



**Suggested
Organizational
Guidelines**

for

Shepherdess Chapters



Shepherdess International
The Ministry to Clergy Spouses

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Sharing the Ministry of Christ Our Lord



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“The wife of a minister of the gospel can be either a most successful helper and a great blessing to her husband or hindrance to him in his work. It depends very much on the wife whether a minister will rise from day to day in his sphere of usefulness, or whether he will sink to the ordinary level.”

—*Adventist Home*, p. 355





I. Why a Shepherdess Organization

Major research projects on feeling and attitudes of pastors' wives reflect both positive and negative elements. Most ministers' wives do provide positive support for the church in general and for their husbands' work in particular. Yet surveys indicate the need for an effective support system to encourage and strengthen them in their roles as women, wives, mothers and leaders.

These committed women are doing a great, though often unrecognized, work for the church. Many have expressed the need for more training, as they feel inadequate to meet the demands of their various roles.

The Spring Meeting of 1985, recommended the creation of an "affirmative action" plan for the involvement of women in various church ministries; the stressing of team ministry by a pastor and wife, including the development of a financial plan and training program (*Adventist Review*, July 11, 1985, p. 20).

On October 11, 1987, Annual Council voted:

"To recognize Shepherdess International as a regular program of the General Conference Ministerial Association commencing January 1, 1988 . . ."

This action was taken to encourage and professionalize the pastor's wife in order to:

Enhance her personal and spiritual growth. The minister's wife gives and gives of herself to the church, to her spouse, and to her children. This can lead to depletion of her inner resources. She needs an in-filling experience, as much as, or more than, her husband. Special programs and incentives to invigorate her personal and spiritual growth are imperative.

Clarify her role as a minister's spouse. The minister's wife often finds herself feeling guilty and frustrated because she does not fully understand her own role. She needs to discover for herself her unique spiritual gifts and how she might develop them in a way that will prepare her for team ministry with her husband.

Train her as a paraprofessional in the ministry so she will be able to complement her husband's work and develop her own competency and self-worth.

Help her form close relationships. Home problems cripple the ministerial couple in the performance of their task. With the minister's heavy schedule, relationships are prone to deteriorate. Programs to nurture ministers' homes are of primary importance.

II. How to Start a Shepherdess Chapter

Responsibility. The ministerial association Secretary of each conference/mission is responsible for the organizing of a local Shepherdess chapter. He should request the president to appoint a sponsor to assist in this. Such sponsor should be the wife





of the conference president or ministerial association secretary when practical. The constitution outlines the procedure.

III. Model Constitutions for Shepherdess Chapters

Suggested Constitution. It is not assumed that every Shepherdess chapter will have a constitution. The important factor is to organize a support group for the pastoral wives. If you desire to have one, here is a sample.

Suggested Constitution for the (Conference/Mission) Chapter of Shepherdess International

Preamble. This organization is sponsored by the _____
Conference/Mission to assist the minister's spouse in:

- personal, spiritual growth;
- clarification of her role as a minister's spouse;
- development of a team ministry with her husband, uniquely suited to her own interests and abilities;
- training as a paraprofessional in the ministry;
- finding fellowship and a support system; and
- developing closer home relationships.

Article I

Name. The name of this organization shall be _____.

Article II

Membership. Membership be granted to spouses of pastors, administrators, seminary professors, theology professors, retired and widowed ministers' wives and seminary students' wives.

Although ministers' spouses have a concern for, and much in common with, wives of other denominational employees, they do have unique needs and problems. It is important, therefore, to have a successful support group which can address those problems directly. Women to be included in the local organization include wives of pastors, departmental directors and administrators. Also, the theology students' wives, college and seminary theology teachers' wives, retired workers' wives, and widows of ministers. Wives of other workers such as teachers, colporteurs, etc., might, on occasion, be invited as guests. However, the principal purpose of this organization is to address special needs of spouses who are paraprofessionals in the ministry—particularly the pastoral ministry.

Article III

Meetings. Officers and sponsor of the organization should consult the conference administration whenever it calls ministers together to determine if it is possible to invite their spouses. If so, set some of the time aside for spouses to meet separately.





Article IV

Sponsor. The sponsor provides overall guidance to the organization. To assure continuity in the program from year to year, the sponsor should not be changed frequently. She is liaison between the organization and the conference administration regarding financial and other matters. Resource material is sent to her through the General Conference Shepherdess International office. She presides over elections.

