NAD
Ministry

Can We Build a New Partnership for Lay Minister Certification?

The Case for Four Partners
in Developing an NAD Lay Minister Credential

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North American Division Year-End Meetings—2026

FANG PROVERB · GABON

“He who does not ask questions learns nothing.”

African Proverbs: Wisdom of the People (Comboni Missionary Publications, 2019)

We Asked the Questions. You Answered!

Clergy Continuing Education Survey · 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting

170

Leaders surveyed

at the 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting

79%

Serve at Division, Union or Conference level

15% Division · 18% Union · 46% Conference · 21% Congregational

10

Territories represented

Nine Unions plus Guam–Micronesia

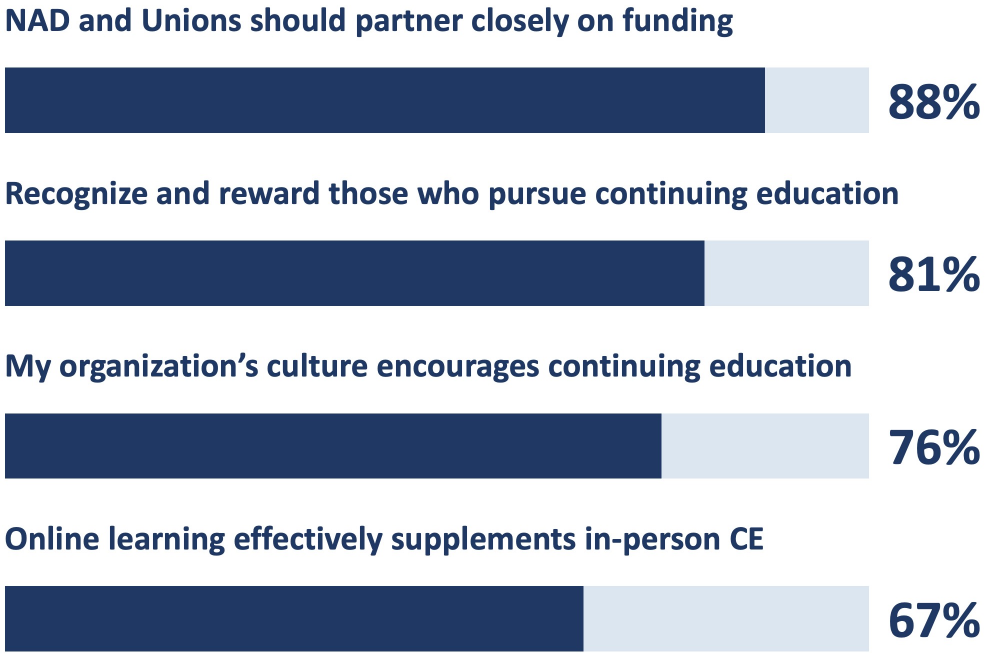
Who answered, by role



The people who answered are the people who decide — and the people who will carry this out.

You Told Us: The Will Is There

Percent who agree or strongly agree



88%

asked NAD and the Unions to partner closely to find funding for continuing education.

The highest agreement of any item in the survey.

A mandate with a funding preference already attached.

Source: NAD Clergy Continuing Education Survey, 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting (n = 162–164 per item).

The Need: The Ministry Landscape Has Changed

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION • 2025

6,761 Congregations in 2025

5,876
Churches (86.9% of congregations)

885
Companies (13.1% of congregations)

~4,100

Credentialed Pastors

250 members per pastor
(was 86 per pastor in 1913)
2025 NAD Ex. Secretary Report

427+

Projected Pastor Deficit by 2027

930 exits — 503 graduates
(NAD President Bryant, 2023)

"We do not have adequate numbers in the system to replace those who are going to be retiring."

