

The District System in West-Central Africa Division

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates under a constitutional polity that recognizes four formal levels of organization: the local church, the local conference or mission, the union conference or mission, and the General Conference, with the latter administered through 13 geographical divisions.¹ Within this configuration, the term “district” refers to a cluster of two or more local churches placed under the pastoral oversight of a single ordained or licensed minister, who functions as the senior or district pastor. The district has long existed as a pragmatic ministerial arrangement, particularly in territories where the ratio of congregations to available pastoral personnel renders a one church to one pastor model impossible, but it has not been recognized as a constitutional tier within the denominational organogram. It possesses no constituency session, no elected administrative officers beyond the district pastor, no independent treasury, and no formal voting representation in the conference executive committee distinct from that of its constituent congregations.

The Current Adventist Organogram and the Liminal Status of the District

The representative policy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is written into the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws and detailed in the Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy; governance is distributed across four constitutional levels. The foundational tier is the local church of baptized members in covenantal fellowship. The local church elects officers, board and delegates by direct vote of the membership. A grouping of local churches within a defined territory forms the local conference or mission,



UNITED IN MISSION TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's official mission statement is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 14:6-12).”

The organizational structure of the Church has been developed with this primary objective in mind. In order to successfully accomplish the mission laid out by Jesus in Matthew 28: 18-20, members, ministries, and institutions serve within their calling, collaborate together, and share their resources so no part of the world has to be without help and support.

In the spirit of the Early Church (Acts 15:2, 6), challenges and decisions are addressed as a family of representative leaders—from the local church board to administrative councils composed of church representatives from across the globe.

This well-organized internal structure helps ensure—though only with the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit—that Seventh-day Adventist Church members can effectively proclaim the Gospel message of our Savior Jesus, who gives us freedom, healing and hope, in their communities and throughout the world.

Source: Seventh-day Adventist Church's

website, <https://adventist.org/identity/structure>.

which holds title to church property, employs and assigns pastors, and convenes a constituency session typically every three to five years. Local conferences are clustered into union conferences, which provide a regional layer of coordination and own the senior educational and health institutions of their territory. Union conferences are organized into divisions of the General Conference, which is itself the constitutionally supreme body of the world church and convenes its session every five years.²

Within this architecture, the district occupies a peculiar liminal status. It is neither constituted as a corporate ecclesiastical entity nor entirely absent from the denominational consciousness. The *Church Manual* acknowledges the district pastor as a recognized ministerial role and prescribes the relationship between the district pastor and the elders, deacons, and church boards of the constituent congregations.³ Yet the district itself has no juridical existence apart from the conference that constituted it, no constituency that may be summoned in session, no elected secretary or treasurer, and no representation in the conference executive committee that is distinct from the representation enjoyed by its constituent local churches. The district is, in effect, an administrative artifact of the conference's pastoral assignment policy, not a structural participant in the denominational polity.

This liminal status is increasingly difficult to reconcile with the demographic and missional realities of the global church. In territories such as Eastern Africa, parts of Latin America, the Philippines, and the Pacific, district pastors regularly oversee between five and twenty local congregations, with combined memberships frequently exceeding two thousand baptized adults.⁴ In several East-Central and West-Central African unions, district pastors function as de facto bishops, exercising sustained spiritual, pedagogical, and disciplinary authority over communities whose aggregate membership exceeds that of many North American conferences in their early decades. Yet the constitutional polity provides such pastors with no structural support proportionate to the scale of their pastoral charge, and the local churches under their oversight have no formal channel through which to deliberate, plan, and act collectively as a district body.

Historical Development: Precedent for Adaptive Structural Expansion

The Adventist conviction that organizational structure is a servant rather than a master of mission has been exemplified at three pivotal moments in the denomination's institutional history, each of which expanded the organogram in response to demonstrated missional need. The first occurred between 1860 and 1863 when the loose network of Sabbatarian believers, which had previously resisted formal organization on the grounds that organized denominations represented Babylonian compromise, accepted the necessity of incorporation, the legal ownership of property, the systematic support of ministers, and the establishment of conferences, culminating in the formation of the General Conference at Battle Creek, Michigan, in May 1863.⁵ The second moment occurred at the General Conference Session of 1901 during which President Arthur G. Daniells, drawing on his Australasian experience, led the most significant structural reorganization in the denomination's history.

