

T h i r d E d i t i o n 2 0 1 9



T H I N G S Y O U S H O U L D K N O W A B O U T

Regional Conferences

in the North American

Division of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church





T h i n g s Y o u S h o u l d K n o w . . .

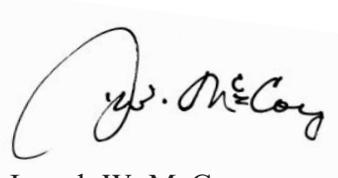
This booklet is designed to provide insight and address questions regarding the legitimacy of Regional Conferences in the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We have also provided copies for your review, of the action taken in 1944 by the General Conference that created Regional Conferences. Subsequent actions were taken to ensure fair representation and treatment for all people who have been blessed to accept the Truths of scripture that define our unique mission. The Regional Conferences have memberships composed primarily of Black people. However, found in their congregations are people from every nationality and walk of life. In other words just as is true in most congregations of the World Church of Seventh-day Adventists, these conferences and their member congregations have an open fellowship.

Clearly, Regional Conferences were born during an age of near unbridled and unqualified racial intolerance. And yet, as God would have it, in the mid 1940's America was also a time and place of examination, determination and slowly emerging change. During this time period, Major League Baseball received its first Black player (Jackie Robinson of The Brooklyn Dodgers) ... "The First Freedom Rides" were organized to influence the legislation that desegregated interstate public transportation. Black young men aspiring to be military fighter pilots were taught to fly and fight at historically Black Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Their success in World War II helped to desegregate the United States Armed Forces. It was also home of Dr. George Washington Carver, peanut researcher and inventor. Our church had to face the cruel reality of a life lost unnecessarily as a member in one of our Black churches, was denied admittance into one of our denominations' racially segregated hospitals. It was in this climate that our Regional Conferences set their deep and deepening roots.

Seventy-five years later, the world and our nation have changed. More specifically, our church has made enormous positive change since that turbulent era. Our successes in racially sensitive matters give rise to the question of the need for Regional Conferences and their relevance in a desegregated, culturally diverse climate. That is a question to be answered at another time and in another forum. However abundantly clear since their inception, is the unprecedented membership growth in Black American churches. They also provide substantial financial support for the church's world mission and there is nearly universal respect for World Church leaders that emerge from that vibrant community. Also true is the fact that few congregations within our World Church adhere more faithfully to the fundamental teachings of the Adventist church, than the members in the Regional Conferences.

With their maturing sense of spiritually tempered self-determination, Regional Conferences have consistently challenged Church Leaders to improve Seventh-day Adventist operational policies and traditions impacting its membership and the quality of life for its employees. It is in that spirit that the contents of this booklet are prayerfully presented. They are also presented to underscore the blessings of God and the actions recorded at the General Conference Committees that voted to form and sustain the Regional Conferences of the NAD.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. W. McCoy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Joseph W. McCoy
Executive Director

T h i n g s Y o u S h o u l d K n o w . . .

Regional Conferences . . . Authorized by this action of the General Conference Spring Council in 1944:

“WHEREAS, The present development of the work among the colored people in North America has resulted, under the signal blessing of God, in the establishment of some 233 churches with some 17,000 members and

WHEREAS, It appears that a different plan of organization for our colored membership would bring further great advance in soul-winning endeavors, therefore

WE RECOMMEND, that in the unions where the colored constituency is considered by the union conference committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and leniency warrant, colored conferences be organized.”

FORMATION OF REGIONAL CONFERENCES

NAME	YEAR	LOCATION
ALLEGHENY	1945	PINE FORGE, PA
ALLEGHENY WEST	1967	COLUMBUS, OH
CENTRAL STATES	1947	KANSAS CITY, MO
LAKE REGION	1944	CHICAGO, IL
NORTHEASTERN	1945	NEW YORK, NY
SOUTH ATLANTIC	1945	ATLANTA, GA
SOUTH CENTRAL	1945	NASHVILLE, TN
SOUTHEASTERN	1981	ORLANDO, FL
SOUTHWEST REGION	1946	DALLAS, TX

