

# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

## **Local Church Clerk/Secretary Manual** **New Jersey Conference**

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## ***Membership Matters!!***

### ***Role of the Church Clerk/Secretary***

Welcome to the office of church clerk/secretary for your congregation! This position uses the spiritual gifts of helps, energy, and orderliness as you serve your church through lists, changes, numbers, people, history, and church procedures (I Corinthians 12:28).

Your role will be to minister to the congregation by documenting and maintaining the church records. You will work closely with the pastor and other church officers and members. You will keep accurate minutes of church board and business meetings and will regularly submit information regarding your church to the conference.

As clerk/secretary, you must recognize the need for careful and confidential guardianship of all church records. Even inactive members regard their church membership and church business as important to their spiritual life.

Not all congregations have the same needs. A large congregation may need a clerk as well as an assistant clerk to function. In some churches, one clerk takes care of membership changes and transfers while another clerk deals with church board and business meetings. This arrangement can work very well and keeps the job from becoming too much for the busy individual.

Some churches keep records in computer files while others use card files and notebooks. With the introduction of the eAdventist.net web - based internet program, record management efficiency has been greatly enhanced. If your church uses card files, you should acquaint yourself with how to maintain these records effectively. If you would like to become an online clerk/secretary, you can call your conference membership clerk for training.

You should become acquainted with the latest edition of the Seventh - day Adventist Church Manual which contains important information and procedures for the work of the clerk. Contact your local Adventist Book Center or your conference membership clerk for this publication.

This manual gives an overview of the duties you are expected to perform and manage. It is a challenge, but one you will enjoy!

### ***eAdventist.net INFORMATION***

eAdventist.net is the web - based internet membership program of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh - day Adventists.

It was piloted in June 2002 in the North Pacific Union and was made available to the rest of the division in January 2003. Rocky Mountain Conference went online April 2004. Currently, 51 of 58 conferences in North America have joined us.

eAdventist gives access to your church membership data online and makes it possible to update member records, transfer members into or out of the conference, create numerous reports, etc. Because it is an online program, both the church clerk and the conference membership clerk can

update member information which is immediately seen by all other conference clerks who have access to New Jersey Conference membership. For example, if the address of a member is updated, the next time mailing labels are generated for conference/union/NAD mailings, the most recent address will be utilized. The result is great savings in postage of undeliverable mail.

If you would like to become one of the many local church clerks/secretaries in the NJ Conference who is enjoying the benefits of being online with eAdventist.net, please complete the Authorization Form on Page 20. Both you and your pastor should sign the form and mail or fax it to:

E. Gill Conference Membership Clerk

2303 Brunswick Avenue

Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Fax number:

Once your Authorization form has been submitted, you will be contacted and given information on accessing a training manual along with the demo site login authorization code.

Being on eAdventist is not mandatory, but is highly encouraged. Check into the benefits of eAdventist.net. Once you see how it can benefit you and the sisterhood of churches throughout the North American Division, you may decide it's just what you need.

## **CHURCH BOARD AND BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

As the church clerk/secretary, you may be expected to take the minutes for the church board and business meetings. If you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting, you should make necessary advance arrangements which are satisfactory to the chairperson for a replacement to record the minutes for you.

Minutes should be typed as soon as possible after a meeting while the notes are still meaningful and details can be more easily recalled. Provide a copy of the typed minutes for the pastor and/or the chairperson to read and approve before you finalize the minutes to be copied and distributed.

Remember these points when recording minutes:

1. Include the following in your minutes:

a. Date and time of meeting

b. Place of meeting

- c. Members present
  - d. Members absent
  - e. Invited guests present
  - f. Agenda items
  - g. Actions voted (17:2014) Number as shown by the order of the vote followed by a colon, followed by the year
  - h. Major discussion items (even if no action was voted)
  - i. Signature lines for the chairperson and clerk
2. Supply copies of minutes from the previous meeting for committee members.

You can find a sample of church board minutes in the Appendix.

## **INCOMING MEMBERSHIP RECORDS**

An individual becomes a member of the Seventh - day Adventist church in one of three ways – baptism, profession of faith, or letter of transfer from another Adventist church.

