



Launching & Growing a House Church Movement

FOR CHURCH
LEADERS

Seventh-day
Adventist Church™

North New South Wales





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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing interest in house church movements within the Seventh-day Adventist church and the wider Christian movement around the world. The catalysts for this interest have included:

- 1 The Biblical fact that Christians worshipped predominantly in homes for the first three centuries.
- 2 Highly effective and rapidly growing church planting movements that have occurred in countries in the Global South (such as China, India, Vietnam) and other countries in the Southeast Asia and the Middle East.
- 3 The missional opportunities that house church movements provide in creating relational disciple-making environments in post-Christian cultures.
- 4 Government restrictions that have been placed on church worship, such as the restrictions imposed by Communist and Islamic governments. Restrictions have also recently been felt in other areas of the world due to COVID-19.
- 5 The anticipation that the world is coming closer to end-time scenarios portrayed in Revelation 13 where religious discrimination and persecution will restrict or even eliminate public church worship.
- 6 The reality that the Seventh-day Adventist church cannot financially afford to buy or rent large buildings to reach people living in the cities with the gospel. Neither does the Seventh-day Adventist church have the resources to assign paid pastors to all the churches that need to be planted.

The intent of this document is not be used as a policy manual, but to be used as a guide and a resource. This document is also intended to foster and facilitate conversations between church administration and house church leaders which will lead to the growth of effective and healthy house church movements.

God has called the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be a prophetic end-time movement whose mission is to proclaim the eternal gospel that is taught throughout the Bible and in the Three Angel's Messages and make disciples who are preparing for Jesus' soon return. The eternal gospel is to go to every nation, tribe, language and people. In order for the Seventh-day Adventist movement to grow and gain momentum, it is essential to remain committed to the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission but be willing to adapt to the times and local context.

The Seventh-day Adventist movement has always been willing to adapt its methods and tools in order to reach more people for Jesus and prepare more people for His soon return. For example, consider the way that the denomination quickly moved to utilise the printing press, radio, colour television and satellite communications. The Adventist church also recognises the need to do the same with the internet and social media in its effort and willingness to share the everlasting good news about Jesus.

In the same way, the Adventist denomination has been willing to start new Seventh-day Adventist churches in a wide variety of settings and venues. There is value in establishing churches in schools, university campuses, community halls, thatched huts as well as gathering in more standard purpose-built church buildings. People need to be reached not only in established churches, but wherever they might gather.

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In recent years, the attention of the Seventh-day Adventist movement has been drawn to the reality that legitimate churches can be created in homes. The home has always been an important place where discipleship occurs. For example, when Jesus sent out His 72 disciples, He gave them these instructions:

*Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. **Luke 10:5-7***

Jesus was instructing them to multiply disciples in homes throughout Judea, Galilee and even into Samaria, wherever He Himself was about to go.

In fact, house churches have a strong Biblical basis. Paul wrote his letters to Christians who met in houses. For example, at the end of his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul sent them the following greeting:

*The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. **1 Corinthians 16:19***



It may be a surprise to learn that the New Testament never refers to any dedicated physical Christian buildings. In the Bible, the word “church” (ἐκκλησία) does not refer to a physical building. Rather, church always refers to the community of believers and disciples who were called out and set apart to follow Jesus.

In the early history of the Christian movement, Christians met for fellowship and worship in houses right around the Mediterranean. It is also important to note that this was not a novel Christian idea. In the Fourth Commandment, which the Seventh-day Adventist church holds so dear, the home is portrayed as a place of rest and worship for family, employees and visitors:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8-11

Prophetic guidance encourages using homes for evangelism and discipleship. In the same chapter where the famous “Christ’s Method Alone” quote is found, Ellen White also writes:

We should feel it our special duty to work for those living in our neighborhood. Study how you can best help those who take no interest in religious things. As you visit your friends and neighbors, show an interest in their spiritual as well as in their temporal welfare. Speak to them of Christ as a sin-pardoning Saviour. Invite your neighbors to your home, and read with them from the precious Bible and from books that explain its truths. Invite them to unite with you in song and prayer. In these little gatherings, Christ Himself will be present, as He has promised, and hearts will be touched by His grace. The Ministry of Healing, 152.

There are also powerful missional reasons for establishing house church networks. Most people in post-Christian societies do not naturally seek out church buildings and programs to attend. They are interested in building authentic relationships, which occur more naturally in interactive environments.

The Seventh-day Adventist church is also aware that the world is heading towards the end time when draconian worship restrictions will be imposed. Throughout history, one of the main ways that Jesus' church could survive persecution was to go underground and meet in homes. While this prospect may sound daunting, the reality is that the Christian church has flourished in these times. By creating a framework for house churches and encouraging this as a full expression of church, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is wisely preparing for these end-time laws that will prohibit corporate public worship on Sabbath.

The most exciting days for the Seventh-day Adventist movement are still in the future. House church networks will form growing missional opportunities in cities and countries around the world. May this guide be a valuable tool and map for churches and people who want to embrace this missional opportunity.

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers also. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining encouragement and strength from the assistance of the others. Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build up one another in the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in the endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ's name, their numbers will increase; for the Saviour says, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask in My name, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." **Australiasian Union Conference Record August 15, 1902.**

2

THE VISION OF HOUSE CHURCH NETWORKS

2.1 What does it look like?

The house church model is a valid expression of church which has existed since the beginning of Christianity up until now. At its core, house churches are small groups of believers whose primary gathering occurs in a home. Alternatively, the small group may meet in some other space which is not a dedicated church building. House church meetings include the core elements of worship, community and mission.

The principle aim of the house church is to make disciples who gather together, encourage each other and grow in faith, while at the same time making new disciples of Jesus. As the group grows, the vision is to multiply and launch new house churches, rather than to just increase the size of their own gathering. One of the essential keys to making this vision become a reality is to keep house churches simple and reproducible.

house churches are small groups of believers whose primary gathering occurs in a home

Although some house churches may decide to grow and become a traditional church which meets every Sabbath in a dedicated building, the purpose of this guide, though, is to outline how a network of house churches can grow and flourish in the Adventist system.

A house church has the potential to be strongly connected to the local community where it is located. Those that attend the house church will often not just attend church there, but also live, work, shop, go to school/university and be involved in many other activities (e.g. sports clubs, gyms etc.) within that particular local community. This would mean that people in the house church already have social connections with people in the community. They can then intentionally seek to share the message of Jesus with them and connect them with the life of the church.

Thus, the primary driver for launching house churches is to enter new missional areas. While many house churches will meet in homes, other house churches may meet in businesses, cafes, community spaces, etc. The key is to utilize spaces that are available for the group to meet. A house church multiplies when:

1. **A new missional area is identified.** Through the community connections and missional passion that the group has, a new unreached area or people group may be identified. The house church will then intentionally develop a plan to enter into the new area and launch another house church.
2. **A new need in the community is identified** that can be better met by starting a new group with a specific focus. This should be based on a new demographic or people group that has a particular ministry need.
3. **A house church outgrows the physical space that it is currently using.** This occurs when the space where the house church is meeting is not adequate. This process will involve identifying appropriate leadership to begin a new group and an appropriate location where the new group can meet.

Each house church needs to have a clear leadership structure. There should be a leader and a trainee leader. Within the Adventist Church structure, it is recommended that the leaders of house churches are ordained elders in order to be able to perform appropriate functions such as leading in communion, baptism etc. It is recommended that ordaining a house church leader as an elder is an important part of recognising a person's call to leadership and is performed through the mission hub church which the house church is connected to, or by the pastoral coach of the house church network.

2.2 Disciple making focus

All house churches should be focused on making disciples and multiplying leaders. Healthy house churches are not just focused on creating comfortable gatherings for Christians. Developing an intentional strategy for and a consistent culture of making disciples is essential to the house church having a clear focus and achieving its purpose to multiply disciples.

A disciple can be defined as a person who has made the decision to follow Jesus and is becoming more like Christ in every way (see Ephesians 4:15). A person grows as a disciple at a personal level and within their church family. Discipleship involves worship, ministry, witness/evangelism, community building and doing God-centered life together. Just as importantly, true disciples are also committed to making other disciples.

Every church needs to have a clear disciple making focus in order to be faithful to Jesus' command to make disciples in the Great Commission. The focus of house churches should be on multiplying disciples. This should not be just a central part of the life and

purpose of the church, but also of its members and attendees. Discipleship is not practiced at church gatherings exclusively. Rather church gatherings are one part of a discipleship lifestyle which also includes personally spending time in the Bible, in prayer and in intentional mentoring relationships with specific people from the community.

house churches value empowerment and involvement of all attendees

Making disciples is not just about sharing one's beliefs with someone else, but about mentoring them to understand what it means to know Jesus Christ and believe in Him as your Saviour. In the Great Commission, Jesus outlines the three elements of discipleship:

1. Making disciples
2. Baptising them in the name of the triune God and into the body of Christ
3. Teaching people to follow Jesus in all aspects of life

Discipleship involves providing practical assistance as to how a person lives their lives with this knowledge and is a continual process which lasts for one's entire life. This personal and spiritual transformation requires the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the group and the individuals of the group.

The people and mission of the church are priorities. The focus is on multiplying disciples who are being transformed, rather than simply gathering more and more people at one weekly worship event. By its very nature, house churches value empowerment and involvement of all attendees. With the emphasis on making disciples, it is essential that a house church does not continue to exist for any extended period of time without at least one unchurched person attending the group.

2.3 Group assessment

Before making the decision to launch a house church or a house church network, it is recommended that your group makes use of the assessment tool which has been included in the back of this guide in order to see if this model will suit the aims and goals of your group or new church. You are encouraged to use this guide as a tool in conversation with the Conference administration.

2.4 Adventist identity and mission

Seventh-day Adventists base their identity on a saving relationship with Jesus and following Him wherever He goes. This means that being a disciple of Jesus and making disciples with Jesus is core to Seventh-day Adventist identity. Building on this mission of disciple-making, Jesus painted a clear picture in Revelation that He would launch a prophetic end-time movement of people who proclaim the eternal gospel and make disciples in the context of the Three Angels' Messages. Thus, the Adventist identity is directly and integrally linked with Jesus and the message and mission that is portrayed in Revelation 10-14.

The Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs form a valuable summary of the history of God's love towards humanity, as recorded in the Bible. These Fundamental Beliefs express the Seventh-day Adventist theological understanding of what the Bible teaches. They also create a holistic picture of what being a disciple of Jesus looks like in the context of the end times of this world's history. They give practical guidance on how to follow Jesus in terms of issues such as:

- Sabbath observance,
- being an active and contributing member of the body of Christ,
- being involved in the mission of Jesus to share the gospel with the people in the community,
- practice of ordinances,
- stewardship of time, influence and finances,
- following the Bible's counsel on how to live in a way that reflects God's original intent for people.

In addition to the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, the missional aspects of the Adventist identity as a church needs to be emphasized in the following ways:

1. The denomination holds that its Fundamental Beliefs provide the best framework to live out and share the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. He is calling Seventh-day Adventist believers to share this message in the context of the end times in order to make disciples who are preparing for His soon return.
2. Seventh-day Adventists aim to bring people into a saving and growing relationship with Jesus where they know Him personally, love Him supremely and experience His atoning salvation in a real and tangible way and commit to following all the commands of Jesus through the in-dwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Team Reflection

Spend time wrestling in your group with the missional aspect of your identity as Adventists. Reflect on the following questions:

- What role has mission played in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church?
- How has God led the Adventist church further into mission?
- What has the Adventist church learnt through this process?

2.5 The Principle of Visibility

One of the most important aims for any church is to be visible within its community. House churches are no exception. There is a need for house churches to be intentional in developing a clear strategy in order to create effective visibility and connect with the community. Seventh-day Adventist churches should aim to create a meaningful visibility which is attractational and relational, not just symbolic or token.

A house church may not have a dedicated building or common community space, but this can be viewed as an opportunity. Too often a building can create an assumed visibility just by the physical presence that it creates. However, there may be no real connection between the community and the church. Since house churches cannot rely on this assumed visibility, they will need to work harder to create it through intentional interactions and connections through many various means. Strategies for creating this visibility will be further detailed in Section 5.4.

2.6 Ecclesial Minimum

Ecclesial Minimum is a term used to describe the essential elements that any gathering of believers needs to be considered a legitimate church. It is important for us to consider what differentiates a house church as a valid and full expression of church as compared to a small group meeting in someone's home. In Section 5.5, this will be detailed further however the three core areas of Mission, Community and Worship need to be developed in order for a house church to be defined as a church. This can be summarised by the following diagram.



Figure 1: The ecclesial minimum for a group to be a true church. When all three areas are practiced, the ecclesial minimum is achieved

The meetings run by a house church can take on almost any form but should always include the following essential elements to be biblical expressions of church:

1. Worship in the form of singing
2. Communal Prayer
3. Opportunities for utilising spiritual gifts
4. Opportunities for sacrificial giving of time and financial gifts
5. Spiritual teaching in the form of talks/presentations or interactive bible studies
6. Regular practice of ordinances such as communion, baptism, etc.

Some important elements which house churches can also include are those of

1. Eating together
2. Helping each other and the community through acts of service
3. Times of sharing experiences and discussion about life with opportunities for biblical counsel



3

DEVELOPING YOUR VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

3.1 Developing Your Vision

Jesus has painted an incredible vision that the good news of His kingdom and salvation will be communicated throughout the entire world. His vision is that this good news will go to every people group in the world:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. Revelation 14:6

Jesus' vision is that His disciples would launch a missional, disciple-making movement that would make this vision become reality:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19,20

It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Revelation 14:4b

This vision was not just a novel idea. In fact, it had been anticipated by prophets in the Old Testament. For example, Habakkuk painted this prophetic picture:

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
Habakkuk 2:14

It is this vision of reaching entire cities, regions and countries that motivates house church leaders to launch house church networks and movements around the world. Seventh-day Adventists are inspired and challenged by the very real possibility of seeing communities around the world saturated with disciple-making house churches.

What this means for house church leaders is that they are captivated by a vision that is bigger than just one single house church. In order to see the gospel communicated throughout the entire world and for disciples of Jesus to be made in every suburb and people group, leaders need to be committed to launching a house church movement, not just one house church. New house churches will be formed by reaching new people from the community. Multiplication needs to be deeply rooted into the very DNA of house churches.

There is incredible power in an inspiring vision that everyone in your team shares. Vision evokes passion within people.

A vision is a transformed picture of the future. It is based in reality, but presents something better and more desirable than what we currently have.

Vision provides motivation for your team, sets the direction for your group, translates our existence into purpose, and is essential in uniting a group to keep moving forward in a shared mission towards a common goal.

A vision is a transformed picture of the future. It is based in reality, but presents something better and more desirable than what you currently have. In the Biblical sense, a vision is God's preferred future. The vision is not a reality yet, but you want it to become true.

Vision is based on three key elements:

- 1. Feelings:** As you spend time in your community, what generates strong emotions within you? What do you really want to change? While it is important not to be ruled by our feelings, feelings are important in the development of your vision, because an inspiring vision will invoke passion within your team.
- 2. Fact:** A vision also needs to be strongly grounded in the reality of your team and community. You can only make a significant and substantial difference in your community when you know the facts about your house church and where it will be launched.
- 3. Faith:** It is important to remember that the all-powerful Creator of the universe is working through you and in you. God has a preferred future for your team and your community. What would happen if you really put your faith in God and allowed Him to accomplish His vision through your team?