The session interpolated the union conference between the local conference and the General Conference, decentralizing administrative authority and distributing responsibility to regional bodies that could respond more sensitively to local missional context.⁶ The third moment, which unfolded gradually across the twentieth century, was the establishment of divisions as administrative extensions of the General Conference, intended to coordinate the work of unions across continental and super-continental geographical zones.

The 1901 reorganization is of particular relevance to the present argument because it constitutes the closest historical analogue to the structural addition here proposed. The principles articulated by Daniells and by the contemporaneous reflections of Ellen G. White, namely decentralization, distribution of responsibility, simplicity, adaptability, and the priority of mission over inherited form, were not understood as expedients for a particular moment but as enduring principles of Adventist polity.⁷ Daniells argued that the guiding principle of reorganization had been the decentralization of authority by the distribution of responsibility, a formulation that has become axiomatic within Adventist administrative reflection.⁸ Ellen White, on the day before the 1901 session opened, declared in the Battle Creek College library that God required a change in the organization of the church and that the change was to be undertaken without delay.⁹ The 1901 reorganization therefore established a precedent that is both historical and theological: when the existing organogram proves structurally inadequate to the missional vocation of the church, faithfulness requires its prudent expansion rather than its rigid preservation.

What was true in 1901 is increasingly true in the early 21st century with respect to the level immediately above the local congregation. Just as the late 19th century discovered that the binary of conference and General Conference could not absorb the administrative load of a global church, so the early 21st century is discovering that the binary of local church and local conference cannot absorb the missional load of a church whose congregations in many regions are multiplying faster than conferences can support them. The argument for the formal inclusion of the district within the organogram is, in this sense, a continuation of the structural logic that produced the union in 1901, not a departure from it. It is on record that “W. C. White was the first to start talking about a ‘district’ plan.”¹⁰

Description of District System in West-Central Africa Division

The West-Central Africa Division (WAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church follows the Church’s standard hierarchy: General Conference Division Union Conference/Mission Local Conference/Mission (District) Local Church. A district is not an independent administrative unit but an *operational grouping* of local churches under a single senior pastor often referred to as the “district pastor”. Districts are below the Conference level and they provide pastoral care, leadership training, and administrative oversight. Where this system is practiced, the district pastors are appointed by the conference executive committee and are accountable to it. Conference leaders are invited to participate in the district programs.¹¹ The *SDA Church Manual* states:

Ordained pastors appointed by the conference executive committee to act as pastors or district leaders do not take the place of the president in their respective fields. They are not charged with administrative powers as is the president, but they cooperate with him in carrying out the plans and policies of the conference.¹²

In addition, a typical district council comprises a District Pastor (chair), a District Elder, Secretary, and Treasurer, along with lay department representatives. District councils—comprising the key officers of each church board in the district—meet regularly (usually quarterly) to coordinate evangelism, training and fellowship across all churches in the district. Financially, districts do not hold funds apart from special offerings for joint projects; tithes and offerings are sent to the conference as usual. In WAD, it seems that district size varies by country and field. In densely populated areas or active fields, a district might have only 2-3 churches (for example, an urban district of large congregations). In sparse or rural regions, one district pastor may oversee 5-10 smaller churches.

Chain of Communication

In Adventist policy, local churches answer to their local Conference/Mission (called a “Field”).

Conferences/Missions in WAD are grouped into Unions (e.g. Western Nigerian Union Conference, Ghana’s West Africa Union Mission (WAUM), Cameroon Union Mission (CAUM), Eastern Nigeria Union Conference, etc.), which in turn report to the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) of the General Conference. The district falls between the conference and the local church. It is *not* a separate corporate unit in constitutions; rather, it is a pastoral “pastoral district” grouping of churches.

Legal/Constitutional Basis

It appears there is no WAD or General Conference constitution which formally defines “district” as a unit; that term appears in Working Policy only in procedural contexts (e.g. for church companies).¹³ Instead, district practice arises from the Church Manual and local bylaws. The SDA Church Manual (2022 ed.) does not lay out district organization explicitly, but it prescribes a system of conferences, unions and divisions (no “district” level in the corporate sense).¹⁴ In practice, WAD unions and conferences simply implement the district as an *administrative* measure. The concept is therefore derived from common practice and principles of church order, rather than a separate legal entity.

