

PASTORAL STATEMENTS ON FAMILY



Taken from the General Conference Web site
www.familyministries.gc.adventist.org/statements



PREFACE

Local church leaders are frequently confronted with family issues or ethical questions that demand an immediate and informed response. They have often expressed a desire for the church to prepare a number of concise documents on specific issues that might guide them in formulating an appropriate response to such situations.

Recently the Family Ministries Department decided to embark on a project of preparing a number of "Pastoral Statements" on family issues that would aid pastors in their work of ministering to families, couples and individuals within their congregation. These statements have now been put together with a number of other statements on ethical issues prepared by the General Conference and made available in this resource package.

It is our hope that this material will provide you with a file of concise, practical and instructive information that will guide you in more adequately responding to the needs of those individuals to whom you minister.

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CONTENTS

Abortion
Abuse and Family Violence
Aids
An Affirmation of Family
An Affirmation of God's Gift of Sexuality
An Affirmation of Marriage
Assisted Human Reproduction
Caring for God's Creation
Caring for the Dying
Child Sexual Abuse
Choosing a Counsellor
Divorced & Separated
Family Violence
Fundamental Belief on Marriage & Family
Genetic Interventions
Home & Family
Homosexuality
Human Cloning
Pornography
Principles for a Christian View of Human Life
Sexual Behaviour
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Temperance



STATEMENT ON ABORTION

Many contemporary societies have faced conflict over the morality of abortion.* Such conflict also has affected large numbers within Christianity who want to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women. The need for guidelines has become evident, as the Church attempts to follow scripture, and to provide moral guidance while respecting individual conscience. Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles that are presented for study at the end of the document.**

1. Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.

2. Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.

3. In practical, tangible ways the Church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These ways should include:

- a. Strengthening family relationships
 - b. Educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality
 - c. Emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning
 - d. Calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles
 - e. Creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion
 - f. Offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies
 - g. Encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children. The Church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.
4. The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships.

5. Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.

6. Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

7. Church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of scripture.

*Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

**The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture as shown in the "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life".

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These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992



STATEMENT ON ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defense of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.



STATEMENT ON AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and associated conditions are spreading rapidly around the world. On the basis of statistical studies it is estimated that in the near future, in many countries of the world, every church congregation numbering 100 or more will include at least one member who has a friend or relative with AIDS.

AIDS is transmitted through two major sources: sexual intimacy with an infected person, and introduction of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) contaminated blood into the body either through injections with unsterile needles and syringes or through contaminated blood products. AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and maintaining a faithful monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage, and by avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections and assuring the safety of blood products.

Adventists are committed to education for prevention of AIDS. For many years Adventists have fought against the circulation, sale, and use of drugs, and continue to do so. Adventist support sex education that includes the concept that human sexuality is God's gift to humanity. Biblical sexuality clearly limits sexual relationships to one's spouse and excludes promiscuous and all other sexual relationships and the consequent increased exposure to HIV.

The Christlike response to AIDS must be personal—compassionate, helpful, and redemptive. Just as Jesus cared about those with leprosy, the feared communicable disease of His day, His followers today will care for those with AIDS. James advised, "What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'—if you don't give them the necessities of life?" (James 2:16, TEV).

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY

The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred. of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honor, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S GIFT OF SEXUALITY

Human beings are created in the image of a relational God and designed to enjoy an intimate relationship with their Creator and one another (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 22:37-39; John 17:3; 1 John 4:11, 12). From the beginning, God fashioned humankind in two genders, male and female (Gen. 1:27). Magnificent expressions of His creative genius, the man and woman evoked His deepest satisfaction and passionate acclaim. Both were sexual creatures by their very nature, and God intended that they would rejoice in their maleness or femaleness. His creative work was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)! There was nothing incomplete or shameful about what He had made. Maleness and femaleness afford a primary basis for human beings to define their personhood and their relationships with God and each other (Ps. 8:3-6; 100:3; Is. 43:1, 3, 4; Jer. 1:5; 1 John 4:7, 8).

God created male and female to complement one another (Gen. 2:18, 20-22). In Eden, they shared equally God's image and blessing. Together they were given responsibility for dominion over and care for the earth, and for procreation (Gen. 1:26-28). They were created with an intrinsic longing and desire for one another, physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Gen. 2:23-25; Prov. 5:18, 19; Song of Sol. 2:16, 17; 4:9). With the creation of the sexes, each came to understand self and other (Gen. 2:23). In the moment they met for the first time, the yearning of Adam's heart and soul for partnership and intimate communion burst

forth into joyous acclamation: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Immediately they recognized each other as companions, counterparts, persons capable of meeting one another's needs. Each saw the other as one corresponding to their being, one equal but different, someone to love who would love in return (Gen. 2:18, 20b-23).

The Bible presents a wholistic view of human beings with no dichotomy between body and spirit (Gen. 2:27; Ps. 63:1; 84:1, 2, 1 Thess. 5:23). In both the Old and New Testaments, sexuality is clearly regarded as a valuable gift from God, to be received with gratitude and freely enjoyed within the marriage relationship (Gen. 1:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:16-5:1; 1 Cor. 7:1-5). Sexual expression within marriage is portrayed as wholesome and honorable (Ps. 139:13-16; Song of Sol. 4:10-16; 7:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Scripture's positive attitude towards human sexuality is further confirmed by the use of the imagery of marital intimacy to describe God's relationship with His people (Is. 54:5; 62:4, 5; Jer. 3:14; Ez. 16:8; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:6-9).

In marriage, God intended that one man and one woman would be joined together for life by covenant promise (Gen. 2:24, 25; Song of Sol. 2:16; Mal. 2:13, 14; Matt. 19:4-6). This marriage relationship is described as one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5) and presumes a sexual union (1 Cor. 7:1-6). The Scripture affirms sexual pleasure between husband and wife for its unitive purposes, apart from procreation. God intends for

the sexual relationship to bond husband and wife together as they bring to one another companionship, emotional support, spiritual fulfillment, joy and sexual pleasure (Gen. 2:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Eccl. 9:9; Song of Sol. 4:16-5:1; Eph. 5:21-33). A loving marriage and sexual union was also God's chosen setting for procreation (Gen. 1:28; 4:1). Such a relationship provides the most secure environment for the care and nurture of children (Eph. 6:4).

Sexual intimacy finds its deepest meaning in husband-wife relationships characterized by love, closeness, mutuality and commitment. In God's design, the sexual relationship is one of respect, mutual desire and consent and loving fulfillment of one another's needs (Prov. 5:15-23; Song of Sol. 2:16-17; 4:16-5:1; 7:8-10; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:3-5). In the context of their commitment to Christ and one another, couples make decision together about their sexual experience. The biblical principles of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) and thoughtful care for one another's needs and desires (Phil. 2:4) help couples to reach decisions which are satisfying to both husband and wife. Sexual practice that harms or threatens the physical, emotional or spiritual health and well-being of one or both partners violates the Scripture's elevated view of persons and its call to care for the body as God's handiwork and dwelling place (Gen. 2:25; Ps. 63:1; 139:13-16; 1 Cor. 3:16-17).

As God surveyed His creation, He observed, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make

a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Though the creation story establishes marriage as God's primary answer to aloneness (Gen. 2:24), in the broader sense aloneness is dispelled through connection with God and fellow human beings in mutually satisfying relationships (Rom. 14:7). All human beings were created for life in community, where persons whose differences would otherwise separate them are bound together as one in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22; 4:1-6). While some, by choice or circumstance, are single, they may experience wholeness as individuals, connect with others through family and friends, and bring glory to God as single men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7, 8). Sexual intimacy is reserved for a husband and wife whose relationship is protected by covenant promise (Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:6,7; 3:5; 8:3,4; 4:12; 8:8-10; Hos. 3:3).

As a result of sin, sexuality has been devalued and, in many cases, wrenched apart from intimacy, love and covenant relationship. Because sexuality is such a powerful vehicle for connectedness, and because it is such an intrinsic part of the wholistic nature of human beings, whenever it is damaged, debased, abused, misused, or counterfeited, the repercussions have an enormous impact on the persons and their relationships. Scripture cries out against such travesty. It calls Christians to flee from sexual immorality and, by God's grace, to stretch toward the full restoration of His original design for sexuality (Prov. 5:15-20; Hos. 2:2; 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 5:3-10; 21-33; Col. 3:1-19; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

While condemning as sin our selfish failures to reflect God-given norms for sexuality, Scripture demonstrates Jesus' readiness to

forgive those who repent of sexual sins. God's renewing power and love have enabled many to experience a transformation from sexual brokenness to healing, wholeness, and peace (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-28; 8:1-11).

This statement originated at the World Commission on Human Sexuality, October 1997. It was approved and voted by four departmental world advisories in March 2001; Departments of Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Women's Ministries and Chaplaincy Ministries.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.



STATEMENT ON ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION - CONSIDERATIONS

Developments in medical technology have led to a number of interventions designed to assist human procreation. Procedures such as artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, embryo transfer, and cloning increasingly provide new options in human reproduction. Such interventions raise serious ethical questions for Christians seeking God's will on these issues.

The hope of having children is generally powerful. When this hope is frustrated by problems of infertility, the disappointment of childlessness weighs heavily on many couples. Their sorrow deserves understanding and compassion. It is not surprising that many who suffer sadness because of infertility turn to new reproductive technologies to restore hope. However, with the power of such technologies comes the responsibility to decide whether and when they should be used.

Because of their conviction that God is concerned with all dimensions of human life, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to discovering and following God's principles for human reproduction. The power of procreation is God's gift, and should be used to glorify God and bless humanity. Through a careful study of the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the community of faith can identify fundamental principles that guide in decision making regarding assisted reproduction. Among the most important of these are:

1. Human reproduction is part of God's plan (Gen 1:28), and children

are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3; 113:9). Medical technologies that aid infertile couples, when practiced in harmony with biblical principles, may be accepted in good conscience.

2. Childlessness should bear no social or moral stigma, and no one should be pressured to have children with or without medical assistance (1 Cor 7:4, 7; Rom 14:4; Matt 19:10-12; 24:19; 1 Tim 5:8). Decisions to use or not use reproductive technologies are a deeply personal matter to be settled mutually by a wife and husband, without coercion. There are many acceptable reasons, including health and the special demands of some forms of Christian service (1 Cor 7:32, 33), that may lead people to refrain from or limit procreation.

3. God's ideal is for children to have the benefits of a stable family with active participation of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; Deut 6:4-7; 1 Tim 5:8). For this reason, Christians may seek medically assisted reproduction only within the bounds of the fidelity and permanence of marriage. The use of third parties, such as sperm donors, ovum donors, and surrogates, introduces a number of medical and moral problems that are best avoided. Moreover, family and genetic identity are significant to individual well-being. Decisions regarding assisted reproduction must take into consideration the impact on family heritage.

4. Human life should be treated with respect at all stages of development (Jer 1:5; Ps 139:13-16). Assisted reproduction calls for sensitivity to the value of human

life. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization require prior decisions about the number of ova to be fertilized and the moral issues regarding the disposition of any remaining preembryos.

5. Decisions regarding procreation should be based on complete and accurate information (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Couples considering assisted reproduction should seek such information. Health care professionals should disclose fully the nature of the procedures, emotional and physical risks, costs, and documented successes and limited probabilities.

6. The principles of Christian stewardship are relevant to decisions concerning assisted reproduction (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9). Some forms of technology are very costly. Couples seeking reproductive assistance should give responsible consideration to the expenses involved.

As Christians seek to apply these principles, they can be confident that the Holy Spirit will assist them in their decisions (John 16:13). The community of faith should seek to understand their aspirations and the issues that childless couples face (Eph 4:11-16). Among the alternatives that infertile couples may consider is adoption. As couples make careful decisions they should be able to rely on the compassionate understanding of the church family.

This recommendation was voted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee at Pine Springs Ranch, California, April 10-12, 1994.

This document was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), Silver Spring, Maryland, July 26, 1994.



STATEMENT ON CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from “him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7, NIV; cf Rev 11:17,18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons and the surrounding world. therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment. The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realising our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

¹Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

²The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture outlined in the statement "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life" on page 37.



STATEMENT ON CARE FOR THE DYING

For people whose lives are guided by the Bible, the reality of death is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Gen 2:17; Romans 5; Hebrews 9:27). There is a 'time to be born, and a time to die' (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Although eternal life is a gift that is granted to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ, faithful Christians await the second coming of Jesus for complete realisation of their immortality (John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Cor 15:51-54). While waiting for Jesus to come again, Christians may be called upon to care for the dying and to face personally their own death.

Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), patience (James 1:2-4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ (John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34-40).

This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34-36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Rev 21:4).

Developments in modern medicine have added to the complex-

ity of decisions about care for the dying. In times past, little could be done to extend human life. But the power of today's medicine to forestall death has generated difficult moral and ethical questions. What constraints does Christian faith place upon the use of such power? When should the goal of postponing the moment of death give way to the goal of alleviating pain at the end of life? Who may appropriately make these decisions? What limits, if any, should Christian love place on actions designed to end human suffering?

It has become common to discuss such questions under the heading of euthanasia. Much confusion exists with regard to this expression. The original and literal meaning of this term was "good death." Now the term is used in two significantly different ways. Often euthanasia refers to "mercy killing," or intentionally taking the life of a patient in order to avoid painful dying or in order to alleviate burdens for a patient's family or society. (This is so called active euthanasia). However, euthanasia is also used, inappropriately in the Seventh-day Adventist view, to refer to the withholding or withdrawal of medical interventions that artificially extend human life, thus allowing a person to die naturally. (This is so called passive euthanasia). Seventh-day Adventists believe that allowing a patient to die by foregoing medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to address the ethical issues at the end of life in ways that demonstrate their faith in God as the Creator and Redeemer of life and that reveal how God's grace has empowered them for acts of neighbour love. Seventh-day Adventists affirm God's creation of human life, a wonderful gift worthy of being protected and sustained (Genesis 1-2). They also affirm God's wonderful gift of redemption that provides eternal life for those who believe (John 3:15; 17:3). Thus they support the use of modern medicine to extend human life in this world. However, this power should be used in compassionate ways that reveal God's grace by minimizing suffering. Since we have God's promise of eternal life in the earth made new, Christians need not cling anxiously to the last vestiges of life on this earth. Nor is it necessary to accept or offer all possible medical treatments that merely prolong the process of dying.

Because of their commitment to care for the whole person, Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about the physical, emotional and spiritual care of the dying. To this end, they offer the following biblically based principles:

1. A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's personal and cultural circum-

stances (Ephesians 4:15).

2. God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.

3. God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Gen 2:18; Mark 10:6-9; Ex 20:12; Eph 5-6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

4. Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probably benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope

of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.

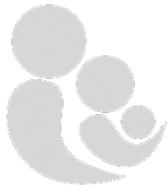
5. While Christian love may lead to the withholding or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Gen 9:5,6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.

6. Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:29-37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.

7. The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenceless and dependent (Psalm 82:3,4; Proverbs 24:11,12; Isaiah 1:1-18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1-9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the

fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1-5; James 5:13-16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14,15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.



STATEMENT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal,

generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.

5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
 - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
 - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
 - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
 - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
 - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on Tuesday, April 1, 1997, in Loma Linda, California.



STATEMENT ON CHOOSING A COUNSELLOR

In moments of crisis or distress, people often realise that a very positive option to dealing with their trauma or difficulties is to seek the help and guidance of a professional counsellor. A couple who feel 'stuck' in their relationship and doesn't know what to do to resolve their conflict and anger may decide that counselling offers real benefits and hope. But how do you go about choosing an appropriate Counsellor?

Deciding to begin Counselling may have very important consequences for the rest of your life. Individuals, couples and families are most likely to benefit from the experience of counselling if they enter into it with a clear understanding of what to expect.

Specific Qualifications

A professional counsellor may be either a clinical or counselling psychologist, a certified social worker, a marriage and family counsellor, a pastoral counsellor, a child psychologist or a psychiatrist. When you are referred to a Counsellor, it is proper to ask about the following:

- * Is the Counsellor's specific training, experience and credentials pertinent to dealing with your case?
- * What are the Counsellor's values in areas of special significance to you? (Is he/she a committed Christian, What are his/her views on Scripture, Prayer, Marriage, Divorce, Lifestyle etc).
- * What is the counsellor's particular treatment approach and do you feel comfortable with this approach Does he/she seek to facilitate change by improving your behaviour. (Behavioural), giving you new insights into your problems (Psychoanalytic/Cognitive) or helping you to get in touch with your feelings (Experiential), or is it a combination of all these approaches?

- * Does the Counsellor have an associated or a referral system for emergencies when he/she is out of town?
- * Is the Counsellor a current member of any professional organisation?

Most competent and qualified Counsellors are members of professional organisations that have strict guidelines and standards in ethical and professional behaviour. These guidelines are designed to protect the consumer and uphold the quality of service provided. Competent counsellors are also trained to respect your wishes and gladly make a further referral if they feel that they are unable to help you or that your problems are outside of the field of their professional expertise.

Counsellor Responsibilities

What are the Counsellor's responsibilities towards you and the Counselling process?

- * First, he/she will take time to establish a working relationship with you.
 - * Then he/she will take time to identify carefully the types and extent of your concerns.
 - * Next, the level of stress and your ability to cope with these concerns will be assessed.
 - * The counsellor will usually then discuss with you a Counselling plan including goals, methods, and the appropriate length of time required to achieve these goals.
 - * Periodically as you progress in this counselling process, joint assessment will be made to see if the desired goals are being achieved.
 - * Termination of the Counselling process will occur when you feel that you have received what you wanted to achieve.
- Other areas of responsibility to you as a 'client' are:
- * Competent Counsellors must not reveal

any information about a client to anyone. He/she will guarantee strict confidentiality in all circumstances except when it is clear that a person is in danger to themselves or to another person. The Counsellor will take steps to protect those individuals under such threat. He/she may also choose to report any knowledge of the abuse and neglect of a child or an incompetent or disabled person.

- * Erotic contact between a Counsellor and client is unethical and immoral and always unacceptable behaviour. To take advantage of a vulnerable person who comes for help is an act of aggression that should always be considered a serious offence.

It is not uncommon for some people to feel frustrated with their Counsellor. However, if an individual does have questions or concerns about what happens in the Counselling process, these should be raised first with your Counsellor. If you feel you are not being heard, you probably are not! If you are still feeling dissatisfied you always have the option of ending the Counselling contract and switching to another Counsellor of your choice. Competent Counsellors recognise their own limitations. They accept that they are human and are unable to be all things to all people.

Focus of Counselling

At times Counsellors may choose to 'treat' or work with an individual. Marriage and family Counsellors mostly prefer to work together with a couple or in some cases the whole family. Often the person who is identified as 'the problem' (the symptom bearer) may not be the person with the problem at all. In marriages and families symptoms such as depression, anger, fear and anxiety can be transmitted to other family members, who become the symptom bearers.

The Counselling Process

There is an old adage that says, 'Things get worse before they get better.' This applies to Counselling! What we repress or deny needs to be confronted. Like Jesus did with Nicodemus, a Counsellor may need to confront

a person's fears and game-playing, to get to the heart of an issue. Particularly difficult is the problem of forgiveness. We all tend to be so magnanimous that we forgive others and trust in God who has forgiven us, but our pride and perfectionism makes it difficult to forgive ourselves. A Christian Counsellor, who understands that healing often begins with forgiveness, may need to help us face our pride, which may hurt and be awfully scary, before healing can occur. It is still the truth that sets us free!

The Christian Counsellor is someone who is in the business of helping individuals to be restored in the image of God. This image is basically one of love. It is only in such restoration that the fearful find peace and the broken hearted find healing. As the Apostle John says, it is only through the development of perfect love that fear is cast out (1 John 4:18). A skilled and sensitive Counsellor, who is a Christian, can minister to the wounded of our world in gentle ways. He or she can help individuals, couples and families to find the way of escape to freedom, health and spiritual growth. The Christian Counsellor is like the quiet shepherd who finds and binds the lost sheep. Through the ministry of Counselling God's grace can become a reality as it brings with it the gift of healing, affirmation and hope.



STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

In harmony with the Fundamental Belief of Seventh-day Adventists in the divine ordination and nurture of family life it is affirmed that:

Marriage was instituted in Eden by a loving Creator for the purpose of meeting the needs of mankind for an enduring human relationship which would provide mutual respect, companionship, fidelity, sexual fulfilment and procreation (Gen 2:18-28; Ex 20:14; Matt 19:4-6). Therefore, Christian marriage is a divinely ordained life-long commitment between a man and woman in which love may mature, understanding grow, the marriage privileges be enjoyed, and the responsibilities borne (1 Cor 7:1-5).

