

Appendix B

AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE Guidelines for Establishing a Company of Believers

Preamble

Church planting is a significant function in the mission of the church and is the usual basis for the establishment of a new company of believers. This document provides the guidelines and benchmarks for success in establishing a new company of believers as another outpost of the kingdom of God. These guidelines shall be followed in conjunction with the *Church Manual*.

New companies can only be established by the approval of the local Conference Executive Committee.

Reasons for Establishing a Company

New companies of believers are to be established only when the primary reason for establishment is a mission focus. Companies can be formed to reach new locations or to reach new people groups. These can be church planting initiatives or “where a number of isolated believers reside in proximity to one another, a company of believers may be organized for fellowship and worship with the object of growing into an organized church.” (*Church Manual*, 2005 edition, p.40).

Companies should not be formed when the underlying issues include an unhealthy spirit of independence, doctrinal disagreement, dissatisfaction over worship style, inability to resolve conflict, difficult relationships or anger.

Requirements:

Companies need to have:

1. A cooperative attitude and loyalty to the teachings and organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, other Adventist churches and Conference.
2. A Biblical Vision, Mission and Values statement.
3. A target area defined by the leadership/group and agreed to by the Conference.
4. A strategy and process plan of how the new church will reach the target audience.
5. A discipleship plan that includes an introduction to basic Christianity, baptismal and membership preparation, systematic Bible study, how to share your faith and leadership training.
6. An approved church planter who has an evangelistic record of bringing people to Jesus and his church, recognized and approved by Conference.*
7. A coach and/or mentor to guide and support the difficult process of starting a new church. There will need to be a meeting between the company leadership and the coach at least monthly.*
8. Critical mass – enough people to run the basic functions of a church company. The number for critical mass may vary from place to place. However a company would generally be expected to have at least twenty baptized members and ideally should have thirty or more.

9. Must demonstrate that they have adequate and responsible leadership to enable them to function as a separate group. The two required officers for a company are a Company Leader and Company Treasurer. These officers are appointed by the Executive Committee on the recommendation of the members of the Company. Other church officers may be appointed as are needed by the Company.
10. It is expected that those serving in leadership positions and a majority of the members are consistent in their commitment to returning a faithful tithe to the conference, thus assisting the world-wide work of the church.
11. Have the basic functions of the church company working – weekly worship and Sabbath School programs, small groups and evangelistic plans as well as participation and cooperation with conference plans and events.
12. Demonstrates the principles of becoming a balanced and healthy church.
13. It is expected that the members of the proposed company will give a positive response to the following seven principles prior to approval being given by the Executive Committee:
 - i. An active commitment to the teachings, practises and standards of the Seventh-day Adventist church.
 - ii. A willingness to accept the full financial responsibility that is expected of all churches and companies within the sisterhood of churches in the local Conference by returning tithes and offerings in accord with the Conference annual tithe and offering schedule.
 - iii. An ascent to the principle that all visiting preachers and speakers for the company must be approved in the usual way with a regular service request through the conference General Secretary. This applies particularly to speakers from outside the conference whether they are church employees or lay people.
 - iv. An acknowledgment that they are accountable to the sisterhood of churches through the Executive Committee of the conference.
 - v. A stated intention that the company intends to work in harmony and in consultation with neighbouring churches especially when planning evangelism that may cross into another church's mission territory.
 - vi. A willingness to accept the conference appointed pastor, should a pastor be appointed.
 - vii. An acceptance of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* as the guide that governs matters of church governance and other matters of church life.
14. Companies should have ongoing support of a mother church or the local Conference.
15. Where a company is proposed to be established within the territory of another existing church or company there must be dialogue with and support from that church or company for the establishment of a new company in their territory.
16. The Executive Committee is the board of a company. The Conference President is the leading elder and the Conference Secretary the company clerk.
17. Governance and other matters will occur as outlined in the Church Manual.

* In the event of a company of believers not being established specifically as a church plant, for example, an isolated group of believers, the local Conference may review such a requirement.

Intention

The formation of a company is the first step in the establishment of an organized church; hence a company must keep this goal before them and have a mission focus with plans for achieving the goal of growth and self sufficiency.

The aim should be to become an organized church within 3-8 years.
When this time comes the usual procedures as outlined in the *Church Manual* will be followed. (Refer also to the *Guidelines for Organization of Churches – Australian Union Conference*).