Team Activity

- A. Schedule time with your team to:
 1. Read through the book of Acts together. This is a biblical journey that your team could go on for a few months.
- B. Understand your vision. This is a process that could take your team just a few weeks:
 2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - a. What motivates you to action? What don't you like that you would like to change?
 - b. What is your place in the world? What are you called to change?
 - c. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you as you pray and reflect on Jesus' vision?
 - d. What are the things that could destroy your understanding of and commitment to Jesus' vision?
 - e. What will you do about it this week?
 - f. How big is your God? How can you develop your faith in God?
 3. Identify how God has gifted and equipped your team to serve.
 4. Explore the needs and interests of people in your community to identify how your team intersects with them:
 - a. Study the demographics of your community
 - b. Connect with gatekeepers in your community, such as business owners, police, school principals, librarians, etc.
 - c. Spend time observing people and how they naturally gather
 - d. Talk to people in public spaces such as parks and shopping centres
 5. Write out your vision statement:
 - a. As you reflect and brainstorm these questions, write down the words and ideas that are shared. These will form the basic building blocks for an inspiring, shared vision statement for your team.
 - b. Write out a draft vision statement of how you would express Jesus' vision for your community in your specific context.
 - c. Polish your vision statement until it truly captures the vision that you believe is God's preferred future for your community.

3.2 Clarifying Your Mission

Jesus has made the mission of the church very clear. It is to make more disciples. This is based on the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist movement is to make disciples within the end-time, prophetic context of the Three Angels' Messages:

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the

hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.”

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. Revelation 14:6-12

House church movements that are created by Seventh-day Adventists need to be committed to the Seventh-day Adventist mission. When a team is not collectively committed to the unique Seventh-day Adventist mission it leads to divergent goals within the team. This introduces a psychological braking mechanism into the collective thinking of the team, thus slowing the movement and reducing the missional drive within the group.

At the same time, it is valuable to contextualise the core Seventh-day Adventist mission to make disciples in a way that expresses what this mission means in the context of the local community that you are called to reach.

Team Activity

Reflect on the following questions as a team:

1. What would making disciples look like in this community?
2. How can you express the mission of making disciples in a way that makes sense and is attractive to people in the community?
3. Why is it important to be committed to the Seventh-day Adventist mission?
4. Why are you committed to the Seventh-day Adventist mission, both personally and as a team?

3.2 Identifying Your Values

It is important to identify and define the values that a group or movement is committed to. Values define the qualities of the relationships that your team would like to have in your house church movement. Most conflicts in local churches are not over theological beliefs, but rather over values. Simply put—values identify how you will treat each other and others from your community.

Two ways that you can identify values:

1. Relationship qualities that are valued in your community
2. Relationship qualities that your team or community do not currently have, but you need to grow in

Some important values in house church movements are:

- **Engaged / Incarnational:** Being engaged with people in the community
- **Missional:** Living life on Jesus' mission wherever you are
- **Dependence:** Learning to live a life that demonstrates dependence on God through prayer and the study of God's word
- **Generosity:** Being generous with time, service, spiritual gifts, finances
- **Trust / Transparency:** Developing trust within the group by being open and transparent
- **Simplicity:** Being committed to simple methods that are easily learned and replicated by people
- **Scalability / Reproducibility:** Making sure that ideas and structures can be transferred easily
- **Intergenerational:** Being family by building intergenerational relationships within the community
- **Discipleship:** Supporting and encouraging other people in their commitment to follow Jesus and become like Him
- **Multiplication:** Having intentional plans to make more disciples, leaders and house churches
- **Empowering:** Seeing the potential in people and encouraging them to grow
- **Unity:** Remaining united with the Seventh-day Adventist missional movement and global family

It will be valuable for you as a team to identify the values that you see as the most important for your community.

Team Activity

Reflect on these questions as a team:

1. What relational qualities do you really value as a team?
2. What qualities do people in your community value?
3. What qualities are really needed in your team or community?
4. How will you communicate these values within your house church movement and individual house churches?

3.3 Developing Your Discipleship Strategy

The core mission in Christianity is to make disciples, so it is essential to spend time developing your discipleship strategy. The best way to learn how to make disciples is to learn from the example of Jesus. Paul provides a Biblical example of how he applied Jesus' disciple-making strategy in his missionary journeys around the Mediterranean planting churches.

When reading through the New Testament, it is clear that Jesus made disciples by investing in the lives of others. We can also identify that Jesus' strategy for making disciples progressed through the following stages.

1. Connecting with people by sympathising with them and ministering to their needs;
2. Inviting them to make a decision to follow Him;
3. Teaching them about the kingdom of God;

4. Involving them in mission, community service and church;
5. Training them to become mission-focused leaders;
6. Sending them out to start new churches.

In today's context, making disciples involves building relationships with people, introducing them to Jesus, inviting them to make a decision to follow Him, helping them understand their role in prophetic history and empowering them to become missional leaders in their community. Core elements of discipleship are:

- Introducing people to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus through the Gospels
- Teaching them how to be filled with the Holy Spirit and have a daily walk with Jesus through Bible study and prayer
- Involving them in Jesus' mission to save lost people

Jesus also helped His disciples understand the prophetic significance of the time in which they lived. In particular, Jesus pointed His disciples to read the prophecies of Daniel:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Matthew 24:15

History tells us that all of the followers of Jesus were saved from being destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by valuing and following Jesus' counsel. In the same way, Seventh-day Adventist house churches need to teach new disciples in their house church networks the prophetic significance of the time in which they live. This includes sharing with them the Adventist prophetic mission and calling, as found in Daniel 7-9 and Revelation 10-18. It is also essential for new Adventist disciples to be able to accept and value the prophetic gift that the Holy Spirit has given to the Seventh-day Adventist movement. This includes sharing books such as *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*.

Take time with your team to reflect on what discipleship framework and initiatives you will use to grow disciples in your house church network. Refer to the Tools & Resources Section for specific frameworks that your team may choose to use.

*building relationships with people,
introducing them to Jesus, inviting
them to make a decision to follow Him,
helping them understand their role
in prophetic history and empowering
them to become missional leaders in
their community*

3.4 Engaging with the Community

Jesus' end-time vision is that the eternal gospel will go to every nation, kindred, language and people group. In order for this vision to become a reality, Seventh-day Adventist house church movements need to venture beyond the four walls of established Adventist churches and homes, and engage with people in the community.

There are many opportunities for house churches to engage with their community:

1. Friends
2. Work colleagues
3. Neighbours
4. Community groups
5. Online groups
6. Community service

People in house churches are often already involved in these types of opportunities to engage. They may also decide to intentionally join new groups in their community in order to broaden their reach.

It is important for house churches to establish built-in accountability for engaging with people in the community. For example, the Discovery Bible Reading method intentionally includes a question which encourages people to share their faith journey. The AUC Sabbath School for Life resource is another discipleship tool that encourages people to initiate and maintain their commitment to building disciple-making relationships.

Sometimes people can struggle to know how to transition conversations towards spiritual and Biblical topics. The Conversation Quadrants below can provide people with valuable insights on how to recognise people who are on a journey and becoming closer towards God:



3.5 The Lifecycle of Growth and Multiplication

There are many similarities between families and house churches. In time, a healthy family will grow to the point where children will step out and start their own families. Usually, they will still remain connected to their family of origin. Then when



grandchildren come, they bring a sense of vitality and freshness to the broader family network.

In the same way, it is important for house churches to intentionally plan to grow and multiply. This will happen naturally, along existing relational lines, as well as intentionally, as house church leaders mentor younger leaders with potential. When this vision of growth and multiplication is embraced, the house church movement will constantly experience new life and missional vitality.

It is also important not to resist the process of growth and multiplication. It would be detrimental for parents to try to keep their children to stay in the family home long after the children become adults and are mature enough to start

their own homes and families. In the same way, house church leaders need to keep the vision of multiplication and growing a house church movement in mind. Otherwise, there is the risk that the growth of people in the house church will be stunted. In turn, this will limit the growth of the whole group and the potential for multiplication.

It is important to keep in mind that people will naturally move away to study and work. These do not need to be seen as a loss to the house church. Rather, it is an opportunity to train missional leaders and intentionally send them to launch new house churches wherever they are going. This unwavering commitment to equipping and sending missional leaders will be a blessing to the group and ultimately result in saturating your community, and the world, with house churches.



4

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

One of the most important aspects that will impact the overall health of any house church movement is its ability to multiply and replicate spiritually mature and effective leadership. Serious thought needs to be made in how leaders are identified and developed within your house churches. This includes the systems which are implemented to develop leaders. By their very nature house churches are smaller in numbers. The ability to multiply and grow new house church groups will depend on your ability to grow new leaders. It will also depend on the structure and support you give leaders to reproduce themselves.

4.1 How to structure leadership

Each house church needs to have a clear and transparent leadership structure. Good leadership helps keep the group focused on God's vision and mission for the house church. It also helps in the multiplication of your groups as people will know the leaders who are being trained to lead new groups when the house church multiplies. Furthermore, leadership helps to protect the house church from being hijacked or misdirected by people who are not aligned with the direction and vision of the house church.

A suggested starting point in developing an appropriate leadership structure is establishing the definitions of leaders. Each house church should have a leader and trainee leader, and these leaders should be ordained elders of the group. Other minimum roles should be treasurer and clerk/secretary. You can then consider leaders

of other essential ministries depending on the make up and needs of your house church. For example, children’s ministry leader and assistant are essential when there are children in the group because the house church needs to fulfill AdSAFE requirements.

You should avoid appointing too many roles and keep the leadership structure clear and simple. It is also important to emphasise that people can be involved in the house church even when they are not leaders. All house churches should encourage participants to identify their gospel-centred and God-given calling. This will either lead them to using their gifts within the group or open opportunities and inspiration to go out and start a new group.



Figure 2: Leadership Model for a House Church.

The core responsibilities for house church leaders should be:

- empowering and training all for ministry
- encouraging members to invite new unchurched people to the group
- organising the group and activities
- administration tasks
- delegating ministry tasks to people
- ensuring legal and insurance obligations are being met

- mentoring new leaders to start new house churches

4.2 How to multiply leaders

Leaders should intentionally raise up and mentor new leaders with the view to grow and multiply house churches. The best method to do this is for both the leader and trainee leader to identify people they can each mentor and disciple for the express purpose of leading a new group.

Identifying potential leaders is an important part of the leadership development process. Jesus instructed His disciples to look for a person of peace, or in other words, someone who is spiritually open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the vision of His growing kingdom:

Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. Luke 10:5,6

When you actively look for people of peace, you are able to move with the supernatural flow of the Holy Spirit through relationship streams that exist within communities.

Look for natural leaders. These are people that God has naturally gifted with leadership and will be able to lead their relational streams into the kingdom of God. There are many examples of natural leaders in the Bible, such as the demoniac (Mark 5:18-20), the woman at the well (John 4:39-42), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27), Saul (Acts 9:20-22), Cornelius (Acts 10:24), Lydia (Acts 16:14,15) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:27-34). These natural leaders were not necessarily people that Jewish society would have seen as leaders.

People of peace and/or natural leaders could be the head of their homes, a key person of influence in a workplace or a leader of a community group. However, they may not necessarily be someone holding a formal leadership position. In the same way, be open to people of peace and natural leaders that may not normally be chosen, but people whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to be His missional leaders.

CASE STUDY: The Well, Kempsey NSW

Growing an Organic House Church Movement

The Well started in November 2018. It was launched in the Kempsey Adventist School, and was specifically a campus church. We wanted to focus on the kids at the school, but also have a discipleship pathway for parents in small groups. Out of that was birthed the focus of becoming more of a house church movement. We saw kids coming along to The Well on Friday night. Then parents would bring their kids to house churches the next day because they wanted to take the next spiritual step as a family.

We started with one group that met in different houses each Sabbath. Because of the growth of the group and the COVID-19 restrictions, we planted a second group. We now have a Lower Macleay and Kempsey group. The Lower Macleay house church focuses more on the staff of the school, while the Kempsey group focus more on families in the school.

Heading into 2021, our big focus is on prayer and growing spiritually. Our goal is to plant two more house churches, one from each group, by the end of the 2021.

We started to meet outdoors, rather than in people's houses. This was because of COVID-19, but also because it is easier on families that are hosting. Our ministry model is to focus on relational streams, ministering in the relationships that already exist, such as people's family members and where they work. That was how the two groups found their focus. The focus of each group was found organically because we were ministering through relational streams.

Our strategy has three key simple elements:

1. Our message is focused on the gospel in the Bible.
2. Our missional power comes through prayer.
3. Our groups grow organically through relational streams.

Jack Ryder

The process of discipling leaders forms the leadership development stage of a comprehensive discipleship strategy. This will require spending regular time with that person. It is recommended to commit to spend at least 1hr per week. It is also important that you spend time together in the process of actually making other disciples. A healthy discipleship process should include a balance of relational and practical aspects.

It is also important that you are explicit in outlining your purpose of entering into this arrangement. The purpose of these meetings is not just for a weekly chat. Instead, these times should have focus and purpose. You should aim to clearly communicate to the person what leadership potential you see in them and what development you are wanting to see from your time in discipleship. Jesus demonstrated this principle when He called Peter. He called many disciples but clearly identified those he saw as having leadership potential. We see these principles in his calling of Peter.



In Luke, after the incident of the miraculous catch of fish he tells him,

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” **Luke 5:10**

In Matthew and Mark, he says the following

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17**

Here Jesus invites them into a discipleship relationship, but in so doing he indicates that he sees leadership potential in them. He tells them what he hopes to develop in them through his time with them, ie that they would draw people into His kingdom. Jesus also indicated his intent to develop the leadership potential in Peter when he indicates the change of name representing a change of character.

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter). **John 1:42**

In fact, this method of developing leaders can be seen right throughout the Bible. God identifies leadership potential and indicates what characteristics He is wanting to develop in the person. Other good examples are Moses, Gideon, Samuel, David etc.

Paul used this model in his ministry, especially in the Pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus. For example, Paul told Timothy:

“...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2

Too often church leaders are far too shy in identifying leadership potential. You need to clearly indicate what you see the person is capable of and how you want to see them develop in that area. This doesn't mean that you ignore or gloss over the challenges that a person faces. This approach helps set a clear direction and purpose for the time spent with this person and introduces accountability for the trainee and you as their mentor. It also has to be noted that it does not guarantee that this person will develop into their leadership potential. They still have the freedom to choose whether to become a house church leader, but it is your job to give them every opportunity you can.

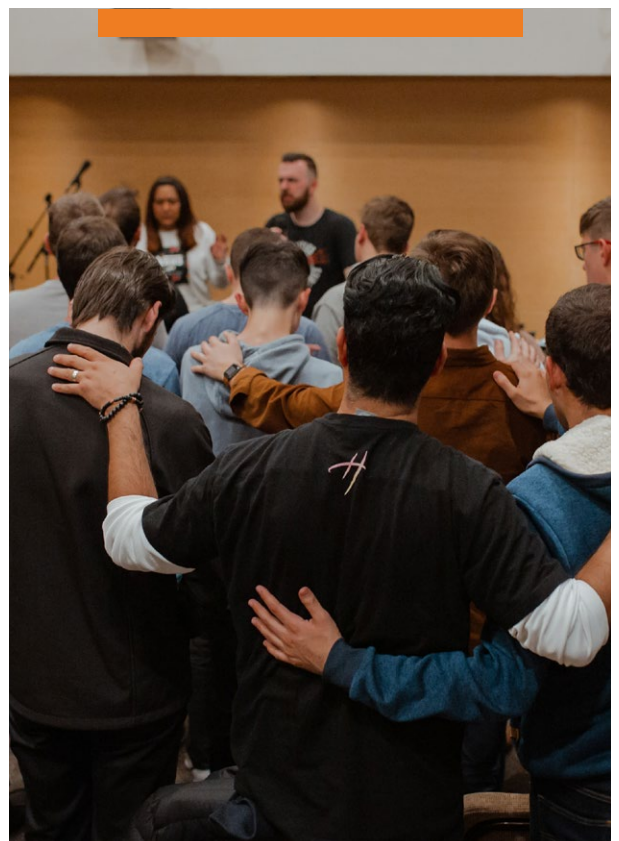
Some of the important areas to focus on with this person are:

- What are the core tasks of a leader and trainee leader in the house church
- What skills does the trainee have which can be utilised now
- What skills need to be enhanced or developed
- Give tasks and opportunities for them to perform important leadership tasks
- Give encouraging and constructive feedback for them to learn from
- Discuss the core characteristics of what it takes to be an effective leader in your house church movement
- Instill within their understanding and vision the important principle of reproducing new leaders
- Model leadership for the trainee
- Provide leadership opportunities to the trainee to allow them to develop their leadership and confidence

4.3 Spiritual gifts development

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit gives all believers spiritual gifts to minister to others and to build up the church. There are natural and Biblical ways of identifying the spiritual gifts that people have been given. Through prayer and spiritual discernment, spiritual gifts can often be apparent to everyone in the house church and this observation can be communicated in a relational way. Structured assessment tools can also be used to identify people's spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts are supernaturally endowed abilities given to disciples by the Holy Spirit. They can often overlap with natural talents, but they are not identical to natural talents. The Holy Spirit can enhance a natural talent supernaturally



for the purpose of building up the kingdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, the apostle Paul lists the following gifts

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Discernment
- Tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Serving
- Teaching
- Giving
- Leadership
- Mercy
- Encouraging
- Helps
- Administration

(1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30, Rom 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11)

When considering the purpose of these gifts, Paul states that “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Paul also mentions that the gifts are for building up the church, encouraging each other and spurring each other onto acts that glorify God. Spiritual gifts will also enable the church to spread God’s good news. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 13 that all spiritual gifts should be utilised in the context of expressing love for each other and all people.

