"Equipping Volunteer Lay Pastors for Spiritual Leadership"

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INTRODUCTION

The Allegheny East Conference of Seventh-day Adventists recognizes that one of its major responsibilities is Kingdom growth. The Savior's commission to carry the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) means not only preaching the message but also ensuring the welfare of those who accept that message. This is best reflected in the Conference Mission Statement: "To reach the Allegheny East region with the distinctive Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist message of Hope and Wholeness. This involves shepherding as well as providing sanctuary for the membership. Such an endeavor calls for prayer and careful organization.

The focus of the Church Growth Strategy initiatives of Allegheny East Conference will be on churches whose primary goal is growth through service in the communities in which they are planted.

Service is to obey Christ's command to take the gospel to the world. The Allegheny East Conference needs more workers dedicated to pursuing this objective. Jesus' words are still true today that "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Luke 10:2 NIV). To fulfill the mission of Christ, and reach new communities for God, the Allegheny East Conference needs Volunteer Lay Pastors (VLP) who can lead current and new Groups, Companies, Churches, and church plants. Training VLP is a viable solution to help Allegheny East Conference fulfill its mission.

The Allegheny East Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has established policies and guidelines for Missions, Companies, and Churches to facilitate church growth and planting. Select Conference Missions, Companies, and Churches may be led by a VLP under the supervision of the Ministerial Director and his/her designee, and the approval by the Conference.

It is with this responsibility in mind that the following guidelines are in place to advance the work in Allegheny East and facilitate the efforts of qualified Volunteer Lay Pastors.
THE VOLUNTEER
LAY PASTOR ORDINATOR

The volunteer lay pastor coordinator (VLPC) will be the Ministerial Director (MD).

Mission Statement

Mobil and equipping lay people to provide consistent and loving care to congregations. Promote congregational vitality through volunteer lay pastor training and providing a means for those who are called to leadership positions to develop their skills for service in different forms of ministry in the church.

"I urge the elders among you, as a fellow elder myself and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and as one who is to have a share in the glory that is to be revealed: give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, as God wants; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Do not lord it over the group, which is in your charge, but be an example for the flock. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the unfading crown of glory." I Peter 5:1-4

Ministry Description

God asks the church to be a community of people who share a common purpose. They should fellowship and continually grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as "his body, the fullness of the one who fills everything in every way" (Eph. 1:23).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church. Thus, the church is a creation of the Spirit.

We experience the Presence of Jesus Christ within His Church (the body), and the world experiences the living presence of Jesus Christ as it witnesses the people of His Church. When a local church serves the world it is an expression of the love of Christ to the World. It is the body of Christ serving the world's needs and being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation.

Thus, the church is a servant body. Created for service, it serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is a kingdom of priests set free to minister effectively for Christ. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. A VLP is a ministering servant of God and like every Christian is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism equipped for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry -- scripture, spiritual power, God's character, and spiritual gifts. A VLP is equipped for his or her ministry by the gifts received from the Holy Spirit.

1 Responsibilities in the Local Church, by the Church Resources Consortium, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church. Copyright © 1997, Revised 2002.
Key Responsibilities

1. **Mentoring and Coaching.** The VLPC or his/her designee serves as mentor, coach, and guide for the Volunteers Lay Pastors (VLP) as needed. In addition to coaching, the Coordinator or his/her designee will observe the VLP in their ministry environment(s) as scheduling allows.

2. **VLP Continuing Education Program:** The VLPC oversees training and development of VLPs. There will be two Continuing Education Retreats (spring and fall) in which seminars will be taught in five different areas: Spiritual vitality, biblical exposition, people skills, evangelism, and team building. The VLPC is responsible for organizing the retreats.

3. **Group Expansion:** The VLPC or his/her designee will direct and oversee the expansion of new church plants in areas of the Conference.

4. **Serves as a Liaison between VLP and Conference:** The VLPC or his/her designee will serve as a liaison between the VLP, their church, and Allegheny East Conference.