As church clerk, you have the following duties for each type of transfer (also see the SDA Church Manual)

### **BAPTISM**

1. When a n individual is baptized, a Certificate of Baptism must be signed by the pastor and the church clerk/secretary. These forms are available from the conference membership clerk.
2. After the baptism, the individual must be accepted into church fellowship by vote of the congregation and the clerk must record the following information:

Name

Address

Phone number(s)

Date of birth (very important)

Gender

Marital status

Date of baptism

Officiating pastor

Place of baptism

3. If you **are** an online clerk, record this information in eAdventist.net.

4. If you **are not** an online clerk, **send this information immediately** to the conference clerk to put into eAdventist. Then be sure to record this information in your Church Record Book or on a Church Membership card for your card file.

The New Jersey Conference website, [www.njcsda.org](http://www.njcsda.org) has a Baptism/POF form which you can use to record this information to send to the conference.

## **RE - BAPTISM**

If a current member of your church is re - baptized, send all the information required for a baptism and indicate that it is a re - baptism.

If the individual requesting re - baptism is from another church and desires to join your church, it is necessary to transfer their church membership to your church.

Call the conference membership clerk for instructions on how to record the re - baptism and request this transfer if you are not an online clerk.

If the individual was re - baptized after having been dropped from the Seventh - day Adventist Church in the past (apostasy or missing), this will be considered a new baptism rather than a re - baptism for reporting purposes.

## **PROFESSION OF FAITH**

1. The Profession of Faith certificate is signed by the pastor and the church clerk/secretary. These forms are available from the membership clerk at the conference office.

2. When a person has been accepted into church fellowship by vote of the congregation (not just the church board), the clerk must record the following personal information:

Name

Address

Phone numbers

Date of birth (vitaly important)

Marital status

Date of baptism

Officiating pastor

3. The above information should be recorded in eAdventist, in the church record book, or on a Church Membership Card for the current card file.

4. If the church clerk is NOT on eAdventist, this information must be sent to the conference membership clerk **immediately** so that it can be entered into eAdventist. The church clerk is responsible for making sure that baptism information is sent to the conference membership clerk.

The Rocky Mountain Conference website -- [www.njcsda.org](http://www.njcsda.org) – has a Baptism/POF form that can be used for clerks not having access to eAdventist. You can also find one in the Appendix of this pamphlet. This is the only reporting form to be used.

## **TRANSFER OF INCOMING MEMBERSHIP**

The North American Division is now using eAdventist for all membership transfers. This has replaced the green membership transfer cards formerly used to request a transfer.

When an individual request to join your church, obtain the full name (including maiden name, if appropriate) of the individual as well as the name of the church, city, and state where their current SDA church membership resides. Take the requested name to your church board.

If the clerk is online with eAdventist, he/she will initiate the transfer of anyone coming INTO their church using the eAdventist website. Nothing needs to be mailed. Every party who needs to see the transfer -- the clerk of the church the member is coming from, the clerk of the church the members is moving to, the conference membership clerk -- will be able to see this transfer request online.



However, if the church where the membership is currently located is not online, the transfer request will be printed at the conference office and mailed to that church (see Page 10). Your sole responsibility at this point is to see that the transfer request is entered on the eAdventist system. And then wait until you receive word (or see online) that the request has been granted.

If you are NOT online with eAdventist, the transfer information should be emailed or called into the conference membership clerk so that he/she can enter the request in eAdventist. **DO NOT SEND A REQUEST TO THE OTHER CHURCH.** The conference membership clerk will enter it into the eAdventist.net system for the transfer to be initiated.

The transfer request is taken to the granting church board, then to the congregation for a first and second reading. It's a good idea to list these names in your weekly church bulletin. The date of the second reading (followed by a vote) is the grant/recommended date. The church clerk enters the second reading date on the transfer form and mails it back to the conference membership clerk who then enters the date into the system. A transfer request is then printed that asks for the acceptance date from the new church. This form is sent to the clerk asking for the transfer (see Page 13).

The individual requesting transfer is now ready to be accepted into your church. Their name goes before the church in a first and second reading (followed by a vote) whereupon the second reading date is the official acceptance date which you must enter into eAdventist.net.

