

Constitution and Bylaws

*ADOPTED: REVISIONS ADOPTED AT THE
SEPTEMBER 22, 2019 CONSTITUENCY MEETING*

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS
 OF THE
 SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

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ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be known as the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, hereinafter referred to as the conference.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of this conference is to facilitate the proclamation of the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 to all peoples within its territory, leading them to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return.

ARTICLE III - RELATIONSHIPS

The Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is a part of the Southwestern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which in turn is part of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, a world church organization; and all purposes, policies and procedures of this conference shall be in harmony with the working policies and procedures of the North American Division and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This conference shall pursue the mission of the Church in harmony with the doctrines, programs, and initiatives adopted and approved by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in its quinquennial sessions.

ARTICLE IV - TERRITORY

The territory of this Conference shall consist of the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico, except San Juan County in New Mexico.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this conference shall consist of such churches as have been or shall be properly organized in any part of the geographic territory under its jurisdiction and formally approved for membership by vote of the delegates at any regularly scheduled constituency meeting.

A minimum number forty (40) members shall be required for a company to be organized into a new church.

ARTICLE VI - BYLAWS

The voters of this conference may enact bylaws and amend or repeal them at any session, and such bylaws may embrace any provision not inconsistent with the constitution of this conference and the provisions contained in the current edition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual.

ARTICLE VII - DISSOLUTION AND DISPOSITION OF ASSETS

This conference may be dissolved only by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present and voting at any constituency meeting.

In the event of the dissolution of this conference, all assets remaining after all claims have been satisfied shall be transferred to a legal non-profit entity authorized by the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

This conference shall amend its constitution from time to time at any duly called constituency meeting, and such changes to conform to the spirit of the model local conference constitution located in the most current edition of the North American Division Working Policy Book.

**BY-LAWS
 OF
 SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

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ARTICLE I - PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the Southwest Region Conference is fixed and located at 2215 Lanark, Dallas, Texas, 75203. The Executive Committee may, in an emergency, change the location of the principal office on a temporary basis.

ARTICLE II - CONSTITUENCY MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular Quadrennial Constituency Meeting

This conference shall hold a regular quadrennial constituency meeting at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall designate. Notice of the time and place of the meeting of the delegates representing the members shall be given by:

- a. A notice printed in the official publication of the Southwestern Union Conference at least four weeks before the date of the session or
- b. A method approved by the Southwest Region Conference Executive Committee.

Section 2. Special Meetings:

- a. The Executive Committee of the conference may call a special constituency meeting, at a time and place it deems proper, when:
 - 1) It is voted by the Executive Committee; or
 - 2) It is voted by the delegates at any constituency meeting; or
 - 3) It is requested by 50 percent of churches and membership of the conference through their churches in business session; or
 - 4) It is voted by the union committee, division committee, or General Conference Committee.

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88 b. The union committee or the division committee may call a special constituency meeting of the conference.

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90 c. The agenda for special constituency meetings shall be included in the notice of the meeting.

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92 d. The time and place of special constituency meetings shall be given in the same manner as for regularly scheduled constituency meetings.

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94 **Section 3. Quorum**

95 More than fifty percent (50%) of the delegates authorized hereinafter under Section 1.a of Article III must be present at any regular or
96 special constituency meeting to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Once the meeting is declared open, the delegates present shall
97 constitute a quorum.

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99 **Section 4. Proxy Voting**

100 All the delegates must be present in person at any constituency meeting in order to be eligible to vote. There shall be no voting by proxy.

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102 **Section 5. Voting Rights of the Delegates**

103 Each delegate appointed to act on behalf of the members of this conference shall be entitled to one vote. The voting rights of the individual
104 delegates representing the members as hereinafter provided shall be limited to the particular constituency meeting of the conference in which they
105 have been designated to represent a local church, an institution, the Southwestern Union Conference, the North American Division or the General
106 Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The delegates shall serve at each special constituency meeting held during the quadrennial session unless such
107 delegate is replaced by the local church for cause.

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109 **Section 6. Voting - Secret Ballot/Voice Vote**

110 The election of officers shall be by secret ballot, and the voting on other matters shall be by voice vote, or as designated by the chair, unless
111 otherwise determined by a majority of the delegates present.

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113 **Section 7. Election of Officers**

114 All officers of the conference and members of the Executive Committee shall be chosen by the delegates at the regular meeting of the conference
115 constituency and shall hold their offices until the next regular quadrennial session, unless removed for cause by the Executive Committee.