The relationship which exists between Christ and the church becomes the Scriptural model for Christian couples. Husbands are to love and protect their wives and wives are to love and respect their husbands. While Christian marriage preserves the God-given right of each partner to develop his or her own individual talents it does so in the context of voluntary submission of husband and wife to one another. The church will be as solicitous to nurture this marital commitment as it is eager to sustain and depend each member's dedication to Christ (Eph 5:21-23; Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19).

Sexuality is an integral part of every human being. The expression of sexual relations, while not limited to procreation is to be confined to the marriage relationship. Aware of their wider accountability to a world facing

hunger and overpopulation the responsible Christian parents will carefully consider and limit the size of their family for which they can adequately care (1 Tim 5:8; Gen 1:28). Contraception is a legitimate means of limiting the size of a family and allows for the fulfilment of normal and God-given sexual needs.

Once conception occurs new life begins. Scripture does not declare the time when personhood begins but stresses that God is the lifegiver and protector of even the unborn child. Therefore, abortion has an alternative to contraception is untenable for the Christian. When an abortion has occurred the church will show compassion for those who may suffer (Ex 21:22; Ps 139:13-18; Jer 1:4-5; Luke 1:39-66).

Since God intended that man's sexual needs be met in the heterosexual, monogamous union of husband and wife any deviation from this ideal is a perversion of the divine plan. Therefore the church cannot accept the practice of sexual aberrations. Nevertheless the community of believers will provide compassionate help and guidance for those involved in such practices who desire to change to God's ideal (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10; 2:1).

According to the Bible, marriage is intended to be indissoluble as long as both partners live. Divorce, except for marital infidelity, is contrary to Scripture as a means of solving interpersonal problems. Healing through reconciliation is the better way (Matt 19:3-9).

Where irretrievable marital breakdown has occurred the church is to be a caring community of believers showing compassion and providing support to those involved in the tragedy (Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19). Just as marriage is God's means for meeting the needs of men and women so it is His plan that the home they establish should provide a warm, caring environment for the birth and development of children. The Christian family is the learning centre where behaviour and values are modelled and taught. Christian parents should assume responsibility for mothering and fathering in all aspects of family life recognizing the uniqueness of their role. Consequently they should provide leadership and loving discipline for their children in accord with the word of God (Ex 20:12; Deut 6:4-25).

It is the church's responsibility to provide assistance for parents and children in strengthening family unity and cohesion. This should include education and preparation for those contemplating a life-changing event such as marriage, parenting, bereavement, help in facilitating adjustment to retirement, and diminishing capacities in old age, as well as understanding and support for those in crisis and in need (Acts 5:11).

Strongly unified Christian families, dedicated to sharing the good news of Salvation, when joined together in a church, form a network of interdependent support systems, which are effective in extending the Kingdom of God.



STATEMENT ON DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

The Church, in all of its relationships, seeks to operate like an extended family, providing encouragement, nurture and support to every individual within the community of faith. As such, it is committed to not only building up and strengthening marriages and families, but to fostering the individual growth and spiritual development of each person.

In moments of crisis, the Church also seeks to be caring and responsive to the needs of its members. It does not abandon them nor does it stand aloof from their pain and hurts when things go wrong. The Church is especially sensitive to those distressed by interpersonal conflict, marital disharmony or those experiencing marital breakdown, separation or divorce.

The Church sees as its charter, the command of Christ to proclaim salvation and redemption in all of its utterances and relationships. It seeks to offer healing, hope and wholeness to people in every area of their lives. However, the Church must provide certain guarantees to those who are wounded and hurting. It must make it safe for them to risk being open with us so that they can begin a journey towards healing and redemption. There are three guarantees we must make to people if we want to share salvation with them:

1. That they will be loved - always, under every circumstance, with no exception.
2. That they will be totally accepted - without reservation.
3. That unreserved forgiveness can be theirs - no matter how

miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, this forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth.

A. Love

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death." 1 John 3:14. The New Testament word used here for love is "agape." "Agape" love is God's love. It exists in human relationships as a gift from God and is demonstrated in the act of a person unconditionally accepting another person. Its presence affects the emotions and the behaviour, motivating us to act in Christ-like ways towards others.

B. Acceptance

The separated or divorced constantly refer to the lack of acceptance that they feel in the church community. They tell us that they feel like second class citizens. This constitutes a real challenge for the Church. It must come to the place of accepting them the way Jesus accepts us. Unreserved acceptance of people needs to be a habit with us. There is no other way to get close enough to people to help them at the level of their deepest needs. It is only when we cultivate the habit of accepting people, that they will trust us to model the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Because we are accepted in the Beloved, we must be accepting of the beloved. Some people fear that such acceptance will breed license for marital break-

down. However, our acceptance of a brother will make him strong. It will never confuse him in questions of right and wrong if our teaching and personal lifestyle establish clear standards. For example, a person who uses profanity is not going to think you approve of such language just because you accept him personally. But if you communicate personal rejection to such a person, he will not remain in the church community long enough to be touched by God through the Church. Jesus accepts us though we have much in our lives that offends His holiness. His acceptance of us does not imply approval of our unworthy behaviour. His acceptance is our model in ministering to others.

C. Forgiveness

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32.

Forgiving another person is an act of grace. It means that you are willing to release another person from your own personal judgment. It may not mean that you agree with what they have said or done, it simply means you will not act as their judge. You will not pronounce a guilty verdict on them.

The divorced or remarried are not to be held in social punishment in order to teach them a lesson, but are to be warmly accepted in the mercy and grace of God. We cannot preach forgiveness for all the sins that may have caused the death of a marriage while failing to preach forgiveness for the death itself. Sins of hostile-

ity, resentment, silence, impatience, bitterness, and pride have kept growing and growing until they were impossible to handle, and the marriage died. While the Church at times has found it difficult to recognize and accept a legal divorce, it has many times passively sat by while an emotional divorce was in existence for many years.

When love, acceptance and forgiveness prevail, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world - a centre of love designed for the healing of broken people, a powerful force for God.

Ministers therefore, need to lead their churches toward a new sense of compassion, mercy, and redemption. They must help the Church to understand the tragedy of divorce and not to assume that there is some simplistic answer to every marital breakdown. If the Church can redeem these hurting people and open doors of hope to them, they will find new life and be an added resource to aid the Church in its mission of sharing the good news of salvation to the world.

In writing to G I Butler, President of the General Conference, on April 21, 1887, on the subject "Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who have Violated the Seventh Commandment," E G White said:

"I wish that we had much more the Spirit of Christ and a great deal less of self and less of human opinions. If we ere, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing." (Letter 16, 1887).

Most of the separated and divorced people in our churches feel the hurt, shame and rejection for what has happened to them. They do not need intemperate condemnations to bring home

to them a consciousness of guilt - they are often wrapped in it. To come to Christ with their hurt and guilt should lead to an experience of renewal. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted. We have been entrusted with His great commission to proclaim the good news that all may be forgiven and reconciled to their Father. We must cultivate within the Church the kind of caring and accepting community, in which people who have broken marriages can seek forgiveness from God, have their wounds bound, and receive assistance and encouragement in forging a new life.

The Church's Task

When it comes to dealing with marital breakdown, the Church must do more than talk about it, it must see that its primary task is to be the people of God in a caring, supportive community.

First of all, the Church must commit itself to being a community of truth, a community in which believers tell the truth about their own lives. The Church must be willing to hear the stories of pain, suffering, and failure in the lives of its members; and those who tell the stories must receive from the Church both lamentation and the healing balm of Christ. When the Church is open and honest about pain and suffering, it can then confront, in love, even the most difficult of human failures and crises - marital breakdown.

Second, the Church must commit itself to being a community of love, not quick to judge. Since divorce often brings with it stigma and feelings of guilt, those currently free of pain must welcome those who suffer, in the name of Christ; and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, they must place themselves at one another's disposal.

Third, the Church must com-

mit itself to being a community of joy, a community in which the new life in Christ is celebrated, a community that calls others to celebrate the new life in Christ. By living as a community of joy, but regularly celebrating God's goodness to us in Jesus Christ, the Church ministers to those who are saddened, joyfully acquainting them with the one who has known their sorrows.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Family Violence Defined

Family violence involves an assault of any kind (be it verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, active or passive neglect) that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family be they married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. According to current research family violence occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socio-economic levels, and in families from all types of religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

B. Common Examples of Family Violence

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways: It may be an attack on one's spouse which can take the form of either physical violence, emotional abuse, marital rape, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behaviour. It could be the mistreatment or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen by parent(s) or other guardians that results in injury or harm. It may include physical violence, verbal or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, and physical or educational neglect. It can manifest itself in the relationships of siblings to other siblings or of children to parents. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material and medical abuse or neglect.

C. Scripture and Family Relationships

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christ's

followers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. Such relationships are characterised by love and acceptance, rather than tyrannical control or abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, Christians seek to affirm and build others up, rather than abuse or tear each other down. Disciples of Christ seek to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept both male and female as equals, and to acknowledge that every person irrespective of race or creed has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way is to violate personhood and to devalue the individual.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as 'the household of faith' and suggests that it should function as an extended family offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to everyone, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

He sees the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as the feelings of betrayal, rejection and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust and wholeness.

D. The Responsibility of the Church

Regrettably, family violence occurs to some degree in many homes. However, it can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of self and others.

It is our belief that the SDA church has a responsibility -

1. To care for those involved in

family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth
 - b. Highlighting to the community the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defence of its victims
 - c. Providing a ministry of reconciliation to families affected by violence and abuse including both the victims and the perpetrators
 - d. Guarding against ostracism within the family or church community
2. To strengthen family life by
 - a. Providing family life education
 - b. Seeking to understand the origins of family violence
 - c. Developing ways to prevent the recurring cycle of family violence

We believe that the church has a moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and in the community. Any indications or reports of abuse must be taken seriously. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following Scriptural passages: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 7:12; 20:25,26; John 13:34; Romans 12:10,13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:2,3; 6:4; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:5-8.



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B. Common Examples of Family Violence

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The apostle Paul refers to the church as 'the household of faith' and suggests that it should function as an extended family offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to everyone, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

He sees the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as the feelings of betrayal, rejection and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust and wholeness.

D. The Responsibility of the Church

Regrettably, family violence occurs to some degree in many homes. However, it can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of self and others.

It is our belief that the SDA church has a responsibility -

1. To care for those involved in

family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth
 - b. Highlighting to the community the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defence of its victims
 - c. Providing a ministry of reconciliation to families affected by violence and abuse including both the victims and the perpetrators
 - d. Guarding against ostracism within the family or church community
2. To strengthen family life by
 - a. Providing family life education
 - b. Seeking to understand the origins of family violence
 - c. Developing ways to prevent the recurring cycle of family violence

We believe that the church has a moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and in the community. Any indications or reports of abuse must be taken seriously. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following Scriptural passages: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 7:12; 20:25,26; John 13:34; Romans 12:10,13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:2,3; 6:4; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to

seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as "the household of faith" which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
- b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
- c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling with Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community.
- d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
- e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.
- f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.
- g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or

perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.

2. To strengthen family life by:
 - a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.
 - b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.
 - c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.
 - d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.
3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; I Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2, 3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)



STATEMENT ON GENETIC INTERVENTIONS

Most of the new developments in genetics are the result of increased knowledge concerning the fundamental structure of genes, not only in humans but throughout all the realms of life on earth. Among these developments are genetic mapping, new means for genetic testing, new possibilities for genetic engineering, and a variety of eugenic strategies that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. In short, new genetic knowledge has produced unprecedented power. With that power has come the potential for immense good or harm. And with such great power also comes great responsibility. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, we are accountable for the use of this power not only to global humanity, but also to every realm of created life that God has entrusted to our stewardship. Ultimately we are accountable to the Maker of the universe who holds us responsible for the care of each other and of the earth.

When creation came forth from the Creator's hand it was "very good." (Gen 1:31). The genetic endowment which Adam and Eve received from their Creator was without defects. The genetic diseases from which humans now suffer are not the result of normal variation. They have developed through harmful mutation. In restoring the human genome to a healthier condition, modern sciences may attempt to recover more of creation's original condition. To the extent that helpful genetic interventions can be conducted in harmony with Christian principles, they are to be

welcomed as cooperation with the divine intention of alleviating the painful results of sin.

Any attempt to state comprehensive principles of ethics for genetic interventions must confront the complexities of a rapidly changing field of science. Since the discovery of the molecular structure of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), knowledge of genetics across an ever wider range of life forms has burgeoned.

Many of the increases in information and technological ability have been accompanied by significant ethical concerns. We can only begin to imagine future questions that will arise as genetic science progresses. The complexity of the issues and the pace of change make it likely that statements of relevant Christian principles will require expansion and modification as time passes.

One example of an area of rapid change is genetic mapping. An international, scientific effort known as the Human Genome Project is attempting to construct a detailed genetic chart, or "map," of all the human chromosomes. The goal is to provide a comprehensive description of the sequence of the millions of DNA base pairs which human chromosomes contain. Researchers plan to use this information to facilitate the identification and isolation of human genes, thereby providing a helpful aid in understanding human development and in treating human diseases. New details about the identity, role, and function of human genes are continually emerging.

Increased knowledge about

the identity of human genes has given rise to a variety of new possibilities for genetic testing. In the past, genetic information about an individual was largely inferred from the person's family history or clinical observations of the person's phenotype, or physical expressions of a person's genes. Today, a growing number of sophisticated genetic analyses make it possible to identify defective genes that cause genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, Huntington's Chorea, and some types of cancer. Many of these tests can now be performed prenatally. The potential exists for identifying hundreds of genetic characteristics, including a wide range of genetic disorders.

A further result of basic genetic knowledge is the capacity to alter genes intentionally, or genetic engineering. Through the use of enzymes which are able to excise specific segments of genes, it is possible to change the genetic makeup of cells by deliberately inserting, removing or changing specific genes. Genetic engineering presents astonishing new possibilities, including the transfer of genes across biological boundaries, such as from animals to plants. The potential for improving life forms seems endless. Genetically engineered plants, for example, can be made more productive, more resistant to diseases, or less susceptible to internal processes of decay.

Genetic engineering has directly benefited human medicine. It has made possible, for example, the production of human insulin and human growth factor, neither of which was previously

obtainable in sufficient quantities. Genetic engineering also makes it possible to treat diseases through genetic alteration. With this type of treatment, a patient whose cells have missing or defective genes receives needed genetic material. No one knows how many genetic diseases may eventually be treated in this way, but initial successes with diseases such as cystic fibrosis give hope that other genetic disorders may be treatable.

Increased genetic knowledge also produces new possibilities for eugenics, or endeavours to improve the gene pool of various species, including human beings. In broad terms, such attempts fall into two categories. Negative eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to prevent harmful genes from being inherited. Positive eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to promote the transmission of desirable genes. An example of negative eugenics, common in the past, is the sterilization of individuals considered to have defective genes capable of being inherited. An example of positive eugenics is artificial insemination by donors who have been selected for traits, such as high intelligence, that are deemed desirable.

Ethical Concerns

In order to provide focus, it is helpful to consider a sampling of current ethical concerns for which we seek to state Christian principles. These concerns can be placed in four basic categories: the sanctity of human life, the protection of human dignity, the acceptance of social responsibilities, and the safekeeping of God's creation.

Sanctity of human life. If genetic determinism reduces the meaning of humanhood to the mechanistic outworkings of molecular biology, there is

serious potential for devaluing human life. For example, new capacities for prenatal genetic testing, including the examination of human pre-embryos prior to implantation, generate questions about the value of human life when it is genetically defective. How serious must a genetic defect, prenatally diagnosed, be before it is an ethically legitimate reason for discarding a pre-embryo or for inducing an abortion? Some conditions, such as trisomy 18, are generally deemed incompatible with life. But the relative seriousness of most genetic defects is a matter of judgment.

Protection of human dignity.

The protection of personal privacy and confidentiality is one of the major concerns associated with the new possibilities for genetic testing. Knowledge about a person's genetic profile could be of significant value to potential employers, insurance companies, and to those related to the person. Whether genetic testing should be voluntary or mandatory, when and by whom the testing should be done, how much and with whom the resulting information should be shared are matters of significant ethical concern. Difficult decisions must be made about whether there are exceptions to the usual expectation of confidentiality and privacy when persons may suffer considerable harm because of a lack of information. At stake is the protection of persons from stigma and unfair discrimination on the basis of their genetic makeup.

Another cluster of concerns related to human dignity stems from the possibility of intentionally altering the human gene pool. Medical interventions for genetic diseases may be aimed either at the treatment of bodily cells that are genetically defective or at the alteration of reproductive cells.

Changes in human reproductive cells could become a permanent part of the human gene pool. Interventions may also extend beyond the treatment of disease and include attempts to enhance what have formerly been considered normal human characteristics. What are the implications for the meaning of being human, for example, if interventions aimed at enhancing human intelligence or physique become available?

Acceptance of social responsibilities. The power that results from new genetic knowledge also raises concerns about the ethics of social policies and the boundaries between individual liberties and social responsibilities. For example, should society develop policies designed to encourage either positive or negative eugenics? Should individuals with serious genetic disorders be given full procreative liberty? Another area of social concern has to do with the use of society's resources. Questions can be raised about the amount of social resources that should be spent for interventions in human genetics when more basic health care is not fully available. Other questions arise concerning the distribution of the benefits and burdens of genetic interventions and how they will be shared by rich and poor within society.

Stewardship of God's creation. As the powers of genetic engineering are further developed, many changes could be made in various species that inhabit the earth. These changes have the potential for being both permanent and, to some degree, unpredictable. What limits to genetic change, if any, should be accepted? Are there boundaries that should not be crossed in transferring genes from one life form to another? We may hope that genetic changes are intended to enhance life on our planet.

But there are reasons for concern. For example, consideration has already been given to genetic alterations for the purpose of developing new biological weapons. The exploitation of other life forms for purposes of military security or economic gain should call for careful, moral scrutiny.

It is with ethical concerns like these in mind that we state the following Christian principles for genetic interventions.

Principles

Confidentiality Christian love requires that trust be maintained in human relationships. The protection of confidentiality is essential to such trust. In order to safeguard personal privacy and protect against unfair discrimination, information about a person's genetic constitution should be kept confidential unless the person elects to share the knowledge with others. In cases where others may suffer serious and avoidable harm without genetic information about another person, there is a moral obligation to share the needed information (Matt 7:12; Phil 2:4).

Truthfulness The Christian obligation to be truthful requires that the results of genetic testing be honestly reported to the person tested or to responsible family members if the person is incapable of understanding the information (Eph 4:25).

Honoring God's image In all of God's creation, only human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). The Christian acknowledgment of God's wisdom and power in creation should lead to caution in attempts to alter permanently the human gene pool (Gen 1:31). Given current knowledge, genetic interventions in humans should be limited to treatment of individuals with genetic disorders (somatic cell therapies) and

should not include attempts to change human reproductive cells (germ cell alterations) that could affect the image of God in future generations. All interventions in human beings for genetic reasons should be taken with great moral caution and with appropriate protection of human life at all stages of its development.

Prevention of suffering It is a Christian responsibility to prevent or relieve suffering whenever possible (Acts 10:38, Luke 9:2). For this reason the primary purpose of human genetic intervention should be the treatment or prevention of disease and the alleviation of pain and suffering. Because of the tendencies of sinful human nature, the possibility of abuse, and unknown biological risks, attempts to modify physical or mental characteristics with genetic interventions for healthy persons who are free of genetic disorders should be approached with great caution.

Freedom of choice God values human freedom and rejects the way of coercion. People who are capable of making their own decisions should be free to decide whether or not to be tested genetically. They should also be free to decide how to act on information that results from testing, except when others may suffer serious and avoidable harm. It may be the morally responsible choice to avoid known risks of serious congenital defects by forgoing procreation. While such decisions about procreation and genetic testing are deeply personal, they should be made by the individual with due consideration for the common good.

Stewardship of creation Safeguarding God's creation includes esteem for the diversity and ecological balance of the natural world with its countless species of living creatures (Gen

1). Genetic interventions with plants and animals should show respect for the rich variety of life forms. Exploitations and manipulations that would destroy natural balance or degrade God's created world should be prohibited.