FORMATION OF REGIONAL CONFERENCES IS
CONSISTENT WITH BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

I Corinthians 12:4-6 --- “Now there are diversities of **gifts** (**gifts of grace produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit**), but the same Spirit. And there are differences of **administrations** (**service to the Christian community such as serving tables - deacons**), but the same Lord. And there are diversities of **operations** (“**working**” - **The Greek word indicates power in operation that produces obvious results**), but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

ORIGIN OF THE “REGIONAL” NAME

Until the organization of Regional Conferences in the United States, local conferences were assigned a state or two as their territory of responsibility. Regional Conferences, because of their small membership size and the scattered locations of their congregations, were assigned a larger territory that covered several states or a region of the nation. Hence, the name “Regional Conferences” as compared to state conferences.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES . . .

are legitimate, fully recognized, participating organizations in the World Church of Seventh-day Adventists. We are different in leadership when compared to state conferences but not separate nor detached in mission, organization, accountability or structure. Regional Conferences hold membership in the family of local conferences that comprise the Union Conferences in the NAD. Of the more than 1 million members in the NAD, membership exceeds 300,000 in the Regional Conferences and the predominantly Black congregations of the Pacific and North Pacific Unions.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES . . .

A DIVERSE POPULATION

Regional Conferences endorse the General Conference imperative of an open fellowship and are racially and nationality diverse. Although originally planned for Black people alone, many congregations within the Regional Conferences are predominantly Hispanic, Korean, Haitian, African and White. Lovingly they all remain open and embracing to anyone the Lord sends to join them in their daily walk to the kingdom. Regional Conferences consistently baptize 8,000 to 10,000 new members per year.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES . . .

RETIREMENT PLAN

In 2000 the Regional Conferences chose to create a Defined Benefits Retirement Plan for all of its employees rather than change to the Defined Contributions Plan suggested by the NAD. However, Regional Conferences assumed a significant portion of the financial liability accumulated by the NAD when forming their Plan. Regional Conferences contribute more than \$1 million per year towards the remaining benefit liabilities in the NAD. They are the only local conferences operating a full service Retirement Plan for their employees without NAD or General Conference oversight.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES . . .

SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMS

Regional Conferences have sponsored multi-conference Youth Congresses and the United Youth Congresses every 3 to 5 years beginning in 1971. The most recent was held at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia, in the Spring of 2006. It attracted more than 50,000 young people from the United States, Canada, England and the Caribbean for the 4 day meeting. Churches within the Regional Conferences have created or expanded their youth programs to attract all age groups. Some of the additional programs focused on the youth and young adult members are:

- Sabbath School sponsored Community Vacation Bible Schools
- Puppet Ministry
- Bible Bowl - local – state and national competitions
- Choir Concerts and Festivals
- Pathfinders – local – campmeetings and camporees
- Youth Federations – quarterly and annually - in all conferences
- Summer Camps

REGIONAL CONFERENCES . . .

CONTRIBUTED MORE \$\$\$

Members' financial contributions beginning in 1985 through 2005 exceeded 1 billion dollars in tithes and offerings.

THE FOLLOWING 3 INSERTS ARE COPIES OF DOCUMENTS REFLECTING THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE TO ENSURE RACIAL TOLERANCE AND FAIR REPRESENTATION IN ALL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND HUMAN RELATIONS - 16 POINTS

16 POINTS: VOTED AT GENERAL CONFERENCE ANNUAL COUNCIL – APRIL 2, 1970

13 POINTS: (REVISED) AD HOC COMMITTEE – JULY 28, 1981

11 POINTS: (REVISED) PRE-COUNCIL OF UNION PRESIDENTS, NAD & GC OFFICERS – SEPTEMBER 28, 1981

11 POINTS: VOTED AT NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING – OCTOBER 6-14, 1981

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

1. Seventh-day Adventist churches open their doors to any would-be worshipper or prospective member regardless of race or color and welcome such with brotherly love and concern. Where it is felt that this principle is violated it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend effective measures to correct.

2. The following additions to the baptismal vow and Church Manual are being recommended to the General Conference session:

“6) All who enter the kingdom of heaven must have experienced conversion, or the new birth, through which man receives a new heart and becomes a new creature. Thus, regardless of ethnic or social background, he becomes a member of the ‘whole family in Heaven and earth.’” (Matt. 13:3; John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eze. 36:26, 27; Heb. 8:10-12; 1 Peter 1:23, 2:2; Eph. 3:15; Acts 17:26.)