Section 8. Election of Departmental Directors	117
Directors in charge of these departments shall be elected at the regular quadrennial session of the conference and shall hold their offices until the next regular quadrennial session, unless removed for cause by the Executive Committee.	118 119 120
Section 9. Executive Committee Members Transferring to Different States	121
A layperson or denominational employee serving on the Southwest Region Conference Executive Committee from a particular state shall lose his/her seat on the committee if he/she transfers to another state during the quadrennium. Another layperson or denominational employee representing that state shall be selected by the Executive Committee to serve the remainder of the term.	122 123 124 125
Section 10. Session Reports Delivery Date	126
All reports to be presented at constituency meeting are to be prepared and delivered to regular and at-large delegates at least fourteen (14) days prior to the session.	127 128 129
Section 11. Rules of Order	130
The rules of order governing the conduct of business of constituency session shall be the General Conference Rules of Order.	131 132 133
ARTICLE III - REPRESENTATION	
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Section 1. Regular Delegates and Delegates-at-Large	135 136
The delegates at any constituency meeting of this conference shall be regular delegates and delegates-at-large	137 138
a. Regular Delegates: All delegates duly accredited by any one of the organized churches and companies of the conference. Each church and company shall be entitled to one delegate for the organization and one additional delegate for each 35 members or major fraction thereof. Delegates must hold membership in the local church or company which accredits them.	139 140 141 142
b. Delegates-at-large:	143
1) All members of the Executive Committee of the Southwest Region Conference.	144 145 146
2) All employees holding credentials or licenses issued by this conference.	147 148

- 149 3) All retired employees of the Southwest Region Conference who reside within this territory and are members in good and regular
150 standing in a Southwest Region Conference Church.
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- 152 4) Members of the General Conference Executive Committee and Southwestern Union Conference Executive Committee,
153 who may be present at any Constituency Meeting of this Conference. The number of such delegates representing these Church
154 entities shall not exceed five percent (5%) of the total number of delegates provided for herein above in Article III, Section 1.a.
155 of these Bylaws.
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157 Section 2. Delegate Representation

158 The delegate representation of each church of this conference shall be based on the official local church clerk's September 30 report, on file in the
159 conference secretary's office the year prior to the quadrennial session.
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161 Section 3. Voice and Vote Privileges

162 Voice and vote privileges at regular and special sessions of this conference shall be the prerogative of only regular and delegates at large.
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165 ARTICLE IV - COMMITTEES

167 Section 1. Organizing Committee

- 168 a. Members of the Organizing Committee shall be chosen prior to the constituency meeting. At least ninety (90) days prior to the session,
169 the secretary of the Southwest Region Conference shall notify each church and company as to the number of delegates to which it is
170 entitled under Article III Section 1-a and the members of the Organizing Committee to which it is entitled.
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- 172 b. The Organizing Committee shall be constituted as follows: Each church or company to be represented at the constituency meeting shall
173 choose, or empower its delegation to choose one member plus one additional member for each full 500 members.
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- 175 c. The chairperson of the Organizing Committees shall be the president of the Southwestern Union Conference or his designee.
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- 177 d. The Southwest Region Conference is divided into eight (8) geographical areas. Members of the Organizing Committee shall meet in their
178 designated geographical area no later than forty-five (45) days prior to the Constituency meeting at a location and date determined by
179 the Conference Executive Committee.²⁴
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- e. Each geographical area of the Organizing Committee shall select and appoint conference employees and lay persons from their geographical area to serve on the Nominating Committee according to a pre-determined number for their area. The Conference Executive Committee shall determine the number of laypersons and employees for each area. The number of members for the Nominating Committee for each geographical area shall be determined as close as reasonably possible by the proportion of the geographical area's membership to the total conference membership.
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- f. The Organizing Committee shall select the following:
 - 1. A Nominating Committee, 187
 - 2. A Constitution and Bylaws Committee, 188
 - 3. Other committees as may be deemed necessary. 189