All spiritual gifts are given for a time and a purpose. Sometimes these gifts might be given for an occasion, as in the gift of tongues given to Peter and other apostles at Pentecost. Other times, gifts are given for a season, such as in the gift of healing given to Paul. There are also situations when a person is given a spiritual gift for a lifetime, for example the gift of encouragement given to Barnabas. One important aspect of a spiritual gift is that it is given to a person, but it does not belong to them personally — it belongs to the Spirit of God.

All spiritual gifts should be utilised in the context of expressing love for each other and all people.

In the New Testament, people usually received spiritual gifts through prayer and the laying on of hands. Before the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost Jesus instructed the disciples not to leave Jerusalem and, during this time, they committed themselves to prayer.

In the Bible, Jesus invites His disciples to spend focused and passionate time on their knees pleading for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their lives. More time could be spent with your church praying intentionally for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in each other’s lives. During this time, your team will be given more spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit will also supernaturally enhance gifts and talents that people in your team already have. Jesus instructs His disciples to ask for the Holy Spirit in prayer in the parable of the persistent neighbour in Luke 11:5-13. He is teaching his disciples how to pray and gives them this illustration about persistence in prayer. His conclusion is:

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Luke 11:9,13b

It is also clear that a New Testament practice was to lay on hands for those being prayed for. When Peter and John went to Samaria to preach to the new believers, it was not just enough for them that they listened, believed and were baptised in Jesus name. They also “laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.” **Acts 8:17** Paul also reminds Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.” **1 Timothy 4:14** This can be included as a part of when you pray for each other regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your lives.

One of the most reliable ways for a disciple to discover their spiritual gifts is finding opportunities to serve in various ministry contexts. These practical opportunities should be supported by ongoing constructive feedback from a leader or mentor to gauge the fruitfulness, joy and level of spiritual growth experienced. While this is not an easy shortcut in the journey of discovering one’s spiritual gifts, it is by far the most effective way.

It is important for you to start with a biblical emphasis on spiritual gifts. After following a Biblical approach, if using a spiritual gifts assessment tool would be beneficial, there are many online tools available. However, it is important to maintain a Spirit-led focus throughout the discovery process.

5

LEADING A HOUSE CHURCH

House churches provide an incredible opportunity to be creative and adapt to the needs of the community. They are also highly relational environments for making disciples and developing leaders. It is important to understand some basic principles in leading a house church that will allow the group to grow and flourish.

5.1 Building Your Team

A house church flows naturally out of your own relational networks. Start off by inviting your family and friends. It will also be important to create a strong outward and missional focus within your house church. Intentionally invite missionally-minded Adventists to join your group.

house churches are highly relational environments for making disciples and developing leaders

It is essential that you carefully assess potential leaders who you are seeking to invite to be part of the core team for your house church. You need to build a mission-focused team of leaders who are committed to making disciples and to fulfilling the Seventh-day Adventist mission. There are people who are attracted to house churches for the wrong reasons. These reasons may include wanting to promote divergent theological ideas, to seek leadership positions for control, or simply relax in a comfortable environment where there is little accountability. Therefore, it is recommended that you use a leadership assessment process to determine whether potential leaders would

contribute to the vision and missional direction of the house church. An example assessment tool is found in the Tools & Resources Section.

Spend time with your team sharing with them the vision and values of the house church movement. Do this at the start, when you are first launching your house church. It is also important to regularly share the vision and values of the movement with your house church even when it is underway. There is a process called vision leakage, which describes the way that vision will leak from a group within about 6 weeks. The way to counteract vision leakage is to regularly communicate your vision and values. Communicate your vision creatively in your welcome messages, through real-life stories, at different times throughout your church gatherings and in messages that you post on social media.

5.2 Creating Community

Community is created as you spend time doing things together that you enjoy and that you find meaningful. One of the best ways to build community is to eat together. Jesus directed His disciples to eat with people (Luke 10:7,8). Other good ways of building community are engaging in service for others and spending recreational time together like playing sports, enjoying music or doing some form of crafts.

5.3 Engaging with the Community

Your house church needs to engage with the wider community. This was Jesus' method:



Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." The Ministry of Healing, 143.

Some ideas of ways that you can engage with the community are:

- 1. Prayer walking around your community:** Devote time to walking and praying around your community. Take note of any patterns that you observe.
- 2. Identify natural gathering patterns:** Spend time observing the times and places where your community normally gathers. This is often at shopping centres, kids' playgrounds and schools. Then identify ways that you can mingle with people in these natural gatherings.
- 3. Identify the needs of the community:** Spend time learning about the needs of the community. A significant amount of demographic information

can be gleaned from the Australian Census data. Other good ways to identify the needs of the community is to meet up with community gatekeepers, like senior police constables, librarians, school principals, local state and federal politicians and business owners. Spend time observing people and their needs in places where the community naturally gather, such as shopping centres and playgrounds. Additionally, many communities have 'groups' on Facebook for various needs (for example, parents groups, dog owners groups, buy swap and sell groups, etc.). Sometimes you recognise the needs of the community by listening to a specific individual you meet and discovering his or her needs. They will probably not be alone in their situation, and often will be connected with others who share the same needs. Other needs in the community are almost universal: health (including mental health) and activities for children are some of them.

- 4. Identify the skillset and passion of your group:** Your group may have a shared passion for a people group or need in your community such as the homeless, single-parents or young men. Identify how you can support them and continue to connect with them.
- 5. Other community groups:** Collaborate with community groups (such as Rotary or Lions etc.) who are already working in your community. By working collaboratively, you can not only gain opportunities to meet people's needs, but also work alongside people who hold similar values and goals of helping the local community. These relationships can lead to a greater insight into your community and open up opportunities for service which may not have otherwise been possible or obvious.

Once you have identified key needs that your team has the capacity to meet, make specific plans to start meeting one or a few of those needs. It is important to be ready to share the gospel with people at any stage when the Holy Spirit provides the opportunities, as people will be open at different points in your relational journey with them.

5.4 Visibility in the Community

Seventh-day Adventist churches need to be visible in the community, and this includes Adventist house churches. A house church can still be highly visible in the community even though it does not have a physical building with physical roadside signage. This is aligned with the Biblical understanding of worship, which is that worship is not inherently restricted to a physical building and location:

The sabbath is a cathedral in time. Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath

You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19b-22

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4,5

House churches need to build visibility by intentionally building social capital within their community. This can be achieved through initiatives such as:

- Building empathetic and caring relationships with people in the community
- Being engaged individually and as a group in community service
- Confidently and boldly identifying with your house church in conversations
- Actively inviting friends, colleagues, neighbours and family to social events and house church gatherings
- Having an active and relevant online presence, including a website, social media pages and video channels
- Developing a comprehensive community presence, which can include traditional communication initiatives such as letter-boxing and door-to-door surveys
- Actively promoting and participating in larger house church network gatherings

5.5 Leading Sabbath Worship

As a house church, you will want to get together to worship God. You can worship God at any time. However, the Sabbath is a special time that has been set apart by God for believers to be able to connect with Him. It is also important to assist new disciples to learn the meaning of Sabbath and how to keep it. Keeping the Sabbath is an essential aspect of the Seventh-day Adventist identity and mission.

No matter when your house church meets for worship on Sabbath, it is essential to teach and model to new disciples that God intended the Sabbath as a day of rest that is free from the regular burden of work and the modern tyranny of consumerism. The issue with work is not that it is spiritually degrading, but rather that it can isolate individuals from the rest of God's community. Furthermore, at a deeper level, God wants to make it clear through the Sabbath that people are defined by who they are in relationship with Him, not in what they do. Jesus healed people on Sabbath not to show His followers that they are free to work on Sabbath. Rather, He wanted to free sick people from the burden of disease and the social isolation that disease brings, and give them the opportunity to join God's community once again.

Also, the Fourth Commandment identifies that believers need to share the Sabbath with everyone in their circle of influence, including those who do not share their beliefs. This principle means that you should not be enjoying Sabbath rest while making others work for you, whether directly or indirectly. This is why retail shopping, eating out at cafes and restaurants, and purchasing food from takeaway outlets on Sabbath all go against God's vision for the Sabbath. At its very heart, this is ultimately a social justice issue.

Scheduling Sabbath Worship

The Bible does not give a specific time to gather for Sabbath worship, so your leadership team can work out what time works well for you and the people in your community. There is missional value in identifying a time that meets the context and needs of the community you're trying to reach. Typically, the timeslot 10am-1pm works

well for most Adventists, because they are used to coming together for worship at that time. However, this may not be the best time for people in the community to join your Sabbath worship. If your house church does not meet on Sabbath mornings, you can use Sabbath mornings for developing your leaders and your team. Keep in mind that a house church is flexible enough to be able to meet at different times and different periods, depending on the needs of the group and the community.

Principles for Sabbath Worship

There are a number of key elements that you need to include in your Sabbath worship:

1. **Checking-in time / testimonies:** Spend time as a house church sharing what God has been doing in your lives and in the lives of others around you during the week. This encourages people to see that discipleship is an ongoing journey, rather than simply an event that occurs once a week.
2. **Prayer times:** Jesus' mission moves forward through prayer, and so it is essential that you develop a culture of prayer in your house church. There are many different ways to pray as a group. Conversational prayer is one powerful and natural way to incorporate prayer into your house church. Conversational prayer is just like having a normal conversation with a special focus on talking with God. People can pray once or multiple times. Alternatively, if people do not feel comfortable praying publicly, they can simply immerse themselves in the atmosphere of prayer. A valuable way of uniting the prayer time is by affirming what people have already prayed for, before moving onto new topics. In conversational prayer, there is no need to take time to create a prayer list before entering into the prayer time—prayer needs will simply arise during the conversational prayer time itself. Also, the group should avoid praying in a circle because this only allows each person to pray once and it can put pressure on people to plan elaborate prayers. This makes praying in a circle uncomfortable for new people from the community.
3. **Worship Music:** People who have no recent Christian experience can find it strange to sing. Therefore, it is important to introduce singing at the appropriate point in the journey of the house church. This can be done by playing Christian background music using a bluetooth speaker or smart TV. When you sense that the unchurched people in your group are wanting to sing praise to God, you can introduce singing to them as a distinctively Christian form of worship. Psalms is the longest book in the Bible and is a book of songs. It comes as no surprise that the Bible records David organising musicians and singing for worship. Revelation reveals that the angels love singing praise to God all the time. The reality is, though, that house churches may not have adequate musicians to have an entire worship music team. If your house church has someone who plays the piano or guitar, this is usually sufficient. Other musicians can always join them. If you don't have a pianist or a guitarist, the best option is to use recorded worship music that you can play on a laptop, smartphone or smart TV. You can use a bluetooth speaker to amplify the music so that everyone can hear well. It is important to choose recorded music that has been produced for communal singing and has lyrics for people to follow.
4. **Communicate Stewardship:** Take time to communicate the principles of stewardship in creative ways. Focus on broad principles, such as caring

for the environment and the best use of your time, talents and treasure. It is important to explain the meaning and purpose of returning tithes and offerings in ways that make sense and are motivating for people within your house church movement. Stewardship will be addressed more comprehensively in the chapter devoted to this specific topic.

5. **Interactive Bible reading:** When the Bible is read interactively in community, it has the power to change people's lives. It encourages people to personally spend time in the Bible themselves during the week. Using a simple and reproducible method of Bible reading inspires younger leaders with the possibility of being able to lead their own groups.
6. **Fellowship Meals:** Eating together is a great way to build relationships in your group. It is most effective if you eat together every time that you gather for worship. By arranging for people to bring a plate of food, you can minimise the load on one or a few people. Also, it sets an example which is easy to follow in other house churches that may arise from your house church. It is important to establish at the outset whether your fellowship meal will be vegetarian, as it is easy to establish and explain this precedent from the start rather than trying to introduce it later. If you choose to make your fellowship meals plant-based, you can announce this and let people know simple things that they could bring if they are not accustomed to cooking plant-based dishes. Another way to introduce plant-based cooking is to cook meals together where people are asked to bring a specific ingredient that will be used in making the recipes. Research by Roy Morgan that was reported in February 2020 has shown that the surge in Australians eating all vegetarian or almost vegetarian diets continues to grow, with 2.5 million Australians (12.5%) adopting these diets. The reasons why Australians are adopting plant-based diets are for their health, the environment and compassion towards animals. Seventh-day Adventist house church movements can be leaders in this area. At the same time, it is important to prepare your team and house church to know how to handle the situation if a guest brings a meat dish to contribute to the fellowship lunch without embarrassing or singling out the guest.
7. **Fellowship:** Being part of the church involves being part of God's family. Hence, it is really valuable to spend time in fellowship together. This includes doing fun things together on Sabbaths and also during the week, like going for walks, having picnics together and playing games together. This will create a strong sense of community and family within your house church. As the saying goes, churches that play together, stay together.
8. **Intergenerational Worship Experiences:** For those that have kids, it is important to find meaningful ways to engage them through the worship experience. If you have a good number of kids, consider assigning a leader to facilitate the kids' key learning moments. However, care should be taken to ensure that intergenerational engagement takes place within the worship experience. Be creative!

There are some things that you want to avoid in your Sabbath worship gatherings:

- **Formal Room Layout:** Avoid setting up the room where you have your Sabbath worship gatherings to mimic larger established churches. This includes setting out seats in rows and having a pulpit. One of the purposes of having a house church is

to focus on building relationships, not replicating formal church settings. Think in circles, not rows.

- **Highly Structured Programs:** Because house churches are highly relational, it is important to keep your worship program simple and flexible.
- **Non-interactive sermons:** Avoid delivering sermon messages which are non-interactive or watching live streamed or recorded sermons. While there may be situations where you intentionally choose to have these types of messages presented to the group, it should not be the norm. This is because they do not foster relationships, enable participation and develop leaders within the group.
- **Theological debates:** Leaders who are facilitating discussions should be skilled to guide the conversations in ways that keep the discussion from degenerating into a theological debate.
- **Dominant participants:** While there may be individuals who might be more knowledgeable than others, attention should be given to ensure that the discussion time is evenly spread among the group.
- **Exclusivity:** Care should be given to ensure the language used in the discussion is accessible and easily understood by visitors. Adventist lingo and jargon, if used, should be explained. No assumptions should be made.

If there is any desire within the group to regularly have non-interactive sermon messages, consider this advice:

*There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit. **The Ministry of Healing, 143.***

*There are times when it is fitting for our ministers to give on the Sabbath, in our churches, short discourses, full of the life and love of Christ. But the church members are not to expect a sermon every Sabbath. Let church members, during the week, act their part faithfully, and on the Sabbath relate their experience. The meeting will then be as meat in due season, bringing to all present new life and fresh vigor. When God's people see the great need of working as Christ worked for the conversion of sinners, the testimonies borne by them in the Sabbath service will be filled with power. With joy they will tell of the precious experience they have gained in working for others. **Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 7, 19.***

CASE STUDY: Adamstown Heights House Church, Adamstown Heights NSW

Sowing the Seeds of the Gospel in Our Home

When we came to Australia, the mission that the Conference gave us was to start a church plant. After much prayer, we decided to pursue the house church model because it was low cost and an effective way of reaching secular Aussies.