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

“13) Do you believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the remnant church of prophecy into which people of every nation, race and language are invited and accepted, and do you desire membership in its fellowship?”

At an appropriate time during this session a forthright statement should be made by the leadership of the Church dealing with and giving support to the position of the Church on race relations.

3. Conferences selecting qualified spiritual leaders as pastors shall not be limited by race or color. Should some black pastors be appointed to white churches and some white pastors appointed to black churches, a very desirable example of church fellowship and understanding would result; therefore, programs to this end should be undertaken with the support and guidance of unions.

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

4. In order to make our public ministry more effective and to help members and potential members realize the importance of this brotherhood, conference administrators are urged to make clear to pastors and evangelists that it is their duty to teach these principles as a part of the gospel and our special message for the world. We further recommend that prospective members be so instructed either in the baptismal class or in personal Bible studies.

5. Special emphasis should be given to human relations workshops to implement resolutions which unless carried out, are useless. These workshops should include all workers—field, educational and institutional, and leading laymen from both black and white conferences and churches. It is recommended that union and/or conference-wide human relations workshops be conducted in every union in North America before the 1971 Autumn Council.

6. Where normal entrance requirements are met, all Seventh-day Adventist schools from the elementary to the university level shall admit Seventh-day Adventist youth to the school of their

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

choice without regard to race or color. Where a church supported school fails to follow the counsel of the Church as stated on this point, it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend corrective measures.

7. A bi-racial commission of not more than 7 members shall be appointed in the North American Division to deal with complaints of discrimination or exclusion and other problems that arise in the area of race relations that may be appealed to it for help. This commission in cooperation and in counsel with the union conferences and/or local conference and/or the institution shall have authority to act immediately, making a thorough investigation and seeking solutions to these problems.

8. On the union conference level positive steps should be taken to open doors in the area of administrative and departmental leadership for those who have demonstrated their ability and qualifications to serve all segments of the Church. In unions where there are Regional conferences or where there is an organized Regional Department, the administrative officer level should include black leadership.

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

9. Black personnel shall be selected to serve in our publishing houses, hospitals, academies, colleges, universities and other denominational institutions on the staff and/or administrative levels. Where it seems advisable institutions should institute training programs for the development of black personnel in technical and administrative skills.

10. There is a missionary magazine dedicated to the black community in North America. The circulation of this journal is primarily the responsibility of the Regional churches. The Autumn Council of 1967 voted to help finance a black circulation manager for Message Magazine. We reaffirm that recommendation on the basis of the 1967 agreement on union participation and ask that this be implemented in the immediate future.

11. At the time of the annual North American Union Conference Presidents' meetings one or more black administrators on the union level will be invited to participate as well as representation from the Regional Department of the General Conference.

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

12. In order to provide opportunity for the presidents of Regional Conferences (including the secretary of the Regional Department of the Pacific Union) to consult together regarding problems distinctive to their work, Autumn Councils will schedule two meetings of this group each year, under North American Division leadership, in conjunction with other regularly called meetings. When additional meetings are required such would be arranged by the North American Division administration.

13. The next edition of the Ministers' Manual should include as a part of the ministerial candidates examination before ordination questions regarding the candidate's attitude toward human relations.

14. We recommend that the General Conference lay plans to provide literature that would be useful in operating human relations workshops, setting forth standards, guidelines and procedures in this area.

(16 Points: Voted at General Conference Annual Council – April 2, 1970 continued)

15. We recommend that the General Conference officers develop some plan whereby reports of progress in human relations may be publicized throughout the constituency in North America on local as well as general levels.

16. We recommend the adoption in principle of the following plan of financial relationships involving Regional work.

**AD HOC SIXTEEN POINTS REVISION COMMITTEE
JULY 28, 1981 • REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND
HUMAN RELATIONS - 13 POINTS**

After discussion, the following revisions of the Sixteen Points were recommended:

1. Seventh-day Adventist Churches should open their doors to any would-be worshiper or prospective members regardless of race or color and welcome such with brotherly love and concern. Where it is felt that this principle is violated it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend effective measures to correct.