Definition and Function of a District

A district is generally “an amalgamation of several local churches in a given geographical territory under the supervision of a single pastor”. In other words, it is a group of congregations that share one senior “district pastor” and support staff. The primary function of this structure is pastoral care and coordination. The district

pastor's first responsibility is to shepherd the members of all churches in the district, visiting the sick, nurturing new converts, and training local leaders. The district provides a vehicle for collective evangelism, member care and resource-sharing across the grouped churches. For example, joint evangelistic campaigns and multi-church training events are usually planned at the district level.¹⁵

The district council (also called a "board") is composed of the principal officers (pastors, elders, department leaders) of each church in the district. Its chief concern is the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning evangelism in all its phases. The district council's responsibilities include coordinating Sabbath School, youth, health, and outreach programs across the churches, planning joint events (e.g., camp-meetings or Bible studies), and resolving issues that cut across congregations. These functions mirror those of a local church board, but on the multi-church scale.

Reporting and Accountability

The District Pastor reports directly to the Conference/Mission president and Executive Committee. District councils report through the District pastor to the conference board. Minutes of district council meetings are forwarded to the conference secretary as a courtesy for oversight. District financial statements (if any) are audited or reviewed by the conference auditors. In effect, a district is "accountable" to the conference, just as a local church is. District officers do *not* form a separate constituency or have independent authority beyond church policy. Any major decisions (e.g., disciplining members, transferring pastors) involve the conference committee.

Districts are subordinate to the local Conference or Mission. All district officers and plans operate under conference rules. Conferences often issue instructions to districts (e.g. a targeted evangelism campaign date, or new Sabbath School materials to use). District pastors serve as the conference's representatives to their congregations. Conversely, district pastors are the conference's liaisons to local churches, passing guidance (and sometimes personnel such as departmental directors) down to the grassroots.

To local churches, the district adds a layer of support. It brings training and resources beyond what a single small church could achieve. However, district decisions do not override a church's autonomy in worship style or member discipline except by mutual agreement. Each local church still has its own board and officers; the district council coordinates but does not replace the church board.

Biblical Justification I: The Mosaic Pattern of Jethronic Delegation

The most extended treatment of organizational structure in the Hebrew Bible is the Jethronic counsel of Exodus 18:13-26, in which Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, observes Moses, adjudicating the disputes of Israel from morning until evening, and discerns that the burden is unsustainable. Jethro counsels

Moses to appoint able men out of all the people, men of truth, fearing God and hating covetousness, and to set them as rulers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, who would judge the smaller matters and refer only the great matters to Moses himself (Exodus 18:21-22). The text records that Moses heeded the counsel and that the resulting structure secured both the welfare of the people, who would go to their place in peace, and the sustained capacity of Moses, who would be able to endure (Exodus 18:23). The passage is regarded across the Jewish, Christian, and Adventist exegetical traditions as a paradigmatic articulation of the principle that mediate structures of authority, and are theologically warranted whenever the immediate exercise of authority by a single leader becomes incompatible with the welfare of the community.¹⁶

The Jethronic pattern is constitutive for the present argument because it articulates with particular clarity the principle that organizational structure should be calibrated to the actual scale and complexity of the community. Moses had not been ordained to fail, but the absence of mediate structures of leadership had placed him in a position where failure was structurally inevitable. The remedy proposed by Jethro was neither the abandonment of Moses's prophetic office nor the diminution of the people's access to him, but the interpolation of intermediate ranks of leadership that absorbed the routine pastoral and judicial burden while preserving the prophetic apex of authority for the matters that genuinely required it. Commenting on Exodus 18, Michael Hasel notes that "effective leadership cannot be accomplished by one person alone. Responsibilities must be delegated."¹⁷ This is true of the church structure. By analogy, the present condition of district pastors in the high-membership regions of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church mirrors the condition of Moses before Jethro's intervention. The conferences have not been organized to fail, but the absence of a mediate structural tier between the conference and the local congregation has placed conference administrators and district pastors alike in a position where the sustainable exercise of pastoral oversight is structurally impossible. The Mosaic precedent suggests that the remedy is neither the dismantling of the conference nor the multiplication of conferences beyond financial sustainability, but the formal recognition of a mediate tier that absorbs the proximate pastoral burden while preserving the conference's strategic and administrative apex. This necessitates the district structure.