The sponsor shall be chosen by the conference president in consultation with the ministerial secretary.

Article V

Officers

Section 1: Positions. Officers of the chapter should include the president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, editor and assistant editor of the newsletter.

Section 2: Duties. (All points in the philosophy of the preamble should be considered when nominating officers.)

President. The president shall call and preside over business sessions and executive meetings. She gives overall leadership to the organization.

Vice-President/President Elect. The vice-president/president elect shall assist the president in fulfilling her duties.

Editor. The editor shall prepare the organization's local newsletter in cooperation with the conference, using the services of an assistant editor and other individual members.

Assistant Editor/Editor Elect. The assistant editor/editor elect shall assist the editor in fulfilling her duties.

Secretary-Treasurer. The secretary-treasurer will rate proceedings of the local organization in a manner easily transferred to her successor. She may be asked to keep the mailing list up-to-date, unless the conference is able to provide this service. If dues are required, she should collect them, keep a financial record, and make disbursements as authorized.

Area Director (Optional for large or scattered conferences). In order to provide more localized support, an area director may be elected from a geographical portion of the conference to arrange activities for pastors' spouses in that area. Their meetings are to be independent of, but not in conflict with, the parent organization. All proposed actions are to be subject to the executive committee. News items regarding minister families, their involvement in the church and community, and activities of area meetings should be sent to the editor.

Section 3: Term of Office. Length of office shall be one or two years, depending on how often the conference brings the spouses in for meetings. If they can only meet once or twice a year, it would be better to keep the same officers





longer. The vice president shall follow as president for the following term. The assistant editor shall also follow the editor the following term. This will provide better continuity in the program.

Section 4: Election of Officers. The election shall take place at the annual meeting where the largest number of members normally attend. Officers shall be nominated by a nominating committee of five chosen from the floor and chaired by the sponsor. Names are then presented to the floor for election and chosen by the majority of members present and voting. The final duty of each outgoing officer is to transfer all records and materials to her successor. New officers begin their term at the close of the meeting at which they were elected. (For example, if officers are chosen at camp meeting, they take office when camp meeting ends.)

Article VI

The Executive Committee shall direct all activities of the organization, making certain its program is in harmony with the constitution. The committee shall consist of the five officers and the sponsor. It is presided over by the president. This committee shall serve as the nominating committee to nominate officers to fill vacancies occurring between elections.

Other Committees, if needed, may be chosen at any business session to consider matters of special importance.

Article VII

Publication. The name of the organization's local newsletter publication shall be _____ . It shall be published not more than 12 or less than four times per year. The publication usually takes the form of a newsletter and is duplicated and mailed as inexpensively as possible—preferably by the conference.

The primary purpose of this local newsletter is to build a support system within the conference and share spiritual experiences and articles about ministers' spouses in the local conference as well as educational articles for personal growth to help encourage the spouse in team ministry.

The editor of each chapter should send a copy of the local newsletter to Shepherdess International at the General Conference Ministerial Association. Ideas can thus be shared through the *Shepherdess International Journal* to pastoral wives around the world.

Article VIII

Officers usually serve without pay. Expenses, such as duplicating and mailing of the newsletter, should be met by the conference.

Article IX

Amendments. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a properly constituted business meeting, provided the change is in harmony with the purposes of the organization as stated in the constitution preamble.





IV. Local Conference/Mission Shepherdess Organization

Conference Ministerial Association Secretary. The local Shepherdess organization is responsible to the conference/mission, its president, and ministerial association secretary. The ministerial association secretary works with the president to select the sponsor and give her support and counsel.

Conference/Mission Coordinator Job Description.

1. Has a special interest in the needs of the minister's spouse.
2. Encourages the conference to include every pastoral wife at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the wives can attend. Plans special meetings for the pastoral wives at these occasions. Calls the spouses of ministers together at a time when most can be present, perhaps at workers' meeting or camp meeting. The sponsor should always be present at an election.
3. Acts as the liaison between the conference/mission administrators and the Shepherdess organization. She should meet with conference/mission administrators when plans are made for any workers' meetings to invite wives and plan meetings for them. Advises Shepherdess International on how they can serve the conference more effectively.
4. Makes certain a local newsletter is prepared regularly. She should try to make arrangements for specific conference office help in typing and mailing the newsletter.
5. She should make sure the conference provides the *Shepherdess International Journal* complimentary to all the pastoral wives in their own language.
6. She should help organize translation, if needed.
7. A stipend and budget for Shepherdess should be provided.
8. Educates church members and leaders about their responsibility to provide nurture and support to the pastoral family.
9. Demonstrates concern for the pastoral families in times of joy, stress, or crisis—moves, birth of child, baptism of child, deaths, transitions, illness, etc.