(13 Points: (Revised) Ad Hoc Committee – July 28, 1981)

2. Conferences selecting qualified spiritual leaders as pastors should not be limited to race or color. A very desirable example of Christian brotherhood would be exhibited if pastors of black and other ethnic groups would be appointed to white churches and white pastors would appointed to churches of black and other ethnic groups; therefore programs to this end should be undertaken with the support and guidance of unions.

3. In order to make our public ministry more effective and to helps members and potential members realize the importance of this brotherhood, conference administrators are urged to make clear to pastors and evangelists that it is their duty to teach these principles as a part of the gospel and our special message for the world. We further recommend that prospective members be so instructed through personal Bible studies and in the baptismal class.

4. Special emphasis should be given to human relations workshops to implement resolutions which, unless carried out are useless. These workshops should include black, white and any other minority educational, field, and institutional workers and leading laymen from all churches and conferences. This should be done on a continuing basis.

(13 Points: (Revised) Ad Hoc Committee – July 28, 1981)

5. Where normal entrance requirements are met, all Seventh-day Adventist schools from the elementary to the university level shall admit Seventh-day Adventist youth to the school of their choice without regard to race, color, or ethnic background.

Where church supported school fails to follow the counsel of the church as stated on this point, it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend corrective measures.

6. A multi-cultural commission shall be appointed in the North American Division to deal with complaints of discrimination or exclusion and other problems that arise in the area of racial, cultural and ethnic relations. This commission, in cooperation and in counsel with the union conferences and/or the local conferences and/or the institution shall have authority to act immediately, making a thorough investigation and seeking solutions to these problems.

7. On the union conference level positive steps should be taken to open doors in the area of administrative and departmental leadership for those who have demonstrated their ability and qualifications to serve all segments of the church. The union administrative and departmental staffs should reflect the racial or ethnic composition of the union constituency. In unions

(13 Points: (Revised) Ad Hoc Committee – July 28, 1981)

where there are regional conferences or where there is a regional department, the administrative officer level should include black leadership. This principle should apply to other ethnic groups that have large constituencies.

8. Black and other minority personnel shall be selected to serve in our publishing houses, hospitals, academies, colleges, universities and other departmental institutions on the staff and administrative levels. Where it seems advisable, institutions should institute training programs for the development of black and other minority personnel in technical and administrative skills.

9. There is a missionary magazine dedicated to the black community in North America. The circulation of this journal is primarily the responsibility of the regional churches. This principle should apply to other ethnic missionary journals.

10. At the time of the annual North American Union Conference Presidents' Councils, one or more black, as well as Hispanic leaders on the General Conference or union level should be invited to participate.

(13 Points: (Revised) Ad Hoc Committee – July 28, 1981)

11. In order to provide opportunity for the presidents of Regional Conferences (including the Secretary for the Regional departments of the Pacific Union and North Pacific Union) to consult together regarding problems distinctive to their work, Autumn Councils will schedule two meetings of this group each year, under North American Division leadership, in conjunction with other regularly called meetings. When additional meetings are required such would be arranged by the North American Division administration. A similar arrangement should be developed for the Spanish Advisory.

12. We recommend that the General Conference lay plans to provide literature that would be useful in operating human relations workshops, setting forth standards, guidelines, and procedures in this area.

13. We recommend that the General Conference Officers develop some plan whereby reports of progress in human relations may be publicized throughout the constituency in North America on local as well as general levels.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND HUMAN RELATIONS - 11 POINTS

(Revised) Voted by the North American Division Annual Council October 6-14, 1981-Regional Conferences and Human Relations – Cross Cultural administrative Guidelines

VOTED, To adopt human relations and cross-cultural administrative guidelines as follows:

1. Seventh-day Adventist churches are to welcome any would-be worshiper or prospective member with brotherly love and concern regardless of race or color. Where it is felt that this principle is violated it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend corrective measures.
2. Conferences considering qualified spiritual leaders as pastors are to select the best qualified individuals and not limit themselves to candidates of a particular race or color. A very desirable example of Christian brotherhood is exhibited when pastors of Black and other ethnic groups are appointed to Caucasian churches and Caucasian pastors are appointed to churches of Black and other ethnic groups. The Union Conferences are to give support and guidance to programs to achieve the above conditions.