— G. Alexander Bryant, NAD President, 2023 Year-End Meeting

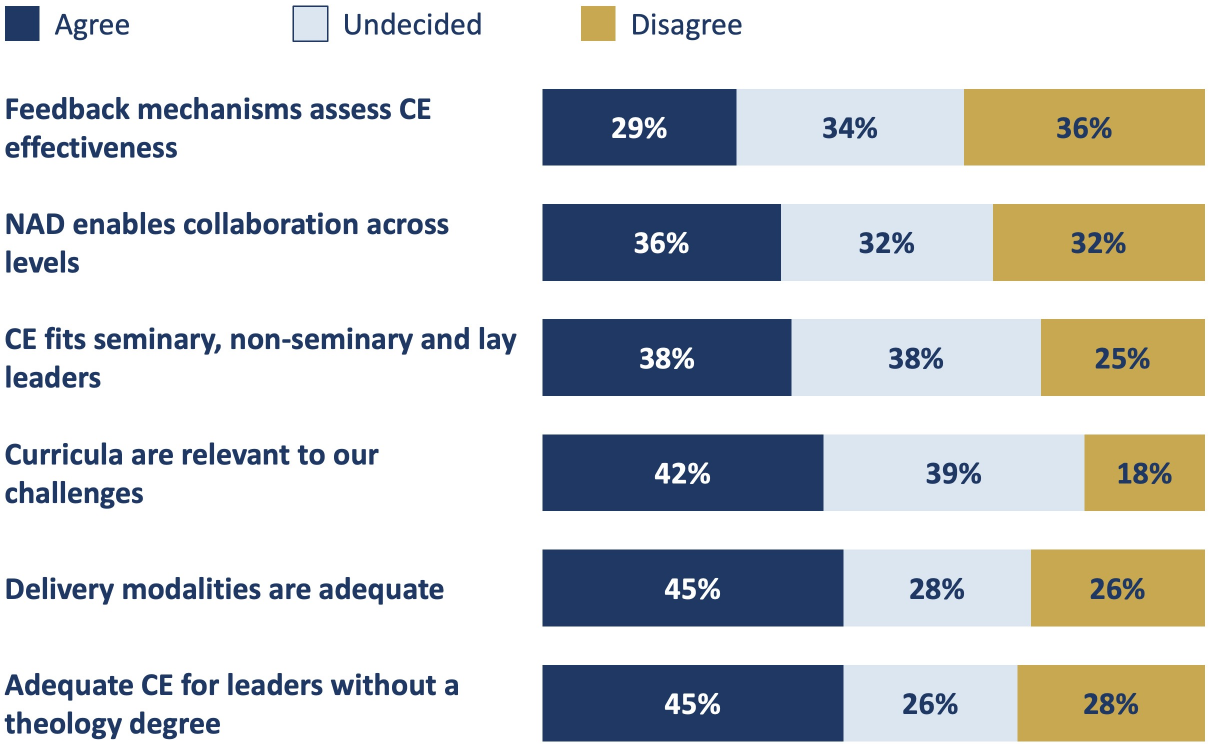
With a median Sabbath attendance of 53 per congregation, every equipped lay leader is not a substitute for a pastor — but a missiological force multiplier.

IRISH PROVERB

“A friend’s eye is a good mirror.”

Is maith an scáthán súil charad.

You Also Told Us: The Systems Are Thin



36%

agree the NAD enables effective collaboration among congregations, conferences and unions.

32% disagree. Another 32% are undecided.

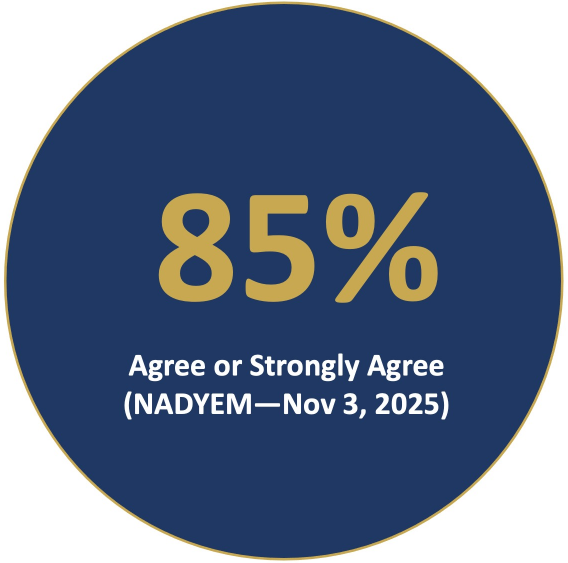
Adequate CE exists for MDiv-trained ministers (53% agree) far more than for leaders without a theology degree (45%).

Source: NAD Clergy Continuing Education Survey, 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting (n = 158–166 per item). Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

The Consensus: The NAD Field Has Spoken

NAD Clergy & Lay Leader Survey · 170 Respondents—November 3, 2025 NADYEM

"Lay minister certification will enhance our efforts to complete God's work in the North American Division."