Section 2. Nominating Committee

- a. The Nominating Committee shall consist of at least 10, and not more than 25 members, including the president of the Southwestern Union Conference, or his designee, who shall serve as the chairperson. The membership of the committee shall be balanced, as nearly as possible, between denominational employees and laypersons representing various segments of the work and territories of the conference.
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- b. The Nominating Committee shall be chosen by the Organizing Committee in the following manner: Each state of Southwest Region Conference shall be represented by one layperson and one denominational employee from different church districts. Up to fourteen (14) additional persons shall be selected by the Organizing Committee, representing various segments of the work and territories of the Conference. This membership shall be balanced as nearly as possible, between denominational employees and laypersons. The Chairperson shall complete the total number of twenty-five (25) members of the Nominating Committee.
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- c. If a vacancy occurs in the Nominating Committee membership, the Executive Committee shall appoint a replacement consistent with Article IV Section 2 a and b.
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- d. The Nominating Committee shall begin its work within thirty (30) days prior to the regular Constituency session. At least nineteen (19) members or 75% of the committee must be present to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Members of the Nominating Committee may request the chairman to solicit résumés to possibly fill positions. The committee shall have in hand its report to the delegates with a résumé of each non-incumbent nominee at least seven (7) days prior to the regular Constituency session.
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- e. The date, time, and location of the initial Nominating Committee meeting shall be determined by the Conference Executive Committee in consultation with the president of the Southwestern Union Conference or his designee, and shall be made known to the Nominating Committee at least fourteen (14) days prior to said meeting.
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215 f. The Nominating Committee shall nominate the Officers, the Departmental Directors, the Conference Executive Committee, and the
216 Conference Association Board. Members of the Nominating Committee shall make nomination without consideration being given to
217 specific incumbents only.
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- 219 g. No more than three (3) members of the Nominating Committee shall be eligible to be elected as members of the Executive Committee
220 for the ensuing quadrennial session.
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- 222 h. No individual shall be eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee for two consecutive quadrennial sessions.
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224 **Section 3. Standing Constitution and Bylaws Committee**

- 225 a. The standing Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall be chaired by the secretary of the local conference, or his/her designee.
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- 227 b. This committee shall function between the regularly scheduled constituency meetings and shall submit its reports and detailed
228 recommendations to the conference Executive Committee and to the next regular constituency meeting or any special
229 constituency meeting.
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231 **Section 4. Executive Committee Members Eligible to Serve On Nominating Committee**

- 232 a. The members of the Executive Committee who served during the ending of the quadrennium are not eligible to serve on the nominating
233 committee during the current session, but may be selected to serve on other current session committees.
234 b. Former members of the Executive Committee are eligible to serve on the nominating committee, who were eliminated from service
235 under Article II, Section 9 and to whom Article IV, Section 4a does not apply.
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238 **ARTICLE V - Executive Committee**
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240 **Section 1. Membership**

- 241 a. The Executive Committee of Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists shall be elected at its regularly scheduled
242 constituency meeting and shall consist of not more than twenty-seven (27) members. The president, secretary, treasurer, and vice
243 president shall be members ex officio of the Executive Committee. The remaining membership shall be balanced as nearly as possible
244 between laypersons and denominational employees. The membership shall include the conference director of education, one layperson
245 and one denominational employee from each state and from different church districts, and up to twelve (12) additional persons from the
246 eight (8) geographical areas of the conference.

Until such time as a vice president is elected/or appointed, the membership of the Executive Committee shall be no more than twenty-five (25) members instead of twenty-seven (27) members and the twelve (12) additional persons from various sections of the conference shall be eleven (11) additional persons instead of twelve (12). 247
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- b. The Executive Committee should include at least two (2) non-office employees and two (2) laypersons from the previous Executive Committee for the purpose of continuity. 251
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Section 2. Delegated Authority 254
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The Executive Committee of the conference is delegated the authority to act on behalf of the constituents between regular sessions, including the authority to elect or remove, for cause officers, directors of departments/services, board and committee members. 256
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Section 3. Administrative Authority 258
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The Executive Committee shall have full administrative authority: 260
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- a. To fill for the current term, any vacancies that may occur by death, resignation or otherwise, in its boards, committees, departments or in offices which have been filled by conference election. If a new president is to be elected, the president of the Southwestern Union Conference or his designee, shall serve as chairman of the Executive Committee. 262
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- b. To appoint subcommittees, such as an administrative committee, with their terms of reference. 266
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- c. To employ ministers, secretaries and other persons as deemed necessary for the work of the conference. 268
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- d. To grant and withdraw credentials and licenses. The withdrawal of credentials or the removal of those names under Article V, Section 3, Subsection c, of these bylaws shall require the consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Executive Committee. 270
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- e. To handle other business matters of the conference. 273
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Section 4. Regular Meetings 275