*(11 Points (Revised) Voted by the North American Division Annual Council
October 6-14, 1981)*

3. In order to make public ministry more effective and to help members and potential members realize the importance of this brotherhood, conference administrators are urged to make clear to pastors and evangelists that it is their duty to teach these principles as a part of the gospel and the special Adventist message for the world. Prospective members are to be instructed in this through personal Bible studies and in baptismal classes.

4. Special emphasis is to be given to the conducting of human relations workshops that are to implement these guidelines which, unless carried out, are useless. These workshops are to include Blacks, Caucasians and various minorities, and are to consist of workers from the educational, ministerial, and institutional fields and leading laymen from all churches and conferences. This is to be done on a continuing basis.

5. Where normal entrance requirements are met all Seventh-day Adventist schools from the elementary to the university level are to admit Seventh-day Adventist youth to the school of their choice without regard to race, color, or ethnic background. Where a church-supported school fails to follow the counsel of the Church as stated on this point, it is the duty of the next higher organization to investigate and recommend corrective measures.

*(11 Points (Revised) Voted by the North American Division Annual Council
October 6-14, 1981)*

6. On the union conference level, positive steps are to be taken to open the doors of the area of administrative and departmental leadership for those who have demonstrated their ability and qualifications to serve all segments of the Church. The union administrative and departmental staffs are to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the union constituency. In unions where there are regional conferences or where there is a regional department, the administrative officer level should include black leadership. This principle is to apply also to other ethnic groups that have large constituencies.

7. Black and other minority personnel are to be selected to serve on the staff and administrative levels of Adventist publishing houses, hospitals, academies, colleges, universities, and other institutions. Where there is a regional department, the administrative officer level should include black leadership. This principle is to apply also to other ethnic groups that have large constituencies.

8. At the time of North American Union Presidents' Meetings, one or more Black, as well as Hispanic leaders, on the General Conference and union levels are to be invited to participate.

*(11 Points (Revised) Voted by the North American Division Annual Council
October 6-14,1981)*

9. In order to provide opportunity for the presidents of Regional Conferences (including Secretary of the Regional Departments of the Pacific Union and North Pacific Union) to consult together regarding problems distinctive to their work, the Annual Council is to schedule two meetings of this group each year, under North American Division leadership, in conjunction with other regularly called meetings. When additional meetings are required such are to be arranged by the North American Division administration. A similar arrangement is to be developed for Asian and Spanish Advisories.

10. The General Conference is to lay plans to provide literature useful in operating human relations workshops and setting forth standards, guidelines and procedures in this area.

11. The General Conference Officers are to develop plans whereby reports of progress in human relations may be publicized to the constituency in North America on local as well as general levels.

SPECIAL MINISTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS
SUPPORTED BY REGIONAL CONFERENCES ...

In addition to the support of all other ministries expected of local conferences within the World Church of Seventh-day Adventists:

- BAYDA (Black Adventist Youth Directors Association)
- Breath of Life Telecast
- Regional Conference Laymen's Congresses
- United Youth Congresses
- Bradford Cleveland Brooks Leadership Center
- Oakwood University
- Pine Forge Academy
- North American Regional Voice Magazine
- Message Magazine
- Family Health Education Services (Publishing)
- Annual Ministers Conference and Evangelism Council
- Regional Conference Defined Benefits Retirement Plan

Throughout the world, the work of the Lord in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown significantly when leadership was put into the hands of the indigenous people. Putting leadership of the work for Black people in the United States under the direction of Regional Conferences seventy-five years ago has borne rich fruit. Since that time the membership has increased from 17,000 and is approaching the 300,000 mark.

These blessings have come as the respective Union Conferences and the North American Division leadership of the General Conference made accommodations for the successful growth and development of Regional Conferences. We praise God for the success we have enjoyed for it has only been by His might and power that these things have come to pass. Today we remain spiritually and organizationally joined together in unity with all entities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And together all of us remain determined that as one mighty army under God and with the power of the Holy Ghost, “this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.”

*Go ye therefore, and teach
all nations, baptizing them in
the name of the Father, and of
the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

*Teaching them to observe
all things whatsoever I have
commanded you: and lo, I am
with you alway, even unto
the end of the world. Amen.*

MATTHEW 28:19-20





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