating committee has spent hours prayerfully considering positions and the people God can best work through to meet the needs of those jobs.

You have been asked to fill the role of the church clerk. Thank you for accepting this ministry position. Even though much of your work takes place behind the scenes, you will be an important part of your church's administrative team. This Quick Start Guide will provide you with a basic outline of your duties as church clerk. If you have other questions, feel free to seek guidance from your pastor or your local conference clerk. Faithful fulfillment of your duties will help your church function at its most efficient.

The first thing you should do is familiarize yourself with the current edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. If you do not have a copy, you can obtain it through your local Adventist Book Center, AdventSource, or download a digital copy (free) from www.adventist.org/resources/church-manual/.

Take time to learn how the local church operates. As church clerk, you should pay particular attention to the chapter on church membership and the sections on the church board and business meetings.

Duties of the Church Clerk

The basic duties of the church clerk are similar in all Seventh-day Adventist churches, although there may be minor differences between congregations. Your duties will typically include the following:

- Acting as secretary at all church board and business meetings
- Recording church membership activity
- Keeping church records
- Compiling a list of committees
- Producing the church directory
- Overseeing the church bulletin
- Communicating with members

Secretary of Board and Business Meetings

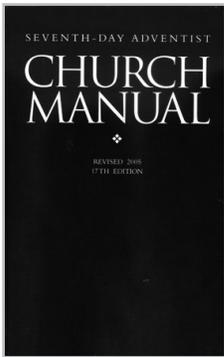
As the church clerk, one of your primary responsibilities will be to serve as the recording secretary for all church board and church business meetings. You will record, distribute, and keep copies of the official minutes of these meetings. In addition, you will need to attach complete copies of any financial statements, documents, and reports that are a part of the meeting. For instance, if your church is considering a major roofing project, a committee would be asked to gather several estimates of the cost for the project, and you would need



to include copies of these quotes with the minutes of the meeting. At each board or business meeting, the church treasurer will provide a financial statement. You should also include these with the minutes.

RESOURCE

Church Manual



The Church Manual describes the operations and functions of local churches and expresses the Adventist church's understanding of Christian life and church governance and discipline. The content of each chapter is of worldwide value and is applicable to every church organization, congregation, and member.
Product #520382
Available at AdventSource.org or 402.486.8800.

It is important that all minutes are complete and accurate. A typical church clerk's report for a board meeting should include the following items:

- List of board members present.
- List of board members absent.
- Who provided the devotional thought and a summary of the message.
- Motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting. It is optional to include who makes the motion, who moves it, and who seconds the motion.
- Any motions that are passed or rejected.
- Treasurer's report. You may include any discussion or questions raised in your notes. Be sure to keep a copy to attach to the minutes. There must be a motion to either accept or reject the report. It must be moved and seconded. The motion must be voted on and the final decision of whether it passes or not should be recorded.
- Old business. This often comes from the minutes of the previous church board meetings or from other earlier meetings. If there is old business, you will want to list it in an orderly manner for ease of presentation.
- New business. This should not be discussed until all old business is taken care of or tabled for further action. New business can be discussed and either voted on at that time or if more research and information are necessary, it can be tabled until a later date. It is a good idea for the church clerk to receive any new business items several days in advance of the meeting so they can be placed on the agenda in a timely manner.
- As each item is brought to the group, it must either be voted on or tabled until a later date. You will need to record for each item whether a motion is made, and the final decision on the item.



Responsibilities After the Meeting

Following a board meeting, you will need to organize your notes into officially typed minutes. You will sign the notes as the official recording secretary. Copies of the minutes should be sent to all members of the church board by email or through the postal service.

Preparing for a Board or Church Business Meeting

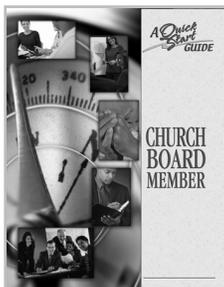
To prepare for a board or church business meeting, it is your responsibility to make sure the upcoming meeting is announced in church. Typically this should be placed in the bulletin two Sabbaths prior to the meeting. It should also be announced verbally the Sabbath before the scheduled meeting date.

As the church clerk it is your responsibility to go through the minutes of previous meetings to see if there is old business that needs to be discussed and if there are any votes that need to be made.

You will also need to prepare an agenda listing all old and new business. Make enough copies for each person attending the meeting. These can either be delivered to the board members prior to the meeting or they can be distributed at the beginning of the meeting. You should also bring minutes of previous church board and church business meetings with you in case someone forgets their copies. You may also need these to answer any questions that may arise during the meeting.

