Friedensau Adventist University

Statement

Regarding the Document

“Unity in Mission: Procedures in Church Reconciliation”

Voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, October 11, 2016

As leaders of Friedensau Adventist University, Germany, we wish to express the following observations and concerns regarding the above mentioned 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 Seventh-day Adventist church and we pray for this “unity in mission” as Jesus himself did (John 17). To us, the major elements of reconciliation suggested in the document are of utmost importance: listening, consultation, and prayer. In this process, both sides at variance will be heard graciously.

2. There is, undoubtedly, 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.

3. The “Procedures in Church Reconciliation” voted in the document mentioned above were evidently occasioned by church entities not in compliance with the decision of the 2015 General Conference or certain parts of the Working Policy relating to ordination. That vote did not end the debate and bring about the hoped-for unity of belief and action. This is mainly due to the fact that ordaining or not ordaining women or men is not only a matter of church policy, but also of Christian conscience, ecclesiastical authority, cultural factors, and mission concerns.

4. Voted actions and working policies binding on the entire church need to be based on clear biblical principles. If, on the other hand, church actions or policies are not clearly based on such biblical principles, further discussion should take place and reasonable range of opinions should be accommodated.
5. Church leaders at all levels should 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.

6. 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)

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Version 3

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26.10.16