5. **Evaluation of VLP:** The VLPC will review and evaluate VLP every year by the following parameters:
   
   a. Evidence of growth in their local church, company or mission.
   b. Evidence that the entity is ready to move on to the next level of organization
   c. Evidence of growth in the five areas of the Continuing Education Program (see "Curriculum")
   d. Attendance at meetings, gatherings, and retreats
THE VOLUNTEERLAYPASTOR(VLP)

Definition

A "VLP" is a Lay Pastor who has been recommended by an Area Leader/Ethnic Coordinator, Ministerial Director and assigned by the Conference Executive Committee.

Reappointment to VLP status will be contingent upon attending annual training events, an annual performance review, the recommendation of the sponsoring church board (if applicable) the Area Leader/Ethnic Coordinator and the Ministerial Director.

The VLP must be involved in a continuing training process for certification as a VLP. Character, leadership, spirituality, loyalty to the church, theology, and a cooperative spirit should be demonstrated. The duration of a VLP’s service in a congregation will be reviewed and recertified annually for up to 5 years, unless the Conference finds it necessary to extend or reduce the term. It is important to understand that this program is not a path to employment.
Responsible to VLPC, President, and Executive Committee

The VLP is responsible to the Ministry Mentor, Ministerial Director/VLPC, the President, and the Allegheny East Conference Executive Committee.

Duties

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a VLP is described in the following terms:

1. **Ministry Mentor.** Every LVP will have a ministry mentor. The VLP will meet with a designated ministry mentor (in most cases a seasoned pastor) each month, either in person or by phone, to discuss professional effectiveness in ministry, and to strengthen their personal and spiritual health.

2. **Teamwork.** The VLP works under the supervision of a ministry mentor, and must work closely with the local church board and officers.

3. **Preaching and Worship Leadership.** One of the responsibilities of the VLP is to be the Worship Leader. This includes filling the pulpit and attention to the entire worship service.

4. **Visitation.** The VLP is expected to visit church members, conduct Bible Studies and visit the sick.

5. **Chairing the Board.** The VLP is expected to chair the church board unless the Church Board selects another Board Member as Chairperson.

6. **Midweek Meetings.** The VLP should conduct a service one evening a week (Prayer Meeting, a Bible Study Group, a seminar, or a Lay Training Class.)

7. **Planning.** It is the responsibility of the VLP to facilitate a yearly plan for church growth that includes outreach, soul winning and outreach.

8. **Training Programs.** The VLP must be involved in a continuing training process for certification as a VLP. Recertification for VLP status will be contingent upon attending annual recertification training. There will be Continuing Education Training each year. All VLPs are required to attend.

9. **Reports.** The VLP should ensure that membership statistics are reported on a monthly basis by the Church Clerk.

10. **Tithe and Offering.** As part of the sisterhood of churches in the Allegheny East Conference, and to advance the mission of the global church, the VLP is responsible to make sure tithe and offerings are handled according to church policy. See Allegheny East Conference Policies.

    **Due to Federal Labor Laws, absolutely no remuneration (tithes, offerings or donations) is to be given by the church to VLPs.**

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Not Authorized to Perform Certain Official Duties

The VLP is not authorized to officiate over marriages or to ordain local leaders. The Ministry Mentor or
Area Leaders/Ethnic Coordinators will oversee baptism.

**Term of Appointment**

A VLP is appointed for one year. Annual recertification will be contingent upon attending recertification training twice each year, annual review by the Allegheny East Conference VLPC, and the recommendation of the sponsoring church board, and the ministry mentor. In addition, the duration of a VLP in a congregation will be reviewed and recertified annually, up to 5 years, unless the Conference finds it necessary to extend the term. **It is important to understand that this program is not a path to employment.**

**No Compensation**

The VLP is a volunteer position. **The VLP will serve without compensation. Due to federal labor laws absolutely no remuneration (tithes, offerings, or donations) is to be given to VLP by the church.**

However, a VLP who leads a Mission, Company, or Church with Conference approved status, may report by receipt, travel expenses and ministry related expenses to the Allegheny East Conference for reimbursement, up to a maximum amount established by the Conference annually.