It is also helpful to have extra paper and pens to distribute during meetings, in case a written vote needs to be taken.

Quick Start Guide for Church Board Members



The church board is a vital committee in every Adventist church. Board members are legally and morally responsible for all activities of the congregation. Learn about your role as a church board member. This is a must-read for all new church board members! Prepared by the North American Division (AdventSource) Product #416220

RESOURCE



Church Business Meeting Minutes

The church business meeting minutes are a written record of the church at work. Your note-taking will provide the historical record of what the church has voted. It is important that all minutes are complete and accurate.

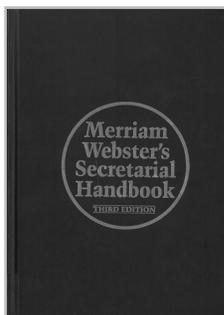
A typical church clerk's report for a church business meeting should include the following items:

- List of church members present
- List of any special guests present
- Record of who provided the devotional thought and a summary of the message
- Motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting
- Treasurer's report
- Old business
- New business

It is a good idea for the church clerk to receive any new business items for the agenda several days in advance of the meeting, in order for the items to be placed on the agenda in a timely manner.

RESOURCE

Merriam Webster's Secretarial Handbook



This authoritative reference source for today's office professional covers all aspects of office management. It outlines office management duties and includes guidelines for taking minutes at meetings and maintaining effective communication.

By Anna L. Eckersley-Johnson
Available at Amazon.com



Tips on Note-taking

Recording accurate notes is an important task for the church clerk. You can either type or handwrite your notes. If you choose writing, you will probably want to have a notebook that you use specifically for church business. Keep it in a secure place and bring it to each board and business meeting. If there comes a time when you no longer hold the position of church clerk, you should turn all electronic files, notebooks and copies of minutes, etc. over to the church. These records will need to be kept in a secure place at the church. They are not the private property of any one individual.

In your notes try to comprehensively describe the action taken. Make sure you have recorded any motions and amendments to motions exactly as stated. Typically after a motion is made and discussion is held, the clerk reads the motion back to the group. At this time, it is best to ask the person making the motion if you have recorded it correctly.

With each motion you will need to record whether the action was moved and seconded as well as voted on. You should also notate if the motion passed or was rejected.

Tips for Easier Note-taking

- During church board meetings, sit near the chairperson. Many of the comments will be directed to him or her. This will help keep your attention focused on what is happening during the meeting. During church business meetings, sit near the front. You'll be able to hear all the comments and see anything projected for the group to see. By sitting close to the action you'll be less distracted and able to follow the discussion more easily.
- Use the meeting agenda as an outline for your notes. This will help keep your notes orderly and clear for later transcription.
- When taking notes for anything other than motions, try to record the key themes of the discussion rather than verbatim comments. This will give you the general idea of the discussion without missing key points in your notes.
- If you are taking notes by hand rather than typing, use consistent abbreviations or a type of shorthand that works for you. You'll find that you will be able to take notes more quickly and easily by doing this. Since you will be typing these notes into official minutes, it won't matter if others can understand your shorthand. Just make sure you can understand it.
- As you are taking notes during the meeting, try to mark things that need follow-up or further discussion. For instance, if a committee needs to obtain a quote for repairs, you might notate this with a question mark or dollar sign. If there is something you need to remind the pastor about, draw an open circle next to it that you can check off later. Use a square in the same way to signify reminders to others.
- Give lots of attention to listening. If you are listening closely, it will enable you to understand the concept of the discussion. This will make your notes more accurate.
- Be concise in your note-taking. If you are writing long sentences, you will not be paying close attention to the discussion. Again, this is why you should record the general thought of the discussion, not verbatim comments.



- A good method for note-taking by hand is the Cornell Method. This is a proven method that can help you condense and organize your notes. Make a rule down one side of your paper that leaves a 2.5 inch margin on the left side of the paper. This will leave a six-inch area on the right for taking notes. During the meeting, you can fill the 2.5 inch margin area with the main topics of discussion. When the meeting moves on to a new topic of discussion, skip a few lines and begin your next note.

Responsibilities After the Business Meeting

Following a church business meeting, organize your notes into typed minutes. Sign the notes as the official recording secretary. Remember to give a copy to your pastor. You will also need to bring the typed minutes to the next board meeting. At that time you should remind the board members of any actions that were voted before that may need further work by the board.

