

**Ministerial Spouses Association:  
A Handbook for Local Chapter Presidents and Sponsors**

© 2022 by General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists.

General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904

For more information on resources available to Ministerial Spouses, visit:  
<https://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses/>

## Contents

<a href="#"><u>Why a Ministerial Spouses Association?</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>Starting a Local Ministerial Spouses Association Chapter</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Suggested Constitution</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Membership</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Meetings</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Sponsor</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Officers</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Duties</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Term of Office</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Election</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Committees</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Publication</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Finance</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Amendments</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Ministerial Spouses Association Structure</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Local Conference/Mission Level</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Union Conference/Mission Level</u></a>	10
<a href="#"><u>Division Level</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>General Conference Level</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Publications</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u><i>The Journal, a Resource for Ministry Spouses</i></u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>Local Newsletter</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>Helpful Tips for the Newsletter Editor</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Choosing Topics</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Tips for Writing</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Publishing</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Conclusion</u></a>	19

## **Why a Ministerial Spouses Association?**

The Ministerial Spouses Association, formerly known as Shepherdess International, was initially created to provide an effective support system for pastor's wives; to encourage and strengthen them in their roles as wives, mothers, and leaders.

Most ministers' spouses provide positive support for the church in general and for their husband's or wife's work in particular. These committed individuals 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 Church, during the spring business session 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). Two years later, Annual Council voted to "recognize Shepherdess International as a regular program of the General Conference Ministerial Association commencing January 1, 1988..."

In recent years the official name changed to Ministerial Spouses Association. The Division Ministerial Spouse coordinators voted to recommend it for a variety of reasons and then the General Conference ADCOM voted to approve that recommendation. It was clearly understood that the divisions who preferred to stay with the name Shepherdess or another name they have chosen that works better according to their needs, would be allowed to do so.

The Ministerial Spouses Association exists to enhance personal and spiritual growth, clarify spousal roles, and encourage inter-personal relationships between ministry spouses.

## Starting a Local Ministerial Spouses Association

The Ministerial Association secretary of each conference/mission is responsible for organizing a local Ministerial Spouses Association chapter. He/she should request the president to appoint a sponsor to assist in this. A sponsor should be the spouse of the conference president or Ministerial Association secretary when practical.

We've offered a suggested constitution sample below:

### **Suggested Constitution for the (Conference/Mission Name) Chapter of the Ministerial Spouses Association**

**Preamble.** This organization is sponsored by the (Conference/Mission name) to assist the minister's spouse in:

- personal, spiritual growth;
- clarification of their role as a minister's spouse;
- development of a team ministry with their spouse, uniquely suited to their 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' spouses and seminary students' spouses.

Although minister's spouses have a concern for, and much in common with, those 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. Men and women to be included in the local organization include spouses of pastors, departmental directors and administrators. Also, theology students' husbands or wives, college and seminary theology teachers' spouses, retired workers' spouses, and widowers/widows of ministers. Spouses 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 ministry—particularly the pastoral ministry.

### **Article III**

**Meetings.** Officers and sponsors of the organization should talk with the conference administration whenever the ministers are called to meet together to determine if it is possible to invite their spouses. If so, set some 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 change frequently. He/she is liaison between the organization and the conference administration regarding financial and other matters. Resource material is sent to him/her from the Division Ministerial Office. He/she presides over elections. The sponsor should be chosen by the conference president in consultation with the ministerial secretary.

### **Article V**

#### **Elected 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.** When nominating officers, keep in mind the purpose of the organization given in the preamble.

**President.** The president arranges and presides over business sessions and executive meetings. He/she gives overall leadership to the organization.

**Vice-President/President Elect.** The vice-president/president elect assists the president in fulfilling duties.

**Editor.** The editor prepares the organization's local newsletter in cooperation with the conference, using an assistant editor, if possible, and other individual members.

**Assistant Editor/Editor Elect.** The assistant editor/editor elect assists the editor in fulfilling duties.

**Secretary-Treasurer.** The secretary-treasurer will note proceedings of the local organization in a manner easily transferred to a successor. They may be asked to keep the mailing/email list up-to-date, unless the conference is able to provide this service. If dues are required, he/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 would be with the approval of the executive committee. News items regarding ministers' 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 should take place at an annual ministers meeting where the largest number of spouses normally attend. We suggest that a nominating committee of five be chosen, chaired by the sponsor. Names would then be presented to the floor for election and chosen by the majority of members present and voting. The final duty of each outgoing officers is to transfer all records and materials to his/her successor. New officers begin their term at the close of the meeting at which they are elected. (For example, if officers are chosen at camp meeting, they take office when camp meeting ends.)