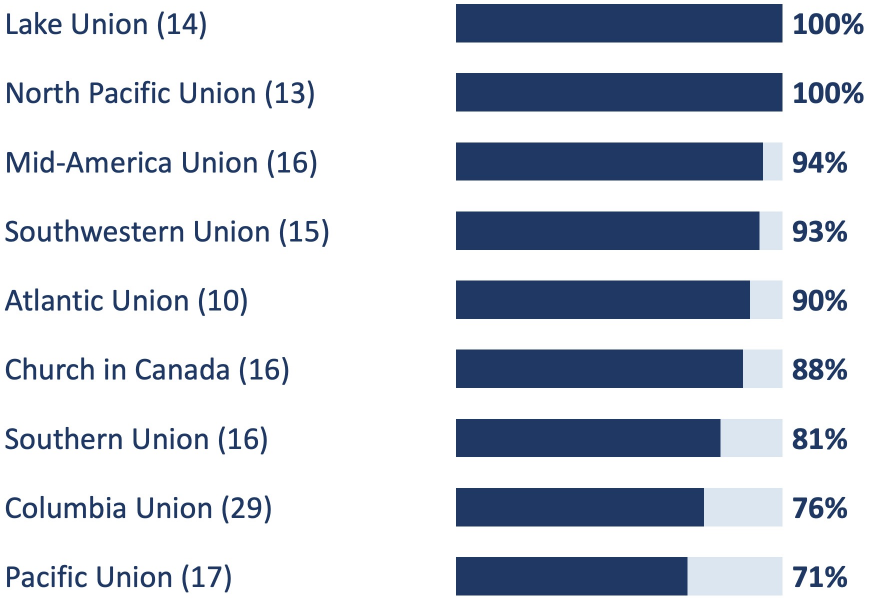
By Credential Type:



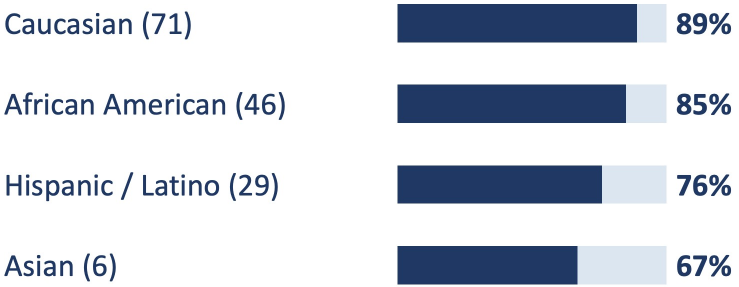
Support Holds in Every Union and Community

Agree or strongly agree: "Lay minister certification will enhance our efforts to advance God's work in the North American Division."

By Union (respondents)



By racial / ethnic group (respondents)



Not one Union and not one group falls below a majority. The lowest: Asian respondents at 67% (n = 6) and the Pacific Union at 71%.

Not shown (very small samples, all 100%): Guam–Micronesia (n = 1), Native American / First Nation (n = 1), Pacific Islander (n = 2). Source: NAD Clergy Continuing Education Survey, 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting (n = 164).

With Gratitude: Many Hands Built This Path

Colleagues who made the survey, and this initiative, possible

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Dr. G. Alex Bryant
Instrument review and counsel

Dr. Rohan Wellington
Then-Director of Professional Services

Neat Randriamilison
Director, Professional Services

Sheldon Kennedy
Professional Services

Dr. Ivan Williams
Chair, Continuing Education Advisory

SOUTHERN UNION · SURVEY ORIGINATION AND ADVISEMENT

Dr. Ron Smith
President

Dr. Alan Machado
Then Florida Conference President

Dr. Orlando Lopez
Current Florida Conference President

Dr. Michael Owusu
Southeastern Conference (July 2025)

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

Dr. Elton DeMoraes
Union President

Dr. Ismael Castillo
Texas Conference President

Good work is rarely solitary work.

YORUBA PROVERB

“One hand cannot tie a bundle.”

An Exemplar—Texas Conference Volunteer Lay Pastors as a Working Model



258 Churches/ 354 Congregations

70,503 Members 84 Pastors

5 Regions/21 Schools

Mission
Train, equip and resource everyone God calls to start new churches in Texas.

Vision
A church in every geographic area of 25,000+ people and every demographic group in the Conference territory.

A Testimony from the new Texas Conference President Dr. Ismael A. Castillo and With Gratitude to Dr. Elton DeMoraes, New Union President, Southwestern Union

Sources: Adventist Yearbook (statistics as of June 30, 2025); Texas Conference, Church Planting | Volunteer Lay Pastor | Church Revitalization department.

