Statement of Solidarity and Concern  

Regarding  
“Unity in Mission: Procedures in Church Reconciliation”  
Voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists, October 11, 2016  

As Friedensau Adventist University in Germany, we express our solidarity and concern regarding the document voted by the recent Annual Council of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We do this in the spirit of love and loyalty to our church.  

1. We share the concern of the document for the worldwide unity and mission of the Adventist church and we pray for this “unity in mission” as Jesus himself did (John 17).  

2. We support procedures for reconciliation suggested in the document: listening, consultation, and prayer. In this process, both sides at variance will be heard graciously.  

3. We affirm the need to counsel with any church entity that appears to have overlooked or ignored biblical principles as expressed to the best of our understanding in the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This applies to all entities from the local church to the General Conference.  

4. We believe that for voted actions and working policies to be binding on the entire church, they need to be based on clear biblical principles and we declare our resolve to abide by such rules. If, on the other hand, it is found that church actions or policies are not in agreement to biblical principles, we as church members and church entities alike will not be bound by those parts that stand in contradiction to truth.  

5. We believe that followers of Christ are bound in their conscience by the Word of God which supersedes personal opinions and preferences as well as church traditions and ecclesiastical councils. As members, teachers, and leaders of a church that regards itself as “heirs of the Reformation,” we are committed to follow truth as expressed in Scripture and as impressed upon our minds by the Holy Spirit. We share Ellen White’s view that Martin Luther is a worthy model for believers in the last days and we are inspired by his faithful adherence to the Bible under all circumstances.  

6. We understand that the “Procedures of Church Reconciliation” were occasioned by church entities not in compliance with the decision of the 2015 General Conference and/or certain parts of the Working Policy relating to ordination. The 2015 vote did not end the debate and bring about the hoped-for unity of belief and action. We believe this is mainly due to the fact that (not) ordaining women is not only a matter of church policy, but also (and even more so) of biblical truth, human conscience, and ecclesiastical authority.
7. We declare our adherence to the truth expressed in Fundamental Belief No. 14, according to which differences between male and female must not be divisive among us. To discriminate against people on the basis of race or gender (to name just these two) is contrary to the will of God and tends to divide the church. We deplore the fact that this is taking place right now and we speak out against enforced policies deviating from this foundational biblical principle.

8. We also express our support for Fundamental Belief No. 17 which states that “God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity.” These gifts come from the Holy Spirit “who apportions to each member as He wills” to “foster unity of the faith.” Hindering a disciple from exercising his or her spiritual gift in answer to a divine call is contrary to the will of God and works against the mission and unity of the church of Christ.

9. We encourage pastors and leaders on all levels of church organization to adhere to the biblical principle of non-discrimination with regard to spiritual gifts (the priesthood of all believers) and to beware of the tendency to subject them to traditional caveats or cultural restrictions. While the latter do have an impact on the church in different regions of the world (including our own), they must not be used as rationale for restrictive church policies that are considered binding upon all entities of our multicultural denomination.

10. We appeal to our church leaders worldwide to refrain from using the authority entrusted to them by the church to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit who calls pastor-leaders—men and women—to build up the body of Christ according to the needs in different parts of the world. Only in this way can we fulfill our God-given mission to reach people everywhere so “that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

11. We also appeal to our church leaders at the General Conference to actively work for the unity in mission of our church. We are seriously concerned that the document “Unity in Mission” in conjunction with its announced follow-up will be used to discipline church entities seemingly in noncompliance with the church but actually striving to uphold its teachings and values and acting faithfully within the sphere of responsibility entrusted to them. We wholeheartedly support them in this endeavor.

12. It is our sincere hope and prayer that God will guide our church—members, pastors/leaders, and committees—to avert further damage from the church we love and support, to practice enabling leadership, and to foster a healthy diversity without which spiritual and organizational unity cannot be truly maintained. In the words of our Adventist prophet:

“The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish a perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance.” (MS 24, 1892)

In Christian love,
October 31, 2016
(Reformation Day)