V. Union Conference/Mission Shepherdess Organization

Union Ministerial Association Secretary. The union ministerial association secretary is responsible to select, support and train a minister's wife to oversee the Shepherdess work throughout the union. It may work best if the wife of the union ministerial association secretary or president is chosen. She should be given a stipend and some travel budget. Travel is less expensive if the wife can combine





her travel with her husband. Their working together *models* team ministry as they *promote* team ministry.

Union Shepherdess Sponsor Job Description.

1. Helps local conference/mission to organize Shepherdess chapters and remain active. Serves as liaison to union leadership, under the auspices of the Ministerial Association, to promote the needs and nurture of pastoral wives within the union.
2. Makes it a goal for every pastoral wife in the union to receive the *Shepherdess International Journal* in her language. Sends Shepherdess International news of Shepherdess activities in the union.
3. Helps provide translation resources, if needed, for her union.
4. Encourages the union leadership to include every pastoral wife at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the wives can attend. Plans special meetings for the pastoral wives at these occasions.

VI. Division Shepherdess Organization

Division Ministerial Association Secretary. The division ministerial association secretary is responsible to select, support and train a minister's wife to oversee the Shepherdess work throughout the division. It is suggested that, if possible, she be the wife of the division ministerial association secretary or president. A stipend and travel budget should be provided. Travel is less expensive, and safer too, if the wife can combine her travel with her husband. Team ministry modeled from the top promotes pastoral team ministry.

Division Shepherdess Coordinator Job Description.

1. Helps train and encourage union Shepherdess sponsors to promote local conference/mission chapters. Serves as liaison to division leadership, under the auspices of the ministerial association, to promote the needs and nurture of pastoral wives within the division.
2. Makes continuing education courses available. She can use the General Conference Shepherdess International courses and adapt as needed or make up her own.
3. Keeps records of new Shepherdess chapters and newsletters being sent. She shall ask for copies of local newsletters to be sent to her. Keeps statistical records of Shepherdess chapters in her division and reports them to ministerial secretary annually, or at his request.
4. Makes it a goal for every pastoral wife in the division to receive the *Shepherdess International Journal* in her language. Sends Shepherdess International news of Shepherdess activities in the division.





5. In conjunction with the ministerial association secretary and Shepherdess International, helps plan the World Ministers Councils.
6. Serves as advisor, resources, and help to union and conference Shepherdess coordinators. Analyzes their needs and helps them provide nurture to their pastoral wives.
7. Encourages the division to include every pastoral wife at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the wives can attend. Plans special meetings for the pastoral wives at these occasions.

VII. General Conference Shepherdess International Organization

The Shepherdess International Executive Committee's function is to guide the General Conference coordinator of Shepherdess International in carrying out the Shepherdess Board's decisions. It is responsible for decision making between the meetings of the Shepherdess Board. It consists of the following members.

Chairman: Ministerial Association Secretary

Secretary: Shepherdess International Coordinator

Members: Ministerial Association staff

The Advisory Committee is made up of mainly women having an exceptional interest and experience in being ministers' wives. It serves in an advisory capacity to represent the feelings and needs of ministers' wives. Vacancies may be filled by the Executive Committee from the following list:

Chairman: Ministerial Association Secretary

Secretary: Shepherdess International Coordinator

Members: Shepherdess International staff, pastoral and administrative wives representing all division and attached fields.

The Staff Committee's function is to implement the policies and actions established by the Shepherdess Board and the Executive Committee and, within that framework, develop and coordinate programs and resources for ministerial spouses. The members are:

Chairman: Shepherdess International Coordinator

Secretary: Secretary to coordinator

Member: Assistant to coordinator

General Conference Shepherdess Coordinator Job Description

1. Implements the policies and actions established by the Shepherdess Board and Executive Committee.





2. Serves as liaison between the General Conference Ministerial Association and the Ministerial Association Shepherdess coordinators on the division level and assists them in understanding and upholding the objectives and functions of Shepherdess International.
3. Prepares, reproduces and distributes materials relevant to needs of ministers' spouses around the world.
4. Promotes and publicizes Shepherdess chapters worldwide.
5. Keeps careful records of all transpiring events and materials for ready reference.
6. Reports annually to the Ministerial Association and make such recommendations as are needed for the growth and function of Shepherdess chapters.
7. Promotes team ministry wherever possible.
8. Plans and promotes meetings for administrative wives and others attending Annual Council sessions with their husbands both in North America and overseas.
9. Assists Women's Ministries' director to plan and promote meetings for women attending General Conference sessions. Shepherdess International staff gives input during planning for the World Ministers' Council held before each General Conference Session. Seminars will be included with the minister's wife in view.
10. Serves on the *Ministry* staff committee, to ensure the publication of articles that address the needs of the minister's spouse.
11. Publishes the *Shepherdess International Journal* quarterly as the official magazine at Shepherdess International. Promotes this magazine to church leadership and helps them realize the importance of providing this source of nurture. Specific subjects covered include: spirituality, team ministry, children in the pastoral home, health, loneliness, expectations of church members, time management, devotionals, and news from around the world. Makes it a goal for every pastoral wife in the world to receive this magazine in her language.
12. Provides opportunities for spiritual and mental growth through seminars to pastoral wives as her services are requested by the divisions/unions/conferences. Currently she travels approximately 200 days per year to keep current with the needs of pastoral wives around the world.
13. In conjunction with the ministerial association secretaries and Shepherdess coordinators, helps plan the World Ministers Councils.
14. Publishes Continuing Education Courses as needed.





15. Provides resources for pastoral wives to accomplish soul-winning activities, which is currently intended to be funded through sales of *Seasoned With Love*, *Seasoned with Love*, *a Second Helping*, *Seasoned with Laughter* and *Sunrise In Her Heart*.

VIII. Newsletter

Shepherdess International Journal:

Purpose. Each quarter a *Shepherdess International Journal* is published at the Shepherdess International headquarters. The purpose of this material is to provide an official publication for Seventh-day Adventist pastoral wives around the world. It is published in as many languages as possible.

Campus Use. The *Journal* is sent to every Seventh-day Adventist college. The chairman of the religion department receives it and should see that it is used for campus organizations made up of prospective ministers' wives. It is urged that the schools sponsor the *Shepherdess International Journal* for all their theology and seminar spouses.

Local Newsletter:

Suggestions for Publishing. The local newsletter should usually be mailed from the local conference office. If finances are limited, they could be mailed with material being sent to ministers. It is recommended that an issue be sent out no less than once each quarter.

Each newsletter should have a name and list the conference/mission, date, sponsor, and current officers.

Personalizing. Since the local newsletter serves a specified group, human interest should be the focus of the newsletters by introducing items of a personal nature, such as new babies, birthdays, anniversaries, prayer partners, upcoming events, etc. This, along with a paraprofessional article, will make the newsletter readable and provide a supportive environment for mental and spiritual growth.

IX. Continuing Education

Need. The Ministerial Association, in conjunction with Shepherdess International, has developed and is developing courses to fit the specific needs of the pastoral wife. These courses are being prepared after studying results of surveys done to find the areas of greatest interest and need.

Resolution. The 1983 Annual Council passed the following resolution:

“There is normally little formal educational training to function as a minister’s spouse. It is the intention of the Center of Continuing Education for Ministry to pay heed to the challenges of ministers’ spouses and to provide offerings which would meet the specific needs of this important segment of our ministerial force.”

Fulfillment. Pastoral wives who experience the thrill of mental and spiritual growth become more fulfilled in their daily living and are more effective in helping their families and church members.





Record. If a minister and spouse desire, the spouse's continuing education may be recorded on a separate sheet and filed with the minister's service record just as the spouse's is. This will encourage couples to spend more time studying together and to prepare themselves for a more fulfilling team ministry.

Finance. Continuing education is greatly encouraged by those conferences having a plan for sharing the expense of the course taken by a spouse. This may be done, either by refund on completion of the course, or by a stipend offered upon the purchase of the course.

How. Write Shepherdess International for a list of courses available with prices.

X. Conclusion

Suggestions Welcome. Denominational administrators, ministerial association secretaries, and ministers' spouses are invited to make suggestions to the Shepherdess International coordinator regarding development of materials needed by the world field.

Seventh-day Adventist ministers' spouses can function more efficiently and more joyfully as they join hands and hearts with their spouses, with church administrators, and with each other for the cause of Christ and a finished work.