Florida: Train, Then Release

235
Churches

74,507
Members (2025)

2017
NAD voted Volunteer Lay Pastor guidelines



The last light in the county

A nearly closed North Florida church was handed to a woman volunteer lay pastor. She sold the old building, and within two years the congregation built a new one.

The chef who pastors 400

A Miami congregation of 400+ members is led by a volunteer lay pastor who is a professional chef, with about 30 baptisms a year.

Florida's lesson: training alone is not enough. The secret is training and releasing.

Vignettes as reported by W. Castro, Florida Conference (2019). Adventist Yearbook statistics as of June 30, 2025. Guidelines voted at the 2017 NAD Year-End Meetings.

THE INITIATIVE

What Is A Lay Minister Credential?

A Division-wide standard for lay ministry formation

SPANISH / LATINO PROVERB

“Pray to God, but keep hammering.”

A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando.

Defining the Lay Minister Credential

Toward an Official Definition

"An official authorization issued by the NAD, its Unions, and its Conferences, empowering qualified laypersons to carry out pastoral duties in assigned ministry contexts."
L. N. Pollard, Assistant to the NAD President



Voluntary service · Not a paid employee position

What the LMC Means in Practice

1. **Official NAD Authorization.**
   Issued by the NAD, its Unions, and Conferences to authorize a class of local church appointees drawn from the laity.
2. **Certified and Certifiable Training.**
   Signifies successful completion of a pastoral care certification track of training courses.
3. **Ongoing Education.**
   Indicates annual completion of leadership, shepherding, and other training courses required to maintain the initial certification.
4. **Conference Assignment.**
   Qualifies the holder for Conference Committee assignment to work under a supervising pastor and facilitate the work of elected local church officers.
5. **Lay Volunteer Service.**
   The LMC is not a paid employee position — it is an authorized ministry role within the lay order of the church.

What the LMC Is NOT — and What It IS:

Answering the Concern That Lay Certification Becomes a Back Door to Conference Ministry

✕ The LMC Is NOT ...

Not a seminary substitute

The LMC curriculum does not replicate theological education. It is focused, ministry-specific formation — not an MDiv compressed into certificate form.

Not a pathway to ordination

Completion of the LMC does not confer, imply, or qualify a holder for ordained ministry. The ordination track remains exclusively through the seminary and BMTE.

Not a Conference employment credential

The LMC authorizes voluntary lay service. It is not a hiring credential. Conference employment requires ordination or commissioning — not an LMC.

Not a lifetime certification

Biennial recertification (12 CE contact hours every 2 years) is required. There is no permanent lay minister credential — accountability is built in.

✓ The LMC IS ...

an official NAD authorization

Issued through the NAD → Union → Conference chain. This is a denominationally-weighted credential — not a self-certified lay title.

a lay order ministry credential

The LMC places the holder squarely within the lay order of the church — working alongside, never above, the ordained clergy.

a supervised ministry role

Every LMC holder serves under a supervising pastor with a Conference Committee assignment. The ecclesiological guardrails are explicit.

a response to a documented crisis

With 230 ministerial students across 13 NAD schools and a projected pastor deficit, the LMC is not a threat to the clergy pipeline — it is a lifeline to the church.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL FIREWALL: Point 5 of the LMC Definition — 'The LMC is not a paid employee position. It is an authorized ministry role within the lay order of the church.' — L. N. Pollard

Peer Denominations Set the Standard

Denomination	CE / Lay Ministry Requirement	Lay Credential?
United Methodist Church	8 CEUs/quadrennium (80 hrs); locally appointed pastors: 4 courses/year	**Yes — Certified Lay Minister**
Church of the Brethren	CE per 5-year cycle; congregation-funded	**Yes**
ELCA (Lutheran)	Continuing theological education required for rostered leaders	**Yes — Synod-Authorized Ministers**
NAD (Adventist) — Current	Recommends 20 hours/year — voluntary, not enforced	**Not yet**

The LMC places the NAD where its mission demands — aligned with the professional standard of every major Protestant tradition. The question is not whether to create it. The question is how to deliver it — and that is where four partners must work as one.