## **Article VI**

**Committees.** The organization's Executive Committee is responsible for all activities of the organization, making sure its program is in harmony with the constitution. The Executive Committee consists 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 either duplicated and mailed as inexpensively as possible—preferably by the conference—or emailed digitally to members.



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.

### **Article VIII**

**Finance.** Officers usually serve without pay. Expenses, such as duplicating and mailing of the newsletter, small gifts for special events, retreats, or occasional bonuses 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.

## **Ministerial Spouses Association Structure**

### **Local Conference/Mission Level**

The local Ministerial Spouses 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 support and counsel.

#### *Conference/Mission Coordinator Job Description:*

An ideal candidate

1. has a special interest in the needs of the minister's spouse.
2. encourages the conference to include spouses at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the partners can attend. Plans special meetings for spouses 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 Ministerial Spouses organization. They should meet with conference/mission administrators when plans are made for any workers' meetings to invite spouses and plan meetings for them. Advises the Union Ministerial Spouses Association on how they can serve the conference more effectively.
4. makes certain a local newsletter is prepared regularly. They should try to make arrangements for specific conference office help in typing and mailing or digitally distributing the newsletter.
5. makes sure the conference provides *The Journal: A resource for ministry spouses* complimentary to all the spouses in their own language.
6. should help organize translation, if needed.
7. will create a stipend and budget for the local Ministerial Spouses Association chapter.
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.

### **Union Conference/Mission Level**

The union Ministerial Association secretary is responsible to select, support and train a minister's spouse to oversee the Ministerial Spouses Association's work throughout the union. It may work best if the spouse of the union Ministerial Association secretary or president is chosen. He/she should be given a stipend and some travel budget, if possible. Travel is less expensive if the spouses can combine travel. Their working together models team ministry as they promote team ministry.

#### *Union Ministerial Spouses Association Sponsor Job Description:*

An ideal candidate

1. helps local conference/mission to organize Ministerial Spouses Association chapters. Serves as liaison to union leadership, under the auspices of the

Ministerial Association, to promote the needs and nurture of pastoral spouses within the union.

2. makes it a goal for every spouse in the union to receive *The Journal: A resource for ministry spouses* in her language. Sends the Division news of activities in the union so it can be shared with General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association.
3. helps provide translation resources, if needed, for their union.
4. encourages the union leadership to include every pastoral spouse at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the partners can attend. Plans special meetings for the spouses at these occasions.

### **Division Level**

The division Ministerial Association secretary is responsible to select, support and train a minister's spouse to oversee the Ministerial Spouses Association's work throughout the division. It is recommended that, if possible, he/she be the spouse of the division ministerial secretary or president. A salary and travel budget should be provided. Travel is less expensive, and safer too, if the spouses can combine travel. Team ministry modeled from the top promotes pastoral team ministry.

#### *Division Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinator Job Description:*

The ideal candidate

1. helps train and encourage union Ministerial Spouses Association 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 spouses within the division.
2. makes continuing education courses available. He/she may use the General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association curriculum and adapt as needed or make up a course suited to specific division needs.
3. keeps records of new Ministerial Spouses Association chapters and newsletters being sent. Keeps statistical records of chapters in the division and reports them to the ministerial secretary annually, or at his/her request.

4. makes it a goal for every pastoral spouse in the division to receive *The Journal: A resource for ministry spouses* in their language. Sends the General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association news of activities in the division.
5. plan the Division Ministers and Spouses Council, in conjunction with the General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary and Ministerial Spouses Association.
6. advises, provides resources for, and helps union and conference Ministerial Spouses Association coordinators. Analyzes their needs and helps them provide nurture for their pastoral spouses.
7. encourages the division to include every pastoral spouse at functions they plan for the ministers. Encourages that these meetings be planned during a time the partners can attend. Plans special meetings for the spouses at these occasions.

### **General Conference Level**

The Ministerial Spouses Association Executive Committee's function is to guide the General Conference coordinator in carrying out the Board's decisions. It is responsible for decision-making between the meetings of the Ministerial Spouses Association Board. It consists of the following members: Ministerial Association Secretary, chairman; Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinator, secretary; Ministerial Association staff, members.

The Advisory Committee is made up primarily of men and women who have an exceptional interest and/or experience in being ministry spouses. It serves in an advisory capacity to represent the feelings and needs of the minister's spouse. Vacancies may be filled by the Executive Committee from the following list: Ministerial Association Secretary, chairperson; Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinator, secretary; Ministerial Spouses Association staff, and pastoral and administrative spouses representing all divisions and attached fields, members.