Camila and I started a not-for-profit organisation that was focused on promoting health in the community. We started a number of programs, including health programs such as cooking classes and exercise groups. We would then invite people who were spiritually open to our house church.

In our house church gatherings, we started with some songs, but then headed into an interactive Discovery Bible Study. People loved the biblical narratives and were excited to see how these stories related to their lives. They also enjoyed the relaxed home environment. Many people commented that they came because the church met in our home. Over the years, we have studied the Bible with about 50 people and seen about 10 people baptised.

The Adamstown Heights House Church has been a really rewarding experience for my wife and I. My vision is a house church network launched in the Hunter Region, because I am convinced that this will be a highly effective way to plant churches in the future.

Joseph Skaf

Facilitating Accountability

Since the mission of house church movements is to make disciples within the context of the Three Angel's Message, it is important to build in natural and intentional accountability into house church meetings. This accountability can be incorporated into the check-in time and the interactive Bible study time.

The areas where accountability is needed include:

1. Having an active relationship with Jesus, including studying the Bible and personal prayer
2. Serving people in the community
3. Sharing your faith with others
4. Launching new Bible reading groups

It is important not to make accountability feel intimidating or legalistic. The best way to promote accountability is to ask for stories where people have been able to achieve

personal goals in these areas. Stories model the discipleship process and provide tangible examples to follow.

One-on-One Discipleship and Mentoring

Another important way to make committed disciples of Jesus Christ is to establish one-on-one discipleship relationships within the house church. Being a disciple involves learning to become like Christ, and this is best done in the context of a relationship. This is because God created people as social beings.

Paul gave the following counsel to the disciples in Corinth:

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

In order for true disciples to be made, people in house churches need to be as vulnerable and courageous as Paul was in inviting people to follow them so that they can lead these spiritually younger people to follow Jesus.

One-on-one discipleship involves establishing an intentional relationship with a seeker or new disciple with the goal of growing spiritually. From a practical perspective, this means arranging to meet on a weekly basis. These discipleship meetings could occur in a number of locations or contexts, such as:

- In person in a third space, such as a café or library
- Online
- Via phone or mobile

It is important that you only meet for one-on-one discipleship with a person of the same gender and that you do not meet alone with them. This is for Adsafes reasons and to completely avoid the risk of allegations.

The goal of one-on-one discipleship is to focus on spiritual growth. Specific areas to focus on include:

1. Having an active relationship with Jesus, including studying the Bible and personal prayer
2. Addressing sin and addictions in your life through confession and accountability
3. Sharing your faith

One-on-one discipleship relationships should also focus on specifically reaching and discipling other seekers so that the discipling relationship always has an outward focus. This fulfils the vision of growing and multiplying disciples.

5.6 Creating Communication Channels

House churches are very flexible and adaptive. This means that it is very important to create communication channels so everyone is informed of what is happening in the group. These communication channels can include:

- A group in a messaging app
- An email group
- Website

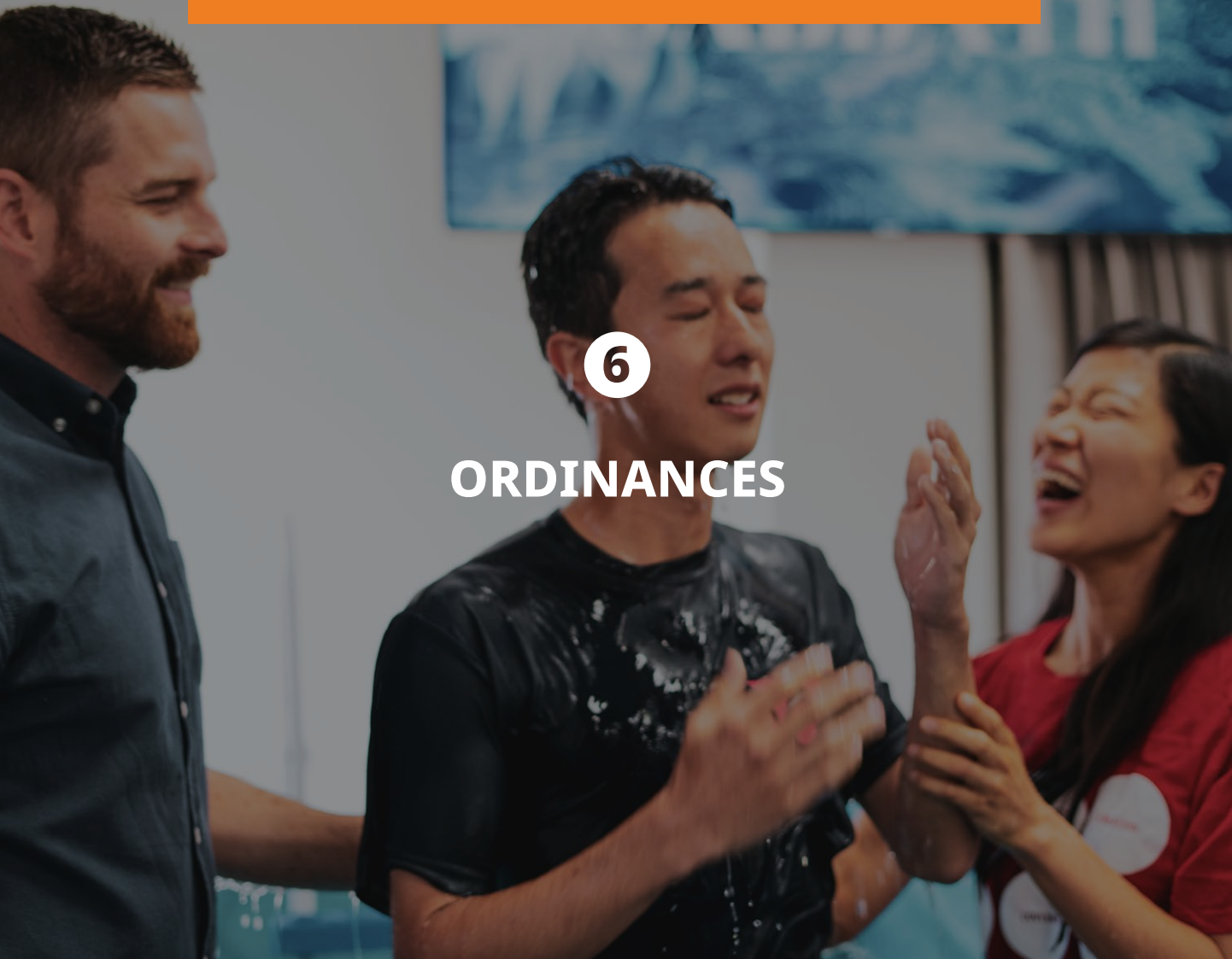
In order to distribute the leadership responsibilities, it is valuable to delegate the task of updating your communication channel(s) to one of your group members who has good technical abilities. Multiple communication channels may be required to ensure the information is accessible to everyone. Ensure you find out people's preferred mode of communication. House churches need to abide by social media policies developed by either the house church network or by the Conference. A social media policy identifies the language and online behaviour that is appropriate for Seventh-day Adventist leaders and groups to engage in. Contact the Conference for their social media policy.

5.7 Regular Leadership Meetings

Many week-to-week decisions can be made with the whole house church during their regular weekly meetings. However, it is important to also schedule separate leadership meetings to address higher level leadership and strategic opportunities. These include:

- Community engagement
- Leadership identification and development
- Process and timing of multiplication
- Preparation for baptism
- Calendar of community service and social events
- Larger gatherings with other house churches in the movement or network

Scheduling leadership meetings at least monthly can build discipleship and leadership momentum within the house church.



6

ORDINANCES

There are a number of important Biblical rites or ceremonies which Jesus established for His church. These have powerful spiritual meaning for disciples, and so it is important for house churches to actively participate in them as well.

6.1 Baptism

Jesus instituted baptism as a public act and declaration that a person chooses to die to their natural self and be raised to new life in Him. Being baptised is a powerful symbol and a time to rejoice as a church family.

When Jesus first gave the Great Commission, He directed all disciples to make disciples. He also authorised all disciples to baptise these new disciples:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

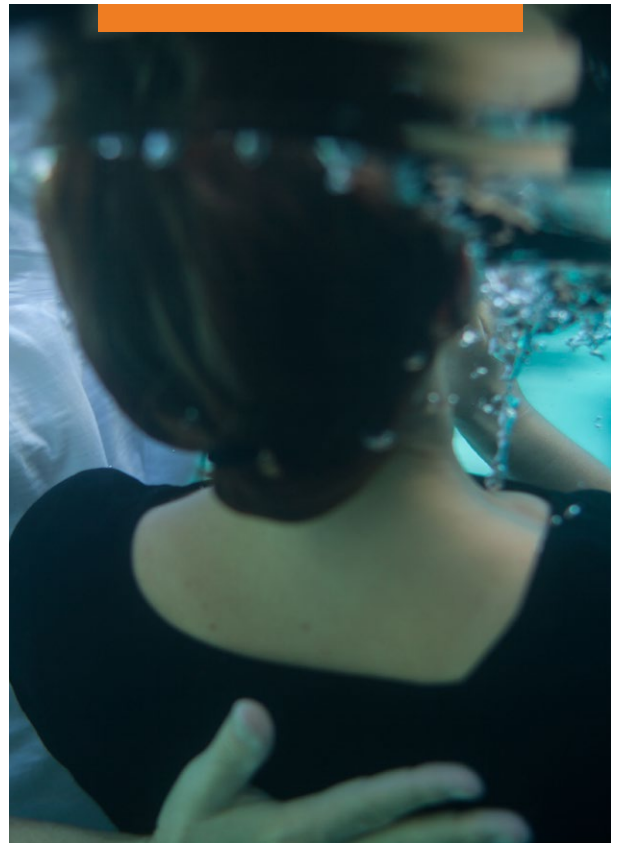
The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual has a section on baptism.¹ It is important to follow the processes and procedures outlined in that section as applicable. Because house church networks are fairly new in the Seventh-day Adventist movement, some of the more distinctive aspects of baptism are discussed here. House church leaders

¹You can download the current Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual from here: <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/documents/church-manual/>. The section on baptism is on pages 43-55 in the 2015 Edition of the Church Manual.

who are ordained elders and approved by the Conference President can baptise new disciples into their community of faith. This inspires and motivates other people in the house church to be actively involved in sharing their faith and discipling the people around them. It is important to understand that baptism is a public testimony that is performed in the context of the community of disciples. Thus, baptism should not be performed in isolation without the community being present, except in unique circumstances like extreme persecution or death penalties. Also, Jesus instituted the symbol of baptism in the context of the process of discipleship, rather than a one-off event.

It is important for baptismal candidates to understand that they are being baptised into Christ and the body of Christ, which includes both the local house church and the global Seventh-day Adventist church. Thus, it is essential that baptismal candidates be taught a clear overview of the Biblical worldview and the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs.

The decision to baptise a person is a group decision, not an individual decision by a single person or leader. Therefore, leaders who are preparing new disciples for baptism need to consult with the other leaders in their group when they make the decision to baptise someone. It is worthwhile to hear other leader's perspectives, even if this extends the process of preparing for baptism. Sometimes leaders want to rush people into baptism, but having other leaders' perspectives can deepen the preparation in valuable ways. On the other hand, it is important not to unnecessarily stall a person's baptism.



This inspires and motivates other people in the house church to be actively involved in sharing their faith and discipling the people around them.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has established baptismal procedures so that this very important Biblical ceremony can be performed in an orderly and intentional way. Seventh-day Adventist policy is that baptisms can be performed by ordained and commissioned ministers, as well as by ordained elders approved by the Conference President. Therefore, it is recommended that house church leaders are ordained as elders according to Seventh-day Adventist Church policy and that the Conference President gives an all-inclusive approval to all elders in recognised house church networks within the Conference to baptise new Seventh-day Adventist disciples. In house churches which do not have ordained elders, the house church leaders need to seek the support of an ordained or commissioned minister and ask him or her to

accompany them in performing the baptism. House church leaders who are seeking to baptise new disciples should seek support and approval from the church board of their mission hub church or the board of the house church network.

Whenever a person is baptized in a house church, the elder or minister who is baptising them should complete a baptismal certificate and information slip. The person being baptised should be presented with their baptismal certificate and the baptismal information slip should be forwarded to the Membership Secretary of the Conference.

6.2 Communion

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus gave His followers the communion service to remember His sacrifice for them on the Cross until He returns. Participating in the foot-washing service demonstrates your willingness to follow Jesus' example of humility and service. Participating in the Lord's Supper demonstrates your desire to remember Jesus' sacrifice and to assimilate His life into your lives.

House churches can organise communion services as agape meals, which reproduce the experience of the disciples in the Upper Room much more closely. The bread and the grape juice can be supplemented with many Middle Eastern foods, such as pita bread, falafels, hummus, tabouli, olives as well as other vegetables and dips. The communion service can be held during an evening to replicate the evening setting of the Last Supper. The meal can be incorporated within a whole worship program, including singing, testimonies, conversational prayer and other highly spiritual experiences of surrender.

Alternatively, the bread and the grape juice can be incorporated into a normal fellowship meal, thus giving salvation significance to these meals. In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White made this significant comment:

*To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that Communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament. **The Desire of Ages, 660.***

Thus, incorporating the bread and the grape juice into ordinary fellowship meals is publicly acknowledging what is already true spiritually.

It is important to prepare or source bread that has been made without yeast. This is a significant Biblical symbol that our Saviour Jesus was without sin (Lev 6:17; 1 Cor 5:6). It is important that church leaders do not compromise this Biblical symbol simply because of convenience or taste preferences.

The foot-washing service was a beautiful demonstration of the Lord's willingness to humble Himself to serve His followers. It is also connected with the priestly service of

cleansing that Aaron and his sons undertook when they washed their feet (Ex 30:19,21). Organising and participating in the foot-washing service is a powerful symbol that shows that believers are committed to following Jesus' example of humility and service and to commit ourselves to being part of His royal priesthood (Ex 19:6, 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 1:6, Rev 5:10). Organising the foot-washing service can take a little more coordination than the Lord's supper, because of the need for basins and towels. House church leaders can borrow these supplies from their mission hub church or the house church network can purchase a supply for the network itself. It is helpful for house church leaders to be aware that plastic basins cost very little. Usually, water is easily obtained in a home from the kitchen sink or laundry. The house church leaders should wash and dry the towels before returning them to the mission hub church or the place where the house church network normally stores them.

The foot-washing service can be quite foreign to people from the community who have little or no Christian experience. It is important to explain clearly why Seventh-day Adventists practice foot-washing. The meaning of the service can also be illustrated through video or drama. The person leading out in the foot-washing can announce that any people from the community are welcome to observe the service, if they do not feel comfortable participating.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church practices open communion and allows anyone who confesses faith in Jesus to participate:

Christ's example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord's Supper. It is true that open sin excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. 1 Corinthians 5:11. But beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." For "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Corinthians 11:28, 27, 29.

When believers assemble to celebrate the ordinances, there are present messengers unseen by human eyes. There may be a Judas in the company, and if so, messengers from the prince of darkness are there, for they attend all who refuse to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Heavenly angels also are present. These unseen visitants are present on every such occasion. There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not be forbidden. There are witnesses present who were present when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and of Judas. More than human eyes beheld the scene.

Christ by the Holy Spirit is there to set the seal to His own ordinance. He is there to convict and soften the heart. Not a look, not a thought of contrition, escapes His notice. For the repentant, brokenhearted one He is waiting. All things are ready for that soul's reception. He who washed the feet of Judas longs to wash every heart from the stain of sin.

None should exclude themselves from the Communion because some who are unworthy may be present. Every disciple is called upon to participate publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Saviour. It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. Hearts and hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His children. All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. Of them it may appropriately be said, "Ye are not all clean." The Desire of Ages, 656.