Church Membership Records

Another important part of the work of the church clerk is maintaining the church membership records. You will need to make sure memberships transfers, baptism records, deaths, and current contact information is kept up-to-date and readily available. (For information on this topic, read the chapter titled “Church Membership” in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*.)

eAdventist.net is the official source for membership records for your church and there are two methods of maintaining them – the online method where you enter the information in eAdventist and the offline method where your conference clerks enters the information in eAdventist on your behalf.

Transfers Using eAdventist

eAdventist.net allows church clerks to handle membership information and transfers online. The best way to become familiar with eAdventist is to complete the Clerk Training exercises. The first exercise set covers most of the changes you need to make (e.g. adding a person, recording a baptism, updating address/phone/email, etc.) and the second set covers transfers. Ask your conference clerk for a demo account so you can do the exercises on a copy of your membership data, rather than on your live data.

If you are using eAdventist for your membership recordkeeping and transfers, the steps of board recommendation and voting by the church body follow the process outlined in the *Church Manual*. However, eAdventist allows you to make and receive the requests for transfer electronically. To learn more about eAdventist, visit <https://help.eAdventist.net> – the knowledge base for local church clerks who are responsible for church membership, transfers, and everything that goes with effective membership management.



Offline Method for Membership Transfers Into Your Congregation

1. Write or email your conference clerk, including the prospective member's name, birth date (optional, but valuable), and former church. Your conference clerk will enter a transfer request on eAdventist.
2. When your conference clerks receives a response from the other church, they will notify you by mail or email. At this point, the name and request for transfer to your church must be taken to your local church board for a vote to recommend the transfer of membership to the church body.
3. Once the board has made their recommendation, the name(s) of those whose membership will be transferred should be read for two consecutive Sabbaths. These are called the first and second readings of membership transfer. On the Sabbath of the second reading, the members present will take a vote. At that time the new members should be welcomed into the fellowship of your local church body.
4. After the vote of the church is taken, you will need to notify your conference clerk – who will enter the vote in eAdventist, which will notify the clerk of the former church that the membership transfer has been completed

Offline Method for Membership Transfers Out of Your Congregation

When members transfer out of your congregation, you will receive a request for membership transfer from another church's clerk – via your conference clerk.

Once you have received a request for transfer of membership, you will need to take the following steps:

1. Present the request for transfer of membership out of your congregation to the church board.
2. After the board has voted to recommend it to the church body, two readings of the names of those requesting transfer of membership should be made to the church body on two consecutive Sabbaths. A vote should be taken following the second reading.
3. After the vote for transfer has been held, you must notify your conference clerk in a timely manner of the action that was taken. Your conference clerk will enter the vote in eAdventist, which will notify the church clerk in the receiving church.
4. After the vote of the receiving church is taken, you will receive a letter of confirmation from your conference clerk that the membership transfer has been completed.



Membership Records

It is important to understand that no one person can add or delete names from church membership roles. The church clerk, pastor, and church board do not have this authority. Names on membership roles can only be added or deleted by vote of the church body at large. An individual may request that their name be dropped from church membership, but even in this instance the church body must vote on such an action.

Membership of Newly Baptized Members

It is a joyous occasion when a person accepts Christ as their personal Savior and requests baptism as a means of showing their commitment to Jesus. In the Seventh-day Adventist church, when a person is baptized, they are then accepted for membership into the local church congregation.

At the time of baptism, a certificate of baptism is presented. These certificates are available through your local conference office or Adventist Book Center. Some conferences supply certificates to the pastors, so check with your pastor to see if the church already has certificates before purchasing more.

Give the certificate to the pastor for presentation to the baptismal candidate and relay the new church member's name and contact information to the conference. The conference will place them on the mailing list for the union paper and other mailings from the conference.

Welcoming a new member should be a time of celebration with a memorable ceremony. As church clerk, you should work with the deacon/deaconess committee to plan the celebration of this important spiritual event.

Do Not Let Members Slip Through the Cracks

Another duty of the church clerk is to work closely with the Sabbath school teachers to monitor the attendance of members. If you notice a pattern of someone missing in attendance on a regular basis, contact that person and let him or her know you have missed his or her presence.

If new people begin attending your church and you learn they are already baptized members, but their membership is with another congregation, encourage them to transfer their membership. This allows them to participate more fully by being able to hold church office and vote at local church business meetings.