Nonviolence Using genetic manipulation to develop means of warfare is a direct affront to Christian values of peace and life. It is morally unacceptable to abuse God's creation by changing life forms into weapons of destruction (Rev 11:18).

Fairness God loves all human beings, regardless of their perceived social status (Acts 10:34). The benefits of genetic research should be accessible to people in need without unfair discrimination.

Human dignity Created in God's image, human beings are more than the sum of their genes (Gen 1:27; Acts 17:28). Human dignity should not be reduced to genetic mechanisms. People should be treated with dignity and respect for their individual qualities, and not be stereotyped on the basis of their genetic heritage.

Healthfulness Christians have a responsibility to maintain the health of their bodies, including their genetic health (1 Cor 10:31). This means that Christians should avoid that which is likely to be genetically destructive to themselves or to their children, such as drug abuse and excessive radiation.

Glossary

Base pairs. Pairs of complementary bases forming the DNA structure; the units used to measure the length of DNA. Base pairs consist of adenine (A), which must always pair with thymine (T), and guanine (G), which must always pair with cytosine (C).

Chromosome. The condensed rod made up of a linear thread of DNA interwoven with protein that is the gene-bearing structure of living cells. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The double helix molecule that encodes genetic information and is the primary hereditary molecule in most species.

Enzyme. A protein that facilitates a specific chemical reaction without changing its direction or nature.

Eugenics. Strategies for attempting to improve the gene pool of a species either by halting the transmission of unwanted characteristics or increasing the transmission of desired characteristics.

Gene. The basic unity of heredity; a section of DNA that contains information for the production of specific protein molecules.

Gene mapping. The process of ascertaining the genetic sequence of a species.

Gene therapy. The medical replacement or repair of defective genes in living cells.

Genetic engineering. The process of altering the genetic makeup of cells or individual organisms by deliberately inserting, removing, or changing specific genes.

Genetic testing. The examination of individuals' genetic makeup for the purpose of identifying possible hereditary traits, including

defects or abnormalities.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell.

Genome. All of the genetic material in the chromosomes of a particular organism or individual.

Genotype. An individual's genetic makeup.

Human Genome Project. The international, scientific effort to construct a detailed map of human genes, identifying their structure and function.

Implantation. The attachment of an embryo to the wall of the uterus.

Mutation. A permanent alteration of DNA that can be inherited.

Negative eugenics. Strategies for preventing the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed undesirable.

Phenotype. The observable characteristics resulting from a particular genotype as influenced by environmental factors.

Positive eugenics. Strategies for promoting the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed desirable.

Pre-embryo. A fertilized ovum (or conceptus) prior to implantation and the beginning of pregnancy.

Recombinant DNA. A novel sequence of DNA that is artificially produced by joining segments of DNA.

Somatic cell. Any cell of a body other than reproductive cells.

This document was adopted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee in March 1995 and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), June 13, 1995.



STATEMENT ON HOME & FAMILY

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." —The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.



STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one" (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.



STATEMENT ON ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING HUMAN CLONING

For a number of decades, the prospect that new members of the human family might be produced by cloning was considered farfetched. Recent advances in genetic and reproductive biology, however, indicate that techniques for cloning humans may soon be developed. With this prospect comes the Christian responsibility to address profound ethical issues associated with human cloning. As Christians, with firm belief in God's creative and redemptive power, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to enunciate ethical principles that emerge from their faith commitments.

Cloning includes all those processes by which living plants or animals are replicated by asexual means—methods that do not involve the fusion of egg and sperm. Many natural processes are forms of cloning. For example, microorganisms, like common yeast, reproduce by splitting into two daughter cells that are clones of the parent cell and each other. Cutting a twig from a rose bush or grapevine and propagating it into a complete plant also creates a clone of the original plant. Similarly, many simple animals, such as starfish, can regenerate complete organisms from small parts of a predecessor. Thus the biological principle of cloning is not new.

The new technique is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions,

an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At present, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

Biologists have developed this technique as a tool for animal husbandry. By this means, they hope to create a herd of valued animals that are genetically identical to a selected individual. The potential benefits from this technology, including the expectation of products for treating human diseases, are of great interest to researchers and to the biotechnology industry. However, the same technological capacity could be used for human reproduction and thus raises serious ethical concerns.

First among these concerns is medical safety. If the current technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer were to be used in humans, ova would need to be obtained from donors. Most of these would perish because of cellular manipulations during early embryonic growth in the laboratory. Others would be lost after implantation, spontane-

ously aborted at various stages of fetal development. In this respect, sensitivity to the value of embryonic and fetal life would be similar to the development of other methods of assisted reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization. There would likely be an increased risk of birth defects in children brought to term. At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology.

However, even if the success rates of cloning were to improve and the medical risks were diminished, a number of major concerns would remain. For example, is there anything intrinsically problematic with creating an individual who is not produced through fertilization of an egg by a sperm? Further study is needed to resolve questions regarding the essential nature of procreation in God's design.

Another of the most often expressed concerns is that the dignity and uniqueness of a cloned person may be jeopardized. This risk includes the psychological harm that might be experienced by an individual who would be what some have called the "delayed identical twin" of the individual who provided the initial cell. Do existing persons have the right to exercise such a level of control over the genetic destiny of a new individual?

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual

relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce problems of relationships and responsibilities.

An additional major risk is that cloning could lead to expedient uses of those who are cloned, with their value assigned primarily on the basis of their utility. For example, there could be a temptation to clone individuals to serve as sources of transplantable organs. Others have worried about the deliberate creation of subservient individuals whose autonomy would be violated. Egotistical or narcissistic individuals might be inclined to use the technology in order to “duplicate” themselves.

Finally, the financial costs of cloning would likely be considerable even after significant technological improvements. If human cloning were commercialized, conflicting interests might add to the risk of abuse.

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs*. The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

The following ethical principles are intended to apply to somatic cell nuclear transfer if that technology is ever applied to human beings. The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic

review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. Protection of vulnerable human life. Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.
2. Protection of human dignity. Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.
3. Alleviating human suffering. It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.
4. Family support. God’s ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and

support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.

5. Stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely to be very costly. Married couples seeking such assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.

6. Truthfulness. Honest communication is one of Scripture’s mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.

7. Understanding God’s creation. God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

Given our present state of knowledge and the current refinement of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technique for human cloning is deemed unacceptable by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given our responsibility to alleviate disease and to enhance the quality of human life, continued appropriate research with animals is deemed acceptable.

Glossary

Allele. One of the alternative forms of a particular gene. Each gene of an organism can exist in slightly different forms. Those small differences are responsible for some of the variations that we observe in different individuals within natural populations. Different alleles for genes that produce the blood protein hemoglobin, for example, will affect how well the blood cells will carry oxygen.

Clones. Two or more individuals with identical genetic material. Human clones occur naturally in the form of "identical twins." Though twins begin life with the same genetic material they, nevertheless, develop distinct physical differences (fingerprints, for example). Furthermore, they become fully unique individuals with distinct personalities as a result of their different experiences and independent choices. An individual conceived by somatic cell nuclear transfer would be at least as different from his or her progenitor as natural twins.

Cytoplasm. All the contents of a cell, other than the nucleus. The cytoplasm is the site where many important processes occur, including the assembly of proteins and enzymes, and the manufacture of cell products. The cytoplasm also contains the mitochondria, small bodies that are responsible for the breakdown of food to produce the energy needed for the activities of the cell.

Embryo. The early stages of development of a fertilized egg. In somatic cell nuclear transfer, it refers to the early developmental stages of an enucleated egg after it has been fused with a somatic cell.

Enucleated egg. An egg cell from which the nucleus has been removed. This is usually

accomplished by penetrating the cell with a fine glass needle and withdrawing the nucleus while observing the process under a microscope.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell. In mammals and humans, the germ cells are the sperm and eggs (ova).

Gestation. The period of time it takes an embryo to develop in the uterus from a fertilized egg to a newborn offspring. Gestation begins with implantation of the embryo in the uterus and ends with birth.

Nucleus. The structure within a cell that contains the genetic material or genes. The nucleus is surrounded by a membrane that separates it from the remainder of the cell.

Ovum (plural: ova). An egg cell. A female productive cell.

Somatic cell. Any cell from the body of a mammal or human, other than the germ cells.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer. The technical name for the method used to produce the first animal clone, a sheep called "Dolly." Though the name suggests that a nucleus from a somatic cell was used, in fact, the complete somatic cell was fused with an enucleated egg.

Sperm. A male reproductive cell.

*There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child

with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.

PASTORAL STATEMENTS ON FAMILY



Taken from the General Conference Web site
www.familyministries.gc.adventist.org/statements



PREFACE

Local church leaders are frequently confronted with family issues or ethical questions that demand an immediate and informed response. They have often expressed a desire for the church to prepare a number of concise documents on specific issues that might guide them in formulating an appropriate response to such situations.

Recently the Family Ministries Department decided to embark on a project of preparing a number of "Pastoral Statements" on family issues that would aid pastors in their work of ministering to families, couples and individuals within their congregation. These statements have now been put together with a number of other statements on ethical issues prepared by the General Conference and made available in this resource package.

It is our hope that this material will provide you with a file of concise, practical and instructive information that will guide you in more adequately responding to the needs of those individuals to whom you minister.

Bryan Craig
Family Ministries Department
South Pacific Division
1996
Trafford Fischer
2009



CONTENTS

Abortion
Abuse and Family Violence
Aids
An Affirmation of Family
An Affirmation of God's Gift of Sexuality
An Affirmation of Marriage
Assisted Human Reproduction
Caring for God's Creation
Caring for the Dying
Child Sexual Abuse
Choosing a Counsellor
Divorced & Separated
Family Violence
Fundamental Belief on Marriage & Family
Genetic Interventions
Home & Family
Homosexuality
Human Cloning
Pornography
Principles for a Christian View of Human Life
Sexual Behaviour
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Temperance



CONTENTS

Many contemporary societies have faced conflict over the morality of abortion.* Such conflict also has affected large numbers within Christianity who want to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women. The need for guidelines has become evident, as the Church attempts to follow scripture, and to provide moral guidance while respecting individual conscience. Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles that are presented for study at the end of the document.**

1. Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.

2. Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.

3. In practical, tangible ways the Church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These ways should include:

- a. Strengthening family relationships
 - b. Educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality
 - c. Emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning
 - d. Calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles
 - e. Creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion
 - f. Offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies
 - g. Encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children. The Church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.
4. The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships.

5. Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.

6. Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

7. Church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of scripture.

*Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

**The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture as shown in the "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life".

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These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992



STATEMENT ON ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defense of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.



STATEMENT ON AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and associated conditions are spreading rapidly around the world. On the basis of statistical studies it is estimated that in the near future, in many countries of the world, every church congregation numbering 100 or more will include at least one member who has a friend or relative with AIDS.

AIDS is transmitted through two major sources: sexual intimacy with an infected person, and introduction of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) contaminated blood into the body either through injections with unsterile needles and syringes or through contaminated blood products. AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and maintaining a faithful monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage, and by avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections and assuring the safety of blood products.

Adventists are committed to education for prevention of AIDS. For many years Adventists have fought against the circulation, sale, and use of drugs, and continue to do so. Adventist support sex education that includes the concept that human sexuality is God's gift to humanity. Biblical sexuality clearly limits sexual relationships to one's spouse and excludes promiscuous and all other sexual relationships and the consequent increased exposure to HIV.

The Christlike response to AIDS must be personal—compassionate, helpful, and redemptive. Just as Jesus cared about those with leprosy, the feared communicable disease of His day, His followers today will care for those with AIDS. James advised, "What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'—if you don't give them the necessities of life?" (James 2:16, TEV).

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY

The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred. of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honor, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S GIFT OF SEXUALITY

Human beings are created in the image of a relational God and designed to enjoy an intimate relationship with their Creator and one another (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 22:37-39; John 17:3; 1 John 4:11, 12). From the beginning, God fashioned humankind in two genders, male and female (Gen. 1:27). Magnificent expressions of His creative genius, the man and woman evoked His deepest satisfaction and passionate acclaim. Both were sexual creatures by their very nature, and God intended that they would rejoice in their maleness or femaleness. His creative work was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)! There was nothing incomplete or shameful about what He had made. Maleness and femaleness afford a primary basis for human beings to define their personhood and their relationships with God and each other (Ps. 8:3-6; 100:3; Is. 43:1, 3, 4; Jer. 1:5; 1 John 4:7, 8).

God created male and female to complement one another (Gen. 2:18, 20-22). In Eden, they shared equally God's image and blessing. Together they were given responsibility for dominion over and care for the earth, and for procreation (Gen. 1:26-28). They were created with an intrinsic longing and desire for one another, physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Gen. 2:23-25; Prov. 5:18, 19; Song of Sol. 2:16, 17; 4:9). With the creation of the sexes, each came to understand self and other (Gen. 2:23). In the moment they met for the first time, the yearning of Adam's heart and soul for partnership and intimate communion burst

forth into joyous acclamation: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Immediately they recognized each other as companions, counterparts, persons capable of meeting one another's needs. Each saw the other as one corresponding to their being, one equal but different, someone to love who would love in return (Gen. 2:18, 20b-23).

The Bible presents a wholistic view of human beings with no dichotomy between body and spirit (Gen. 2:27; Ps. 63:1; 84:1, 2, 1 Thess. 5:23). In both the Old and New Testaments, sexuality is clearly regarded as a valuable gift from God, to be received with gratitude and freely enjoyed within the marriage relationship (Gen. 1:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:16-5:1; 1 Cor. 7:1-5). Sexual expression within marriage is portrayed as wholesome and honorable (Ps. 139:13-16; Song of Sol. 4:10-16; 7:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Scripture's positive attitude towards human sexuality is further confirmed by the use of the imagery of marital intimacy to describe God's relationship with His people (Is. 54:5; 62:4, 5; Jer. 3:14; Ez. 16:8; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:6-9).

In marriage, God intended that one man and one woman would be joined together for life by covenant promise (Gen. 2:24, 25; Song of Sol. 2:16; Mal. 2:13, 14; Matt. 19:4-6). This marriage relationship is described as one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5) and presumes a sexual union (1 Cor. 7:1-6). The Scripture affirms sexual pleasure between husband and wife for its unitive purposes, apart from procreation. God intends for

the sexual relationship to bond husband and wife together as they bring to one another companionship, emotional support, spiritual fulfillment, joy and sexual pleasure (Gen. 2:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Eccl. 9:9; Song of Sol. 4:16-5:1; Eph. 5:21-33). A loving marriage and sexual union was also God's chosen setting for procreation (Gen. 1:28; 4:1). Such a relationship provides the most secure environment for the care and nurture of children (Eph. 6:4).

Sexual intimacy finds its deepest meaning in husband-wife relationships characterized by love, closeness, mutuality and commitment. In God's design, the sexual relationship is one of respect, mutual desire and consent and loving fulfillment of one another's needs (Prov. 5:15-23; Song of Sol. 2:16-17; 4:16-5:1; 7:8-10; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:3-5). In the context of their commitment to Christ and one another, couples make decision together about their sexual experience. The biblical principles of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) and thoughtful care for one another's needs and desires (Phil. 2:4) help couples to reach decisions which are satisfying to both husband and wife. Sexual practice that harms or threatens the physical, emotional or spiritual health and well-being of one or both partners violates the Scripture's elevated view of persons and its call to care for the body as God's handiwork and dwelling place (Gen. 2:25; Ps. 63:1; 139:13-16; 1 Cor. 3:16-17).

As God surveyed His creation, He observed, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make

a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Though the creation story establishes marriage as God's primary answer to aloneness (Gen. 2:24), in the broader sense aloneness is dispelled through connection with God and fellow human beings in mutually satisfying relationships (Rom. 14:7). All human beings were created for life in community, where persons whose differences would otherwise separate them are bound together as one in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22; 4:1-6). While some, by choice or circumstance, are single, they may experience wholeness as individuals, connect with others through family and friends, and bring glory to God as single men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7, 8). Sexual intimacy is reserved for a husband and wife whose relationship is protected by covenant promise (Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:6,7; 3:5; 8:3,4; 4:12; 8:8-10; Hos. 3:3).

As a result of sin, sexuality has been devalued and, in many cases, wrenched apart from intimacy, love and covenant relationship. Because sexuality is such a powerful vehicle for connectedness, and because it is such an intrinsic part of the wholistic nature of human beings, whenever it is damaged, debased, abused, misused, or counterfeited, the repercussions have an enormous impact on the persons and their relationships. Scripture cries out against such travesty. It calls Christians to flee from sexual immorality and, by God's grace, to stretch toward the full restoration of His original design for sexuality (Prov. 5:15-20; Hos. 2:2; 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 5:3-10; 21-33; Col. 3:1-19; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

While condemning as sin our selfish failures to reflect God-given norms for sexuality, Scripture demonstrates Jesus' readiness to

forgive those who repent of sexual sins. God's renewing power and love have enabled many to experience a transformation from sexual brokenness to healing, wholeness, and peace (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-28; 8:1-11).

This statement originated at the World Commission on Human Sexuality, October 1997. It was approved and voted by four departmental world advisories in March 2001; Departments of Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Women's Ministries and Chaplaincy Ministries.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.



STATEMENT ON ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION - CONSIDERATIONS

Developments in medical technology have led to a number of interventions designed to assist human procreation. Procedures such as artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, embryo transfer, and cloning increasingly provide new options in human reproduction. Such interventions raise serious ethical questions for Christians seeking God's will on these issues.

The hope of having children is generally powerful. When this hope is frustrated by problems of infertility, the disappointment of childlessness weighs heavily on many couples. Their sorrow deserves understanding and compassion. It is not surprising that many who suffer sadness because of infertility turn to new reproductive technologies to restore hope. However, with the power of such technologies comes the responsibility to decide whether and when they should be used.

Because of their conviction that God is concerned with all dimensions of human life, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to discovering and following God's principles for human reproduction. The power of procreation is God's gift, and should be used to glorify God and bless humanity. Through a careful study of the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the community of faith can identify fundamental principles that guide in decision making regarding assisted reproduction. Among the most important of these are:

1. Human reproduction is part of God's plan (Gen 1:28), and children

are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3; 113:9). Medical technologies that aid infertile couples, when practiced in harmony with biblical principles, may be accepted in good conscience.

2. Childlessness should bear no social or moral stigma, and no one should be pressured to have children with or without medical assistance (1 Cor 7:4, 7; Rom 14:4; Matt 19:10-12; 24:19; 1 Tim 5:8). Decisions to use or not use reproductive technologies are a deeply personal matter to be settled mutually by a wife and husband, without coercion. There are many acceptable reasons, including health and the special demands of some forms of Christian service (1 Cor 7:32, 33), that may lead people to refrain from or limit procreation.

3. God's ideal is for children to have the benefits of a stable family with active participation of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; Deut 6:4-7; 1 Tim 5:8). For this reason, Christians may seek medically assisted reproduction only within the bounds of the fidelity and permanence of marriage. The use of third parties, such as sperm donors, ovum donors, and surrogates, introduces a number of medical and moral problems that are best avoided. Moreover, family and genetic identity are significant to individual well-being. Decisions regarding assisted reproduction must take into consideration the impact on family heritage.

4. Human life should be treated with respect at all stages of development (Jer 1:5; Ps 139:13-16). Assisted reproduction calls for sensitivity to the value of human

life. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization require prior decisions about the number of ova to be fertilized and the moral issues regarding the disposition of any remaining preembryos.

5. Decisions regarding procreation should be based on complete and accurate information (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Couples considering assisted reproduction should seek such information. Health care professionals should disclose fully the nature of the procedures, emotional and physical risks, costs, and documented successes and limited probabilities.

6. The principles of Christian stewardship are relevant to decisions concerning assisted reproduction (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9). Some forms of technology are very costly. Couples seeking reproductive assistance should give responsible consideration to the expenses involved.

As Christians seek to apply these principles, they can be confident that the Holy Spirit will assist them in their decisions (John 16:13). The community of faith should seek to understand their aspirations and the issues that childless couples face (Eph 4:11-16). Among the alternatives that infertile couples may consider is adoption. As couples make careful decisions they should be able to rely on the compassionate understanding of the church family.

This recommendation was voted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee at Pine Springs Ranch, California, April 10-12, 1994.

This document was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), Silver Spring, Maryland, July 26, 1994.



STATEMENT ON CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from “him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7, NIV; cf Rev 11:17,18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons and the surrounding world. therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment. The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realising our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

¹Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

²The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture outlined in the statement "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life" on page 37.