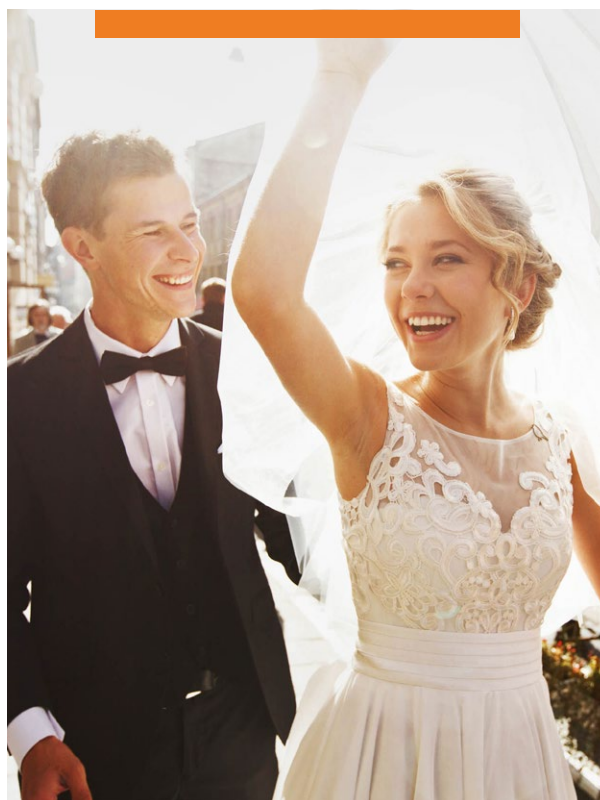
It is recommended that children be allowed to participate in communion services organised by your house church, if they express personal faith in Jesus and understand the meaning of the communion service.

6.3 Baby Dedication / Child dedication

It is recommended that house churches organise a simple service of prayer and dedication for a baby. This demonstrates that the church is committed to supporting the baby's parents in providing nurture, encouragement and support for the child as he or she grows. It is not necessary to call or wait for an ordained or commissioned minister to perform this service.

6.4 Weddings

In Australia, weddings can only be officiated by registered marriage celebrants. House church leaders can participate in organising and leading out in wedding ceremonies, if the couple wishes. This includes contributing to the wedding program in areas such as praying or delivering the sermonette. However, it is necessary to seek the assistance of a registered marriage celebrant to fulfill the legal aspects of the wedding. If the couple wish to have their marriage celebrated according to the rites of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they need to contact an ordained or commissioned Seventh-day Adventist minister who is a registered marriage celebrant.



The Seventh-day Adventist church is committed to the Biblical vision of marriage, which is a lifelong relationship between a man and a woman. House church leaders need to uphold and promote this Biblical vision through their teaching and the way that they live. It is important that a person, who is involved in leading a Seventh-day Adventist house church and who is currently in a dating relationship or is engaged, does not live together with his or her partner before they are married. This leads by example and avoids the appearance of evil. Refer to www.adventist.org/marriage-and-the-family for the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief and other practical counsel on marriage.

6.5 Funerals

There is no legal requirement for a person leading out in a funeral service to have government registration, which means that house church leaders can perform this role. However, the family of the deceased often need experienced support at this time, so it is recommended that a Seventh-day Adventist minister be contacted to officiate or support the house church leader.

6.6 Anointing

When people become sick, they often feel the need to turn to God for help. The Bible encourages sick people to ask the elders of the church to come to pray over them and anoint them (James 5:13-16). This can be a powerful faith-building experience.

House church leaders are encouraged to follow this Biblical practice where appropriate. A simple service of singing, Scripture reading, prayer and anointing with olive oil can be organised. Leaders of mission hub churches and house church movements can provide practical training for house church leaders in leading deeply spiritual anointing services.

6.7 Ordination of Elders

House churches need visionary, missional leaders in order to grow and multiply. Leaders are needed who are able to spiritually inspire people and model how to engage with the community, make disciples, baptise them and develop other leaders. Leaders also need to know how to build community and resolve conflicts. This is the Biblical role of the elders (1 Tim 3:1-7, Tit 1:5-9).

It is important to develop a culture of visionary and missional leaders. This can be achieved through effective leadership identification, training, mentoring, assessment and accountability. This will instill the necessary leadership DNA within the house church network for it to truly become a movement. An elder's assessment tool is included in the Tools & Resources section and house church leaders are encouraged to use it.

House church leaders need to be ordained as elders within the Seventh-day Adventist church so that baptisms and communion services can be performed in harmony with the church's policies. The ordination of house church leaders can be performed by the minister of the mission hub church or by the pastoral coach at a house church network gathering. In order for house church leaders to perform baptisms, it is recommended that the Conference President provide an all-inclusive permission for all elders ordained in house churches to be able to perform baptisms.



7

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is an essential aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It includes wise management of the resources that God has given us, such as time, influence, spiritual gifts and finances. Stewardship is an important aspect of worship for all believers. It is a response of gratitude to God and a recognition that all things originate from Him and belong to Him. Stewardship is also an acknowledgement that He sustains and provides for people in every area of their lives. Promoting stewardship is both a privilege and a responsibility given in Scripture. The collection, accounting and distribution of tithes and offerings can be one of the most logistically challenging aspects for house churches.

7.1 Principles of giving and sacrifice

The Bible establishes the principle of giving as an essential act of worship of the church, just as much as singing or studying God’s word. Paul collected a special offering of the churches of Europe and Asia Minor to support the believers in Jerusalem. God established the principle of tithing to support those doing the work of organising and running spiritual activities.

Stewardship is a response of gratitude to God and a recognition that all things originate from Him and belong to Him

This personal sacrifice is an important part of enabling and multiplying the mission of the church and enabling investment in the expansion of the work of the church into new areas.

The Bible makes it clear that all disciples of Jesus are called to gospel ministry. As Jesus demonstrated through His baptism in the Jordan, one of the significant messages of baptism is that anyone who chooses to be baptised is personally committing themselves to ministry. This includes using their spiritual gifts to serve the church and the community. The Bible also demonstrates that some people are called to provide pastoral support and coaching within the church to equip people for ministry and to build up the church. The Biblical example demonstrates that these people typically will be supported financially through tithe. The Seventh-day Adventist church also has prophetic counsel that confirms this practice. When Adventist disciples faithfully return tithe and offerings to the Conference, they are recognising that they are part of a worldwide movement. These financial resources support the Seventh-day Adventist mission of proclaiming the everlasting gospel.

It is important for house churches to consider the language that they use in relationship with giving. When you speak of it as a privilege and a mutual responsibility of love to God and others, you place the right emphasis on its purpose. You need to educate house church members about the way these funds are used to support the mission of the church. You also need to educate disciples of Jesus on how they can be intentional and systematic in their giving. When this education process is done well, disciples will be better informed and receive a blessing from their faithfulness.

7.2 Tithes and Offerings

House churches and networks should have a means and a method for collecting tithes and offerings. Tithes refers to the practice of faithfully returning 10% of one's income and is what God has asked disciples to do. In the Bible, God's people were required to give a tithe of their income first before using their resources for anything else. Returning tithe demonstrates that everything comes from God and that everyone is ultimately dependent on Him. In Bible times, tithe was returned to the storehouse to support those who worked in full time ministry.

In the Seventh-day Adventist church, tithe is mainly used to cover local pastoral staffing, but it also helps to expand the mission of the church locally, regionally and globally. For house churches connected to mission hub churches, tithe would financially support the pastoral support that is provided to the mission hub church as well as the house churches. For house churches which are part of a network, it would support the pastoral coaches for the house church network. Tithe helps support the creation of resources for the benefit of mission and the church worldwide and at various regional levels. It also provides evangelistic support for local churches. Finally, it helps to support administration costs at the Conference level.



In summary, tithe provides specific support for house churches in one or more of the following ways:

- pastoral support/staffing
- coaching
- training
- funding evangelistic activities
- conference wide events such as Big Camp, summer camps, etc.
- resourcing

Tithe needs to be collected separately from offerings. Offerings are a freewill gift which is an amount on top of the tithe. Offerings fund the local mission, ministries and expenses of the local house church, as well as special areas of need within the worldwide church. A simple way of encouraging people to give offerings is to recommend that they give a predetermined percentage of their income each week as offering.

e-Giving is an efficient and safe way to return tithes and offerings. It is also important to provide the opportunity to give cash during Sabbath worship services. When cash donations are collected, they need to be counted by at least 2 people who have been officially appointed to perform this ministry. The funds need to be recorded and then deposited into the Conference bank account for the house church, house church network or the mission hub church.

7.3 Local church offerings

Even though house churches may be smaller than the traditional church, it is still an important part of the sisterhood of churches in any territory. As house church networks grow, they have the potential to collectively be larger than traditional churches meeting in one location. As such, house churches need to see themselves and act as part of the sisterhood of churches. This should extend to offerings collected during house church meetings.

The Conference sets an offering schedule each year. This schedule allocates offerings collected on a particular Sabbath for specific ministries. The offerings collected on that day will go toward that ministry. There will typically be about 32 Sabbaths in each year where the offering is designated for the local church. On these Sabbaths, what is collected will stay with the local church. On all other Sabbaths, the offerings collected in house churches will be distributed to the ministries specified by the annual Conference offering schedule. In addition, Sabbath School offerings are collected in Seventh-day Adventist churches. This offering is for mission. It is important for house churches to be intentional, creative and committed to collecting these Conference and Sabbath School offerings. This helps the local house church to see itself as a part of a wider and larger movement. There is value in a house church not seeing itself just a local church group, but also supporting the mission work of the world wide church.

Thought should be given as to how and when you will collect or encourage giving during your house church meetings. An easy way for people to give and allocate their gifts is through the church's e-Giving platform, which can be accessed through either the website or the mobile app. Opportunity should be given for everybody to be able to participate in giving financially regardless of the method they choose to give.

For example, you may choose to collect the tithes and offerings using a bag, dish or bucket which is handed around to people. Alternatively, you may wish to simply have a box which people can place their tithes and offerings in at any time. If people are giving with physical money, it would be helpful to train them to use the tithe and offering envelopes so they can easily identify where different donations are going.

7.4 Distribution of Local Church Offerings in a House Church Network

On Sabbaths which are designated as local church offering in the Conference offering schedule, a house church network will need to decide how the offering is applied. There are three possible recipients for local churches offerings in a house church network:

- 1. Local house church:** The offering will be used specifically by the local house church itself.
- 2. House church network:** The offering will be returned to the house church network to be distributed according to the budget and needs of all of the house churches within the entire network.
- 3. Mission hub church:** The offering will be returned to the mission hub church, but will be credited to the house church ledger account for use by the house church or the house church network.

The church board or overseeing committee for the house church network will determine how local church offerings are banked, recorded, allocated and used.

8

MULTIPLICATION STRATEGIES



The vision of a house church movement is that the gospel will be proclaimed throughout the entire world and that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Habakkuk 2:14). The mission of a Seventh-day Adventist house church

movement is to proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ to all people groups and to make disciples within those communities (Mat 28:19,20, Rev 14:6). This is a big and compelling vision which involves house churches being multiplied throughout towns, cities, regions, countries and the entire world.

Proclaim the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ to all people groups and to make disciples within those communities

8.1 The Value of Multiplication

God designed life to multiply. His very first command to both animals and people was to multiply (Gen 1:22,28).

This command to multiply was reiterated in the promise given to Abram. Firstly God gave him the promise that through him would all nations would be blessed:

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
Genesis 12:2,3

Then God changed Abram's name to Abraham,

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. Genesis 17:5

The name "Abram" means "exalted father" while the name "Abraham" means "father of a multitude". God gave this new name to Abraham to indicate that the promise that God had given him was not just that he personally would be blessed, but that the whole world would be blessed through him. In other words, the promise was that Abraham would multiply God's blessing. God was giving Abraham a new name to highlight the fact that He intended multiplication to become an intrinsic part of his identity as a person. This idea was later reiterated many times in the book of Isaiah, as summarised in the following verse.

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. Isaiah 49:6b

The Hebrew word translated "salvation" in this passage is Yeshua, or in English, Jesus. Thus, Isaiah is announcing that the blessing that God had promised Abraham would ultimately flow down to everyone on earth through Jesus.

Multiplication is also intrinsic to the Great Commission, because Jesus directed His disciples to make disciples and teach them to observe everything that He has commanded, which includes His command to make more disciples (Mat 28:19,20).

Jesus has also prophetically revealed to the Seventh-day Adventist church that He intends local churches to multiply as well:

As churches are established, it should be set before them that it is even from among them that men must be taken to carry the truth to others, and raise up new churches. Christian Service, 61.

House churches will thrive as they make a commitment to this vision of multiplication and give sacrificially of their leaders and their disciples. If house churches resist the process of multiplication due to a desire to maintain fellowship or comfort, then they will ultimately suffer spiritually. The reality is that there are times when people need to move away for study, work or family reasons, and without a vision for growing and multiplying, a house church will decline numerically. Making a commitment to growing and multiplying keeps the house church movement mission-focused and thriving.

House churches will thrive as they make a commitment to this vision of multiplication

8.2 Fueling Multiplication

Healthy multiplication is the result or fruit of being committed to making disciples and developing leaders. Consider the example of a fruit tree. The ability of a tree to keep producing fruit is not based on the health and productivity of that single tree alone, but it's success in multiplying itself and growing new trees. Keep in mind the fact that the seeds of an entire orchard are embedded in the fruit of a tree right from the start.

It is essential that the vision and value of multiplication is communicated right from the start of a house church. This embeds multiplication into the DNA of the group. It is much more difficult to introduce the idea of multiplication into a group later. Also, it is important to use the language of “multiplying” the house church rather than “dividing” the house church, as dividing has negative connotations of breaking up relationships.

Thus, it is important that house church leaders consistently focus on making disciples and developing leaders in order to fuel the multiplication of house churches. Simple strategies and practices need to be implemented and assessed. Refer to the sections on developing your discipleship strategy and leaders.

8.4 Practical Strategies for Multiplication

Being successful in multiplying house churches is based on two key dynamics:

Identifying and Developing Natural Leaders: It is important for the leaders of a house church to be actively looking for disciples within their group who have the natural talent and spiritual gift of leadership. These natural leaders need to be mentored in their leadership. This involves spending time with them, providing them with leadership resources, and giving them opportunities to lead. The vision, mission and values of the house church movement need to be shared with them.

Relational Streams: A relational stream is a natural network of people. People within a relational stream naturally gather together. By identifying natural leaders within relational streams in your community, you can launch new house churches. You can also multiply an existing house church by identifying the natural leaders and relational streams within the house church.

Once you have identified the natural leaders and relational streams within your house church, you can initiate a process of forming distinct groups. The relational streams can meet separately for Bible reading and enjoying spending time socially together. As the relational streams are building a more close-knit community, the vision of multiplying needs to be consistently communicated. The mission of reaching more people and making disciples needs to be the driving motivation.

The process of multiplication can be difficult for some people within the group, particularly highly relational people. Some simple and practical strategies for multiplication include:

1. **Launching another group elsewhere:** Leaders form a new house church at a different time or place while keeping the original house church intact and remaining part of it.
2. **Sending leaders out:** Leaders step out of the house church to launch a new house church.
3. **Forming two houses churches from one:** Natural leaders of distinct relational streams within the original house church are identified, and each relational stream starts to form its own group under the same roof. As each group grows, they simultaneously make plans to form distinct house churches.

8.5 Creating House Church Networks

Whenever there are two or more house churches which are connected, it is important to create a network. A house church network is connected in the following ways:

- Vision, mission and values
- Leadership development process
- Coaching and missional support
- Regular network gatherings for visioning, inspiration, leadership recruitment and training
- Governance for overseeing legal matters like AdSafe and insurance

One of the most effective ways to keep the vision, mission and values strong is to have regular network gatherings. The frequency of these gatherings can be selected by the leadership team to meet the needs of the entire network. Typically, these gatherings are scheduled to occur monthly. Fortnightly and quarterly gatherings are also possible. It is important to keep communicating the vision and values and not allow vision leakage to occur.