**IMPORTANT:** Please remember that individual names are added or subtracted from the church membership list **ONLY after** the transfer has been completed by both churches – the granting as well as the accepting church. At no time is an individual left in limbo and not listed as a member of one of the churches.

**LEAVING MEMBERSHIP:** An individual may leave the membership of a Seventh - day Adventist church in one of four ways:

Death

Transfer of membership

Being classified as "Missing"

Being Removed/apostasy

An explanation of your clerk duties for each situation follows (Also see the SDA Church Manual):

#### **DEATH:**

1. If you are an online clerk, record the date of death in eAdventist.net. If you are not an online clerk, email or phone the conference membership clerk so he/she can enter this information. In order for is **necessary that the conference be aware of all such membership changes.**

2. If you are not on eAdventist.net, record the date of death in the Church Record Book and on

the individual's Membership Card.

### **TRANSFER OF OUTGOING MEMBERSHIP**

You, as clerk, will receive notification of the transfer request from the church that your member desires to transfer. If you are online, you will see in the To Grant column of eAdventist.net a transfer request. If you are NOT online, you will receive in the mail a transfer request asking for a grant/recommended date for the transfer.

Take the transfer request to your church board for approval. The name is then entered in the church bulletin for two weeks and presented to the congregation in a first and second reading. The date of the second reading is the official grant/recommended date.

Enter the date on the transfer form and return it to the conference membership clerk so he/she can enter the date in eAdventist.net. If you are an online clerk, enter the date in eAdventist.net.

Remember, the name is not removed from your records **UNTIL** an acceptance date has been sent to you in the form of an acknowledgment (see Page 14). Once you have an acceptance date, you can remove the individual's name from your Church Record Book. The name is automatically transferred in eAdventist.net from one church to the other.

### **MISSING/REMOVED(Apostasy)**

At times, it is necessary to go through the membership list and remove those who have not been attending for many years (usually at least 5+ years). This is not a joyous time, but is sometimes necessary for numerous reasons.

It is suggested that you, as clerk, work with your pastor to compile a list of those who have not been attending. Compose a letter for this group letting them know that you are working on your church membership records and have missed seeing them. Ask if they have moved and are attending another SDA church and where they would like to have their membership transferred. Remember, the tone of this letter is redemptive, not one of scolding (see suggested letter).

You may also want to include a dated card giving them the option of telling you what they would like to have done with their membership. The following are suggestions:

- I am attending the \_\_\_\_\_ church and will ask the church clerk to transfer my membership there.
- I wish to have my membership remain at the \_\_\_\_\_ church.
- I no longer accept the teachings of the SDA church and wish to have my name removed from the SDA church membership list.
- I would like to have a visit from a pastor.

Ask the missing member to indicate their desire by checking one of the boxes, signing the card,

and returning it within a specific time period (such as a month). Be sure to explain that after a specific date, if you have not received the information, their name will be dropped as missing by the church in a church business meeting.

These letters must be sent by registered mail. This will serve as official notice. Be sure to keep accurate records of the letters that are sent and the responses received. This is part of your permanent membership record.

Your next step depends on the response you receive. If someone wishes to have their name dropped because they do not wish to remain members of the SDA church, they will be listed as Removed. The date of the church business meeting when these names are read and voted on is the official date they are dropped and listed as Removed.

Letters that are returned as undeliverable with no forwarding address will be dropped as Missing. The date of the church business meeting when these names are read and voted on is the official date they are dropped as Missing.

**A member's name can ONLY be DROPPED from church membership by a vote of the church.**

This information is then listed in eAdventist.net and in your Church Record Book. If you are not on eAdventist.net, please contact the conference membership clerk so that the information can be recorded in eAdventist.net.

## **HELP PREVENT MISSING MEMBERS**

The church clerk/secretary has a unique opportunity to help prevent “missing member” situations.

In a small church, it is not hard to notice when someone is not attending regularly. A large church may notice when newsletters are returned by the postal service.

If the church clerk/secretary takes note of those persons, he/she can send church bulletins with friendly notes and tell the pastoral staff that the member has been missing. An alert clerk can keep a member from becoming “missing”. If only a short time has elapsed between first notice of an “undeliverable” letter and intervention by a pastor, elder, or lay member, it may not be difficult to find the member and encourage a return to active fellowship.