STATEMENT ON CARE FOR THE DYING

For people whose lives are guided by the Bible, the reality of death is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Gen 2:17; Romans 5; Hebrews 9:27). There is a 'time to be born, and a time to die' (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Although eternal life is a gift that is granted to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ, faithful Christians await the second coming of Jesus for complete realisation of their immortality (John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Cor 15:51-54). While waiting for Jesus to come again, Christians may be called upon to care for the dying and to face personally their own death.

Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), patience (James 1:2-4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ (John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34-40).

This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34-36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Rev 21:4).

Developments in modern medicine have added to the complex-

ity of decisions about care for the dying. In times past, little could be done to extend human life. But the power of today's medicine to forestall death has generated difficult moral and ethical questions. What constraints does Christian faith place upon the use of such power? When should the goal of postponing the moment of death give way to the goal of alleviating pain at the end of life? Who may appropriately make these decisions? What limits, if any, should Christian love place on actions designed to end human suffering?

It has become common to discuss such questions under the heading of euthanasia. Much confusion exists with regard to this expression. The original and literal meaning of this term was "good death." Now the term is used in two significantly different ways. Often euthanasia refers to "mercy killing," or intentionally taking the life of a patient in order to avoid painful dying or in order to alleviate burdens for a patient's family or society. (This is so called active euthanasia). However, euthanasia is also used, inappropriately in the Seventh-day Adventist view, to refer to the withholding or withdrawal of medical interventions that artificially extend human life, thus allowing a person to die naturally. (This is so called passive euthanasia). Seventh-day Adventists believe that allowing a patient to die by foregoing medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to address the ethical issues at the end of life in ways that demonstrate their faith in God as the Creator and Redeemer of life and that reveal how God's grace has empowered them for acts of neighbour love. Seventh-day Adventists affirm God's creation of human life, a wonderful gift worthy of being protected and sustained (Genesis 1-2). They also affirm God's wonderful gift of redemption that provides eternal life for those who believe (John 3:15; 17:3). Thus they support the use of modern medicine to extend human life in this world. However, this power should be used in compassionate ways that reveal God's grace by minimizing suffering. Since we have God's promise of eternal life in the earth made new, Christians need not cling anxiously to the last vestiges of life on this earth. Nor is it necessary to accept or offer all possible medical treatments that merely prolong the process of dying.

Because of their commitment to care for the whole person, Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about the physical, emotional and spiritual care of the dying. To this end, they offer the following biblically based principles:

1. A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's personal and cultural circum-

stances (Ephesians 4:15).

2. God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.

3. God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Gen 2:18; Mark 10:6-9; Ex 20:12; Eph 5-6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

4. Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probably benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope

of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.

5. While Christian love may lead to the withholding or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Gen 9:5,6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.

6. Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:29-37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.

7. The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenceless and dependent (Psalm 82:3,4; Proverbs 24:11,12; Isaiah 1:1-18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1-9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the

fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1-5; James 5:13-16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14,15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.



STATEMENT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal,

generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.

5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
 - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
 - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
 - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
 - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
 - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on Tuesday, April 1, 1997, in Loma Linda, California.



STATEMENT ON CHOOSING A COUNSELLOR

In moments of crisis or distress, people often realise that a very positive option to dealing with their trauma or difficulties is to seek the help and guidance of a professional counsellor. A couple who feel 'stuck' in their relationship and doesn't know what to do to resolve their conflict and anger may decide that counselling offers real benefits and hope. But how do you go about choosing an appropriate Counsellor?

Deciding to begin Counselling may have very important consequences for the rest of your life. Individuals, couples and families are most likely to benefit from the experience of counselling if they enter into it with a clear understanding of what to expect.

Specific Qualifications

A professional counsellor may be either a clinical or counselling psychologist, a certified social worker, a marriage and family counsellor, a pastoral counsellor, a child psychologist or a psychiatrist. When you are referred to a Counsellor, it is proper to ask about the following:

- * Is the Counsellor's specific training, experience and credentials pertinent to dealing with your case?
- * What are the Counsellor's values in areas of special significance to you? (Is he/she a committed Christian, What are his/her views on Scripture, Prayer, Marriage, Divorce, Lifestyle etc).
- * What is the counsellor's particular treatment approach and do you feel comfortable with this approach Does he/she seek to facilitate change by improving your behaviour. (Behavioural), giving you new insights into your problems (Psychoanalytic/Cognitive) or helping you to get in touch with your feelings (Experiential), or is it a combination of all these approaches?

- * Does the Counsellor have an associated or a referral system for emergencies when he/she is out of town?
- * Is the Counsellor a current member of any professional organisation?

Most competent and qualified Counsellors are members of professional organisations that have strict guidelines and standards in ethical and professional behaviour. These guidelines are designed to protect the consumer and uphold the quality of service provided. Competent counsellors are also trained to respect your wishes and gladly make a further referral if they feel that they are unable to help you or that your problems are outside of the field of their professional expertise.

Counsellor Responsibilities

What are the Counsellor's responsibilities towards you and the Counselling process?

- * First, he/she will take time to establish a working relationship with you.
 - * Then he/she will take time to identify carefully the types and extent of your concerns.
 - * Next, the level of stress and your ability to cope with these concerns will be assessed.
 - * The counsellor will usually then discuss with you a Counselling plan including goals, methods, and the appropriate length of time required to achieve these goals.
 - * Periodically as you progress in this counselling process, joint assessment will be made to see if the desired goals are being achieved.
 - * Termination of the Counselling process will occur when you feel that you have received what you wanted to achieve.
- Other areas of responsibility to you as a 'client' are:
- * Competent Counsellors must not reveal

any information about a client to anyone. He/she will guarantee strict confidentiality in all circumstances except when it is clear that a person is in danger to themselves or to another person. The Counsellor will take steps to protect those individuals under such threat. He/she may also choose to report any knowledge of the abuse and neglect of a child or an incompetent or disabled person.

- * Erotic contact between a Counsellor and client is unethical and immoral and always unacceptable behaviour. To take advantage of a vulnerable person who comes for help is an act of aggression that should always be considered a serious offence.

It is not uncommon for some people to feel frustrated with their Counsellor. However, if an individual does have questions or concerns about what happens in the Counselling process, these should be raised first with your Counsellor. If you feel you are not being heard, you probably are not! If you are still feeling dissatisfied you always have the option of ending the Counselling contract and switching to another Counsellor of your choice. Competent Counsellors recognise their own limitations. They accept that they are human and are unable to be all things to all people.

Focus of Counselling

At times Counsellors may choose to 'treat' or work with an individual. Marriage and family Counsellors mostly prefer to work together with a couple or in some cases the whole family. Often the person who is identified as 'the problem' (the symptom bearer) may not be the person with the problem at all. In marriages and families symptoms such as depression, anger, fear and anxiety can be transmitted to other family members, who become the symptom bearers.

The Counselling Process

There is an old adage that says, 'Things get worse before they get better.' This applies to Counselling! What we repress or deny needs to be confronted. Like Jesus did with Nicodemus, a Counsellor may need to confront

a person's fears and game-playing, to get to the heart of an issue. Particularly difficult is the problem of forgiveness. We all tend to be so magnanimous that we forgive others and trust in God who has forgiven us, but our pride and perfectionism makes it difficult to forgive ourselves. A Christian Counsellor, who understands that healing often begins with forgiveness, may need to help us face our pride, which may hurt and be awfully scary, before healing can occur. It is still the truth that sets us free!

The Christian Counsellor is someone who is in the business of helping individuals to be restored in the image of God. This image is basically one of love. It is only in such restoration that the fearful find peace and the broken hearted find healing. As the Apostle John says, it is only through the development of perfect love that fear is cast out (1 John 4:18). A skilled and sensitive Counsellor, who is a Christian, can minister to the wounded of our world in gentle ways. He or she can help individuals, couples and families to find the way of escape to freedom, health and spiritual growth. The Christian Counsellor is like the quiet shepherd who finds and binds the lost sheep. Through the ministry of Counselling God's grace can become a reality as it brings with it the gift of healing, affirmation and hope.



STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

In harmony with the Fundamental Belief of Seventh-day Adventists in the divine ordination and nurture of family life it is affirmed that:

Marriage was instituted in Eden by a loving Creator for the purpose of meeting the needs of mankind for an enduring human relationship which would provide mutual respect, companionship, fidelity, sexual fulfilment and procreation (Gen 2:18-28; Ex 20:14; Matt 19:4-6). Therefore, Christian marriage is a divinely ordained life-long commitment between a man and woman in which love may mature, understanding grow, the marriage privileges be enjoyed, and the responsibilities borne (1 Cor 7:1-5).

The relationship which exists between Christ and the church becomes the Scriptural model for Christian couples. Husbands are to love and protect their wives and wives are to love and respect their husbands. While Christian marriage preserves the God-given right of each partner to develop his or her own individual talents it does so in the context of voluntary submission of husband and wife to one another. The church will be as solicitous to nurture this marital commitment as it is eager to sustain and depend each member's dedication to Christ (Eph 5:21-23; Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19).

Sexuality is an integral part of every human being. The expression of sexual relations, while not limited to procreation is to be confined to the marriage relationship. Aware of their wider accountability to a world facing

hunger and overpopulation the responsible Christian parents will carefully consider and limit the size of their family for which they can adequately care (1 Tim 5:8; Gen 1:28). Contraception is a legitimate means of limiting the size of a family and allows for the fulfilment of normal and God-given sexual needs.

Once conception occurs new life begins. Scripture does not declare the time when personhood begins but stresses that God is the lifegiver and protector of even the unborn child. Therefore, abortion has an alternative to contraception is untenable for the Christian. When an abortion has occurred the church will show compassion for those who may suffer (Ex 21:22; Ps 139:13-18; Jer 1:4-5; Luke 1:39-66).

Since God intended that man's sexual needs be met in the heterosexual, monogamous union of husband and wife any deviation from this ideal is a perversion of the divine plan. Therefore the church cannot accept the practice of sexual aberrations. Nevertheless the community of believers will provide compassionate help and guidance for those involved in such practices who desire to change to God's ideal (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10; 2:1).

According to the Bible, marriage is intended to be indissoluble as long as both partners live. Divorce, except for marital infidelity, is contrary to Scripture as a means of solving interpersonal problems. Healing through reconciliation is the better way (Matt 19:3-9).

Where irretrievable marital breakdown has occurred the church is to be a caring community of believers showing compassion and providing support to those involved in the tragedy (Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19). Just as marriage is God's means for meeting the needs of men and women so it is His plan that the home they establish should provide a warm, caring environment for the birth and development of children. The Christian family is the learning centre where behaviour and values are modelled and taught. Christian parents should assume responsibility for mothering and fathering in all aspects of family life recognizing the uniqueness of their role. Consequently they should provide leadership and loving discipline for their children in accord with the word of God (Ex 20:12; Deut 6:4-25).

It is the church's responsibility to provide assistance for parents and children in strengthening family unity and cohesion. This should include education and preparation for those contemplating a life-changing event such as marriage, parenting, bereavement, help in facilitating adjustment to retirement, and diminishing capacities in old age, as well as understanding and support for those in crisis and in need (Acts 5:11).

Strongly unified Christian families, dedicated to sharing the good news of Salvation, when joined together in a church, form a network of interdependent support systems, which are effective in extending the Kingdom of God.



STATEMENT ON DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

The Church, in all of its relationships, seeks to operate like an extended family, providing encouragement, nurture and support to every individual within the community of faith. As such, it is committed to not only building up and strengthening marriages and families, but to fostering the individual growth and spiritual development of each person.

In moments of crisis, the Church also seeks to be caring and responsive to the needs of its members. It does not abandon them nor does it stand aloof from their pain and hurts when things go wrong. The Church is especially sensitive to those distressed by interpersonal conflict, marital disharmony or those experiencing marital breakdown, separation or divorce.

The Church sees as its charter, the command of Christ to proclaim salvation and redemption in all of its utterances and relationships. It seeks to offer healing, hope and wholeness to people in every area of their lives. However, the Church must provide certain guarantees to those who are wounded and hurting. It must make it safe for them to risk being open with us so that they can begin a journey towards healing and redemption. There are three guarantees we must make to people if we want to share salvation with them:

1. That they will be loved - always, under every circumstance, with no exception.
2. That they will be totally accepted - without reservation.
3. That unreserved forgiveness can be theirs - no matter how

miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, this forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth.

A. Love

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death." 1 John 3:14. The New Testament word used here for love is "agape." "Agape" love is God's love. It exists in human relationships as a gift from God and is demonstrated in the act of a person unconditionally accepting another person. Its presence affects the emotions and the behaviour, motivating us to act in Christ-like ways towards others.

B. Acceptance

The separated or divorced constantly refer to the lack of acceptance that they feel in the church community. They tell us that they feel like second class citizens. This constitutes a real challenge for the Church. It must come to the place of accepting them the way Jesus accepts us. Unreserved acceptance of people needs to be a habit with us. There is no other way to get close enough to people to help them at the level of their deepest needs. It is only when we cultivate the habit of accepting people, that they will trust us to model the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Because we are accepted in the Beloved, we must be accepting of the beloved. Some people fear that such acceptance will breed license for marital break-

down. However, our acceptance of a brother will make him strong. It will never confuse him in questions of right and wrong if our teaching and personal lifestyle establish clear standards. For example, a person who uses profanity is not going to think you approve of such language just because you accept him personally. But if you communicate personal rejection to such a person, he will not remain in the church community long enough to be touched by God through the Church. Jesus accepts us though we have much in our lives that offends His holiness. His acceptance of us does not imply approval of our unworthy behaviour. His acceptance is our model in ministering to others.

C. Forgiveness

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32.

Forgiving another person is an act of grace. It means that you are willing to release another person from your own personal judgment. It may not mean that you agree with what they have said or done, it simply means you will not act as their judge. You will not pronounce a guilty verdict on them.

The divorced or remarried are not to be held in social punishment in order to teach them a lesson, but are to be warmly accepted in the mercy and grace of God. We cannot preach forgiveness for all the sins that may have caused the death of a marriage while failing to preach forgiveness for the death itself. Sins of hostile-

ity, resentment, silence, impatience, bitterness, and pride have kept growing and growing until they were impossible to handle, and the marriage died. While the Church at times has found it difficult to recognize and accept a legal divorce, it has many times passively sat by while an emotional divorce was in existence for many years.

When love, acceptance and forgiveness prevail, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world - a centre of love designed for the healing of broken people, a powerful force for God.

Ministers therefore, need to lead their churches toward a new sense of compassion, mercy, and redemption. They must help the Church to understand the tragedy of divorce and not to assume that there is some simplistic answer to every marital breakdown. If the Church can redeem these hurting people and open doors of hope to them, they will find new life and be an added resource to aid the Church in its mission of sharing the good news of salvation to the world.

In writing to G I Butler, President of the General Conference, on April 21, 1887, on the subject "Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who have Violated the Seventh Commandment," E G White said:

"I wish that we had much more the Spirit of Christ and a great deal less of self and less of human opinions. If we ere, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing." (Letter 16, 1887).

Most of the separated and divorced people in our churches feel the hurt, shame and rejection for what has happened to them. They do not need intemperate condemnations to bring home

to them a consciousness of guilt - they are often wrapped in it. To come to Christ with their hurt and guilt should lead to an experience of renewal. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted. We have been entrusted with His great commission to proclaim the good news that all may be forgiven and reconciled to their Father. We must cultivate within the Church the kind of caring and accepting community, in which people who have broken marriages can seek forgiveness from God, have their wounds bound, and receive assistance and encouragement in forging a new life.

The Church's Task

When it comes to dealing with marital breakdown, the Church must do more than talk about it, it must see that its primary task is to be the people of God in a caring, supportive community.

First of all, the Church must commit itself to being a community of truth, a community in which believers tell the truth about their own lives. The Church must be willing to hear the stories of pain, suffering, and failure in the lives of its members; and those who tell the stories must receive from the Church both lamentation and the healing balm of Christ. When the Church is open and honest about pain and suffering, it can then confront, in love, even the most difficult of human failures and crises - marital breakdown.

Second, the Church must commit itself to being a community of love, not quick to judge. Since divorce often brings with it stigma and feelings of guilt, those currently free of pain must welcome those who suffer, in the name of Christ; and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, they must place themselves at one another's disposal.

Third, the Church must com-

mit itself to being a community of joy, a community in which the new life in Christ is celebrated, a community that calls others to celebrate the new life in Christ. By living as a community of joy, but regularly celebrating God's goodness to us in Jesus Christ, the Church ministers to those who are saddened, joyfully acquainting them with the one who has known their sorrows.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Family Violence Defined

Family violence involves an assault of any kind (be it verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, active or passive neglect) that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family be they married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. According to current research family violence occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socio-economic levels, and in families from all types of religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

B. Common Examples of Family Violence

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways: It may be an attack on one's spouse which can take the form of either physical violence, emotional abuse, marital rape, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behaviour. It could be the mistreatment or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen by parent(s) or other guardians that results in injury or harm. It may include physical violence, verbal or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, and physical or educational neglect. It can manifest itself in the relationships of siblings to other siblings or of children to parents. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material and medical abuse or neglect.

C. Scripture and Family Relationships

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christ's

followers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. Such relationships are characterised by love and acceptance, rather than tyrannical control or abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, Christians seek to affirm and build others up, rather than abuse or tear each other down. Disciples of Christ seek to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept both male and female as equals, and to acknowledge that every person irrespective of race or creed has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way is to violate personhood and to devalue the individual.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as 'the household of faith' and suggests that it should function as an extended family offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to everyone, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

He sees the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as the feelings of betrayal, rejection and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust and wholeness.

D. The Responsibility of the Church

Regrettably, family violence occurs to some degree in many homes. However, it can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of self and others.

It is our belief that the SDA church has a responsibility -

1. To care for those involved in

family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth
 - b. Highlighting to the community the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defence of its victims
 - c. Providing a ministry of reconciliation to families affected by violence and abuse including both the victims and the perpetrators
 - d. Guarding against ostracism within the family or church community
2. To strengthen family life by
 - a. Providing family life education
 - b. Seeking to understand the origins of family violence
 - c. Developing ways to prevent the recurring cycle of family violence

We believe that the church has a moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and in the community. Any indications or reports of abuse must be taken seriously. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following Scriptural passages: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 7:12; 20:25,26; John 13:34; Romans 12:10,13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:2,3; 6:4; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)



STATEMENT ON GENETIC INTERVENTIONS

Most of the new developments in genetics are the result of increased knowledge concerning the fundamental structure of genes, not only in humans but throughout all the realms of life on earth. Among these developments are genetic mapping, new means for genetic testing, new possibilities for genetic engineering, and a variety of eugenic strategies that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. In short, new genetic knowledge has produced unprecedented power. With that power has come the potential for immense good or harm. And with such great power also comes great responsibility. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, we are accountable for the use of this power not only to global humanity, but also to every realm of created life that God has entrusted to our stewardship. Ultimately we are accountable to the Maker of the universe who holds us responsible for the care of each other and of the earth.

When creation came forth from the Creator's hand it was "very good." (Gen 1:31). The genetic endowment which Adam and Eve received from their Creator was without defects. The genetic diseases from which humans now suffer are not the result of normal variation. They have developed through harmful mutation. In restoring the human genome to a healthier condition, modern sciences may attempt to recover more of creation's original condition. To the extent that helpful genetic interventions can be conducted in harmony with Christian principles, they are to be

welcomed as cooperation with the divine intention of alleviating the painful results of sin.

Any attempt to state comprehensive principles of ethics for genetic interventions must confront the complexities of a rapidly changing field of science. Since the discovery of the molecular structure of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), knowledge of genetics across an ever wider range of life forms has burgeoned.

Many of the increases in information and technological ability have been accompanied by significant ethical concerns. We can only begin to imagine future questions that will arise as genetic science progresses. The complexity of the issues and the pace of change make it likely that statements of relevant Christian principles will require expansion and modification as time passes.

One example of an area of rapid change is genetic mapping. An international, scientific effort known as the Human Genome Project is attempting to construct a detailed genetic chart, or "map," of all the human chromosomes. The goal is to provide a comprehensive description of the sequence of the millions of DNA base pairs which human chromosomes contain. Researchers plan to use this information to facilitate the identification and isolation of human genes, thereby providing a helpful aid in understanding human development and in treating human diseases. New details about the identity, role, and function of human genes are continually emerging.