- a. The Executive Committee shall schedule at least (4) regular meetings per year at such times and places as it may select. 276
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- 278 b. Invitees to the meetings, such as conference departmental directors shall be non-voting members with participation rights in committee
279 discussions. Individuals who are invited for special presentations will do so without voting rights.
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- 281 c. Observers to the meetings, such as the Lay Advisory Chairperson, laypersons or denominational employees (teachers, pastors, or others)
282 appointed by the committee, will observe the operations of the Executive Committee without voice or vote. Permission to participate in
283 committee discussions may be granted by the committee members.
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- 285 d. The officers of the Southwestern Union Conference, of the North American Division and the General Conference of Seventh-day
286 Adventists are members ex officio of the local conference Executive Committee; however, their membership shall be in addition to the
287 number detailed above. Any such officers exercising their voting rights at any one meeting shall not make up more than ten percent
288 (10%) of the membership present.
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- 290 e. The Ministerial Secretary shall meet with the Executive Committee when they are in executive sessions that concern personnel issues.
291 The ministerial secretary will have voice but no vote.
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293 **Section 5. Special Meetings**

294 Special meetings of the Executive Committee may be called at any time or place by the president or, in his absence, by the secretary. A special
295 meeting shall also be called by the secretary in response to the written request of a majority of the members of the Executive Committee.
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297 **Section 6. Executive Committee Quorum**

298 Fourteen (14) members of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum.
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301 **ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS**

302 **Section 1. Executive Officers**

304 The executive officers of this conference shall be a president, a secretary, and a treasurer.
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306 The secretary and the treasurer may be one individual known as the secretary-treasurer. It is the duty of these officers, in consultation with
307 one another, to carry forward the work according to plans, policies, and programs voted by the constituency and/or the conference Executive
308 Committee. These plans, policies, and programs shall be in harmony with the doctrines and actions adopted and approved by the General
309 Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in its quadrennial sessions.

- a. President: The president, who shall be an ordained minister of experience, is the first officer and shall report to the Executive Committee of the conference in consultation with the secretary and treasurer. He shall act as chairman of the constituency meetings and the Executive Committee, and serve in the general interest of the Southwest Region Conference as the constituency and the Executive Committee shall determine. In his leadership he shall adhere to the policies of the Southwestern Union Conference and the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, work in harmony with the Southwestern Union Conference Committee, and in close counsel with the union officers.
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- b. Secretary/Vice president for administration: The secretary, associated with the president as an executive officer, shall serve under the direction of the Executive Committee and shall act as vice-chairperson of the committee. The secretary shall report to the Executive Committee of the conference after consultation with the president. It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep the minutes of the conference constituency meetings and of the Executive Committee meetings, to furnish copies of these minutes to all members of the Executive Committee and to the officers of the Southwestern Union Conference. The secretary shall also be responsible for providing information as may be requested by the president or by the Executive Committee, and shall perform such other duties as usually pertain to the office.
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- c. Treasurer/Vice president for finance: The treasurer, associated with the president as an executive officer, shall serve under the direction of the Executive Committee. The treasurer shall report to the Executive Committee of the conference after consultation with the president. The treasurer shall be responsible for providing financial leadership to the organizations which will include, but shall not be limited to, receiving, safeguarding and disbursing all funds in harmony with the actions of the Executive Committee, for remitting all required funds to the union/division/General Conference in harmony with the North American Division policy, and for providing financial information to the president and the Executive Committee. The treasurer shall also be responsible for furnishing copies of the financial statements to the Southwestern Union officers.
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- d. The treasurer is responsible for auditing the books of the local churches. Where it is found impossible for the treasurer to personally audit the books of the local churches, the Executive Committee shall arrange with him/her for assistance as may be necessary in order to make the above possible. The treasurer has an oversight responsibility for the local church treasurers.
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Section 2. Other Officers

Other individuals may serve as officers of the local conference, such as vice president, associate secretary and associate treasurer.

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Section 3. Bank Accounts	375
The funds of this conference shall be safeguarded in harmony with the financial policies of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Monies shall be deposited in the name of the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in regular or special accounts, in such banks or saving institutions as the Executive Committee shall designate, and shall be withdrawn only by persons authorized by resolution of the Executive Committee.	376 377 378 379 380
Section 4. Financial Statements	381
The Southwest Region Conference shall prepare annually appropriate statements of income and fund balances and shall be responsible for the filing of any financial information directly within the Southwestern Union and the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and, to the extent required by law, with any branch of local or national government.	382 383 384 385 386
ARTICLE X - BUDGET, SALARY REVIEW AND AUDIT	
Section 1. Budget	387 388
The Southwest Region Conference shall prepare an annual budget in harmony with the policies of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.	389 390 391 392
Section 2. Salary and Expense Review	393
The Executive Committee shall constitute an employee remuneration committee to review annually the salary and expenses of all the employees and set salary rates for the subsequent year.	394 395 396
Section 3. Independent Audit	397
All accounting records of this conference shall be audited at least annually by an auditor designated by the General Conference Auditing Service; and the records of this conference or any of its subsidiaries, agencies or institutions shall at all times be open to said auditor.	398 399 400 401
ARTICLE XI - INDEMNIFICATION	
Section 1. To the extent permitted by law, this conference shall indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, because he/she	402 403 404 405 406

