

1 EOM/PRE/GCDO16AC/PREXAD/GCDO16AC to MLR-16AC(DIV)

2
3 114-16G UNITY IN MISSION: PROCEDURES IN CHURCH
4 RECONCILIATION

5
6 *This document has not been voted by the General Conference Executive Committee.*

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8 UNITY IN MISSION: PROCEDURES IN CHURCH RECONCILIATION

9
10 The Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to grow with members coming from “every
11 nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” These believers have the privilege of working and praying for
12 the unity in faith and mission for which Jesus so earnestly prayed (John 17:11, 20-23). At times,
13 such unity can be a challenge for a local church—how much more for a worldwide family of
14 nearly 20 million people consisting of many different languages, cultures, and backgrounds. And
15 yet this is the high ideal to which we have been called!

16
17 This is why it’s so important to come together to pray, plan, and vote formal policies and
18 guidelines. These provide a framework which helps to hold us together as one people, united in
19 one prophetic mission and message. It is not something we should treat lightly or ignore. Rather,
20 it represents our best effort as a world body to be faithful to God, and move together.

21
22 In order for any organization to function effectively, members will at times have to put
23 aside personal opinions and preferences for the mutual good and health of the larger body. As
24 imperfect human beings, we can expect that mistakes will be made. God is our infallible Leader,
25 but His followers won’t always get it right. At times individuals or organizations will operate
26 outside the Church’s voted policies. Sometimes this happens by accident; sometimes on purpose
27 (and maybe even with very good intentions). But policy has well-defined procedures to follow
28 when an individual or entity feels the need of an exemption to a policy or other voted action of
29 the Church. When any one entity decides to “go it alone,” the whole Church body suffers and is
30 diminished. If not addressed, these actions can lead to charges of unfairness, and can undermine
31 the Church’s united mission.

32
33 So what should the Church family do when this happens? Ignore the situation, praying
34 that the problem will just go away? Move in immediately and demand compliance? Or is there
35 some other balanced path that we can take to hold each other accountable and to work together
36 for our mutual good?

37
38 After much prayer, consultation, and discussion, it is

39
40 RECOMMENDED, 1. To adopt the following steps of reconciliation with entities that appear to
41 have overlooked or ignored the biblical principles as expressed in the Fundamental Beliefs, voted
42 actions, or working policies of the Church:

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RECONCILIATION - 2

1 a. Listen and pray.

2
3 i) This step begins when the executive officers or governing body
4 become aware of an apparent reason for concern regarding a subsidiary entity's actions. The
5 executive officers should then meet with the leaders of the subsidiary entity. This will provide an
6 opportunity to pray together, and listen to each other.

7
8 b. Consultation with wider groups.

9
10 i) If it is found that there is reason for further discussion, the
11 executive officers of the next higher organization should, after consulting with the entity,
12 establish a wider group to discuss the concern. This group—including lay people, pastors, and
13 administrators from the entity and the broader Church—should meet at least twice over a period
14 of six months. This will provide an opportunity to listen to each other, pray together, and study
15 God's will from His Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. Every effort should be made and sufficient
16 time be given, for personal visits, open consultations, meetings, and forums for dialogue.

17
18 ii) If the matter is one with critical time sensitivity (such as an entity
19 preparing to take out an unauthorized loan that could not then be reversed), the executive
20 committee, in consultation with their next higher organization, could authorize an amended
21 timeframe.

22
23 iii) The executive officers who established the larger group should
24 provide regular updates on the discussions to their governing body and to the executive officers
25 of their next higher organization.

26
27 c. Write pastoral letters.

28
29 i) If after six months of discussion the matter has not been resolved,
30 the executive officers of the next higher organization should write pastoral letters encouraging
31 the executive officers and the governing body of the entity to lead their organization to be
32 faithful to the biblical principles as expressed in the Fundamental Beliefs, voted actions, and
33 working policies of the Church.

34
35 d. Listen and pray again.

36
37 i) If these letters still don't resolve the matter, the executive officers
38 of the next higher organization should again meet with the executive officers and the governing
39 body of the entity concerned to urge and encourage them to reconsider (unless an amended
40 timeframe has been approved in step b. above). They should also request an opportunity to meet
41 again with the group that has been addressing the matter.

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RECONCILIATION - 3

1 e. Start phase two of reconciliation.

2
3 i) If, for some reason, the above process of prayer and consultation
4 does not resolve the matter, the executive committee of the next higher organization will need to
5 consider the conflict resolution procedures referred to in recommendation 2. below.

6
7 ii) For the biblical principles as expressed in the Fundamental Beliefs
8 or voted actions and policies of a worldwide nature, the General Conference will become
9 involved.

10
11 RECOMMENDED, 2. To request the General Conference Administrative Committee to
12 recommend to 2017 Annual Council procedural steps to be followed in the event that a
13 resolution of the conflict is not achieved under procedures identified above.

14
15 Even though conflict resolution will be necessary from time to time, the Seventh-day
16 Adventist family and organizational units are all called to be part of a prophetic end-time
17 movement reaching out with a message of hope and salvation to all nations, languages, creeds,
18 and castes around the world. What a privilege to be part of a Church family that bears “one
19 another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2), that is “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”
20 (Eph 4:32), and that strives to work together “that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

21
22 “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

23
24 *All Bible references are from the New King James Version.*