Increased knowledge about

the identity of human genes has given rise to a variety of new possibilities for genetic testing. In the past, genetic information about an individual was largely inferred from the person's family history or clinical observations of the person's phenotype, or physical expressions of a person's genes. Today, a growing number of sophisticated genetic analyses make it possible to identify defective genes that cause genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, Huntington's Chorea, and some types of cancer. Many of these tests can now be performed prenatally. The potential exists for identifying hundreds of genetic characteristics, including a wide range of genetic disorders.

A further result of basic genetic knowledge is the capacity to alter genes intentionally, or genetic engineering. Through the use of enzymes which are able to excise specific segments of genes, it is possible to change the genetic makeup of cells by deliberately inserting, removing or changing specific genes. Genetic engineering presents astonishing new possibilities, including the transfer of genes across biological boundaries, such as from animals to plants. The potential for improving life forms seems endless. Genetically engineered plants, for example, can be made more productive, more resistant to diseases, or less susceptible to internal processes of decay.

Genetic engineering has directly benefited human medicine. It has made possible, for example, the production of human insulin and human growth factor, neither of which was previously

obtainable in sufficient quantities. Genetic engineering also makes it possible to treat diseases through genetic alteration. With this type of treatment, a patient whose cells have missing or defective genes receives needed genetic material. No one knows how many genetic diseases may eventually be treated in this way, but initial successes with diseases such as cystic fibrosis give hope that other genetic disorders may be treatable.

Increased genetic knowledge also produces new possibilities for eugenics, or endeavours to improve the gene pool of various species, including human beings. In broad terms, such attempts fall into two categories. Negative eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to prevent harmful genes from being inherited. Positive eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to promote the transmission of desirable genes. An example of negative eugenics, common in the past, is the sterilization of individuals considered to have defective genes capable of being inherited. An example of positive eugenics is artificial insemination by donors who have been selected for traits, such as high intelligence, that are deemed desirable.

Ethical Concerns

In order to provide focus, it is helpful to consider a sampling of current ethical concerns for which we seek to state Christian principles. These concerns can be placed in four basic categories: the sanctity of human life, the protection of human dignity, the acceptance of social responsibilities, and the safekeeping of God's creation.

Sanctity of human life. If genetic determinism reduces the meaning of humanhood to the mechanistic outworkings of molecular biology, there is

serious potential for devaluing human life. For example, new capacities for prenatal genetic testing, including the examination of human pre-embryos prior to implantation, generate questions about the value of human life when it is genetically defective. How serious must a genetic defect, prenatally diagnosed, be before it is an ethically legitimate reason for discarding a pre-embryo or for inducing an abortion? Some conditions, such as trisomy 18, are generally deemed incompatible with life. But the relative seriousness of most genetic defects is a matter of judgment.

Protection of human dignity.

The protection of personal privacy and confidentiality is one of the major concerns associated with the new possibilities for genetic testing. Knowledge about a person's genetic profile could be of significant value to potential employers, insurance companies, and to those related to the person. Whether genetic testing should be voluntary or mandatory, when and by whom the testing should be done, how much and with whom the resulting information should be shared are matters of significant ethical concern. Difficult decisions must be made about whether there are exceptions to the usual expectation of confidentiality and privacy when persons may suffer considerable harm because of a lack of information. At stake is the protection of persons from stigma and unfair discrimination on the basis of their genetic makeup.

Another cluster of concerns related to human dignity stems from the possibility of intentionally altering the human gene pool. Medical interventions for genetic diseases may be aimed either at the treatment of bodily cells that are genetically defective or at the alteration of reproductive cells.

Changes in human reproductive cells could become a permanent part of the human gene pool. Interventions may also extend beyond the treatment of disease and include attempts to enhance what have formerly been considered normal human characteristics. What are the implications for the meaning of being human, for example, if interventions aimed at enhancing human intelligence or physique become available?

Acceptance of social responsibilities. The power that results from new genetic knowledge also raises concerns about the ethics of social policies and the boundaries between individual liberties and social responsibilities. For example, should society develop policies designed to encourage either positive or negative eugenics? Should individuals with serious genetic disorders be given full procreative liberty? Another area of social concern has to do with the use of society's resources. Questions can be raised about the amount of social resources that should be spent for interventions in human genetics when more basic health care is not fully available. Other questions arise concerning the distribution of the benefits and burdens of genetic interventions and how they will be shared by rich and poor within society.

Stewardship of God's creation. As the powers of genetic engineering are further developed, many changes could be made in various species that inhabit the earth. These changes have the potential for being both permanent and, to some degree, unpredictable. What limits to genetic change, if any, should be accepted? Are there boundaries that should not be crossed in transferring genes from one life form to another? We may hope that genetic changes are intended to enhance life on our planet.

But there are reasons for concern. For example, consideration has already been given to genetic alterations for the purpose of developing new biological weapons. The exploitation of other life forms for purposes of military security or economic gain should call for careful, moral scrutiny.

It is with ethical concerns like these in mind that we state the following Christian principles for genetic interventions.

Principles

Confidentiality Christian love requires that trust be maintained in human relationships. The protection of confidentiality is essential to such trust. In order to safeguard personal privacy and protect against unfair discrimination, information about a person's genetic constitution should be kept confidential unless the person elects to share the knowledge with others. In cases where others may suffer serious and avoidable harm without genetic information about another person, there is a moral obligation to share the needed information (Matt 7:12; Phil 2:4).

Truthfulness The Christian obligation to be truthful requires that the results of genetic testing be honestly reported to the person tested or to responsible family members if the person is incapable of understanding the information (Eph 4:25).

Honoring God's image In all of God's creation, only human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). The Christian acknowledgment of God's wisdom and power in creation should lead to caution in attempts to alter permanently the human gene pool (Gen 1:31). Given current knowledge, genetic interventions in humans should be limited to treatment of individuals with genetic disorders (somatic cell therapies) and

should not include attempts to change human reproductive cells (germ cell alterations) that could affect the image of God in future generations. All interventions in human beings for genetic reasons should be taken with great moral caution and with appropriate protection of human life at all stages of its development.

Prevention of suffering It is a Christian responsibility to prevent or relieve suffering whenever possible (Acts 10:38, Luke 9:2). For this reason the primary purpose of human genetic intervention should be the treatment or prevention of disease and the alleviation of pain and suffering. Because of the tendencies of sinful human nature, the possibility of abuse, and unknown biological risks, attempts to modify physical or mental characteristics with genetic interventions for healthy persons who are free of genetic disorders should be approached with great caution.

Freedom of choice God values human freedom and rejects the way of coercion. People who are capable of making their own decisions should be free to decide whether or not to be tested genetically. They should also be free to decide how to act on information that results from testing, except when others may suffer serious and avoidable harm. It may be the morally responsible choice to avoid known risks of serious congenital defects by forgoing procreation. While such decisions about procreation and genetic testing are deeply personal, they should be made by the individual with due consideration for the common good.

Stewardship of creation Safeguarding God's creation includes esteem for the diversity and ecological balance of the natural world with its countless species of living creatures (Gen

1). Genetic interventions with plants and animals should show respect for the rich variety of life forms. Exploitations and manipulations that would destroy natural balance or degrade God's created world should be prohibited.

Nonviolence Using genetic manipulation to develop means of warfare is a direct affront to Christian values of peace and life. It is morally unacceptable to abuse God's creation by changing life forms into weapons of destruction (Rev 11:18).

Fairness God loves all human beings, regardless of their perceived social status (Acts 10:34). The benefits of genetic research should be accessible to people in need without unfair discrimination.

Human dignity Created in God's image, human beings are more than the sum of their genes (Gen 1:27; Acts 17:28). Human dignity should not be reduced to genetic mechanisms. People should be treated with dignity and respect for their individual qualities, and not be stereotyped on the basis of their genetic heritage.

Healthfulness Christians have a responsibility to maintain the health of their bodies, including their genetic health (1 Cor 10:31). This means that Christians should avoid that which is likely to be genetically destructive to themselves or to their children, such as drug abuse and excessive radiation.

Glossary

Base pairs. Pairs of complementary bases forming the DNA structure; the units used to measure the length of DNA. Base pairs consist of adenine (A), which must always pair with thymine (T), and guanine (G), which must always pair with cytosine (C).

Chromosome. The condensed rod made up of a linear thread of DNA interwoven with protein that is the gene-bearing structure of living cells. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The double helix molecule that encodes genetic information and is the primary hereditary molecule in most species.

Enzyme. A protein that facilitates a specific chemical reaction without changing its direction or nature.

Eugenics. Strategies for attempting to improve the gene pool of a species either by halting the transmission of unwanted characteristics or increasing the transmission of desired characteristics.

Gene. The basic unity of heredity; a section of DNA that contains information for the production of specific protein molecules.

Gene mapping. The process of ascertaining the genetic sequence of a species.

Gene therapy. The medical replacement or repair of defective genes in living cells.

Genetic engineering. The process of altering the genetic makeup of cells or individual organisms by deliberately inserting, removing, or changing specific genes.

Genetic testing. The examination of individuals' genetic makeup for the purpose of identifying possible hereditary traits, including

defects or abnormalities.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell.

Genome. All of the genetic material in the chromosomes of a particular organism or individual.

Genotype. An individual's genetic makeup.

Human Genome Project. The international, scientific effort to construct a detailed map of human genes, identifying their structure and function.

Implantation. The attachment of an embryo to the wall of the uterus.

Mutation. A permanent alteration of DNA that can be inherited.

Negative eugenics. Strategies for preventing the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed undesirable.

Phenotype. The observable characteristics resulting from a particular genotype as influenced by environmental factors.

Positive eugenics. Strategies for promoting the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed desirable.

Pre-embryo. A fertilized ovum (or conceptus) prior to implantation and the beginning of pregnancy.

Recombinant DNA. A novel sequence of DNA that is artificially produced by joining segments of DNA.

Somatic cell. Any cell of a body other than reproductive cells.

This document was adopted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee in March 1995 and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), June 13, 1995.



STATEMENT ON HOME & FAMILY

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." —The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.



STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one" (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.



STATEMENT ON ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING HUMAN CLONING

For a number of decades, the prospect that new members of the human family might be produced by cloning was considered farfetched. Recent advances in genetic and reproductive biology, however, indicate that techniques for cloning humans may soon be developed. With this prospect comes the Christian responsibility to address profound ethical issues associated with human cloning. As Christians, with firm belief in God's creative and redemptive power, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to enunciate ethical principles that emerge from their faith commitments.

Cloning includes all those processes by which living plants or animals are replicated by asexual means—methods that do not involve the fusion of egg and sperm. Many natural processes are forms of cloning. For example, microorganisms, like common yeast, reproduce by splitting into two daughter cells that are clones of the parent cell and each other. Cutting a twig from a rose bush or grapevine and propagating it into a complete plant also creates a clone of the original plant. Similarly, many simple animals, such as starfish, can regenerate complete organisms from small parts of a predecessor. Thus the biological principle of cloning is not new.

The new technique is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions,

an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At present, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

Biologists have developed this technique as a tool for animal husbandry. By this means, they hope to create a herd of valued animals that are genetically identical to a selected individual. The potential benefits from this technology, including the expectation of products for treating human diseases, are of great interest to researchers and to the biotechnology industry. However, the same technological capacity could be used for human reproduction and thus raises serious ethical concerns.

First among these concerns is medical safety. If the current technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer were to be used in humans, ova would need to be obtained from donors. Most of these would perish because of cellular manipulations during early embryonic growth in the laboratory. Others would be lost after implantation, spontane-

ously aborted at various stages of fetal development. In this respect, sensitivity to the value of embryonic and fetal life would be similar to the development of other methods of assisted reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization. There would likely be an increased risk of birth defects in children brought to term. At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology.

However, even if the success rates of cloning were to improve and the medical risks were diminished, a number of major concerns would remain. For example, is there anything intrinsically problematic with creating an individual who is not produced through fertilization of an egg by a sperm? Further study is needed to resolve questions regarding the essential nature of procreation in God's design.

Another of the most often expressed concerns is that the dignity and uniqueness of a cloned person may be jeopardized. This risk includes the psychological harm that might be experienced by an individual who would be what some have called the "delayed identical twin" of the individual who provided the initial cell. Do existing persons have the right to exercise such a level of control over the genetic destiny of a new individual?

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual

relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce problems of relationships and responsibilities.

An additional major risk is that cloning could lead to expedient uses of those who are cloned, with their value assigned primarily on the basis of their utility. For example, there could be a temptation to clone individuals to serve as sources of transplantable organs. Others have worried about the deliberate creation of subservient individuals whose autonomy would be violated. Egotistical or narcissistic individuals might be inclined to use the technology in order to “duplicate” themselves.

Finally, the financial costs of cloning would likely be considerable even after significant technological improvements. If human cloning were commercialized, conflicting interests might add to the risk of abuse.

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs*. The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

The following ethical principles are intended to apply to somatic cell nuclear transfer if that technology is ever applied to human beings. The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic

review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. Protection of vulnerable human life. Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.

2. Protection of human dignity. Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.

3. Alleviating human suffering. It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.

4. Family support. God’s ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and

support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.

5. Stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely to be very costly. Married couples seeking such assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.

6. Truthfulness. Honest communication is one of Scripture’s mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.

7. Understanding God’s creation. God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

Given our present state of knowledge and the current refinement of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technique for human cloning is deemed unacceptable by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given our responsibility to alleviate disease and to enhance the quality of human life, continued appropriate research with animals is deemed acceptable.

Glossary

Allele. One of the alternative forms of a particular gene. Each gene of an organism can exist in slightly different forms. Those small differences are responsible for some of the variations that we observe in different individuals within natural populations. Different alleles for genes that produce the blood protein hemoglobin, for example, will affect how well the blood cells will carry oxygen.

Clones. Two or more individuals with identical genetic material. Human clones occur naturally in the form of "identical twins." Though twins begin life with the same genetic material they, nevertheless, develop distinct physical differences (fingerprints, for example). Furthermore, they become fully unique individuals with distinct personalities as a result of their different experiences and independent choices. An individual conceived by somatic cell nuclear transfer would be at least as different from his or her progenitor as natural twins.

Cytoplasm. All the contents of a cell, other than the nucleus. The cytoplasm is the site where many important processes occur, including the assembly of proteins and enzymes, and the manufacture of cell products. The cytoplasm also contains the mitochondria, small bodies that are responsible for the breakdown of food to produce the energy needed for the activities of the cell.

Embryo. The early stages of development of a fertilized egg. In somatic cell nuclear transfer, it refers to the early developmental stages of an enucleated egg after it has been fused with a somatic cell.

Enucleated egg. An egg cell from which the nucleus has been removed. This is usually

accomplished by penetrating the cell with a fine glass needle and withdrawing the nucleus while observing the process under a microscope.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell. In mammals and humans, the germ cells are the sperm and eggs (ova).

Gestation. The period of time it takes an embryo to develop in the uterus from a fertilized egg to a newborn offspring. Gestation begins with implantation of the embryo in the uterus and ends with birth.

Nucleus. The structure within a cell that contains the genetic material or genes. The nucleus is surrounded by a membrane that separates it from the remainder of the cell.

Ovum (plural: ova). An egg cell. A female productive cell.

Somatic cell. Any cell from the body of a mammal or human, other than the germ cells.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer. The technical name for the method used to produce the first animal clone, a sheep called "Dolly." Though the name suggests that a nucleus from a somatic cell was used, in fact, the complete somatic cell was fused with an enucleated egg.

Sperm. A male reproductive cell.

*There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child

with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.

PASTORAL STATEMENTS ON FAMILY



Taken from the General Conference Web site
www.familyministries.gc.adventist.org/statements



CONTENTS

Abortion
Abuse and Family Violence
Aids
An Affirmation of Family
An Affirmation of God's Gift of Sexuality
An Affirmation of Marriage
Assisted Human Reproduction
Caring for God's Creation
Caring for the Dying
Child Sexual Abuse
Choosing a Counsellor
Divorced & Separated
Family Violence
Fundamental Belief on Marriage & Family
Genetic Interventions
Home & Family
Homosexuality
Human Cloning
Pornography
Principles for a Christian View of Human Life
Sexual Behaviour
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Temperance



CONTENTS

Many contemporary societies have faced conflict over the morality of abortion.* Such conflict also has affected large numbers within Christianity who want to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women. The need for guidelines has become evident, as the Church attempts to follow scripture, and to provide moral guidance while respecting individual conscience. Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles that are presented for study at the end of the document.**

1. Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.

2. Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.

3. In practical, tangible ways the Church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These ways should include:

- a. Strengthening family relationships
 - b. Educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality
 - c. Emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning
 - d. Calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles
 - e. Creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion
 - f. Offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies
 - g. Encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children. The Church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.
4. The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships.

5. Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.

6. Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

7. Church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of scripture.

*Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

**The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture as shown in the "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life".

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These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992



STATEMENT ON ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defense of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.



STATEMENT ON AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and associated conditions are spreading rapidly around the world. On the basis of statistical studies it is estimated that in the near future, in many countries of the world, every church congregation numbering 100 or more will include at least one member who has a friend or relative with AIDS.

AIDS is transmitted through two major sources: sexual intimacy with an infected person, and introduction of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) contaminated blood into the body either through injections with unsterile needles and syringes or through contaminated blood products. AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and maintaining a faithful monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage, and by avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections and assuring the safety of blood products.

Adventists are committed to education for prevention of AIDS. For many years Adventists have fought against the circulation, sale, and use of drugs, and continue to do so. Adventist support sex education that includes the concept that human sexuality is God's gift to humanity. Biblical sexuality clearly limits sexual relationships to one's spouse and excludes promiscuous and all other sexual relationships and the consequent increased exposure to HIV.

The Christlike response to AIDS must be personal—compassionate, helpful, and redemptive. Just as Jesus cared about those with leprosy, the feared communicable disease of His day, His followers today will care for those with AIDS. James advised, "What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'—if you don't give them the necessities of life?" (James 2:16, TEV).

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY

The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred. of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honor, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S GIFT OF SEXUALITY

Human beings are created in the image of a relational God and designed to enjoy an intimate relationship with their Creator and one another (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 22:37-39; John 17:3; 1 John 4:11, 12). From the beginning, God fashioned humankind in two genders, male and female (Gen. 1:27). Magnificent expressions of His creative genius, the man and woman evoked His deepest satisfaction and passionate acclaim. Both were sexual creatures by their very nature, and God intended that they would rejoice in their maleness or femaleness. His creative work was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)! There was nothing incomplete or shameful about what He had made. Maleness and femaleness afford a primary basis for human beings to define their personhood and their relationships with God and each other (Ps. 8:3-6; 100:3; Is. 43:1, 3, 4; Jer. 1:5; 1 John 4:7, 8).

God created male and female to complement one another (Gen. 2:18, 20-22). In Eden, they shared equally God's image and blessing. Together they were given responsibility for dominion over and care for the earth, and for procreation (Gen. 1:26-28). They were created with an intrinsic longing and desire for one another, physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Gen. 2:23-25; Prov. 5:18, 19; Song of Sol. 2:16, 17; 4:9). With the creation of the sexes, each came to understand self and other (Gen. 2:23). In the moment they met for the first time, the yearning of Adam's heart and soul for partnership and intimate communion burst

forth into joyous acclamation: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Immediately they recognized each other as companions, counterparts, persons capable of meeting one another's needs. Each saw the other as one corresponding to their being, one equal but different, someone to love who would love in return (Gen. 2:18, 20b-23).

The Bible presents a wholistic view of human beings with no dichotomy between body and spirit (Gen. 2:27; Ps. 63:1; 84:1, 2, 1 Thess. 5:23). In both the Old and New Testaments, sexuality is clearly regarded as a valuable gift from God, to be received with gratitude and freely enjoyed within the marriage relationship (Gen. 1:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:16-5:1; 1 Cor. 7:1-5). Sexual expression within marriage is portrayed as wholesome and honorable (Ps. 139:13-16; Song of Sol. 4:10-16; 7:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Scripture's positive attitude towards human sexuality is further confirmed by the use of the imagery of marital intimacy to describe God's relationship with His people (Is. 54:5; 62:4, 5; Jer. 3:14; Ez. 16:8; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:6-9).