CASE STUDY

What Peer Denominations Are Already Doing

Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Episcopal) — October 2026

Church Divinity School of the Pacific—Anglican Communion
CDSP's Non-Degree Program — What They're Building

October 2026: CDSP Appoints First-Ever Director of Non-Degree Programs — Rev. Yejide Peters Pietersen

Track 1

Certificate of Anglican Studies

- 1-year program
- Fully asynchronous
- For non-Episcopal clergy converting to Anglican orders

Track 2

Curacy Continuing Education

- Post-ordination CE for curates (new clergy)
- Seminary-structured, diocese-supervised
- Bridges initial training and long-term ministry formation

Track 3 (The CALL Program)

Open-Enrollment

- Any lay or ordained person may enroll
- Custom courses developed on diocesan request
- Seminary faculty; evaluations to diocesan coordinators
- Expands to Local Formation Partnerships next phase

The CDSP model is not a theory. It is a live Episcopal seminary that launched this program in 2026 — with a dedicated administrator, faculty delivery, and conference accountability built in from day one. The NAD LMC is proposing the same structural logic.

THE STRUCTURE

A Quadrant of Service Delivery

Four partners. One credential. Shared mission.

FANG PROVERB · GABON

“Many beads form one necklace.”

African Proverbs: Wisdom of the People (Comboni Missionary Publications, 2019)

Four Partners — One Credential?

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Standards · Branding
Quality Framework · Policy
NAD Departments

UNION COMMITTEES & MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENTS

Coordination
Conference Oversight

LAY MINISTER CREDENTIAL

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES & MINISTERIAL DEPTS.

Candidate Selection
Mentors · Field Supervision

INSTITUTIONS OF NAD HIGHER EDUCATION

Academic Curriculum
Faculty · Credit · Assessment

+ Adventist Learning Community (ALC) — Common Digital Delivery Platform for Online Components, including selected content.

Who Delivers What?

Roles and Responsibilities in the Quadrangulated Model

Partner	Primary Responsibility	Also Provides
North American Division	Standards, curriculum framework, branding, quality expectations	Policy authority; ALC partnership
Union Ministerial Depts.	Coordination between conferences and universities	Funding coordination
Conference Ministerial Depts.	Candidate selection, ministry placement, mentors, field supervision	CE retreats; ongoing accountability
Institutions of Higher Ed.	Academic curriculum, shared faculty deployment, assessment, credit	CPL evaluation; consortium coordination
Local Churches	Ministry laboratory and practical experience	Candidate recommendation/ Reporting to Local Conference Pastor
Adventist Learning Community	Common digital learning platform for online modules	CE tracking; existing infrastructure

Why Four Partners? Your Data Points the Way

What the 2025 survey says each partner must carry

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION · FRAMEWORK AND STANDARDS

38% **say CE serves seminary-trained, non-seminary and lay leaders alike**

→ NAD sets differentiated pathways and builds evaluation in: only 29% say CE feedback mechanisms exist.

UNIONS · COORDINATION AND FUNDING

36% **say NAD enables effective collaboration across congregations, conferences and unions**

→ Unions link the partners, and 88% of you want NAD and Unions to partner on funding.

CONFERENCES · SELECTION AND SUPERVISION

76% **say their organization's culture encourages continuing education**

→ Conferences choose, mentor, supervise and release lay ministers. 81% back rewards for CE.

NAD HIGHER EDUCATION · CURRICULUM AND CREDIT

42% **say current CE curricula are relevant to the challenges we face**

→ Institutions build the academic core. Only 45% see adequate CE for leaders without a theology degree.

+ Adventist Learning Community: 67% say online resources supplement in-person CE well.

Source: NAD Clergy Continuing Education Survey, 2025 NAD Year-End Meeting (n = 158–166 per item).

THE PIPELINE IN NUMBERS

How Many Are Training for Ministry Across 13 NAD Schools?

The Gap

The NAD serves
nearly 1.3 million
members across thousands of congregations.
~230 students cannot close that gap.

~230

ministerial students
across all 13 NAD schools

The Opportunity

Hundreds of gifted laypeople
are already doing pastoral work
without credentials. The LMC names, trains, and authorizes
what God has already called.

WHAT THE NUMBER TELLS US

The Deficit Is Real
Seminary cannot scale fast enough to meet congregational need.

The Laity Are Ready
Gifted laypeople are in every pew, already serving.

The Credential Provides Accountability
Supervised, trained, authorized — not informal and unchecked.

Your Territory Can Lead
Conferences select and supervise; Unions coordinate.

YOUR ROLES

What We Are Asking of You

First, the numbers behind the request.