The Mosaic pattern receives a complementary articulation in Numbers 11:14-17, where the prophet, overwhelmed by the complaints of the people, declares that he is unable to bear the burden alone, and the Lord instructs him to gather seventy elders of Israel upon whom the Spirit will be placed and who will bear the burden with him. The Numbers narrative reinforces the Jethronic precedent and explicitly attaches a pneumatological warrant to the interpolation of mediate leadership: the seventy do not merely relieve Moses administratively, they are themselves anointed by the Spirit for the task. The principle that emerges from the conjunction of Exodus 18 and Numbers 11 is that the distribution of pastoral burden across mediate ranks of leadership is not merely an administrative convenience but a divinely sanctioned and Spirit empowered ecclesial pattern, theologically continuous with the Adventist understanding of representative polity.¹⁸

Biblical Justification II: The Apostolic and Pauline Pattern

The Mosaic pattern of mediate leadership is reinscribed within the New Testament with conspicuous frequency. The most explicit instance is the appointment of the seven in Acts 6:1-7, where the apostles, confronted with the complaint of the Hellenist widows that they were being neglected in the daily distribution, decline to abandon the ministry of the word and prayer and instead direct the church to select seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, who may be appointed to oversee the *diakonal* work. The Lukan narrative is unambiguous in its evaluation of the new structure: the word of God increased, the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great company of the priests was obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). The text presents the structural innovation as a precondition rather than an obstacle to evangelistic advance, and it does so on the same Jethronic logic that distinguishes the apostolic apex of authority from the *diakonal* mediate ranks while preserving both within a single ecclesial body.¹⁹

The Pauline missionary practice extends this pattern to the level of regional church planting. Acts 14:21-23 records that, after evangelizing in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas returned to confirm the disciples and to appoint elders in every church, with prayer and fasting, commending them to the Lord on whom they had believed. The plural elders, appointed in every church, indicates that the Pauline ecclesial vision was neither mono-episcopal in the later patristic sense nor radically congregationalist in the later Anabaptist sense, but presbyteral and collegial, with a plurality of elders constituting the mediate leadership of each local congregation under the apostolic apex.²⁰ Paul's instructions to Titus elaborate the same principle at a regional scale: Titus is left in Crete to set in order the things that are wanting and to appoint elders in every city as Paul had directed him (Titus 1:5). The Cretan instruction is particularly illuminating for the present argument because it explicitly articulates the principle that an apostolic delegate, in this case Titus, exercises a regional rather than a merely congregational pastoral mandate, appointing elders across the multiple cities of an island whose Christian communities together exceeded the practical pastoral capacity of any single elder. The structural function of Titus in Crete is, *mutatis mutandis*, the structural function of the contemporary district pastor in the high-density regions of the global church.²¹

The First Epistle of Peter consolidates the New Testament's ecclesial vision in 1 Peter 5:1-4, where the apostle exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God which is among them, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, neither as lords over those entrusted to them but as examples to the flock. The Petrine charge presupposes that the elders are exercising oversight over a defined flock, that there are multiple elders within the apostolic vision, and that the office is fundamentally pastoral rather than administrative. Each of these presuppositions supports the present argument: that the formal inclusion of the district within the organogram represents not the erection of an unwarranted ecclesiastical bureaucracy but the structural acknowledgment of a pastoral relationship that already obtains and that requires constitutional recognition to be exercised faithfully and accountably.