Some thought needs to be given to scheduling network gatherings. House churches often want to keep meeting in their regular meetings. If the majority of house churches meet on Sabbath mornings, then it is worthwhile to avoid this timeslot.

There are some important vision and mission elements that can be included in network gatherings:

- Missional stories from house churches that focus on community engagement, discipleship and baptisms
- Global Mission stories from GC Adventist Mission that focuses on the unreached people groups, in the cities and unentered countries. This tool can help a house church see how it can contribute to, pray for, and give offerings towards making disciples of “every nation and tribe and language and people” (Revelation 14:6)
- Worship music
- Conversational prayer in mixed groups
- Inspiring messages
- Communication of vision, mission and values
- Leadership call and recruitment
- Leadership training
- Missional workshops
- Fun social activities

Network gatherings would be planned and organised by the oversight or network leadership team. It is important to plan these network gatherings in collaboration with the coach for the house church network.



Governance is a very important part of the missional success of house churches. This area needs to be given significant thought, even though it may seem tedious to some people. These people may feel like it is going through a lot of red tape. However, one of the biggest reasons for the failure of house churches is a lack of effective governance. If not dealt with clearly and effectively, the lack of governance can lead to break down of communication, limited leadership development and inability to achieve the missional goals of the group.

Governance should not be confused with management. Management involves the work of running a house church properly on a week-to-week basis according to the appropriate church rules and procedures. Governance involves establishing the structure of the house church network and the processes of how the rules and procedures are developed. It also establishes the accountability processes between the house church network and the Conference.

9.1 Local house church governance

Governance is important for the local house church as it provides accountability, transparency and clarity. It helps people to understand your structure which provides them with the ability to find the church more accessible and engaging. One important principle of providing effective governance is that it is easier to be flexible when you have a clear and defined structure. It is always preferable to create the structure initially, with built-in room for flexibility to adapt to your needs and circumstances, as opposed to trying to create the structure as you go.

It is important that there is a clear leadership structure. For a house church, this would be a leader and at least one trainee leader. The number of trainee leaders should be representative of the size of the house church. It is advised that these leaders be ordained elders so that they are able to perform functions necessary for the house church.

The minimum roles that you need to have in your leadership team are:

- Leader
- Trainee leader
- Treasurer
- Secretary/clerk

Other roles which could be helpful, if needed, are:

- Children's ministry leader and trainee leader
- Deacon / Deaconess

There are many roles that established churches have which should be the responsibility of everyone at church. These include roles relating to areas such as prayer, hospitality, community service, evangelism, etc. Instead of creating positions for these functions, the leadership team should involve the whole house church in contributing to these areas.

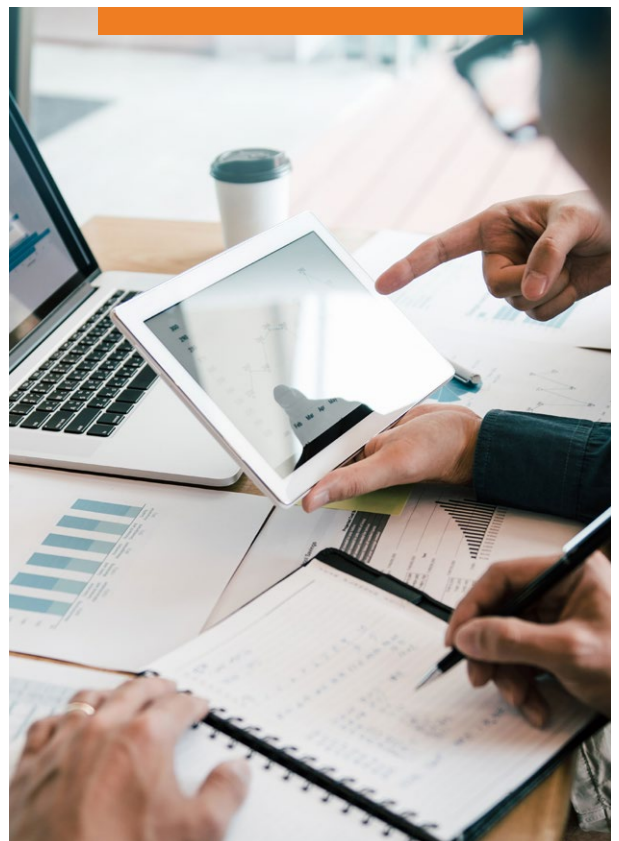
Reporting

It is important that the house church reports to either the Conference or its mission hub church. This reporting should be done at least on a quarterly basis. If connected to the Conference as the overseeing organisation, it needs to provide reports to ADCOM which will then provide relevant information to the Board of Directors for the church company. If connected to a mission hub church, then a report should be provided to the relevant business meeting and board meetings of the mission hub church.

The reports to the conference/mission hub church should include:

- Average Attendance
- Finances
- Baptisms and membership
- Ministry report
- Planned events beyond weekly worship services

It is essential for house churches to be accountable and have the oversight by the Conference or a mission hub church in order to maintain the Adventist identity and mission of the house church.



9.2 Connection between house church and mission hub church

If the house church is connected to a mission hub church, it is important that the house church has representation on the board of the mission hub and that regular reports are given as outlined in the previous section. The relationship between the mission hub church and house church should be one of support, guidance and encouragement and not one of control or being the “gatekeepers” of the house church. Although the house church will report to the mission hub, it is important that the running of the house church is done by those involved with it and invested in its goals.

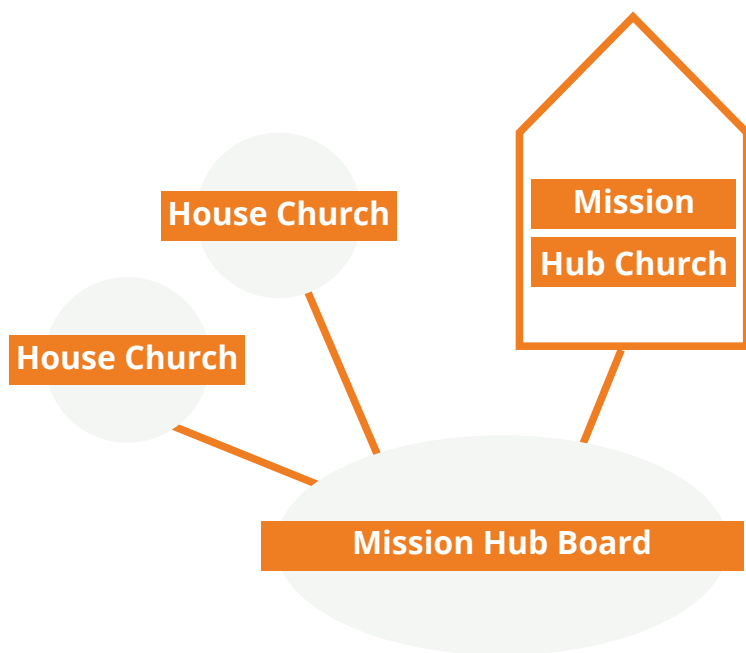


Figure 3: Governance of a mission hub church and the house churches that have been launched by the mission hub church.

When establishing a house church from a mission hub church, it is important that the goals and vision be clearly expressed for both the new house and the mission hub. There should be an honest conversation with the leadership between the proposed house church and the mission hub about how well each entity’s vision and goals align. Ultimately it should be assessed whether the primary focus of both entities is on expanding the mission outreach of the church, rather than just growing the attendance in the house church.

Mission hub churches that are focused on expanding missionary outreach will be more concerned with expanding influence and empowering multiplication than growing the established congregation. It is valuable to consider the biblical example of the Antioch church and apostolic ministry of Paul. If the Antioch church was focused on just building their own church attendance, they would have wanted to keep Paul as an important leader and powerful preacher in Antioch. Instead, they chose to be more focused on expanding the gospel of Jesus into new and largely unreached territories. Hence, they chose to send their brightest and one of the most talented leaders to expand the mission into new territories.

Any group purely focused on growing attendance can quickly become inward looking.

They become concerned with maintaining numbers, programs and services. They will be very reticent to allow leaders to leave to start new outreach ventures. Also, tension will grow if attendees of the mission hub church leave to become involved in starting or multiplying house churches. It is important early on to intentionally discuss how to approach the possibility of members and leaders leaving the mission hub.

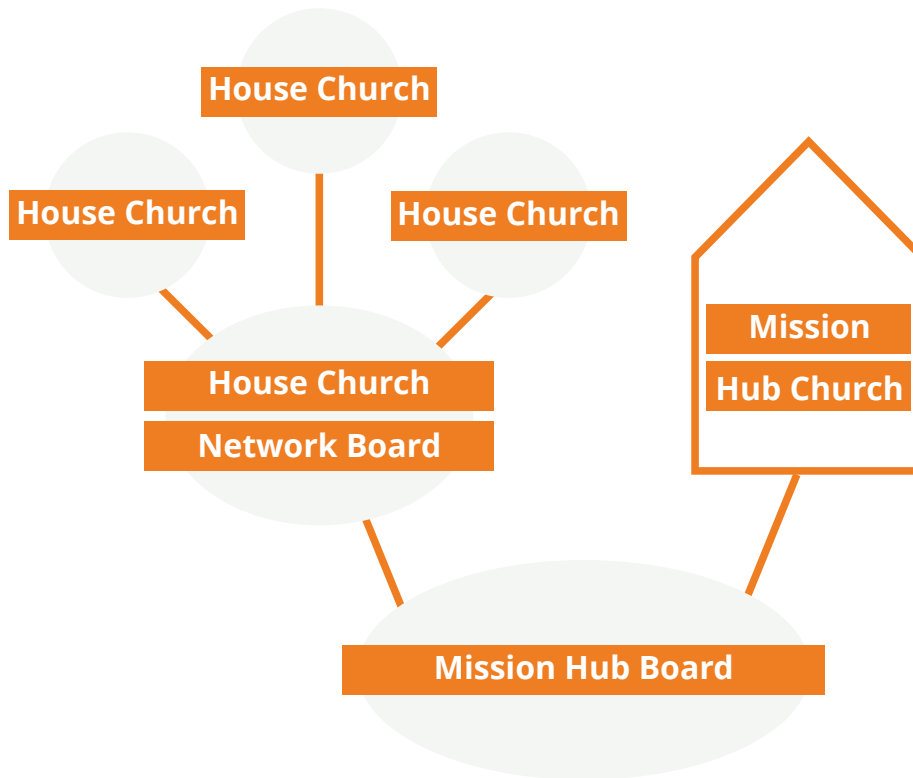


Figure 4: The governance model for a mission hub church and a house church network board.

If the connection with the mission hub church is no longer working effectively, the leaders of both the house church network and the mission hub church should discuss how the connection could be made more effective. If it would be more effective for the house church network to transfer its organisational connection from the mission hub church to the Conference, then this process could be initiated with the guidance of the Conference Administration. Governance of the house church network should include a transition to greater autonomy and self-sufficiency. It is also necessary to discuss the best timing for the house church network to become its own entity under the conference.

A house church network can maintain a relational tie to the mission hub church, but it will no longer need to report to it or be covered by its insurance etc. It would be recommended that once a house church network gets to the point that the network is looking at becoming a multi-level network, they should consider seeking company or church status within the conference as a network.

CASE STUDY: Port Macquarie Church, Port Macquarie NSW

Stoking a House Church Movement from an Established Church

The vision started with prayer. The leadership team at Port Macquarie felt that we had done a lot, but not accomplished much. So we took time to spend in prayer to listen to God. This prayer focus flowed into our Sabbath worship services. People came to church knowing that we would pray together.

Out of that came the question of how we would reach people in the community. We are a church of about 200 people aiming to reach a community of 80,000. We realised that we needed to create multiple small groups so that we could step out into the community and bring people to Christ.

The conversation started about 18 months before COVID-19 hit. We started discussing the vision of starting a house church in every suburb in Port Macquarie. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, everything fell into place. People in our church were already thinking in that space.

We formed our church into 22 house churches. Six months later, there were 14 house churches that were still viably running. A number of these groups were keen to transition into house churches and coming to the established church once a month to be part of the bigger picture. These larger gatherings will be a time to recast the vision and encourage others to be involved.

The keys to creating a house church network were prayer and a leadership team that was open to trying new things for the kingdom of God. We will establish a regular house church leadership team meeting with all of the group leaders for prayer, training and encouragement. Once a week, as the pastor, I will have a phone conversation with them and touch base with them in person once a month.

Obed Soire

9.3 Connection between house churches within a network

All house churches need to have a multiplication mindset and focus. Thus, when a house church is being started, plans should also be made as to how this church will multiply. Multiplication involves creating a network of house churches. This vision and purpose also needs to be clearly communicated to all the attendees of the house church from the beginning. It is important to set the expectation so that even people who attend the house church will expect the church to multiply on a regular basis.

The key to house church multiplication is the multiplication of leadership as addressed in Sections 4 and 8. The structure of the network should be decided before any multiplication takes place. This will include addressing the following questions:

1. Who provides the overall leadership for the network?
2. How does the network maintain a close connection between the house churches?
3. How are decisions made regarding the direction and management of the network?
4. How is finance managed within the network?

It would be recommended that as soon as the house churches begin multiplying that a management committee is formed which includes the main leaders from the house churches. They should meet regularly (once a month) to have reports on finance, leadership development, multiplication planning, etc. One of the leaders of the house churches should be elected as the chairperson of this committee every year and the committee should have representation from each house church. The representative from a house church could be either the leader, trainee leader, treasurer or secretary/ clerk. These representatives should be elected by every house church each year. There should also be regular meetings (once a month) of the leaders of each house church with a clear spiritual focus to discuss matters of a more pastoral nature, leadership development and to encourage and support each other in prayer.

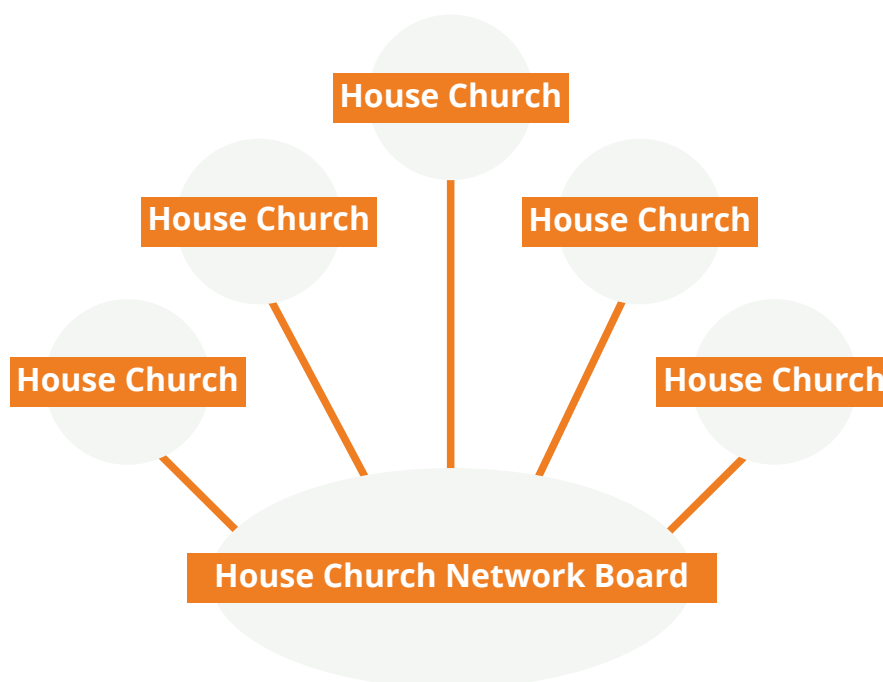


Figure 5: The governance model for a house church network.

As each network grows, there will come a point where the network becomes too large to function effectively as one network. It would be recommended that as soon as the management committee has a membership greater than 20 people, it should consider multiplying into 2 new networks. At this point regular meetings should be held between the chair persons of the networks on a quarterly basis.