Reimbursable ministry related expenses include: mileage, tolls, and books required for certification. The VLP must contact the Allegheny East Conference Treasury Department for information about the monthly/annual limits assigned to these expenses.
TRAINER CURRICULUM

The VLP Training Program is structured for, and made available to those individuals wishing to become a VLP and those who are already functioning as a VLP in the Allegheny East Conference serving in volunteer pastoral ministry. There will be Continuing Education training in which seminars will be taught in five different areas: Spiritual vitality, biblical exposition, people skills, evangelism and team building.

VLP Training Program Objectives

1. The encouragement, care, and growth of Missions, Companies, and Churches in need of VLP leadership through the provision of approved lay-people trained and equipped as VLPs, thereby strengthening the life of the Church and advancing the Kingdom of God.

2. Continuing training and development of VLPs already involved in ministry.

3. Develop a clear, biblical foundation for Adventist doctrines explicitly based on the teachings of Scripture.

4. Develop a firm understanding of Adventist identity, mission, and church operations and procedures.

Curriculum

There are five areas of training for the VLP Training Program with the following elements:

1. Spiritual Vitality

   Biblical Spiritual Growth for Ministry: This area explores the role of personal spirituality in effective ministry. It offers insights for developing a stronger personal bond with God and for fostering spiritual growth in others.

Recommended Seminar Topics:

   >> Practicing Biblical Spiritual Growth
   >> Growing in the Fruit of the Spirit
   >> Growing Faith in God
   >> Authentic Fellowship
   >> Forgiveness
   >> Growth Through Mentoring
**Spiritual Servant Leadership:** This area outlines biblical perspectives on leadership theory. It provides principles and tools that help leader’s lead in a Godly way and with Godly direction.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Spiritual Growth Inventories
- Leadership and administration

2. **Bible Exposition**

**Biblical Foundation of Preaching:** This area establishes the biblical mandate, scope, and purpose of preaching and develops the VLP’s ability to study the Bible for the purpose of preaching.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Basic Principles of Hermeneutics
- A Clear Biblical Basis for Doctrines
- Good Understanding of SDA Theology
- A Clear Understanding of Grace
- Bible Preaching
- Sermon Preparation
- Keys to Effective Preaching
- Homiletical "Do's and Don'ts"
- The Expository Method
3. People Skills

**Emotional Intelligence in Ministry:** This area explores how to develop the people skills necessary to thrive in ministry.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Becoming a Resonant Leader
- Coaching Skills (listening, intuition, curiosity, naming, affirming fulfillment)
- Methods to Reach Post-moderns
- The Motivation to Change

**Pastoral Counseling:** This area provides tools to meaningfully counsel those in crisis. Also helps the VLP to know when to refer a person to a professional counselor.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Fundamentals of Pastoral Care
- What Constitutes Successful Pastoral Care?
- Human Relation Skills for Pastoral Care
- When to Refer a Person to Look for Professional Help
- The Goal of Counseling is to Move from One Level of Change to Another

**Managing Conflict:** This area teaches skills for defusing and resolving conflicts in the church. It provides principles and models for managing conflict.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Biblical Principles for Conflict Resolutions
- Engaging Cultural and Demographic Realities
- Becoming a Calm Leader

4. Evangelism

**Evangelistic Approaches:** This area explores some of the most time-tested approaches to sharing the truth of Adventism, offering principles and tools for effective evangelism.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**
- Biblical Foundations for Evangelism: "The Church in the N.T."
- Strategic Planning and the Church
- Methods to Reach Post Moderns
- How to Assimilate New Members into the Congregation
- How to Plan and Conduct Evangelistic Event
5. Team Building

**A Theology of Church:** This area develops a biblical understanding of church function and structure, providing a framework for building the church into a biblical team.

**Recommended Seminar Topics:**

- Adventist Beginnings and Development of Adventist Organizational Distinctions (historical development and distinctive doctrines)
- Global Mission of the Church vs. a Mentality of Local Consumerism Financial Management (budgeting etc.)
- Conducting Effective Meetings (boards, committees, etc.)
- How to Plan and Conduct Worship, Communion, Baby Dedications, Funerals, and Baptismal Services
- Working Knowledge of Church Policy (Church Manual, Allegheny East Conference Policies, etc.)