Church Records

The church clerk is the keeper of all church records, minutes of business meetings and board meetings, the church officer list and the list, of baptized members. It is important that each of the records is current and readily available.



When a new pastor arrives at your church, they can ask the conference clerk for an eAdventist account. If the pastor does not use eAdventist, you should provide copies of the current membership list and church officer list, along with addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and other pertinent information.

There will be times when the church board will call upon you to provide minutes from previous meetings for clarification or additional information. Keeping your records in an orderly manner will facilitate the work of the board and pastor. As church clerk, you are the oil that keeps the machine running smoothly.

Lists of Church Committees

You also need to keep lists of church committees. eAdventist makes this easy to do. Any committee that is appointed should be listed with members who are a part of the committee. Be sure to include an outline of the work the committee is being asked to accomplish.

Church Directory

Fellowship among members is vital. A current church directory is one way to facilitate communication between church members. There are several options for church directories. They can be as simple as a photocopied list of members' names and their contact information, or your church may choose to work with an outside company to produce a photo directory. Whichever option you choose, eAdventist makes it easy to create a current directory at any time.

Whichever option you choose, make sure to include information such as the names of members, non-member spouses, and unbaptized children. Also include home addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, and, if your church chooses, birthdays and anniversaries.

It is important to note that a church directory is not an official membership list. Its purpose is to encourage friendship and fellowship in the congregation.

Church Bulletin

If your church does not have a secretary, you may be responsible for the weekly church bulletin. This can also be delegated to another person, depending on your congregation.

Summary

As the church clerk, your work includes note-taking, record keeping, and information dissemination. By organizing your duties and keeping accurate records, you will contribute an important work to the functioning of both your local church and your local conference. Thank you again for your willingness to serve in this vital capacity.



Church Clerk Ministry Description

Introduction

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. It is “his body, the fullness of him who filleth everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22).

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

You experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world within your church; the world experiences the living presence of Jesus Christ as it witnesses your 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 and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation. Thus the church is a servant body. Created for service, it serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves 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” (Ephesians 2:10).

Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. The clerk, like every other church officer, is a ministering servant of God. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Duties of the Church Clerk

Although the role varies somewhat from church to church, the ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a church clerk involves the following:

- 1. Acting as a secretary at all church board and business meetings.** Although a church secretary is sometimes delegated this responsibility, it is the duty of the clerk to see that this task is performed and properly entered in the church records. The official copy of the minutes should include complete copies of all reports, documents, and financial statements. It is a public record which any church member or denominational representative can look at.
- 2. Recording church membership.** There must always be a vote by the church, not just the church board, to add or drop a name from the church membership roll, except in the case of the death of a member. The clerk handles the correspondence between the individuals seeking transfers and the churches with which the transfer is being made. The clerk also fills out a certificate and report forms when a person is baptized or makes a profession of faith. In cooperation with the Sabbath school teachers, you should take a keen interest in keeping track of each member, making note of those who do not

attend regularly and those who are absent. When a member moves away, the church clerk should try to keep in touch with them and promptly contact the pastor in the new district to have him or her visit them and encourage them to transfer to a new church home.

- 3. Keeping church records.** All church records, minutes of business meetings and board meetings, the church officer list, and the list of church members are maintained by the church clerk. This information is not only for the sake of the church family, but portions of this information are also sent on special forms to the local conference office for its use in statistical reports. Also, it is vital that you supply copies of these records to new pastors and church board members so they have the information needed for their work.
- 4. Compiling a list of committees.** The clerk should make note of any committees that are appointed and give the chairperson of the group a list of the members making up the committee, along with an outline of the work the committee is being asked to accomplish.
- 5. Producing the church directory.** It is the responsibility of the clerk to have a church directory produced as needed. This may be printed, photocopied, or produced for the church by a company that makes photo directories. It should include non-member spouses and unbaptized children from church-related households, as well as regular attendees not yet baptized. It is well to include a statement that "this is not an official membership list." Its purpose is to facilitate friendship in the congregation.
- 6. Overseeing the church bulletin.** If there is no church secretary, the responsibility for the church bulletin may belong to the church clerk. This is a duty that can be delegated to another person if it is more convenient to do so.

Church Clerk

This Quick Start Guide for the Church Clerk is full of important information to help you start or revitalize a ministry at your local church. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or an experienced volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use in your local church.

Other titles in the Quick Start Guide series:

- Ministry of the Elder
- Deacon and Deaconess
- Stewardship
- Sabbath School Secretary
- Church Board Member

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