

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHURCH BUSINESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
August 24, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an array of unprecedented challenges to the life of the church in North America, disrupting regular worship services. Yet our members are ever more committed to loving God and their neighbors during this time. We praise God for such a display of their love.

Upon receiving many requests from the field, the North American Division, in consultation with the union secretaries, has developed temporary recommendations for the local church during this time. The following recommendations are provided to help the local church handle the issue of church business during this pandemic.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Our local church desires to function as regularly as possible during this pandemic to fulfill its mission, including the processing of membership transfer requests. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* allows alternative method for membership transfer within the division (p. 52).

While the local church may choose to hold the membership transfers until meeting in church resumes, some churches may want to select one of the following approaches to proceed with membership transfer requests during this period.

- Membership transfer can be done in a virtual environment (Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.) either during regular online church services or at a designated time announced in advance. During the online meeting, the membership transfer requests can be read or shown on screen.
- It is imperative to register a vote of the membership transfer. As described in the *Church Manual*, we are thus requiring the church go through the regular reading process once the church board has voted to recommend membership transfer, favorably or otherwise, to the church.
- One of the following methods can be used to register a vote: (1) Poll the congregation by an online survey method such as Survey Monkey; (2) By phone/teleconference; (3) Polling on Zoom; and (4) Email each member.
- Provide board contact information should a person have a question about a membership transfer.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee process can be done in a virtual environment, as described above for the membership transfer process. A person attending a meeting on Zoom or another virtual or electronic platform is considered present for discussion and voting.

HOW SHOULD BAPTISMS BE HANDLED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Our church never stops spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, even in the middle of this unprecedented pandemic. As a result, a number of people have expressed their desire to be members of the Adventist Church by baptism during this pandemic. While the local church can undoubtedly hold off baptisms until the pandemic is over, the following methods are suggested in case a baptismal service needs to be held.

1. Baptism can be held traditionally, as stated in the *Church Manual*, using proper precautions for the COVID-19, such as wearing a mask and gloves.
2. An alternative way of baptizing people can be chosen in lieu of the traditional manner, in which the presiding pastor pronounces the baptism at a distance, while a family member lowers the baptismal candidate, or the baptismal candidate could dip under the water by themselves.
3. Should the level of discomfort rise to the degree of not being able to conduct a traditional style baptismal service, baptismal candidates can be accepted on profession of faith, which is an established practice granted for medical reasons. This approach allows people to join the church on profession of faith, as stated in the *Church Manual* (see “Profession of Faith” on p. 50-51; also “Receiving Members under Difficult conditions”, p. 53), subject to a future baptism by water after this pandemic is over. This future baptism by water should not be counted toward baptismal statistics.

This document was voted by the NAD Administrative Committee on August 20, 2020