Each network of house churches should not just try to maintain organisational links between themselves, but also with the established churches. This could be through organising regular spiritual and social events such as network gatherings and different

social events. At the network gathering, news can be shared of significant events in the lives of each house church including the joys and struggles. Special prayer times for thanksgiving and supplication can be made on behalf of each house church. If the growth extends to multiple networks, then once or twice a year a “regional” event could be held where all the networks gather together. At these times, special training could also be incorporated and special guests could be invited to provide specific training which may be important for the effective running and expansion of the house churches.

If the house church network still has a connection with a mission hub church, a combined service could be organised with the mission hub and the house churches once a year to give the mission hub greater insight and connection to the life of the house church network.



10

RELATIONSHIP WITH CONFERENCE

Being part of a worldwide movement that is sharing the everlasting gospel is a great privilege and is the responsibility of every believer. There are also responsibilities for churches who are committed to the mission of this prophetically significant movement. Since house churches are part of the broader body of Christ, they are accountable to the rest of the church. This means that house churches work together with the rest of the denomination and do not seek to work independently. The Seventh-day Adventist denomination is able to provide valuable support and guidance for those who are fully engaged within the denominational structure.

There are many benefits and privileges for a house church or house church network to maintain a strong and positive relationship with the Conference. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Church planting coaching support and training
2. Access to a variety of departmental support and resources
3. Financial support
4. Promotion in Conference communications
5. Access to major Conference events, such as Big Camp, youth camps, regionals, etc.
6. Risk management and insurance
7. Legal representation
8. Representation at Conference governance events such as Constituency Meetings.

In order to maintain this relationship, house churches will have a responsibility to:

1. Adhere to the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, values and practices

2. Be aligned to the Conference vision, mission and strategic plan
3. Maintain an appropriate leadership structure, as per the requirements by the conference
4. Return tithes and offerings according to the Conference offering schedule
5. Provide regular reporting to the Conference relevant to their organisational status
6. Ensure that all legal requirements are being adhered to with regards to insurances, safe places, WHS, etc.

10.1 Approval for House Churches and House Church Networks

In order to be able to receive the benefits and privileges that come with being part of the sisterhood of churches in the Conference and the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist movement, all Seventh-day Adventist house churches and house church networks need to be established with the blessing and approval of the Conference. This approval process establishes valuable communication between a house church and the Conference as well as establishing the responsibilities for being a Seventh-day Adventist house church.

The initial place to submit a proposal for a house church or house church network is one of the following governance levels:

- Board of a mission hub church
- Board of an already approved house church network
- NSW Conference Church Planting Advisory

The Conference has an existing approval process for new church groups. House churches and house church networks that are seeking the blessing and approval of the Conference need to communicate the mission opportunity, the discipleship strategy and the commitment of the leadership team to carry out the responsibilities of a Seventh-day Adventist house church or house church network. Contact the Conference Director of Church Planting for the details of this approval process.

10.2 How do house churches relate organisationally to the Conference?

There are three types of status that a house church or a house church network can have with the Conference, if they are not directly connected to a mission hub church. The house church or house church network can be recognised as a group, company or church. Each type of connection has different financial and reporting requirements .

Group

Groups are not an official level of church organisation as recognised by the Church Manual. However, groups can be recognised by the Conference. The NSW Conference allows officially recognised groups to hold their membership with the Conference Church and set up church bank accounts. This recognition is achieved by completing the approval process specified by the Conference Executive Committee.

It is not recommended that group status is maintained for too long but should be used as a temporary acknowledgement of the group while they work toward either company or church status. It is recommended this level only be utilised for a house church or house church network in its infancy where it is not possible to be connected to a mission hub church.

Company

Companies are an officially recognised level of church organisation. It is intended for small groups of believers meeting together whose aim is to become an organised church. Being a company does not impose the same expectations from the Conference as a church. Approval is given through the Conference Executive Committee. Typically, once the group has achieved company status, a pastor will be assigned to oversee the group. The minimum organisational structure for a company is that it must have an elder, secretary and treasurer. For a company, the Conference Executive Committee acts as the church board. Some aspects of the management of the company might be given to ADCOM level at the Conference, but all aspects of the functioning of the company are approved and recorded at the Executive Committee level.

Church

This level of organisation is for a group which is ready to take full responsibility as a church in organisation for mission and management of all functions of the church. This level of organisation is approved by the Conference Executive Committee and is ratified at a Constituency Meeting of the Conference.

To be able to function as a church, you must be able to fulfil all the administration functions which the church requires.

It is recommended that a growing house church network, as a collective, seeks to operate as a company or a church. It is also recommended that a house church network transitions to the next organisational level as the network grows.

To work out whether you fulfill the criteria for company or church status, contact the Director of Church Planting or the General Secretary of the Conference.

10.3 Membership

Where membership is held for Seventh-day Adventist house church members will depend on the model of organisation outlined above.

If the house church operates under a mission hub church, then the membership will remain with that church. If it operates as a group or company recognised by the Conference, then the membership will be with the Conference Church. If a house church network operates as a church, then the network will have its own membership roll. The network will require a clerk and will need to operate a board in order to properly manage the membership.

10.4 Mission / theological commitment

The aim in creating new communities of faith is to be faithful disciples of Jesus and to fulfill the Great Commission in the prophetic end-time context in which we live. This means actively proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages and making disciples through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. The Seventh-day Adventist message is best summarised by its Fundamental Beliefs.

It is important that new churches are launched which faithfully reflect this message to the world in a Spirit-filled and relevant manner. Some churches feel that they can work independently from the rest of the church, but it is important to note that the Bible

shows that the Holy Spirit leads believers to work in harmony and unity with the broader church community, rather than independently.

Commitment to being part of God’s church and the theological framework He has given the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, is an important part of fulfilling His mission for us. Maintaining a good and functional relationship with the Conference is important in being able to achieve this goal.

10.5 Closure or Disassociation of a House Church

There are times when a church group takes a path that is either unhealthy or diverges from the Seventh-day Adventist movement. These pathways may include:

- Deviation from the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, values and practices
- Unhealthy leadership
- Irreconcilable divisions within the group
- Financial mismanagement
- Unsafe church practices

Such a group is not fulfilling the responsibilities of being a Seventh-day Adventist church.

When a group is heading towards or in a situation like this, the first step for the board of the house church network or mission hub church is to enter into a caring and honest conversation with the leadership of the group. The aim is to achieve restoration and reconciliation. This may require taking some courageous steps like addressing doctrinal issues and even replacing leaders. If these issues cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the board, the house church leadership will need to approach the Conference to assist in resolving the issues.

If every pathway to achieve reconciliation has been exhausted, the Conference may need to make the decision that it can no longer give approval to the house church. This decision will need to be voted at the appropriate leadership level. This could be at the board level of the house church network or mission hub church. Alternatively, the decision may need to be made by the Conference ADCOM or Executive Committee. The motion will need to be to either close the house church or formally disassociate the house church from its network, mission hub church and the Conference. It needs to be emphasized that this decision should not be taken lightly and should only be made as a last resort, if no other options for reconciliation are available.



11

LEGALITIES

Regardless of the model of church that is being used, church leaders need to meet all legal obligations required by Federal, State and local levels of government. This section will give some of the basic insight into what these obligations are. However, detail and specifics should be sought from the Conference administration team.

11.1 Adsafe

Working together to build safe Adventist environments

There is no priority higher than protecting children, and other vulnerable people, within our care. This is something close to the heart of God (see Matthew 18:6), and cannot be done through wishful thinking or vague aspirations. In order to intentionally protect children and the vulnerable from abuse...local church congregations must comply with Adsafe child safe policies. (SDA Church Manual with SPD Supplements – 19th Edition, 2016 page 239)

Adsafe's mission is to inspire Adventist communities to build safe environments, facilitate restoration and seek justice and fairness for everyone – To create a safe place where everyone can connect with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each Church conference works in partnership with Adsafe to support and empower our Adventist communities through a safety framework, resources and training. Our church safety framework brings together our core values as Christians, best practice and regulatory requirements for each State, Territory and Country.

It is recommended that each house church liaise with Adsafesafe, to be linked with the most current information as this will vary slightly between Conferences.

Below are the minimum requirements for the House Church that need to be completed.

The Leadership team or relevant administrative oversight committee

1. Record approval of current Adsafesafe policies and guidelines
2. Record appointment of a Local Church Adsafesafe Responsible Officer (Church Minister)
3. Record appointment of the Adsafesafe Assistant
4. Adopt and Implement all Adsafesafe policies and guidelines
5. Adsafesafe Responsible Officer to notify the approval and appointments outlined in points 1 to 3 above

Additionally, members of the Leadership team, administrative oversight committee and **those in child-related roles** need to;

1. Hold a current verified WWCC or equivalent
2. Sign the current Code of Conduct
3. Complete relevant Adsafesafe Training
4. Meet the required waiting periods as outlined in the SDA Church Manual and Adsafesafe policy

Adsafesafe Contacts

W: Adsafesafe.org.au

P: 1800 220 468 (Australia)

P: 0800 442 458 (New Zealand)

E: training@adsafesafe.org.au

E: info@adsafesafe.org.au

11.2 Insurance

Public Liability Insurance is a requirement for all official functions and events run by the Seventh-day Adventist church. This is to protect the church organisation from litigation which might stem from events which are officially connected with the church in some way. To ensure the house church is covered, it needs to be an officially approved group connected to either a mission hub church or the Conference. All events must be recorded in the minutes of either the mission hub church board, house network board or the Conference Administrative Committee.

Church equipment must be insured. This insurance can be obtained through Risk Management Services (RMS). Items need to be listed. As the primary location of church activities are people’s homes, it is important to specify where the equipment is stored.

Home owners or tenants need to obtain household contents insurance for their own private property and contents wherever house church events are held. Checks should be made as to the allowable use of the property with the individuals insurance company to ensure that using the property for church events will not void their cover. An agreement should also be entered into between the property owner and the church as to who will pay for excess in the event that damage is done during a church event. This includes situations where house church leaders are renting their home from a landlord.

House church leaders need to consider the zoning of their property as well. Council zoning regulations take into account parking and noise levels. Private residences are not zoned to take into account the parking requirements and potential noise levels of hosting a weekly house church. It is wise to seek council approval for hosting a house church. Also, it is valuable to let neighbours know that you are hosting a house church and resolve any concerns prior to launching a regular house church gathering. This has significant missional value, as some neighbours may be interested in joining the house church. Also, it proactively averts potential conflict with neighbours, if house church leaders make it clear that they are committed to resolving any concerns that may arise.

11.3 Safety

One often overlooked aspect of church events is that of Work, Health and Safety. Running events safely in private homes adds a particular challenge. A person's home environment is much more difficult to ensure that risks are minimised. This is because it is primarily that person's place of residence before it is a church facility. Things like poisons, access to sharp objects, trip and safety hazards such as stairs etc should all be assessed and minimised as much as possible. Even environmental factors such as the presence of pets, access to foods which might pose a risk to some people's health and other WHS hazards should be considered and minimised wherever possible.

It is advised that house churches work closely with the Conference Work, Health and Safety officer to ensure that the house church has conducted a thorough analysis of the risks. The aim is to do everything possible to minimise those risks and document the process.



12

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Coaching

Research has shown that your house church and house church movement will be much more effective in achieving your vision and making disciples if you attend training and are being coached.

Coaching is an empowering process which enables you to discern the next steps and the path that the Holy Spirit wants you to take in your leadership. Coaching also brings in an important level of accountability into your leadership.

Coaching conversations typically follow a framework that are defined by memorable acronyms such as GROW, COACH or CLEAR:

| Stages | GROW | COACH | CLEAR |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Build Rapport | | Connect | |
| Identify Goals | Goals | Outcome | Contract |
| Awareness & Explore | Reality Options | Awareness | Listen Explore |
| Decision & Action | Will | Course of Action | Action |
| Reflection | | Highlights | Reflect |

The particular coaching framework your coach will use depends on their training and preference. It is valuable to meet with your coach on a regular basis. It is recommended that house church leaders have weekly coaching sessions in the early stage of starting a house church movement and monthly coaching sessions when your house church movement becomes more established.

Possible coaches for your house church network could include:

- Pastor of your mission hub church
- Coaching pastor appointed by the Conference
- Conference church planting director
- Leader of another Adventist house church network

The coaching relationship works well when you are inspired and have respect for your coach and you are willing to be accountable to your coach.

House Church Assessment Tool

1. What are your top 3 reasons for wanting to start a house church or house church network?
2. Rate these 3 reasons in terms of missional focus from 1-5, where 1 means the focus is more internal and about those already attending, and 5 is external and completely focussed on bringing new people to be a part of the house church.
3. What are the 3 top things you want to get out of running a house church?
4. What would be the most common reason amongst members of your core team for wanting to leave a traditional church model and be a part of a house church?
5. How many people in your group are reaching out to other people who do not follow Jesus?
6. Who is a part of your core launch team?
7. What percentage of your core launch team are mature/committed believers compared to new believers?
8. Is your core team part of an existing church?
9. What is the DNA / model / culture of the existing church?
10. What is the DNA / model / culture that you want to create within your house church or house church network?
11. What strategy do you have in establishing the DNA / model / culture within your house church or house church network?
12. How would you describe the community that you are planning to reach out to?
13. What are the needs of the people in the community that you are planning to reach?
14. What are the strengths / capabilities of your core group?
15. How is your core group uniquely placed to meet the needs of people in the community?
16. What spaces do you currently have available to run gatherings?

Frameworks for Discipleship Strategies

The mission that Jesus has given to His followers is to make disciples. In order to successfully fulfill His mission, it is essential that you have a clear discipleship strategy. This strategy identifies the key initiatives that you will implement in order to grow disciples who make disciples.

There are a number of frameworks which you can use to develop your own discipleship strategy, which are included below.

Multiplying the Harvest Discipleship Strategy



Figure 6: The Multiplying the Harvest Discipleship Strategy

Shiftm2M Discipleship Strategy

| Stage | Explanation | Initiatives |
|---------|--|-------------|
| Connect | Engage with people in the community | |
| Win | Leading people to make intentional decisions to follow Jesus | |
| Build | Growing disciples spiritually | |
| Train | Training disciples to become missional leaders | |
| Send | Sending missional leaders to launch new house churches | |

Figure 7: The Shiftm2M Discipleship Strategy

Discipleship Journey



Figure 8: The Discipleship Journey

Elders Assessment Tool

Overview

All Christians are called by God to minister (I Peter 2:9). Within this priesthood of all believers, some are appointed in each local church as elders (Acts 14:23). Based on the elder descriptions in the Bible (1 Tim 3:1-7 5:17-19 Titus 1:5-9 1 Peter 5:1-4 James 5:14), the following questions personalise the high calling for spiritual and emotional depth in the life of an elder. Since only Jesus Christ—the “chief shepherd”—exemplifies these perfectly, this questionnaire should function not as a rigid checklist but a conversation starter for spiritual growth in all who would serve as elders.

Spiritual Vitality

As an elder you live under the authority of Christ—the One who delivers you from self-focus and any addictions—so you might be set apart for God’s purposes and that you might live a disciplined life. You are an example to the flock of what it looks like to walk deeply with God.

1. What is your story for how God led you into a saving relationship with Jesus?
2. Has God delivered you from any addictions or idols in your life?
3. Describe your devotional practice over the past month. Is this normal for you—if not, what’s normal?
4. How do you hear from God? Describe a time when you experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Theological Clarity

As an elder you are to hold firmly to the gospel, having a clear understanding of biblical doctrine. Through your teaching and preaching of the good news, you are able to instruct, rebuke, and encourage others.

1. What is the gospel, and how has it specifically transformed your life?
2. Why or why not would you communicate this message through new methods?
3. How do others respond when you communicate the gospel in large or small groups?
4. What is your understanding of the role of the Adventist movement within the larger body of Christ?
5. How does Seventh-day Adventist doctrine overlap with the call to all Christian leaders to ‘make disciples’?

Missional Lifestyle

As an elder you are an example of what it looks like to live a missional lifestyle. You practice biblical hospitality by sharing your life with those outside your church, and should have a positive reputation with outsiders—individuals beyond the walls of your community of faith.