Biblical Justification III: The Ecclesiology of the Body

The structural argument is reinforced by the ecclesiological vision of 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, in which Paul articulates the famous metaphor of the church as the body of Christ, with many members differentiated by gift and function but united in the one Spirit. The ecclesiology of the body has two structural implications that are pertinent here. First, it positively warrants differentiation of function and gift within the body, against the egalitarian flattening that would dispense with structural differentiation altogether. The body is one body precisely because it has many members, and the many members are not in tension with the unity of the body but constitutive of it (1 Corinthians 12:14). Second, it normatively requires that no member of the body should claim no need of another, and that the parts which seem to be weaker are necessary to the welfare of the whole (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).²² The Pauline ecclesiology therefore neither sanctions a flat congregationalism that refuses all mediate structures nor a hierarchical clericalism that subordinates the local congregation to centralized administration; it sanctions a differentiated, interdependent, and mutually accountable body in which mediate structures exist precisely to facilitate the flourishing of the whole.

This ecclesiology fits naturally with the proposed inclusion of the district. The district pastor and the district body are not understood as a centralized supplement displacing local agency but as a mediate organ of the body of Christ, articulating the relationship between the local congregation and the wider conference in a manner that secures both. The local church retains its primary ecclesial standing as the worshiping community of the people of God, and the conference retains its constitutional authority as the corporate organ of regional polity, but the district is recognized as the proximate pastoral and missional unit through which the daily life of the body is sustained.

Ellen G. White and the Theology of Adaptive Organization

Within Adventist ecclesiology, the writings of Ellen G. White are accorded a normative weight that requires their explicit consultation in any discussion of structural reform. Her position on church organization is articulated most fully in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* and in the addresses surrounding the 1901 General Conference Session. White consistently affirmed that organization is essential to the prosperity of the work, that disorder in the church is a door through which the enemy enters to perplex and trouble the flock, and that the church is to flee to the Word of God and become established upon gospel order.²³ At the same time, she insisted with equal consistency that organizational forms are not ends in themselves, that ecclesiastical machinery is not to become a galling yoke, and that the church must remain free to adapt its structures to the missional necessities of each new historical moment.²⁴

The conjunction of these two convictions, the necessity of order and the freedom of adaptation, is the precise theological warrant required by the proposal here advanced. The proposal is not an argument against Adventist

polity but an argument from within it, addressed to a structural inadequacy that the present polity cannot accommodate without modification. The 1901 reorganization itself, which introduced the union conference, was undertaken on exactly this conjunction of principles: that organization is necessary, and that the existing organization required adaptation to serve the mission. White's repeated cautions against the centralization of decision-making in any single office, and her advocacy of the distribution of responsibility across multiple ranks of leadership, apply with particular force to the situation of the district pastor today, who is asked to exercise quasi-episcopal oversight over multi-congregation regions without the structural support that would render such oversight sustainable.²⁵

Missional Advantages of a Formal District Structure

The biblical and historical considerations advanced above converge with a set of pragmatic missional considerations that, together, constitute the comprehensive case for the inclusion of the district within the organogram. Six advantages warrant explicit articulation.

The first is pastoral sustainability. The contemporary district pastor in regions of rapid Adventist growth functions in conditions of chronic vocational overextension, with responsibilities for preaching, sacramental administration, baptismal preparation, marriage and funeral ministry, evangelistic planning, lay leadership development, financial oversight, and disciplinary action distributed across multiple congregations whose combined demands routinely exceed the working capacity of any individual minister. Formal recognition of the district would warrant the establishment of district level pastoral teams, including assistant pastors, Bible workers, and dedicated lay leadership, on a systematic rather than ad hoc basis, distributing the pastoral burden across multiple agents in fidelity to the Jethronic principle of Exodus 18.

The second is missional coordination. The district pastor is uniquely positioned to identify, coordinate, and sequence evangelistic and discipleship activities across multiple congregations within a defined territory. Yet without formal structural standing, the district has no convening authority, no budget, and no accountability framework through which such coordination can be sustained. A formalized district structure would equip the district pastor with the convening, budgeting, and accountability instruments that effective coordination requires, transforming the district from an administrative artifact into a missional unit²⁶

The third is the cultivation of lay leadership. Adventist ecclesiology has long affirmed the priesthood of all believers and the indispensability of lay leadership in the work of the church, but the institutional pathways through which lay leaders are formed, deployed, and held accountable have been weakened by the territorial gap between the local church and the conference. A formalized district body, with elected lay representatives, district treasury accountability, and district level subcommittees for youth, women, education, health, and stewardship, would constitute a proximate and accessible site of lay leadership formation that the present binary structure cannot provide.