The Staff Committee's function is to implement the policies and actions established by the Ministerial Spouses Association Board and the Executive Committee and, within

that framework, develop and coordinate programs and resources for ministerial spouses. The members are: Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinator as chairperson; Secretary to Coordinator as secretary; and the Assistant to Coordinator as member.

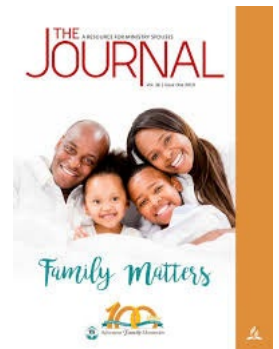
*General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinator Job Description:*

1. Implements the policies and actions established by the Board and Executive Committee.
2. Serves as liaison between the General Conference Ministerial Association and the Ministerial Spouses Association Coordinators on the division level and assists them in understanding and upholding the objectives and functions of the Ministerial Spouses Association.
3. Prepares, reproduces and distributes materials relevant to needs of minister's spouses around the world.
4. Promotes and publicizes 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 Ministerial Spouses Association chapters.
7. Promotes team ministry wherever possible.
8. Plans and promotes meetings for administrative spouses and others attending Annual Council sessions with their partners both in North America and overseas.
9. Assists Women's Ministries director to plan and promote meetings for women attending General Conference sessions.
10. Publishes *The Journal, a Resource for Ministry Spouses* four times a year as the official magazine of the Ministerial Spouses Association. Promotes this magazine to church leadership and helps them realize the importance of providing this source of nurture. Makes it a goal for every spouse in the world to receive the magazine in their language.
11. Provides opportunities for spiritual and mental growth through seminars to pastoral spouses as services are requested by the divisions/unions/conferences. He/she will travel extensively to keep current with the needs of pastoral spouses around the world.

## Publications

### ***The Journal, a Resource for Ministerial Spouses***

**Purpose.** *The Journal, a Resource for Ministry Spouses*, is published four times a year at the Ministerial Association headquarters. The purpose of this material is to provide an official publication for Seventh-day Adventist pastoral spouses around the world. It is published in as many languages as possible. Archived editions of *The Journal* are available in digital format online at <https://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses>.



**Campus Use.** *The Journal, a Resource for Ministry Spouses*, 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' spouses. It is urged that the schools sponsor *The Journal* for all their theology and seminar spouses.

### **Local Newsletter**

Having a local Ministerial Spouses Association newsletter is a terrific opportunity to impact your conference ministry spouses with learning experiences and spiritual encouragement.

Since the newsletter serves a specified group, human interest should be the focus of the newsletters by introducing news such as new babies, birthday and anniversary celebrations, prayer partners, upcoming events, etc. This, along with an educational-type article, will make the newsletter readable and provide a supportive environment for mental and spiritual growth.

## **Helpful Tips for the Newsletter Editor**

Here are a few suggestions as to how you can put your resources to work in the best possible way.

**Pray.** The Holy Spirit has promised to be your guide.

**Read the material carefully.** Ask yourself, does it ring true to the basic beliefs that you hold as a Christian? Does it contain any objectional language or suggestions? Don't take this for granted. Check everything carefully. Your newsletter is a public statement of you and your conference.

**Select relevant material.** Your space is limited and so is the reader's time. Why not select material that is pertinent and the best quality available.

**Get permission.** It is illegal to use articles without gaining the author's permission. A simple letter to the author explaining what you are using the article for usually gains consent. Always use the author's name with the article.

**Keep a high spiritual tone.** It can be said that there is good in almost everything, but your newsletter deserves the best. Ministry spouses everywhere need support, ideas, and inspiration. They need very practical suggestions. In solving any problem and coping with any difficulty, pointing to Jesus is the ultimate plan. Good humor is in keeping with these ideas.

**Pray.** Gather, if possible, your staff and pray over your completed copy. Ask God to bless it. Ask Him to encourage and teach through your newsletter. He will!

## **Choosing Topics for Your Newsletter**

The Ministerial Spouses Association sent out a survey to ministers' wives worldwide. Four areas of concern surfaced. We use these felt needs as a guide for *The Journal*, a

*Resource for Ministry Spouses.* Try to keep these in mind when you decide on materials for your newsletter.

### *Personal Identity*

1. Value as an individual person, how to know myself.
2. How to continue to develop a personal relationship with Christ.
3. Discovering my spiritual gifts and how to use them in ministry.