In marriage, God intended that one man and one woman would be joined together for life by covenant promise (Gen. 2:24, 25; Song of Sol. 2:16; Mal. 2:13, 14; Matt. 19:4-6). This marriage relationship is described as one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5) and presumes a sexual union (1 Cor. 7:1-6). The Scripture affirms sexual pleasure between husband and wife for its unitive purposes, apart from procreation. God intends for

the sexual relationship to bond husband and wife together as they bring to one another companionship, emotional support, spiritual fulfillment, joy and sexual pleasure (Gen. 2:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Eccl. 9:9; Song of Sol. 4:16-5:1; Eph. 5:21-33). A loving marriage and sexual union was also God's chosen setting for procreation (Gen. 1:28; 4:1). Such a relationship provides the most secure environment for the care and nurture of children (Eph. 6:4).

Sexual intimacy finds its deepest meaning in husband-wife relationships characterized by love, closeness, mutuality and commitment. In God's design, the sexual relationship is one of respect, mutual desire and consent and loving fulfillment of one another's needs (Prov. 5:15-23; Song of Sol. 2:16-17; 4:16-5:1; 7:8-10; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:3-5). In the context of their commitment to Christ and one another, couples make decision together about their sexual experience. The biblical principles of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) and thoughtful care for one another's needs and desires (Phil. 2:4) help couples to reach decisions which are satisfying to both husband and wife. Sexual practice that harms or threatens the physical, emotional or spiritual health and well-being of one or both partners violates the Scripture's elevated view of persons and its call to care for the body as God's handiwork and dwelling place (Gen. 2:25; Ps. 63:1; 139:13-16; 1 Cor. 3:16-17).

As God surveyed His creation, He observed, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make

a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Though the creation story establishes marriage as God's primary answer to aloneness (Gen. 2:24), in the broader sense aloneness is dispelled through connection with God and fellow human beings in mutually satisfying relationships (Rom. 14:7). All human beings were created for life in community, where persons whose differences would otherwise separate them are bound together as one in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22; 4:1-6). While some, by choice or circumstance, are single, they may experience wholeness as individuals, connect with others through family and friends, and bring glory to God as single men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7, 8). Sexual intimacy is reserved for a husband and wife whose relationship is protected by covenant promise (Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:6,7; 3:5; 8:3,4; 4:12; 8:8-10; Hos. 3:3).

As a result of sin, sexuality has been devalued and, in many cases, wrenched apart from intimacy, love and covenant relationship. Because sexuality is such a powerful vehicle for connectedness, and because it is such an intrinsic part of the wholistic nature of human beings, whenever it is damaged, debased, abused, misused, or counterfeited, the repercussions have an enormous impact on the persons and their relationships. Scripture cries out against such travesty. It calls Christians to flee from sexual immorality and, by God's grace, to stretch toward the full restoration of His original design for sexuality (Prov. 5:15-20; Hos. 2:2; 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 5:3-10; 21-33; Col. 3:1-19; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

While condemning as sin our selfish failures to reflect God-given norms for sexuality, Scripture demonstrates Jesus' readiness to

forgive those who repent of sexual sins. God's renewing power and love have enabled many to experience a transformation from sexual brokenness to healing, wholeness, and peace (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-28; 8:1-11).

This statement originated at the World Commission on Human Sexuality, October 1997. It was approved and voted by four departmental world advisories in March 2001; Departments of Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Women's Ministries and Chaplaincy Ministries.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.



STATEMENT ON ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION - CONSIDERATIONS

Developments in medical technology have led to a number of interventions designed to assist human procreation. Procedures such as artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, embryo transfer, and cloning increasingly provide new options in human reproduction. Such interventions raise serious ethical questions for Christians seeking God's will on these issues.

The hope of having children is generally powerful. When this hope is frustrated by problems of infertility, the disappointment of childlessness weighs heavily on many couples. Their sorrow deserves understanding and compassion. It is not surprising that many who suffer sadness because of infertility turn to new reproductive technologies to restore hope. However, with the power of such technologies comes the responsibility to decide whether and when they should be used.

Because of their conviction that God is concerned with all dimensions of human life, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to discovering and following God's principles for human reproduction. The power of procreation is God's gift, and should be used to glorify God and bless humanity. Through a careful study of the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the community of faith can identify fundamental principles that guide in decision making regarding assisted reproduction. Among the most important of these are:

1. Human reproduction is part of God's plan (Gen 1:28), and children

are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3; 113:9). Medical technologies that aid infertile couples, when practiced in harmony with biblical principles, may be accepted in good conscience.

2. Childlessness should bear no social or moral stigma, and no one should be pressured to have children with or without medical assistance (1 Cor 7:4, 7; Rom 14:4; Matt 19:10-12; 24:19; 1 Tim 5:8). Decisions to use or not use reproductive technologies are a deeply personal matter to be settled mutually by a wife and husband, without coercion. There are many acceptable reasons, including health and the special demands of some forms of Christian service (1 Cor 7:32, 33), that may lead people to refrain from or limit procreation.

3. God's ideal is for children to have the benefits of a stable family with active participation of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; Deut 6:4-7; 1 Tim 5:8). For this reason, Christians may seek medically assisted reproduction only within the bounds of the fidelity and permanence of marriage. The use of third parties, such as sperm donors, ovum donors, and surrogates, introduces a number of medical and moral problems that are best avoided. Moreover, family and genetic identity are significant to individual well-being. Decisions regarding assisted reproduction must take into consideration the impact on family heritage.

4. Human life should be treated with respect at all stages of development (Jer 1:5; Ps 139:13-16). Assisted reproduction calls for sensitivity to the value of human

life. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization require prior decisions about the number of ova to be fertilized and the moral issues regarding the disposition of any remaining preembryos.

5. Decisions regarding procreation should be based on complete and accurate information (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Couples considering assisted reproduction should seek such information. Health care professionals should disclose fully the nature of the procedures, emotional and physical risks, costs, and documented successes and limited probabilities.

6. The principles of Christian stewardship are relevant to decisions concerning assisted reproduction (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9). Some forms of technology are very costly. Couples seeking reproductive assistance should give responsible consideration to the expenses involved.

As Christians seek to apply these principles, they can be confident that the Holy Spirit will assist them in their decisions (John 16:13). The community of faith should seek to understand their aspirations and the issues that childless couples face (Eph 4:11-16). Among the alternatives that infertile couples may consider is adoption. As couples make careful decisions they should be able to rely on the compassionate understanding of the church family.

This recommendation was voted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee at Pine Springs Ranch, California, April 10-12, 1994.

This document was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), Silver Spring, Maryland, July 26, 1994.



STATEMENT ON CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from “him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7, NIV; cf Rev 11:17,18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons and the surrounding world. therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment. The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realising our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

¹Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

²The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture outlined in the statement "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life" on page 37.



STATEMENT ON CARE FOR THE DYING

For people whose lives are guided by the Bible, the reality of death is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Gen 2:17; Romans 5; Hebrews 9:27). There is a 'time to be born, and a time to die' (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Although eternal life is a gift that is granted to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ, faithful Christians await the second coming of Jesus for complete realisation of their immortality (John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Cor 15:51-54). While waiting for Jesus to come again, Christians may be called upon to care for the dying and to face personally their own death.

Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), patience (James 1:2-4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ (John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34-40).

This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34-36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Rev 21:4).

Developments in modern medicine have added to the complex-

ity of decisions about care for the dying. In times past, little could be done to extend human life. But the power of today's medicine to forestall death has generated difficult moral and ethical questions. What constraints does Christian faith place upon the use of such power? When should the goal of postponing the moment of death give way to the goal of alleviating pain at the end of life? Who may appropriately make these decisions? What limits, if any, should Christian love place on actions designed to end human suffering?

It has become common to discuss such questions under the heading of euthanasia. Much confusion exists with regard to this expression. The original and literal meaning of this term was "good death." Now the term is used in two significantly different ways. Often euthanasia refers to "mercy killing," or intentionally taking the life of a patient in order to avoid painful dying or in order to alleviate burdens for a patient's family or society. (This is so called active euthanasia). However, euthanasia is also used, inappropriately in the Seventh-day Adventist view, to refer to the withholding or withdrawal of medical interventions that artificially extend human life, thus allowing a person to die naturally. (This is so called passive euthanasia). Seventh-day Adventists believe that allowing a patient to die by foregoing medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to address the ethical issues at the end of life in ways that demonstrate their faith in God as the Creator and Redeemer of life and that reveal how God's grace has empowered them for acts of neighbour love. Seventh-day Adventists affirm God's creation of human life, a wonderful gift worthy of being protected and sustained (Genesis 1-2). They also affirm God's wonderful gift of redemption that provides eternal life for those who believe (John 3:15; 17:3). Thus they support the use of modern medicine to extend human life in this world. However, this power should be used in compassionate ways that reveal God's grace by minimizing suffering. Since we have God's promise of eternal life in the earth made new, Christians need not cling anxiously to the last vestiges of life on this earth. Nor is it necessary to accept or offer all possible medical treatments that merely prolong the process of dying.

Because of their commitment to care for the whole person, Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about the physical, emotional and spiritual care of the dying. To this end, they offer the following biblically based principles:

1. A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's personal and cultural circum-

stances (Ephesians 4:15).

2. God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.

3. God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Gen 2:18; Mark 10:6-9; Ex 20:12; Eph 5-6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

4. Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probably benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope

of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.

5. While Christian love may lead to the withholding or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Gen 9:5,6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.

6. Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:29-37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.

7. The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenceless and dependent (Psalm 82:3,4; Proverbs 24:11,12; Isaiah 1:1-18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1-9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the

fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1-5; James 5:13-16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14,15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.



STATEMENT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal,

generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.

5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
 - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
 - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
 - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
 - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
 - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on Tuesday, April 1, 1997, in Loma Linda, California.



STATEMENT ON CHOOSING A COUNSELLOR

In moments of crisis or distress, people often realise that a very positive option to dealing with their trauma or difficulties is to seek the help and guidance of a professional counsellor. A couple who feel 'stuck' in their relationship and doesn't know what to do to resolve their conflict and anger may decide that counselling offers real benefits and hope. But how do you go about choosing an appropriate Counsellor?

Deciding to begin Counselling may have very important consequences for the rest of your life. Individuals, couples and families are most likely to benefit from the experience of counselling if they enter into it with a clear understanding of what to expect.

Specific Qualifications

A professional counsellor may be either a clinical or counselling psychologist, a certified social worker, a marriage and family counsellor, a pastoral counsellor, a child psychologist or a psychiatrist. When you are referred to a Counsellor, it is proper to ask about the following:

- * Is the Counsellor's specific training, experience and credentials pertinent to dealing with your case?
- * What are the Counsellor's values in areas of special significance to you? (Is he/she a committed Christian, What are his/her views on Scripture, Prayer, Marriage, Divorce, Lifestyle etc).
- * What is the counsellor's particular treatment approach and do you feel comfortable with this approach Does he/she seek to facilitate change by improving your behaviour. (Behavioural), giving you new insights into your problems (Psychoanalytic/Cognitive) or helping you to get in touch with your feelings (Experiential), or is it a combination of all these approaches?

- * Does the Counsellor have an associated or a referral system for emergencies when he/she is out of town?
- * Is the Counsellor a current member of any professional organisation?

Most competent and qualified Counsellors are members of professional organisations that have strict guidelines and standards in ethical and professional behaviour. These guidelines are designed to protect the consumer and uphold the quality of service provided. Competent counsellors are also trained to respect your wishes and gladly make a further referral if they feel that they are unable to help you or that your problems are outside of the field of their professional expertise.

Counsellor Responsibilities

What are the Counsellor's responsibilities towards you and the Counselling process?

- * First, he/she will take time to establish a working relationship with you.
 - * Then he/she will take time to identify carefully the types and extent of your concerns.
 - * Next, the level of stress and your ability to cope with these concerns will be assessed.
 - * The counsellor will usually then discuss with you a Counselling plan including goals, methods, and the appropriate length of time required to achieve these goals.
 - * Periodically as you progress in this counselling process, joint assessment will be made to see if the desired goals are being achieved.
 - * Termination of the Counselling process will occur when you feel that you have received what you wanted to achieve.
- Other areas of responsibility to you as a 'client' are:
- * Competent Counsellors must not reveal

any information about a client to anyone. He/she will guarantee strict confidentiality in all circumstances except when it is clear that a person is in danger to themselves or to another person. The Counsellor will take steps to protect those individuals under such threat. He/she may also choose to report any knowledge of the abuse and neglect of a child or an incompetent or disabled person.

- * Erotic contact between a Counsellor and client is unethical and immoral and always unacceptable behaviour. To take advantage of a vulnerable person who comes for help is an act of aggression that should always be considered a serious offence.

It is not uncommon for some people to feel frustrated with their Counsellor. However, if an individual does have questions or concerns about what happens in the Counselling process, these should be raised first with your Counsellor. If you feel you are not being heard, you probably are not! If you are still feeling dissatisfied you always have the option of ending the Counselling contract and switching to another Counsellor of your choice. Competent Counsellors recognise their own limitations. They accept that they are human and are unable to be all things to all people.

Focus of Counselling

At times Counsellors may choose to 'treat' or work with an individual. Marriage and family Counsellors mostly prefer to work together with a couple or in some cases the whole family. Often the person who is identified as 'the problem' (the symptom bearer) may not be the person with the problem at all. In marriages and families symptoms such as depression, anger, fear and anxiety can be transmitted to other family members, who become the symptom bearers.

The Counselling Process

There is an old adage that says, 'Things get worse before they get better.' This applies to Counselling! What we repress or deny needs to be confronted. Like Jesus did with Nicodemus, a Counsellor may need to confront

a person's fears and game-playing, to get to the heart of an issue. Particularly difficult is the problem of forgiveness. We all tend to be so magnanimous that we forgive others and trust in God who has forgiven us, but our pride and perfectionism makes it difficult to forgive ourselves. A Christian Counsellor, who understands that healing often begins with forgiveness, may need to help us face our pride, which may hurt and be awfully scary, before healing can occur. It is still the truth that sets us free!

The Christian Counsellor is someone who is in the business of helping individuals to be restored in the image of God. This image is basically one of love. It is only in such restoration that the fearful find peace and the broken hearted find healing. As the Apostle John says, it is only through the development of perfect love that fear is cast out (1 John 4:18). A skilled and sensitive Counsellor, who is a Christian, can minister to the wounded of our world in gentle ways. He or she can help individuals, couples and families to find the way of escape to freedom, health and spiritual growth. The Christian Counsellor is like the quiet shepherd who finds and binds the lost sheep. Through the ministry of Counselling God's grace can become a reality as it brings with it the gift of healing, affirmation and hope.



STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

In harmony with the Fundamental Belief of Seventh-day Adventists in the divine ordination and nurture of family life it is affirmed that:

Marriage was instituted in Eden by a loving Creator for the purpose of meeting the needs of mankind for an enduring human relationship which would provide mutual respect, companionship, fidelity, sexual fulfilment and procreation (Gen 2:18-28; Ex 20:14; Matt 19:4-6). Therefore, Christian marriage is a divinely ordained life-long commitment between a man and woman in which love may mature, understanding grow, the marriage privileges be enjoyed, and the responsibilities borne (1 Cor 7:1-5).

The relationship which exists between Christ and the church becomes the Scriptural model for Christian couples. Husbands are to love and protect their wives and wives are to love and respect their husbands. While Christian marriage preserves the God-given right of each partner to develop his or her own individual talents it does so in the context of voluntary submission of husband and wife to one another. The church will be as solicitous to nurture this marital commitment as it is eager to sustain and depend each member's dedication to Christ (Eph 5:21-23; Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19).

Sexuality is an integral part of every human being. The expression of sexual relations, while not limited to procreation is to be confined to the marriage relationship. Aware of their wider accountability to a world facing

hunger and overpopulation the responsible Christian parents will carefully consider and limit the size of their family for which they can adequately care (1 Tim 5:8; Gen 1:28). Contraception is a legitimate means of limiting the size of a family and allows for the fulfilment of normal and God-given sexual needs.

Once conception occurs new life begins. Scripture does not declare the time when personhood begins but stresses that God is the lifegiver and protector of even the unborn child. Therefore, abortion has an alternative to contraception is untenable for the Christian. When an abortion has occurred the church will show compassion for those who may suffer (Ex 21:22; Ps 139:13-18; Jer 1:4-5; Luke 1:39-66).

Since God intended that man's sexual needs be met in the heterosexual, monogamous union of husband and wife any deviation from this ideal is a perversion of the divine plan. Therefore the church cannot accept the practice of sexual aberrations. Nevertheless the community of believers will provide compassionate help and guidance for those involved in such practices who desire to change to God's ideal (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10; 2:1).

According to the Bible, marriage is intended to be indissoluble as long as both partners live. Divorce, except for marital infidelity, is contrary to Scripture as a means of solving interpersonal problems. Healing through reconciliation is the better way (Matt 19:3-9).

Where irretrievable marital breakdown has occurred the church is to be a caring community of believers showing compassion and providing support to those involved in the tragedy (Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19). Just as marriage is God's means for meeting the needs of men and women so it is His plan that the home they establish should provide a warm, caring environment for the birth and development of children. The Christian family is the learning centre where behaviour and values are modelled and taught. Christian parents should assume responsibility for mothering and fathering in all aspects of family life recognizing the uniqueness of their role. Consequently they should provide leadership and loving discipline for their children in accord with the word of God (Ex 20:12; Deut 6:4-25).

It is the church's responsibility to provide assistance for parents and children in strengthening family unity and cohesion. This should include education and preparation for those contemplating a life-changing event such as marriage, parenting, bereavement, help in facilitating adjustment to retirement, and diminishing capacities in old age, as well as understanding and support for those in crisis and in need (Acts 5:11).

Strongly unified Christian families, dedicated to sharing the good news of Salvation, when joined together in a church, form a network of interdependent support systems, which are effective in extending the Kingdom of God.



STATEMENT ON DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

The Church, in all of its relationships, seeks to operate like an extended family, providing encouragement, nurture and support to every individual within the community of faith. As such, it is committed to not only building up and strengthening marriages and families, but to fostering the individual growth and spiritual development of each person.

In moments of crisis, the Church also seeks to be caring and responsive to the needs of its members. It does not abandon them nor does it stand aloof from their pain and hurts when things go wrong. The Church is especially sensitive to those distressed by interpersonal conflict, marital disharmony or those experiencing marital breakdown, separation or divorce.

The Church sees as its charter, the command of Christ to proclaim salvation and redemption in all of its utterances and relationships. It seeks to offer healing, hope and wholeness to people in every area of their lives. However, the Church must provide certain guarantees to those who are wounded and hurting. It must make it safe for them to risk being open with us so that they can begin a journey towards healing and redemption. There are three guarantees we must make to people if we want to share salvation with them:

1. That they will be loved - always, under every circumstance, with no exception.
2. That they will be totally accepted - without reservation.
3. That unreserved forgiveness can be theirs - no matter how

miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, this forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth.

A. Love

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death." 1 John 3:14. The New Testament word used here for love is "agape." "Agape" love is God's love. It exists in human relationships as a gift from God and is demonstrated in the act of a person unconditionally accepting another person. Its presence affects the emotions and the behaviour, motivating us to act in Christ-like ways towards others.

B. Acceptance

The separated or divorced constantly refer to the lack of acceptance that they feel in the church community. They tell us that they feel like second class citizens. This constitutes a real challenge for the Church. It must come to the place of accepting them the way Jesus accepts us. Unreserved acceptance of people needs to be a habit with us. There is no other way to get close enough to people to help them at the level of their deepest needs. It is only when we cultivate the habit of accepting people, that they will trust us to model the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Because we are accepted in the Beloved, we must be accepting of the beloved. Some people fear that such acceptance will breed license for marital break-

down. However, our acceptance of a brother will make him strong. It will never confuse him in questions of right and wrong if our teaching and personal lifestyle establish clear standards. For example, a person who uses profanity is not going to think you approve of such language just because you accept him personally. But if you communicate personal rejection to such a person, he will not remain in the church community long enough to be touched by God through the Church. Jesus accepts us though we have much in our lives that offends His holiness. His acceptance of us does not imply approval of our unworthy behaviour. His acceptance is our model in ministering to others.

C. Forgiveness

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32.

Forgiving another person is an act of grace. It means that you are willing to release another person from your own personal judgment. It may not mean that you agree with what they have said or done, it simply means you will not act as their judge. You will not pronounce a guilty verdict on them.

The divorced or remarried are not to be held in social punishment in order to teach them a lesson, but are to be warmly accepted in the mercy and grace of God. We cannot preach forgiveness for all the sins that may have caused the death of a marriage while failing to preach forgiveness for the death itself. Sins of hostile-

ity, resentment, silence, impatience, bitterness, and pride have kept growing and growing until they were impossible to handle, and the marriage died. While the Church at times has found it difficult to recognize and accept a legal divorce, it has many times passively sat by while an emotional divorce was in existence for many years.