It also should be noted that those who have been missing for longer periods of time can sometimes be found by talking with members who have known them. Once found, they can be encouraged to return to church fellowship. This is your ultimate goal!

**CHURCH BULLETIN:** In small churches where there is no church secretary, the church clerk/secretary may assume the responsibility of the weekly church bulletin. However, this duty could be delegated to someone else with the necessary skills if needed.

**CHURCH DIRECTORY:** One of the responsibilities the church clerk/secretary MAY have is to produce a church directory. This may be printed, duplicated, or produced by a company that makes photo directories. Often it will include non - member spouses and non - baptized children from member - related homes plus regular attenders who are not yet baptized.

Since one of the purposes of the directory is to promote friendship in the congregation, it would be good to include a statement that “this is not an official membership list, but a directory of church families.”

**COMMITTEES:** The church clerk/secretary should keep a list of all committees appointed by the church. He/she should also provide a list of the members along with an outline of the task the committee is being asked to accomplish for the chairperson of the group.

**COMPANIES:** Because companies are not recognized as a church, when a company is organized, a charter list is signed by all those wishing to have their membership placed in the conference church under the name of the company being organized. The company clerk/secretary must work with the conference membership clerk to see that all names are reported and the location of the individual’s current church membership identified. It is absolutely vital to have the full name of the church along with the complete mailing address of the church. The conference membership clerk works very closely with the company clerk/secretary to see that important information is obtained so that transfers can be completed.

Language can be a barrier to proper communication between the church, company, or mission group and the conference. It is best when the clerk/secretary speaks and writes English. If no one with these capabilities can

take on this responsibility, it becomes necessary for the clerk/secretary to have an assistant who can interpret when needed and communicate with the conference.

At the organization of a company, the conference membership clerk will prepare a letter for the company clerk/secretary outlining the necessary duties.

## **MEMBERSHIP FILE**

How does a clerk/secretary keep track of the church membership? If you are using eAdventist.net, your membership records are kept online. A variety of other helpful information is also available to you when using the eAdventist.net program. If your pastor also wishes to have access to eAdventist information, he can contact the conference membership clerk for login assistance.

If computer access is not available to you as clerk/secretary, you will have to utilize another method of recordkeeping. You should obtain Membership Cards if you wish to keep a card file. You can request membership lists from the conference membership clerk whenever you desire. This is a good way to be certain that all membership changes have been made at the conference level.

A Membership Card should include:

Name

Address

Phone number

Date received: by baptism, POF, or transfer

Date dismissed: by death, transfer, missing or removed (apostasy)

Date and page number of entry in Church Record Book

Outgoing members should be removed from the “Active Membership File”. Record the date of the official action and how the member was removed. This card should be moved to a file for all “Transferred” or “Dropped” memberships.

## **MISSION GROUPS**

Mission Groups are not recognized as a church. The members attending a mission group have their membership located in a sponsoring church or other SDA church. A mission group may elect a clerk whose first responsibility is to contact the conference membership clerk to discuss what needs to be accomplished at this stage.

## **OBITUARIES**

Whenever a member of your church dies, it is your responsibility to get this information to the conference membership clerk so that he/she can submit it in obituary format to the Mid - American Union Outlook for publication. Be sure to include the following (an obituary form is included in the Appendix):

Full name and age of deceased

Date and place of birth (if known)

Date and place of death (if known)

Church where membership resides

## **PERMANENT CHURCH RECORDS**

Permanent church records are now kept on the computer using eAdventist.net. However, if you, as a church clerk, are not online, you must continue to record information in the Church Record Book. **It is imperative that you have the conference membership clerk record every piece of**

**information on eAdventist.net that you have recorded in your Church Record Book.**

### **UNION PAPER SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The church clerk/secretary insures that each church member receives a subscription to the following two periodicals: the monthly Adventist Review and the Columbia Union Outlook. The mailing addresses for these subscriptions are generated from eAdventist.net. You can see, then, the importance of keeping member information current. Making address changes and updates in eAdventist.net or sending these changes to the conference clerk/secretary is a very important function of the church clerk/secretary.