1. How do you—or your family—intentionally make space in your weekly rhythm to be with those who are far from God?

2. Do you have non-Christian friends you interact with on a regular basis? If so, how can they be contacted in order to vouch for your reputation?
3. Who did you verbally share the gospel with last and how did they respond?

Marriage and Family Life

(skip if not applicable)

As an elder your ministry to your family is the foundation of your ministry to God's family.

1. Describe specifically how you care for your spouse and help shepherd him/her in their spiritual growth.
2. As you are called to manage your family well, describe a difficult circumstance you encountered as a family and how you resolved it.
3. How are you personally leading your children to Jesus?

Financial Integrity

As an elder you live under God's stewardship in all areas, including finances. Rather than using people to get money, you use money to bless people as an example of financial integrity.

1. How are you practicing a missional use of money, including the return of tithe and offerings?
2. What does the way you spend your money say to others about your priorities?
3. What is an area of financial growth you believe would honour God in your life?

Relationship Building

As an elder you are to be a gentle servant, not a harsh overseer. In your personal interactions you are to encourage and build up the body as an emotionally healthy leader.

1. Who have you recognised and developed talent in?
2. How can you grow in the way you deal with conflict and criticism?
3. Name a strength and growth area in the way you relate to others.

Do you feel called to be an elder?

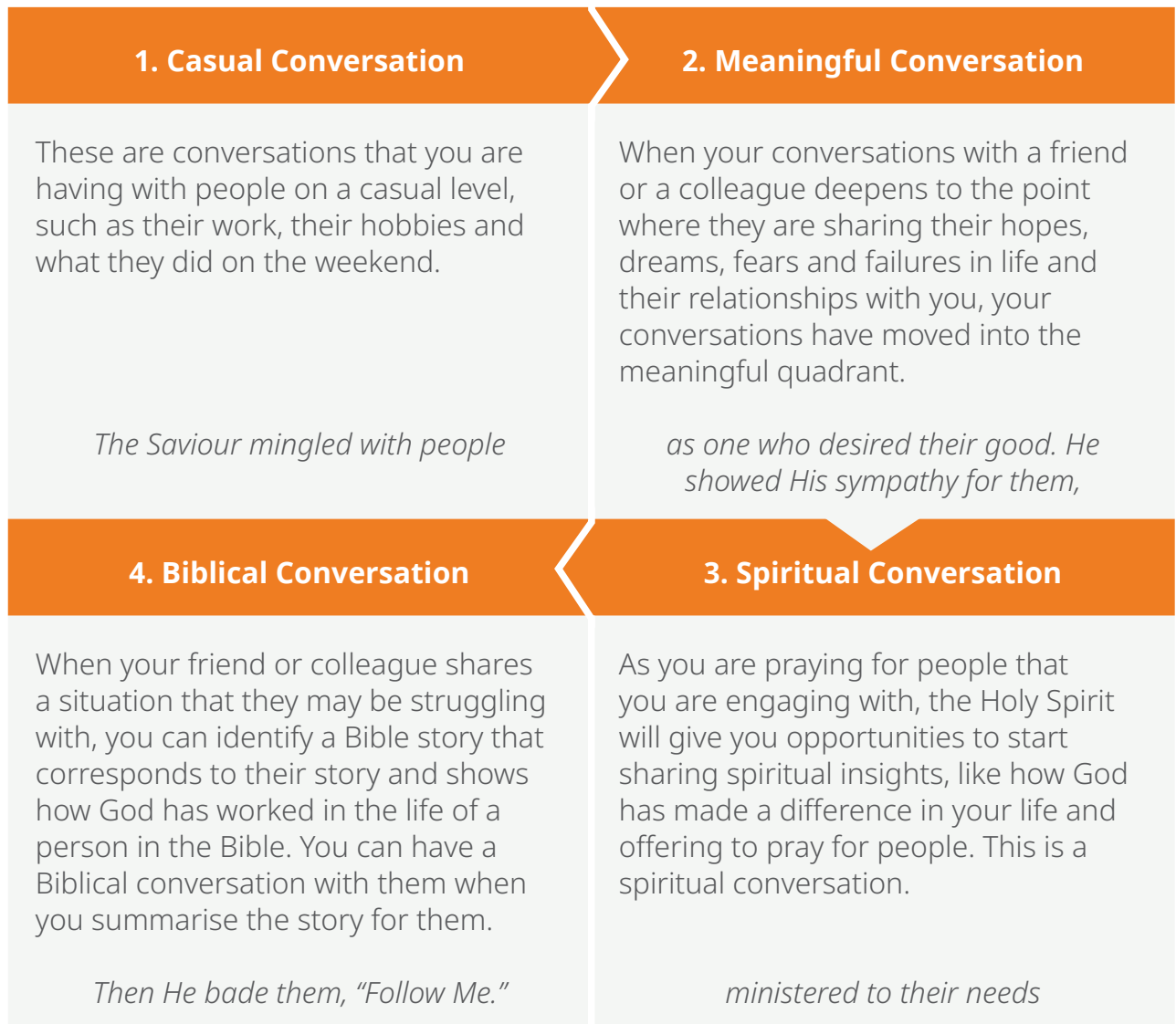
What would change if you are not affirmed by the church?

How might you utilise your strengths and focus on growth areas?

Conversation Quadrants

One of the more difficult aspects of making disciples is transitioning a friendship from being a casual relationship to an intentional discipling relationship. Most Seventh-day Adventists do not feel adequately equipped or confident in leading their friends through this process. It is essential, however, for people within house churches to become experienced and confident at this. This is the only way that house church movements will flourish and multiply.

The concept of Conversation Quadrants is very helpful in this regard:



By keeping a log of the people in your Conversations Quadrants and praying for them, you can start to watch the Holy Spirit leading them closer to Jesus through your relationship with them and the conversations that you are having with them.

Once you have had a number of Biblical conversations with a person, you can then invite them to join you to go more intentionally and systematically through the Bible in a Discovery Bible Reading group.

Discovery Bible Reading

The Bible is inspired by God and has supernatural power to change people's lives. Hardened prisoners, cynical atheists and guilt-ridden adulterers have had their lives completely turned around by reading the Bible. As the letter to the Hebrew Christians tells us:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Through the prophet Isaiah, God has the following promise:

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:10,11

There is also significant missional value in using simple methods of reading the Bible and digging deeper into its personal message and application. Simple methods are easily transferable and foster the processes of multiplication.

The Discovery Bible Reading method has been used very effectively within rapidly multiplying church planting movements in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. It is also being used much more widely in Western countries like Australia, England and the United States.

Discovery Bible Reading has the following elements:

1. Ask one person to read the whole passage
2. Ask someone else to read the same passage, if they have a different version
3. Ask someone to tell or summarise the story in their own words
4. Use a simple set of questions to:
 - a. Explore the meaning of the passage
 - b. Promote listening and obeying the Holy Spirit
 - c. Encourage sharing a message from the passage

The key to making this process reproducible and transferable is to model it using the same set of simple questions. Here are some sets of questions:

| Category | DBS | Following Jesus | Praxis |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| Meaning | What does this passage tell me about God? | What is new? | What do you observe in the story? |
| | What does this passage tell me about people (or myself)? | What surprises you? | |
| | | What don't you understand? | |
| Obedience | If this passage were true, what difference would it make in my life? | What will you obey or apply? | What will you do? |
| Sharing | Who am I going to tell? | What will you share with someone this week? | Who will you share what you have discovered from this passage? |

Spiritual Inventory

Use this tool with your leadership team to help focus and dedicate yourselves to God before working as a team to discuss mission/vision/values. These questions are worded as if God were asking personally your leaders each question.

Over the last year, did you experience My transforming power in your life as you would have liked? Why/why not?

Are you happy with the amount of time we spend together?

Do you find it difficult to prioritise Me above your worldly interests?

Do you truly detest the sin in your life as much as I do?

What do you think it is I want most from you? What do you find hardest about giving this to me?

What do you think were your biggest failures last year?

What will be different about this year?

Are you really seeking to experience the fullness of what I want to do in your life? What are you afraid of in experiencing it?

What are you most afraid of losing if you unreservedly gave your life to Me now?

What would really happen if you lost it?

I love you and am completely devoted to you, do you believe this?

Do you love Me?

I want to do everything for you this year, what is it that you most need me to change in you this year so we can be closer?

Will you surrender that to Me now completely?

Pray a prayer of confession, commitment and surrender to finish off this personal time with God.

Worship Music Resources

It can be valuable having a worship music app that allows your house church to use a broad range of worship music even if you do not have adequate musicians to lead out in worship each week. We recommend exploring the following worship apps:

iSing Worship: <https://www.isingworship.org>

WorshipSong App: <https://www.worshipsong.com>

Books

We recommend the following books to deepen your understanding of Seventh-day Adventist and Christian house church movements that are focused on making disciples.

George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism: Are We Erasing Our Relevancy?* Review & Herald, 2008.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/the-apocalyptic-vision-and-the-neutering-of-adventism.html>

Fernando Canale, "On Being the Remnant," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 24/1 (2013):127-174.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jats/vol24/iss1/8/>

Peter Roennfeldt, *If You Can Eat... You Can Make Disciples*, Signs Publishing, 2018.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/if-you-can-eat.html>

Kayle de Waal, *Mission Shift*, Signs Publishing, 2017.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/mission-shift.html>

Peter Roennfeldt, *Following Jesus: Disciple-Making and Movement Building*, Signs Publishing, 2017.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/following-jesus-pb.html>

Peter Roennfeldt, *Following the Spirit: Disciple-Making, Movement-Building and Church Planting Today*, Signs Publishing, 2018.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/following-the-spirit-disciple-making-movement-building-and-church-planting-today.html>

Peter Roennfeldt, *Following the Apostles' Vision for Disciple-Making, Church-planting Movements: Recapturing Their Vision for Today*, Signs Publishing, 2019.

<https://adventistbookcentre.com.au/following-the-apostles-vision-for-disciple-making->

[church-planting-movements.html](#)

Steve Addison, *Movements That Change the World*, IVP, 2011.

https://www.koorong.com/product/movements-that-change-the-world-steve-addison_9780830836192

David Watson and Paul Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, Thomas Nelson, 2014.

https://www.koorong.com/product/contagious-disciple-making-david-watson-paul-watson_9780529112200

David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*, WIGTake, 2012.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Church-Planting-Movements-Redeeming-World-ebook/dp/B007Q4TFSQ>

JD Greear, *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches that Send*, Zondervan, 2017.

https://www.koorong.com/product/gaining-by-losing-why-the-future-belongs-to-churches-that-send-j_9780310533955

Francis Chan, *Letters to the Church*, David C Cook, 2018.

https://www.koorong.com/product/letters-to-the-church-francis-chan_9780830776580

Tim Chester, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping Around Gospel and Community*, Crossway, 2008.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Total-Church-Radical-Reshaping-Around/dp/1433502089/>

Daniel Im, *No Silver Bullets: Five Small Shifts that will Transform Your Church*, Broadman & Hollman, 2017.

https://www.koorong.com/product/no-silver-bullets-five-small-shifts-that-will-transform-your_9781433651540

Websites

We recommend the following websites:

<https://am.adventistmission.org/mission-spotlight>

<https://disciple.org.au>

<https://www.following-jesus.com>

<https://www.movements.net>

<https://www.contagiousdisciplemaking.com>

<https://www.missionfrontiers.org>

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
(FAQS)

Do house churches always meet in houses?

No, a house church can meet in a variety of locations, such as in cafes, in parks, on university campuses, business seminar rooms, to name a few. The term “house church” has become a common way to refer to a small disciple-making community. Other names have been used, such as simple church, microchurch or household of faith. However, the term “house church” is simple and fairly well-understood. Also, the majority of small disciple-making communities will meet in houses, because it is easy to access houses during the weekends and evenings and they provide a warm, relational environment to make disciples.

If there is a better term to describe your vision and groups, feel free to use it! However, remember that it is not the building, location or label that you use that defines your group. It is the culture of:

- engaging with people who are far from God
- making disciples
- empowering leaders
- multiplying disciple-making communities
- commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission

that truly defines who you really are.



Isn't a house church the same as a branch Sabbath School, cell group, a Bible study group or a home group?

House churches have many similarities with a branch Sabbath School, cell group, a Bible study group or a home group. However, the difference is that a house church is recognised as a legitimate and complete expression of church in and of itself. A house church will have its own Sabbath worship service. A house church will perform all of the functions of a regular church, including baptising disciples, collecting tithes and offerings and practicing communion. Thus, a house church does not need to bring new believers and disciples to another church gathering to experience, in principle, everything that a church needs to offer.

The purpose of cell groups, Bible study groups and home groups are usually to lead people to join a larger established church. A house church does not have this purpose. Rather, the purpose of a house church is to raise up new leaders to start more house churches. The vision of a house church is to multiply itself rather than necessarily to be a discipleship conduit to another church experience. It is important to clarify, though, that cell groups, Bible study groups and home groups all have discipleship value as well.

How do you maintain theological alignment and purity within a house church movement?

It is understandable that people will be concerned that, if many lay people are given the opportunity to lead house churches, theological alignment and purity may be difficult to maintain within the movement. However, the reality is that there is a theological spectrum even amongst established churches and theologically trained ministers, so it is worthwhile having a fair and even-handed approach to the issue of theological purity.

Theological alignment can be achieved in a house church movement in three important ways. Firstly, the leaders of the house church movement need to be committed to being led by the Holy Spirit and basing their teaching on the Bible. This is the Biblical approach to achieving theological alignment. As the preamble to the Fundamental Beliefs confirms, the Seventh-day Adventist church accepts the Bible as its only creed. Making a commitment to Bible-based approaches, like Discovery Bible Reading, will ensure that theological alignment with the Bible is achieved within the group in the long term.

Secondly, it is important for there to be a strong theological component to leadership development and commissioning within the house church movement. Like baptism, becoming a recognised leader is an important transition point in the life of a disciple and it is important to review and explain the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church during leadership training and development. It is valuable for house church leaders to have ongoing theological coaching and training to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Seventh-day Adventist theological system.

Thirdly, when house church leaders focus on the mission of engaging with the community and teaching their personal faith to new disciples, this encourages them to explore their own theological system. This creates a healthy and vibrant way to affirm Seventh-day Adventists beliefs. Experience has shown that a person's faith is affirmed and grows as he or she shares it. Also, it has been observed that theological problems often occur in Adventists bubbles where people's beliefs are not being challenged by the theological opportunities and challenges that are encountered in the "real world".

To summarise, there are effective ways to cultivate theological purity and alignment in house church networks. When these approaches are used in the development of house churches, they will strengthen people's the understanding of and commitment to the Adventist message and mission.

What do you do with children and youth in a house church movement?

People who are members of larger and well-established churches are accustomed to having a range of different ministries for children and youth. These include Sabbath School classes, Adventurers, Pathfinders and youth groups. It can be difficult to envisage how a small house church could adequately cater for children and youth.

It has become apparent, though, that churches need to become more intergenerational so that mentoring can occur. Intergenerational worship and ministry occurs naturally within house churches.

Also, it should be emphasised that part of the vision of house churches is for people within house churches to initiate their own discipleship groups. Thus, children and youth can initiate their own disciple-making groups with schoolmates and friends. This encourages children and youth to become missional in their own context and make disciples amongst their friends and classmates, rather than being passive consumers of ministries.

It is important to be aware that young people do feel a need to be part of a larger group. This is why regular larger house church network gatherings are important. Some age-specific ministries and activities can be planned for these gatherings. If there are enough children of a particular age, then the house church network can organise age-specific ministries like Adventurers and Pathfinders. Also, maintaining a strong relationship with the Conference enables house church networks to access larger children's ministries and youth events, such as Big Camp, summer camps, youth rallies and Pathfinder Camporees.

What do you do with finances in a house church?

Financial stewardship is an important part of being a disciple. Also, house churches need to understand that they are part of a global movement. This is why a whole section on financial stewardship has been included in this guide.



Seventh-day
Adventist Church™

North New South Wales

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