When love, acceptance and forgiveness prevail, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world - a centre of love designed for the healing of broken people, a powerful force for God.

Ministers therefore, need to lead their churches toward a new sense of compassion, mercy, and redemption. They must help the Church to understand the tragedy of divorce and not to assume that there is some simplistic answer to every marital breakdown. If the Church can redeem these hurting people and open doors of hope to them, they will find new life and be an added resource to aid the Church in its mission of sharing the good news of salvation to the world.

In writing to G I Butler, President of the General Conference, on April 21, 1887, on the subject "Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who have Violated the Seventh Commandment," E G White said:

"I wish that we had much more the Spirit of Christ and a great deal less of self and less of human opinions. If we ere, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing." (Letter 16, 1887).

Most of the separated and divorced people in our churches feel the hurt, shame and rejection for what has happened to them. They do not need intemperate condemnations to bring home

to them a consciousness of guilt - they are often wrapped in it. To come to Christ with their hurt and guilt should lead to an experience of renewal. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted. We have been entrusted with His great commission to proclaim the good news that all may be forgiven and reconciled to their Father. We must cultivate within the Church the kind of caring and accepting community, in which people who have broken marriages can seek forgiveness from God, have their wounds bound, and receive assistance and encouragement in forging a new life.

The Church's Task

When it comes to dealing with marital breakdown, the Church must do more than talk about it, it must see that its primary task is to be the people of God in a caring, supportive community.

First of all, the Church must commit itself to being a community of truth, a community in which believers tell the truth about their own lives. The Church must be willing to hear the stories of pain, suffering, and failure in the lives of its members; and those who tell the stories must receive from the Church both lamentation and the healing balm of Christ. When the Church is open and honest about pain and suffering, it can then confront, in love, even the most difficult of human failures and crises - marital breakdown.

Second, the Church must commit itself to being a community of love, not quick to judge. Since divorce often brings with it stigma and feelings of guilt, those currently free of pain must welcome those who suffer, in the name of Christ; and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, they must place themselves at one another's disposal.

Third, the Church must com-

mit itself to being a community of joy, a community in which the new life in Christ is celebrated, a community that calls others to celebrate the new life in Christ. By living as a community of joy, but regularly celebrating God's goodness to us in Jesus Christ, the Church ministers to those who are saddened, joyfully acquainting them with the one who has known their sorrows.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Family Violence Defined

Family violence involves an assault of any kind (be it verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, active or passive neglect) that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family be they married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. According to current research family violence occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socio-economic levels, and in families from all types of religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

B. Common Examples of Family Violence

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways: It may be an attack on one's spouse which can take the form of either physical violence, emotional abuse, marital rape, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behaviour. It could be the mistreatment or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen by parent(s) or other guardians that results in injury or harm. It may include physical violence, verbal or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, and physical or educational neglect. It can manifest itself in the relationships of siblings to other siblings or of children to parents. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material and medical abuse or neglect.

C. Scripture and Family Relationships

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christ's

followers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. such relationships are characterised by love and acceptance, rather than tyrannical control or abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, Christians seek to affirm and build others up, rather than abuse or tear each other down. Disciples of Christ seek to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept both male and female as equals, and to acknowledge that every person irrespective of race or creed has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way is to violate personhood and to devalue the individual.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as 'the household of faith' and suggests that it should function as an extended family offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to everyone, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

He sees the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as the feelings of betrayal, rejection and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust and wholeness.

D. The Responsibility of the Church

Regrettably, family violence occurs to some degree in many homes. However, it can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of self and others.

It is our belief that the SDA church has a responsibility -

1. To care for those involved in

family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth
 - b. Highlighting to the community the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defence of its victims
 - c. Providing a ministry of reconciliation to families affected by violence and abuse including both the victims and the perpetrators
 - d. Guarding against ostracism within the family or church community
2. To strengthen family life by
 - a. Providing family life education
 - b. Seeking to understand the origins of family violence
 - c. Developing ways to prevent the recurring cycle of family violence

We believe that the church has a moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and in the community. Any indications or reports of abuse must be taken seriously. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following Scriptural passages: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 7:12; 20:25,26; John 13:34; Romans 12:10,13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:2,3; 6:4; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)



STATEMENT ON GENETIC INTERVENTIONS

Most of the new developments in genetics are the result of increased knowledge concerning the fundamental structure of genes, not only in humans but throughout all the realms of life on earth. Among these developments are genetic mapping, new means for genetic testing, new possibilities for genetic engineering, and a variety of eugenic strategies that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. In short, new genetic knowledge has produced unprecedented power. With that power has come the potential for immense good or harm. And with such great power also comes great responsibility. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, we are accountable for the use of this power not only to global humanity, but also to every realm of created life that God has entrusted to our stewardship. Ultimately we are accountable to the Maker of the universe who holds us responsible for the care of each other and of the earth.

When creation came forth from the Creator's hand it was "very good." (Gen 1:31). The genetic endowment which Adam and Eve received from their Creator was without defects. The genetic diseases from which humans now suffer are not the result of normal variation. They have developed through harmful mutation. In restoring the human genome to a healthier condition, modern sciences may attempt to recover more of creation's original condition. To the extent that helpful genetic interventions can be conducted in harmony with Christian principles, they are to be

welcomed as cooperation with the divine intention of alleviating the painful results of sin.

Any attempt to state comprehensive principles of ethics for genetic interventions must confront the complexities of a rapidly changing field of science. Since the discovery of the molecular structure of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), knowledge of genetics across an ever wider range of life forms has burgeoned.

Many of the increases in information and technological ability have been accompanied by significant ethical concerns. We can only begin to imagine future questions that will arise as genetic science progresses. The complexity of the issues and the pace of change make it likely that statements of relevant Christian principles will require expansion and modification as time passes.

One example of an area of rapid change is genetic mapping. An international, scientific effort known as the Human Genome Project is attempting to construct a detailed genetic chart, or "map," of all the human chromosomes. The goal is to provide a comprehensive description of the sequence of the millions of DNA base pairs which human chromosomes contain. Researchers plan to use this information to facilitate the identification and isolation of human genes, thereby providing a helpful aid in understanding human development and in treating human diseases. New details about the identity, role, and function of human genes are continually emerging.

Increased knowledge about

the identity of human genes has given rise to a variety of new possibilities for genetic testing. In the past, genetic information about an individual was largely inferred from the person's family history or clinical observations of the person's phenotype, or physical expressions of a person's genes. Today, a growing number of sophisticated genetic analyses make it possible to identify defective genes that cause genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, Huntington's Chorea, and some types of cancer. Many of these tests can now be performed prenatally. The potential exists for identifying hundreds of genetic characteristics, including a wide range of genetic disorders.

A further result of basic genetic knowledge is the capacity to alter genes intentionally, or genetic engineering. Through the use of enzymes which are able to excise specific segments of genes, it is possible to change the genetic makeup of cells by deliberately inserting, removing or changing specific genes. Genetic engineering presents astonishing new possibilities, including the transfer of genes across biological boundaries, such as from animals to plants. The potential for improving life forms seems endless. Genetically engineered plants, for example, can be made more productive, more resistant to diseases, or less susceptible to internal processes of decay.

Genetic engineering has directly benefited human medicine. It has made possible, for example, the production of human insulin and human growth factor, neither of which was previously

obtainable in sufficient quantities. Genetic engineering also makes it possible to treat diseases through genetic alteration. With this type of treatment, a patient whose cells have missing or defective genes receives needed genetic material. No one knows how many genetic diseases may eventually be treated in this way, but initial successes with diseases such as cystic fibrosis give hope that other genetic disorders may be treatable.

Increased genetic knowledge also produces new possibilities for eugenics, or endeavours to improve the gene pool of various species, including human beings. In broad terms, such attempts fall into two categories. Negative eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to prevent harmful genes from being inherited. Positive eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to promote the transmission of desirable genes. An example of negative eugenics, common in the past, is the sterilization of individuals considered to have defective genes capable of being inherited. An example of positive eugenics is artificial insemination by donors who have been selected for traits, such as high intelligence, that are deemed desirable.

Ethical Concerns

In order to provide focus, it is helpful to consider a sampling of current ethical concerns for which we seek to state Christian principles. These concerns can be placed in four basic categories: the sanctity of human life, the protection of human dignity, the acceptance of social responsibilities, and the safekeeping of God's creation.

Sanctity of human life. If genetic determinism reduces the meaning of humanhood to the mechanistic outworkings of molecular biology, there is

serious potential for devaluing human life. For example, new capacities for prenatal genetic testing, including the examination of human pre-embryos prior to implantation, generate questions about the value of human life when it is genetically defective. How serious must a genetic defect, prenatally diagnosed, be before it is an ethically legitimate reason for discarding a pre-embryo or for inducing an abortion? Some conditions, such as trisomy 18, are generally deemed incompatible with life. But the relative seriousness of most genetic defects is a matter of judgment.

Protection of human dignity.

The protection of personal privacy and confidentiality is one of the major concerns associated with the new possibilities for genetic testing. Knowledge about a person's genetic profile could be of significant value to potential employers, insurance companies, and to those related to the person. Whether genetic testing should be voluntary or mandatory, when and by whom the testing should be done, how much and with whom the resulting information should be shared are matters of significant ethical concern. Difficult decisions must be made about whether there are exceptions to the usual expectation of confidentiality and privacy when persons may suffer considerable harm because of a lack of information. At stake is the protection of persons from stigma and unfair discrimination on the basis of their genetic makeup.

Another cluster of concerns related to human dignity stems from the possibility of intentionally altering the human gene pool. Medical interventions for genetic diseases may be aimed either at the treatment of bodily cells that are genetically defective or at the alteration of reproductive cells.

Changes in human reproductive cells could become a permanent part of the human gene pool. Interventions may also extend beyond the treatment of disease and include attempts to enhance what have formerly been considered normal human characteristics. What are the implications for the meaning of being human, for example, if interventions aimed at enhancing human intelligence or physique become available?

Acceptance of social responsibilities. The power that results from new genetic knowledge also raises concerns about the ethics of social policies and the boundaries between individual liberties and social responsibilities. For example, should society develop policies designed to encourage either positive or negative eugenics? Should individuals with serious genetic disorders be given full procreative liberty? Another area of social concern has to do with the use of society's resources. Questions can be raised about the amount of social resources that should be spent for interventions in human genetics when more basic health care is not fully available. Other questions arise concerning the distribution of the benefits and burdens of genetic interventions and how they will be shared by rich and poor within society.

Stewardship of God's creation. As the powers of genetic engineering are further developed, many changes could be made in various species that inhabit the earth. These changes have the potential for being both permanent and, to some degree, unpredictable. What limits to genetic change, if any, should be accepted? Are there boundaries that should not be crossed in transferring genes from one life form to another? We may hope that genetic changes are intended to enhance life on our planet.

But there are reasons for concern. For example, consideration has already been given to genetic alterations for the purpose of developing new biological weapons. The exploitation of other life forms for purposes of military security or economic gain should call for careful, moral scrutiny.

It is with ethical concerns like these in mind that we state the following Christian principles for genetic interventions.

Principles

Confidentiality Christian love requires that trust be maintained in human relationships. The protection of confidentiality is essential to such trust. In order to safeguard personal privacy and protect against unfair discrimination, information about a person's genetic constitution should be kept confidential unless the person elects to share the knowledge with others. In cases where others may suffer serious and avoidable harm without genetic information about another person, there is a moral obligation to share the needed information (Matt 7:12; Phil 2:4).

Truthfulness The Christian obligation to be truthful requires that the results of genetic testing be honestly reported to the person tested or to responsible family members if the person is incapable of understanding the information (Eph 4:25).

Honoring God's image In all of God's creation, only human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). The Christian acknowledgment of God's wisdom and power in creation should lead to caution in attempts to alter permanently the human gene pool (Gen 1:31). Given current knowledge, genetic interventions in humans should be limited to treatment of individuals with genetic disorders (somatic cell therapies) and

should not include attempts to change human reproductive cells (germ cell alterations) that could affect the image of God in future generations. All interventions in human beings for genetic reasons should be taken with great moral caution and with appropriate protection of human life at all stages of its development.

Prevention of suffering It is a Christian responsibility to prevent or relieve suffering whenever possible (Acts 10:38, Luke 9:2). For this reason the primary purpose of human genetic intervention should be the treatment or prevention of disease and the alleviation of pain and suffering. Because of the tendencies of sinful human nature, the possibility of abuse, and unknown biological risks, attempts to modify physical or mental characteristics with genetic interventions for healthy persons who are free of genetic disorders should be approached with great caution.

Freedom of choice God values human freedom and rejects the way of coercion. People who are capable of making their own decisions should be free to decide whether or not to be tested genetically. They should also be free to decide how to act on information that results from testing, except when others may suffer serious and avoidable harm. It may be the morally responsible choice to avoid known risks of serious congenital defects by forgoing procreation. While such decisions about procreation and genetic testing are deeply personal, they should be made by the individual with due consideration for the common good.

Stewardship of creation Safeguarding God's creation includes esteem for the diversity and ecological balance of the natural world with its countless species of living creatures (Gen

1). Genetic interventions with plants and animals should show respect for the rich variety of life forms. Exploitations and manipulations that would destroy natural balance or degrade God's created world should be prohibited.

Nonviolence Using genetic manipulation to develop means of warfare is a direct affront to Christian values of peace and life. It is morally unacceptable to abuse God's creation by changing life forms into weapons of destruction (Rev 11:18).

Fairness God loves all human beings, regardless of their perceived social status (Acts 10:34). The benefits of genetic research should be accessible to people in need without unfair discrimination.

Human dignity Created in God's image, human beings are more than the sum of their genes (Gen 1:27; Acts 17:28). Human dignity should not be reduced to genetic mechanisms. People should be treated with dignity and respect for their individual qualities, and not be stereotyped on the basis of their genetic heritage.

Healthfulness Christians have a responsibility to maintain the health of their bodies, including their genetic health (1 Cor 10:31). This means that Christians should avoid that which is likely to be genetically destructive to themselves or to their children, such as drug abuse and excessive radiation.

Glossary

Base pairs. Pairs of complementary bases forming the DNA structure; the units used to measure the length of DNA. Base pairs consist of adenine (A), which must always pair with thymine (T), and guanine (G), which must always pair with cytosine (C).

Chromosome. The condensed rod made up of a linear thread of DNA interwoven with protein that is the gene-bearing structure of living cells. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The double helix molecule that encodes genetic information and is the primary hereditary molecule in most species.

Enzyme. A protein that facilitates a specific chemical reaction without changing its direction or nature.

Eugenics. Strategies for attempting to improve the gene pool of a species either by halting the transmission of unwanted characteristics or increasing the transmission of desired characteristics.

Gene. The basic unity of heredity; a section of DNA that contains information for the production of specific protein molecules.

Gene mapping. The process of ascertaining the genetic sequence of a species.

Gene therapy. The medical replacement or repair of defective genes in living cells.

Genetic engineering. The process of altering the genetic makeup of cells or individual organisms by deliberately inserting, removing, or changing specific genes.

Genetic testing. The examination of individuals' genetic makeup for the purpose of identifying possible hereditary traits, including

defects or abnormalities.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell.

Genome. All of the genetic material in the chromosomes of a particular organism or individual.

Genotype. An individual's genetic makeup.

Human Genome Project. The international, scientific effort to construct a detailed map of human genes, identifying their structure and function.

Implantation. The attachment of an embryo to the wall of the uterus.

Mutation. A permanent alteration of DNA that can be inherited.

Negative eugenics. Strategies for preventing the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed undesirable.

Phenotype. The observable characteristics resulting from a particular genotype as influenced by environmental factors.

Positive eugenics. Strategies for promoting the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed desirable.

Pre-embryo. A fertilized ovum (or conceptus) prior to implantation and the beginning of pregnancy.

Recombinant DNA. A novel sequence of DNA that is artificially produced by joining segments of DNA.

Somatic cell. Any cell of a body other than reproductive cells.

This document was adopted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee in March 1995 and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), June 13, 1995.



STATEMENT ON HOME & FAMILY

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." —The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.



STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one" (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.



STATEMENT ON ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING HUMAN CLONING

For a number of decades, the prospect that new members of the human family might be produced by cloning was considered farfetched. Recent advances in genetic and reproductive biology, however, indicate that techniques for cloning humans may soon be developed. With this prospect comes the Christian responsibility to address profound ethical issues associated with human cloning. As Christians, with firm belief in God's creative and redemptive power, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to enunciate ethical principles that emerge from their faith commitments.

Cloning includes all those processes by which living plants or animals are replicated by asexual means—methods that do not involve the fusion of egg and sperm. Many natural processes are forms of cloning. For example, microorganisms, like common yeast, reproduce by splitting into two daughter cells that are clones of the parent cell and each other. Cutting a twig from a rose bush or grapevine and propagating it into a complete plant also creates a clone of the original plant. Similarly, many simple animals, such as starfish, can regenerate complete organisms from small parts of a predecessor. Thus the biological principle of cloning is not new.

The new technique is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions,

an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At present, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

Biologists have developed this technique as a tool for animal husbandry. By this means, they hope to create a herd of valued animals that are genetically identical to a selected individual. The potential benefits from this technology, including the expectation of products for treating human diseases, are of great interest to researchers and to the biotechnology industry. However, the same technological capacity could be used for human reproduction and thus raises serious ethical concerns.

First among these concerns is medical safety. If the current technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer were to be used in humans, ova would need to be obtained from donors. Most of these would perish because of cellular manipulations during early embryonic growth in the laboratory. Others would be lost after implantation, spontane-

ously aborted at various stages of fetal development. In this respect, sensitivity to the value of embryonic and fetal life would be similar to the development of other methods of assisted reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization. There would likely be an increased risk of birth defects in children brought to term. At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology.

However, even if the success rates of cloning were to improve and the medical risks were diminished, a number of major concerns would remain. For example, is there anything intrinsically problematic with creating an individual who is not produced through fertilization of an egg by a sperm? Further study is needed to resolve questions regarding the essential nature of procreation in God's design.

Another of the most often expressed concerns is that the dignity and uniqueness of a cloned person may be jeopardized. This risk includes the psychological harm that might be experienced by an individual who would be what some have called the "delayed identical twin" of the individual who provided the initial cell. Do existing persons have the right to exercise such a level of control over the genetic destiny of a new individual?

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual

relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce problems of relationships and responsibilities.

An additional major risk is that cloning could lead to expedient uses of those who are cloned, with their value assigned primarily on the basis of their utility. For example, there could be a temptation to clone individuals to serve as sources of transplantable organs. Others have worried about the deliberate creation of subservient individuals whose autonomy would be violated. Egotistical or narcissistic individuals might be inclined to use the technology in order to “duplicate” themselves.

Finally, the financial costs of cloning would likely be considerable even after significant technological improvements. If human cloning were commercialized, conflicting interests might add to the risk of abuse.

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs*. The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

The following ethical principles are intended to apply to somatic cell nuclear transfer if that technology is ever applied to human beings. The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic

review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. Protection of vulnerable human life. Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.

2. Protection of human dignity. Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.

3. Alleviating human suffering. It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.

4. Family support. God’s ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and

support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.

5. Stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely to be very costly. Married couples seeking such assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.

6. Truthfulness. Honest communication is one of Scripture’s mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.

7. Understanding God’s creation. God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

Given our present state of knowledge and the current refinement of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technique for human cloning is deemed unacceptable by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given our responsibility to alleviate disease and to enhance the quality of human life, continued appropriate research with animals is deemed acceptable.

Glossary

Allele. One of the alternative forms of a particular gene. Each gene of an organism can exist in slightly different forms. Those small differences are responsible for some of the variations that we observe in different individuals within natural populations. Different alleles for genes that produce the blood protein hemoglobin, for example, will affect how well the blood cells will carry oxygen.

Clones. Two or more individuals with identical genetic material. Human clones occur naturally in the form of "identical twins." Though twins begin life with the same genetic material they, nevertheless, develop distinct physical differences (fingerprints, for example). Furthermore, they become fully unique individuals with distinct personalities as a result of their different experiences and independent choices. An individual conceived by somatic cell nuclear transfer would be at least as different from his or her progenitor as natural twins.