FUNDING MODEL COMPARISON

Who Pays for Lay Ministry Certification? What Peer Denominations Show Us

Denomination / Program	Candidate Pays	Institution Carries	Judicatory Supports	Model Notes
Episcopal (Pittsburgh) Lay Ministry Cert.	Books & technology fees; remaining balance after parish + diocese	Parish: ≥25% of tuition	Diocese: up to 25% (max $1,500/yr; $3,500 lifetime)	Cost-share across 3 parties; candidate pre-pays, then claims reimbursement
Episcopal CDSP (CALL Program)	$150/course standard rate ($25 for partner dioceses)	N/A — CALL is cont. ed., not credit-bearing	Diocese may sponsor at reduced $25 rate	Low entry cost; seminary bears production; no institutional contract needed
Sewanee (Cert. of Min. Studies)	$6,000 total ($1,500/course) or as low as $500/course if split 3 ways	Parish absorbs 1/3 if 3-way split	Diocese absorbs 1/3 if 3-way split	4-course program; shared-cost model explicitly encouraged
UMC / Global Methodist (Truett CLM)	$250/course (non-credit, online) ~$1,500 total program	Congregation may support but no formal structure	Conference confers credential but rarely subsidizes	Candidate-driven; low-cost accessible model; non-credit
NAD LMC (PROPOSED)	**Candidate pays credit costs at $150–200/cr hr ($1,800–$2,400 total)**	**University carries contract teaching costs within consortium budget**	**Union + Division cover credential administration, ALC platform, and renewal infrastructure**	**Shared 3-party model: candidate invests, university delivers, Union/Division administers**

KEY PRINCIPLE: No peer model places the full financial burden on the candidate alone. Shared-cost models are the established standard, and 88% of you asked NAD and the Unions to partner closely on funding.

A WORD TO NAD UNION AND CONFERENCE PRESIDENTS

An LMC Needs Your Endorsement.

You hold the keys — to Conference assignment, credential validity, and pastoral deployment. Here is why this matters to your territory.

SAMBURU PROVERB · KENYA

“Mountains do not meet; people do.”

African Proverbs: Wisdom of the People (Comboni Missionary Publications, 2019)

The Ask: Four Partners, One Credential

Today we ask for your endorsement and a seat at the table — not a financial commitment.

1

TODAY

Endorse the Partnership

Affirm that the Lay Minister Credential will be developed jointly by the NAD, Unions, Conferences and NAD institutions of higher education.

2

YEAR 1 · 2026–27

Join the Design

Unions and Conferences shape selection, mentoring and Conference assignment. Institutions set credit policy. All through the NAD Continuing Education Advisory.

3

AUGUST 2027

Run the Pilot

50–75 lay pastors across 5–6 Conferences and 3–4 universities. Texas Conference's Volunteer Lay Pastor program is the first foundation.

4

YEARS 2–3

Launch Division-Wide

NAD-wide implementation with formal articulation agreements and one portable, NAD-recognized certificate.

PROPOSED ENDORSEMENT

To endorse the development of the NAD Lay Minister Credential as a shared work of four partners — the North American Division, Unions, Conferences, and NAD institutions of higher education — aligned with an NAD continuing education framework.

North American Division	Unions	Conferences	NAD Higher Education

+ Adventist Learning Community as the common online platform

What does not change: voluntary lay service, not a paid employee position · supervised by a pastor under Conference assignment · renewed every two years · the ordination pathway stays through the seminary and BMTE.

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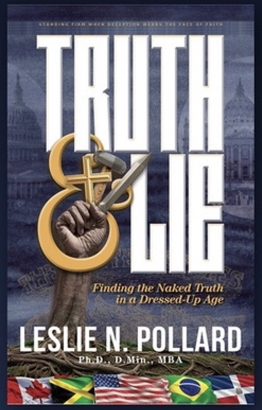
Released Sept 1, 2026--A Resource: “Prophetic Adventism Answers Christian Nationalism”

A NEW BOOK FROM DR. LESLIE N. POLLARD

TRUTH & LIE

“The most accurate analysis yet of the problem, while providing us a solution to it.”

— Rev. Rob Schenck, D.Min.





Dr. Leslie N. Pollard

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VERDAD & MENTIRA

“Verdad y Mentira ofrece el análisis más preciso que se ha publicado hasta ahora sobre este problema, al mismo tiempo que nos presenta una respuesta bíblica para enfrentarlo.”

— Rev. Rob Schenck, D.Min.





Dr. Leslie N. Pollard

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