407 is or was a member of the conference Executive Committee or an officer, employee, or agent of the conference against expenses, (including
408 legal fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him/her in connection with such action,
409 suit, or proceeding if he/she acted in good faith and in a manner he/she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interest of the
410 conference, and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his/her conduct was unlawful.

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412 **Section 2.** This right of indemnification shall be in addition to, and not exclusive of, all other rights to which such member of the Executive Committee
413 or an officer or department director may be entitled.

414 (Note: This right of indemnification may be expanded or contracted as allowed under local law and as adopted by the constituents.)

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ARTICLE XII - CHURCHES

419 **Section 1.** Each church, in order to be retained as a member of this conference shall conform to the tenets, general policies and usages of the Seventh-day
420 Adventists denomination set forth in the current edition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual and the current Working Policy of the
421 North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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423 **Section 2.** This conference may receive or expel a church at any regular session, or in a special session providing such a church has been given notice to
424 the proposed action at least thirty (30) days previous to the date of the special session, either by letter or through publication in the
425 Southwestern Union Record.

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427 **Section 3.** Legal title to all real property acquired by churches, institutions, and associations, within the conference shall immediately, upon acquisition,
428 be vested in the Southwest Region Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, the legal corporation of the conference unless otherwise
429 permitted in writing by the Executive Committee. All such real properties acquired by the Southwest Region Conference Association of
430 Seventh-day Adventists and/or churches, and/or conference institutions are held in trust for the organization that acquired it.

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ARTICLE XIII - CONFERENCE CHURCH

Section 1. The conference church shall consist of such baptized believers as may be received into its membership who do not live close to any regularly organized church.

Section 2. The president of the conference shall be the elder of the conference church. The conference secretary, shall likewise serve as the clerk of the conference church, and the conference treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the conference church. The Executive Committee shall serve as the administrative board of this church for the acceptance and dismissal of members.

ARTICLE XIV - LAY ADVISORY

Section 1. A permanent Southwest Region Lay Advisory made up of an elder and one other designee from each church of the conference shall meet with the officers and departmental directors not less than two (2) times per year, to study all phases of the conference program, and will make recommendations and give counsel to the Executive Committee. It is recommended that these Lay Advisory meetings be held in conjunction with conference-wide meetings, such as elders and deacons retreats, camp meetings, and church officers meetings. The officers of the conference and departmental directors should submit written reports at these Lay Advisory meetings.

Section 2. The Lay Advisory is to be chaired by a layperson elected by the conference constituency at the regular quadrennial session to serve for the term of the quadrennial session. The Lay Advisory Chairperson will also sit on the Executive Committee as an observer.

ARTICLE XV - PASTORAL ADVISORY

A permanent Southwest Region Pastoral Advisory consisting of eight (8) pastors from the eight (8) geographical areas of the conference shall be elected by the pastors from those respective areas. They shall meet with the conference officers not less than twice per year to discuss pertinent conference-related issues, and to make recommendations to the conference officers and/or the Executive Committee. The members of this advisory shall serve for the term of the quadrennial.

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ARTICLE XVI - TOWN HALL MEETINGS

There shall be no less than one Southwest Region Conference Town Hall Meeting in all eight (8) geographical areas of the conference during each quadrennial term. The executive officers will give progress reports and field questions.

ARTICLE XVII - AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This conference shall amend its bylaws from time to time at any duly called constituency meeting, any such changes to conform to the spirit of the model local conference bylaws. Such amendments or revisions shall be approved by a two thirds (2/3) majority vote of the delegates present and voting.

Section 2. The constituency or the conference Executive Committee may recommend to the General Conference through the Southwestern Union Conference and the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists amendments to the Model Local Conference Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 3. Copies of proposed constitution and bylaws are to be furnished to each delegate three (3) weeks before the quadrennial session.