### *Role Expectations*

1. Time Management.
2. Balancing the demands of multi-roles (spouse, parent, employee)
3. Dealing with transitions such as from intern's spouse to minister's spouse, from pastor's spouse to administrator's spouse, and retirement.
4. Moving from one church to another, changes in roles that result.
5. Role guidelines and expectations of church members.
6. Dealing with stress and prevention of burnout.

### *Relationships*

1. Criticism from members.
2. Isolation and loneliness.
3. Team ministry.
4. Conflict management.
5. Absence of spouse in the home, busyness.
6. Nurturing others.
7. Counseling.
8. Support system.
9. Hospitality—meeting the needs of church members.

### *Growth*

1. Seminars to help in learning our role as pastoral wives.
2. Continuing education courses.
3. Retreats for fellowship and training.



4. Support groups, Ministerial Spouses' chapters for fellowship and support, administrators' support.
5. Training courses to be prepared to teach and guide members.

These were the greatest problems in order of importance and frequency:

1. Conflict with church members.
2. Time management.
3. Balance of many roles—wife, parent, and job.
4. Loneliness and isolation.
5. Moving.
6. Unclear role expectations.
7. Administrative indifference.
8. Stress.
9. Multi-church districts.

When asked what help they might suggest, they listed the following:

1. Training courses and seminars.
2. Newsletter and MSA chapters in the local field.
3. Being recognized as part of a team, appreciated by administration.
4. Clear understanding of their place, roles, and needs.

If you can motivate spouses in your own area to share ideas and experiences with you, they can become one of your greatest resources. Many of them could share a lifetime of wisdom. They have overcome difficulties the new minister's spouse will experience, and the more mature spouses gain fresh insights from the young. Your goal is to help them realize the value of sharing and make it easier for them to "take the plunge."

Here are a few ideas that might help:

1. Use your bulletin/newsletter to convey the idea that everyone is valuable and has something to share that will be of value to another.

2. Use short survey sheets to find out areas of interest. You will discover expertise they often fail to offer otherwise.
3. Ask for time at ministry meetings. Let the spouses know what theme ideas you are working with and ask them to sign up for the area of their greatest interest. Set a date when their personal contribution is due.
4. Assure your contributors that someone will edit their material. You are after their ideas, not a perfect copy.
5. Give credit to the writers. They will enjoy seeing their name in print. Some latent abilities might just surface with your encouragement.
6. Give instructions. Let contributors know the length and type of material you want. Give them some guidelines.
7. Say thank you! Sounds redundant, but it is so important.
8. Use the local newsletter to list birthdays, anniversaries, births, etc.
9. Mention prayer requests, those hospitalized, those who are in special need, transitions, moves, etc.
10. Perhaps something for the PKs in the local newsletter is appropriate.
11. Give dates for meetings, camp meetings, and other gatherings.
12. The local newsletter should be a source of pertinent information and sharing concerns and joys. This is the “local nurturing link” for the conference Ministerial Spouses Association chapters.
13. A recipe or idea exchange is always interesting.
14. Correspond with other Ministerial Spouses Association chapters in your division and around the world. Share your magazines with them and ask to be on their mailing list.

## **Interviews**

Personal interviews can be very interesting. Include church members, pastors and administrators, as well as ministers’ spouses. People in all levels of God’s work can give you relevant material for your newsletters.

## Publishing

The local newsletter should usually be mailed or emailed from the local conference office. Each newsletter should have a name and list the conference/mission, date, sponsor, and current officers. It is recommended that an issue be sent out no less than once each quarter.

Microsoft Word or Apple Pages have built-in templates to create newsletters. Many conferences are moving toward digital newsletters or portable digital files (PDF) that are emailed to ministry spouses or uploaded to group websites.

Some online tools to consider when creating beautiful, functional, inexpensive newsletters are Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)), MailChimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)), or Benchmark ([www.benchmarkemail.com](http://www.benchmarkemail.com)). A simple online search will give you more options, too.



## Conclusion

We pray that this handbook will be a helpful guide as you prayerfully establish a local chapter of the Ministerial Spouses Association. We are here to support you in your ministry to the clergy spouses in your region of the world. Please feel free to contact our team with any questions by visiting: <https://ministerial.adventist.org/spouses/>.

Denominational administrators, ministerial association secretaries, and ministers' spouses are invited to make suggestions to the General Conference Ministerial Spouses Association 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.



[ministerialspouses](https://www.facebook.com/ministerialspouses)



[@ministryspouses](https://twitter.com/@ministryspouses)



[@gc\\_ministerial\\_spouses](https://www.instagram.com/@gc_ministerial_spouses)