The fourth is theological and disciplinary coherence. The pastoral oversight of multiple congregations by a single district pastor frequently produces, within a defined territory, a coherent theological emphasis and disciplinary practice. Yet without formal district status, this coherence is vulnerable to discontinuity at every change of pastoral assignment and is inaccessible to systematic conference level evaluation. A formalized district would constitute a stable site of theological and disciplinary continuity that complements rather than replaces the ultimate doctrinal authority of the conference, union, and General Conference.

The fifth is financial proximity and stewardship accountability. Tithe and offering revenue in the contemporary Adventist polity flows from the local church to the conference, with the conference assuming responsibility for ministerial salaries, institutional maintenance, and missional expenditure. The district as currently constituted has no fiscal personality and therefore no fiscal accountability. A formalized district structure, with appropriately defined and conference supervised budgetary functions, would enable the district to receive and deploy resources for proximate missional activity, including evangelistic campaigns, lay training, community outreach, and church planting, without unnecessary recourse to the conference for every minor expenditure.

The sixth is constituent representation. The current Adventist polity grounds the representative principle in the sequence of constituency sessions at the local church, conference, union, and General Conference levels. The interpolation of the district as a formal level would extend the representative principle to the level at which the proximate pastoral relationship is actually exercised, equipping district members with a constitutionally recognized voice in the appointment, evaluation, and replacement of district pastors and in the planning of district missional activity. This extension of representation is consistent with the foundational Adventist conviction, articulated in the 1863 organization and reaffirmed in 1901, that authority in the church flows from the membership through duly constituted representative bodies²⁷

Cautions and Theological Safeguards

The advantages above must be weighed against the theological and administrative cautions that any structural addition properly elicits. Three cautions warrant explicit acknowledgement. The first is the danger of bureaucratic proliferation, against which Ellen White's warnings about the church's organizational machinery becoming a galling yoke remain pertinent²⁸ The formal inclusion of the district must be undertaken with disciplined parsimony, with district structures sized and resourced commensurately with their missional purpose rather than expanded to mimic the institutional density of the conference. The second is the danger of clericalization, in which the elevation of the district pastor to quasi-episcopal status erodes the priesthood of all believers that has been constitutive of Adventist ecclesiology since the nineteenth century. This danger is best mitigated by ensuring that the district body is constituted by lay representatives in proportions consistent with the broader denominational pattern, that the district pastor is accountable to the district constituency as well as to the conference, and that the office of district pastor is understood within the *diakonal* rather than dominical

key of New Testament leadership (Mark 10:42-45; 1 Pet 5:3). The third is the danger of structural rigidity in a future moment when the missional context may require the dissolution rather than the multiplication of mediate structures. The principle of adaptability that animated the 1901 reorganization should equally animate any future reform, and the formal recognition of the district should be undertaken in a constitutional form that permits future revision without structural trauma.²⁹

Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's organogram has never been a static deposit but a dynamic instrument calibrated, at successive moments of the denomination's history, to the missional necessities of its time. The formal inclusion of the district within the organogram, situated between the local church and the local conference, is the structural reform that the present moment of the church's global missional life most clearly requires. The proposal is biblically warranted by the Jethronic delegation of Exodus 18 and the apostolic appointment of mediate leadership in Acts 6, Acts 14, and Titus 1; ecclesiologically warranted by the Pauline vision of the differentiated body in 1 Corinthians 12 and the Petrine charge to the elders in 1 Peter 5; historically warranted by the precedent of the 1901 reorganization that introduced the union conference; spiritually warranted by Ellen G. White's repeated insistence that the church remain free to adapt its structures to its mission; and missionally warranted by the considerations of pastoral sustainability, missional coordination, lay leadership cultivation, theological coherence, financial accountability, and constituent representation. The proposal does not constitute a departure from the Adventist polity but an extension of its founding logic, that organization exists for mission, and that fidelity to mission requires organizational forms that can bear it. The work of the church in the twenty-first century, no less than in the nineteenth, requires the willingness to allow structure to follow function, and to receive, in the language of Ellen White's 1901 address, the change that God requires.

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