Cytoplasm. All the contents of a cell, other than the nucleus. The cytoplasm is the site where many important processes occur, including the assembly of proteins and enzymes, and the manufacture of cell products. The cytoplasm also contains the mitochondria, small bodies that are responsible for the breakdown of food to produce the energy needed for the activities of the cell.

Embryo. The early stages of development of a fertilized egg. In somatic cell nuclear transfer, it refers to the early developmental stages of an enucleated egg after it has been fused with a somatic cell.

Enucleated egg. An egg cell from which the nucleus has been removed. This is usually

accomplished by penetrating the cell with a fine glass needle and withdrawing the nucleus while observing the process under a microscope.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell. In mammals and humans, the germ cells are the sperm and eggs (ova).

Gestation. The period of time it takes an embryo to develop in the uterus from a fertilized egg to a newborn offspring. Gestation begins with implantation of the embryo in the uterus and ends with birth.

Nucleus. The structure within a cell that contains the genetic material or genes. The nucleus is surrounded by a membrane that separates it from the remainder of the cell.

Ovum (plural: ova). An egg cell. A female productive cell.

Somatic cell. Any cell from the body of a mammal or human, other than the germ cells.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer. The technical name for the method used to produce the first animal clone, a sheep called "Dolly." Though the name suggests that a nucleus from a somatic cell was used, in fact, the complete somatic cell was fused with an enucleated egg.

Sperm. A male reproductive cell.

*There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child

with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.

PASTORAL STATEMENTS ON FAMILY



Taken from the General Conference Web site
www.familyministries.gc.adventist.org/statements



CONTENTS

Abortion
Abuse and Family Violence
Affirmation of Family
Affirmation of God's Gift of Sexuality
Aids
An Affirmation of Marriage
Assisted Human Reproduction
Caring for God's Creation
Caring for the Dying
Child Sexual Abuse
Choosing a Counsellor
Divorced & Separated
Family Violence
Fundamental Belief on Marriage & Family
Genetic Interventions
Home & Family
Homosexuality
Human Cloning
Pornography
Principles for a Christian View of Human Life
Sexual Behaviour
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
Temperance



STATEMENT ON GUIDELINES ON ABORTION

Many contemporary societies have faced conflict over the morality of abortion.* Such conflict also has affected large numbers within Christianity who want to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women. The need for guidelines has become evident, as the Church attempts to follow scripture, and to provide moral guidance while respecting individual conscience. Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles that are presented for study at the end of the document.**

1. Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.

2. Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.

3. In practical, tangible ways the Church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These

ways should include:

- a. Strengthening family relationships
 - b. Educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality
 - c. Emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning
 - d. Calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles
 - e. Creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion
 - f. Offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies
 - g. Encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children. The Church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.
4. The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family

relationships.

5. Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.

6. Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

7. Church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of scripture.

*Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

**The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture as shown in the "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life".

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These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992



STATEMENT ON ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity and worth of each human being and decry all forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and family violence.

We recognize the global extent of this problem and the serious, long-term effects upon the lives of all involved. We believe that Christians must respond to abuse and family violence both within the church and in the community. We take seriously reports of abuse and violence and have highlighted these issues for discussion at this international assembly. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

We accept our responsibility to cooperate with other professional services, to listen and care for those suffering from abuse and family violence, to highlight the injustices, and to speak out in defense of victims. We will help persons in need to identify and access the range of available professional services.

When changed attitudes and behavior open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, we will provide a ministry of reconciliation. We will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. We will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence and developing better ways of preventing the recurring cycle.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.



STATEMENT ON AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY

The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred. of any human relationship on earth. God instituted the family as the primary provider of the warm and caring relationships for which the human heart yearns.

In the family circle, deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, and intimacy are met in significant ways. God blesses the family and intends that its members will help each other in reaching complete maturity and wholeness. In the Christian family, the personal worth and dignity of each member is affirmed and safeguarded in an environment of respect, equality, openness, and love. In this intimate circle the individual's earliest and most lasting attitudes toward relationships are developed and values are conveyed from one generation to another.

God also intends that a revelation of Himself and His ways be gained from the family relationship. Marriage, with mutual love, honor, intimacy, and lifelong commitment as its fabric, mirrors the love, sanctity, closeness and permanence of the bond between Christ and His church. The training and correcting of children by their parents and the loving response of offspring to the affection shown them reflects the experience of believers as children of God. By God's grace the family may be a powerful agency in leading its members to Christ.

Sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family. Furthermore, the increasing complexity of society and the enormous stresses which fall upon relationships, lead to crises within many families today. The results are evidenced in lives and relationships that are broken, dysfunctional, and characterized by mistrust, conflict, hostility and estrangement. Many family members, including parents and grandparents, but especially wives and children, suffer from family violence. Abuse, both emotional and physical, has reached epidemic proportions. The rising number of divorces signals a high degree of marital discord and unhappiness.

Families need to experience renewal and reformation in their relationships. This will help change the destructive attitudes and practices prevalent in many homes today. Through the power of the gospel, family members are enabled to acknowledge their individual sinfulness, to accept each other's brokenness, and to receive Christ's redemptive healing in their lives and relationships. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, and restoration from damaging experiences may not be fully accomplished, where the love of Christ reigns, His Spirit will promote unity and harmony making such homes channels of life-giving joy and power in the church and community.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S GIFT OF SEXUALITY

Human beings are created in the image of a relational God and designed to enjoy an intimate relationship with their Creator and one another (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 22:37-39; John 17:3; 1 John 4:11, 12). From the beginning, God fashioned humankind in two genders, male and female (Gen. 1:27). Magnificent expressions of His creative genius, the man and woman evoked His deepest satisfaction and passionate acclaim. Both were sexual creatures by their very nature, and God intended that they would rejoice in their maleness or femaleness. His creative work was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)! There was nothing incomplete or shameful about what He had made. Maleness and femaleness afford a primary basis for human beings to define their personhood and their relationships with God and each other (Ps. 8:3-6; 100:3; Is. 43:1, 3, 4; Jer. 1:5; 1 John 4:7, 8).

God created male and female to complement one another (Gen. 2:18, 20-22). In Eden, they shared equally God's image and blessing. Together they were given responsibility for dominion over and care for the earth, and for procreation (Gen. 1:26-28). They were created with an intrinsic longing and desire for one another, physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Gen. 2:23-25; Prov. 5:18, 19; Song of Sol. 2:16, 17; 4:9). With the creation of the sexes, each came to understand self and other (Gen. 2:23). In the moment they met for the first time, the yearning of Adam's heart and soul for partnership and intimate communion burst forth into joyous acclamation: "This is now bone of

my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Immediately they recognized each other as companions, counterparts, persons capable of meeting one another's needs. Each saw the other as one corresponding to their being, one equal but different, someone to love who would love in return (Gen. 2:18, 20b-23).

The Bible presents a wholistic view of human beings with no dichotomy between body and spirit (Gen. 2:27; Ps. 63:1; 84:1, 2, 1 Thess. 5:23). In both the Old and New Testaments, sexuality is clearly regarded as a valuable gift from God, to be received with gratitude and freely enjoyed within the marriage relationship (Gen. 1:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:16; 4:16-5:1; 1 Cor. 7:1-5). Sexual expression within marriage is portrayed as wholesome and honorable (Ps. 139:13-16; Song of Sol. 4:10-16; 7:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Scripture's positive attitude towards human sexuality is further confirmed by the use of the imagery of marital intimacy to describe God's relationship with His people (Is. 54:5; 62:4,5; Jer. 3:14; Ez. 16:8; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:6-9).

In marriage, God intended that one man and one woman would be joined together for life by covenant promise (Gen. 2:24,25; Song of Sol. 2:16; Mal. 2:13, 14; Matt. 19:4-6). This marriage relationship is described as one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5) and presumes a sexual union (1 Cor. 7:1-6). The Scripture affirms sexual pleasure between husband and wife for its unitive purposes, apart from procreation. God intends for the sexual relationship to bond hus-

band and wife together as they bring to one another companionship, emotional support, spiritual fulfillment, joy and sexual pleasure (Gen. 2:24, 25; Prov. 5:15-19; Eccl. 9:9; Song of Sol. 4:16-5:1; Eph. 5:21-33). A loving marriage and sexual union was also God's chosen setting for procreation (Gen. 1:28; 4:1). Such a relationship provides the most secure environment for the care and nurture of children (Eph. 6:4).

Sexual intimacy finds its deepest meaning in husband-wife relationships characterized by love, closeness, mutuality and commitment. In God's design, the sexual relationship is one of respect, mutual desire and consent and loving fulfillment of one another's needs (Prov. 5:15-23; Song of Sol. 2:16-17; 4:16-5:1; 7:8-10; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:3-5). In the context of their commitment to Christ and one another, couples make decision together about their sexual experience. The biblical principles of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) and thoughtful care for one another's needs and desires (Phil. 2:4) help couples to reach decisions which are satisfying to both husband and wife. Sexual practice that harms or threatens the physical, emotional or spiritual health and well-being of one or both partners violates the Scripture's elevated view of persons and its call to care for the body as God's handiwork and dwelling place (Gen. 2:25; Ps. 63:1; 139:13-16; 1 Cor 3:16-17).

As God surveyed His creation, He observed, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Though the creation story estab-

lishes marriage as God's primary answer to aloneness (Gen. 2:24), in the broader sense aloneness is dispelled through connection with God and fellow human beings in mutually satisfying relationships (Rom. 14:7). All human beings were created for life in community, where persons whose differences would otherwise separate them are bound together as one in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-22; 4:1-6). While some, by choice or circumstance, are single, they may experience wholeness as individuals, connect with others through family and friends, and bring glory to God as single men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:7, 8). Sexual intimacy is reserved for a husband and wife whose relationship is protected by covenant promise (Prov. 5:15-19; Song of Sol. 2:6,7; 3:5; 8:3,4; 4:12; 8:8-10; Hos. 3:3).

As a result of sin, sexuality has been devalued and, in many cases, wrenched apart from intimacy, love and covenant relationship. Because sexuality is such a powerful vehicle for connectedness, and because it is such an intrinsic part of the wholistic nature of human beings, whenever it is damaged, debased, abused, misused, or counterfeited, the repercussions have an enormous impact on the persons and their relationships. Scripture cries out against such travesty. It calls Christians to flee from sexual immorality and, by God's grace, to stretch toward the full restoration of His original design for sexuality (Prov. 5:15-20; Hos. 2:2; 6:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 5:3-10; 21-33; Col. 3:1-19; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

While condemning as sin our selfish failures to reflect God-given norms for sexuality, Scripture demonstrates Jesus' readiness to forgive those who repent of sexual sins. God's renewing power and love have enabled many to experi-

ence a transformation from sexual brokenness to healing, wholeness, and peace (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:4-28; 8:1-11).

This statement originated at the World Commission on Human Sexuality, October 1997. It was approved and voted by four departmental world advisories in March 2001; Departments of Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Women's Ministries and Chaplaincy Ministries.



STATEMENT ON AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and associated conditions are spreading rapidly around the world. On the basis of statistical studies it is estimated that in the near future, in many countries of the world, every church congregation numbering 100 or more will include at least one member who has a friend or relative with AIDS.

AIDS is transmitted through two major sources: sexual intimacy with an infected person, and introduction of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) contaminated blood into the body either through injections with unsterile needles and syringes or through contaminated blood products. AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and maintaining a faithful monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage, and by avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections and assuring the safety of blood products.

Adventists are committed to education for prevention of AIDS. For many years Adventists have fought against the circulation, sale, and use of drugs, and continue to do so. Adventist support sex education that includes the concept that human sexuality is God's gift to humanity. Biblical sexuality clearly limits sexual relationships to one's spouse and excludes promiscuous and all other sexual relationships and the consequent increased exposure to HIV.

The Christlike response to AIDS must be personal—compassionate, helpful, and redemptive. Just as Jesus cared about those with leprosy, the feared communicable disease of His day, His followers today will care for those with AIDS. James advised, "What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'—if you don't give them the necessities of life?" (James 2:16, TEV).

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON AN AFFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as “one flesh.”

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage images in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God’s self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honored as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.



STATEMENT ON ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION - CONSIDERATIONS

Developments in medical technology have led to a number of interventions designed to assist human procreation. Procedures such as artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, embryo transfer, and cloning increasingly provide new options in human reproduction. Such interventions raise serious ethical questions for Christians seeking God's will on these issues.

The hope of having children is generally powerful. When this hope is frustrated by problems of infertility, the disappointment of childlessness weighs heavily on many couples. Their sorrow deserves understanding and compassion. It is not surprising that many who suffer sadness because of infertility turn to new reproductive technologies to restore hope. However, with the power of such technologies comes the responsibility to decide whether and when they should be used.

Because of their conviction that God is concerned with all dimensions of human life, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to discovering and following God's principles for human reproduction. The power of procreation is God's gift, and should be used to glorify God and bless humanity. Through a careful study of the Bible and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the community of faith can identify fundamental principles that guide in decision making regarding assisted reproduction. Among the most important of these are:

1. Human reproduction is part of God's plan (Gen 1:28), and children

are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3; 113:9). Medical technologies that aid infertile couples, when practiced in harmony with biblical principles, may be accepted in good conscience.

2. Childlessness should bear no social or moral stigma, and no one should be pressured to have children with or without medical assistance (1 Cor 7:4, 7; Rom 14:4; Matt 19:10-12; 24:19; 1 Tim 5:8). Decisions to use or not use reproductive technologies are a deeply personal matter to be settled mutually by a wife and husband, without coercion. There are many acceptable reasons, including health and the special demands of some forms of Christian service (1 Cor 7:32, 33), that may lead people to refrain from or limit procreation.

3. God's ideal is for children to have the benefits of a stable family with active participation of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; Deut 6:4-7; 1 Tim 5:8). For this reason, Christians may seek medically assisted reproduction only within the bounds of the fidelity and permanence of marriage. The use of third parties, such as sperm donors, ovum donors, and surrogates, introduces a number of medical and moral problems that are best avoided. Moreover, family and genetic identity are significant to individual well-being. Decisions regarding assisted reproduction must take into consideration the impact on family heritage.

4. Human life should be treated with respect at all stages of development (Jer 1:5; Ps 139:13-16). Assisted reproduction calls for sensitivity to the value of human

life. Procedures such as in vitro fertilization require prior decisions about the number of ova to be fertilized and the moral issues regarding the disposition of any remaining preembryos.

5. Decisions regarding procreation should be based on complete and accurate information (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Couples considering assisted reproduction should seek such information. Health care professionals should disclose fully the nature of the procedures, emotional and physical risks, costs, and documented successes and limited probabilities.

6. The principles of Christian stewardship are relevant to decisions concerning assisted reproduction (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9). Some forms of technology are very costly. Couples seeking reproductive assistance should give responsible consideration to the expenses involved.

As Christians seek to apply these principles, they can be confident that the Holy Spirit will assist them in their decisions (John 16:13). The community of faith should seek to understand their aspirations and the issues that childless couples face (Eph 4:11-16). Among the alternatives that infertile couples may consider is adoption. As couples make careful decisions they should be able to rely on the compassionate understanding of the church family.

This recommendation was voted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee at Pine Springs Ranch, California, April 10-12, 1994.

This document was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), Silver Spring, Maryland, July 26, 1994.



STATEMENT ON CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from “him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:7, NIV; cf Rev 11:17,18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons and the surrounding world. therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment. The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realising our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

¹Abortion, as understood in these guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy. The focus of the document is on abortion.

²The fundamental perspective of these guidelines is taken from a broad study of scripture outlined in the statement "Principles for a Christian View of Human Life" on page 37.



STATEMENT ON CARE FOR THE DYING

For people whose lives are guided by the Bible, the reality of death is acknowledged as part of the current human condition, affected by sin (Gen 2:17; Romans 5; Hebrews 9:27). There is a 'time to be born, and a time to die' (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Although eternal life is a gift that is granted to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ, faithful Christians await the second coming of Jesus for complete realisation of their immortality (John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Cor 15:51-54). While waiting for Jesus to come again, Christians may be called upon to care for the dying and to face personally their own death. Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), patience (James 1:2-4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ (John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34-40).

This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34-36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Rev 21:4).

Developments in modern medicine have added to the complexity of decisions about care for the

dying. In times past, little could be done to extend human life. But the power of today's medicine to forestall death has generated difficult moral and ethical questions. What constraints does Christian faith place upon the use of such power? When should the goal of postponing the moment of death give way to the goal of alleviating pain at the end of life? Who may appropriately make these decisions? What limits, if any, should Christian love place on actions designed to end human suffering?

It has become common to discuss such questions under the heading of euthanasia. Much confusion exists with regard to this expression. The original and literal meaning of this term was "good death." Now the term is used in two significantly different ways. Often euthanasia refers to "mercy killing," or intentionally taking the life of a patient in order to avoid painful dying or in order to alleviate burdens for a patient's family or society. (This is so called active euthanasia). However, euthanasia is also used, inappropriately in the Seventh-day Adventist view, to refer to the withholding or withdrawal of medical interventions that artificially extend human life, thus allowing a person to die naturally. (This is so called passive euthanasia). Seventh-day Adventists believe that allowing a patient to die by foregoing medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to address the ethical issues at the end of life in ways that demon-

strate their faith in God as the Creator and Redeemer of life and that reveal how God's grace has empowered them for acts of neighbour love. Seventh-day Adventists affirm God's creation of human life, a wonderful gift worthy of being protected and sustained (Genesis 1-2). They also affirm God's wonderful gift of redemption that provides eternal life for those who believe (John 3:15; 17:3). Thus they support the use of modern medicine to extend human life in this world. However, this power should be used in compassionate ways that reveal God's grace by minimizing suffering. Since we have God's promise of eternal life in the earth made new, Christians need not cling anxiously to the last vestiges of life on this earth. Nor is it necessary to accept or offer all possible medical treatments that merely prolong the process of dying.

Because of their commitment to care for the whole person, Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about the physical, emotional and spiritual care of the dying. To this end, they offer the following biblically based principles:

1. A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's personal and cultural circumstances (Ephesians 4:15).
2. God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.

3. God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Gen 2:18; Mark 10:6-9; Ex 20:12; Eph 5-6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

4. Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Cor 13; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probably benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped

if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.

5. While Christian love may lead to the withholding or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Gen 9:5,6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.

6. Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:29-37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.

7. The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenceless and dependent (Psalm 82:3,4; Proverbs 24:11,12; Isaiah 1:1-18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1-9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1-5; James 5:13-16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They

are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14,15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.



STATEMENT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse occurs when a person older or stronger than the child uses his or her power, authority, or position of trust to involve a child in sexual behavior or activity. Incest, a specific form of child sexual abuse, is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a parent, a sibling, an extended family member, or a step/surrogate parent.

Sexual abusers may be men or women and may be of any age, nationality, or socio-economic background. They are often men who are married with children, have respectable jobs, and may be regular churchgoers. It is common for offenders to strongly deny their abusive behavior, to refuse to see their actions as a problem, and to rationalize their behavior or place blame on something or someone else. While it is true that many abusers exhibit deeply rooted insecurities and low self-esteem, these problems should never be accepted as an excuse for sexually abusing a child. Most authorities agree that the real issue in child sexual abuse is more related to a desire for power and control than for sex.

When God created the human family, He began with a marriage between a man and a woman based on mutual love and trust. This relationship is still designed to provide the foundation for a stable, happy family in which the dignity, worth, and integrity of each family member is protected and upheld. Every child, whether male or female, is to be affirmed as a gift from God. Parents are given the privilege and responsibility of providing nurture, protection, and physical care for the children entrusted to them by God. Children should be able to honor, respect, and trust their parents and other family members without the risk of abuse.

The Bible condemns child sexual abuse in the strongest possible terms. It sees any attempt to confuse, blur, or denigrate personal,

generational, or gender boundaries through sexually abusive behavior as an act of betrayal and a gross violation of personhood. It openly condemns abuses of power, authority, and responsibility because these strike at the very heart of the victims' deepest feelings about themselves, others, and God, and shatter their capacity to love and trust. Jesus used strong language to condemn the actions of anyone who, through word or deed, causes a child to stumble.

The Adventist Christian community is not immune from child sexual abuse. We believe that the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist faith require us to be actively involved in its prevention. We are also committed to spiritually assisting abused and abusive individuals and their families in their healing and recovery process, and to holding church professionals and church lay leaders accountable for maintaining their personal behavior as is appropriate for persons in positions of spiritual leadership and trust.

As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.

5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
 - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children,
 - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
 - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
 - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
 - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.
9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Lev 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Matt 18:6-9; 1 Cor 5:1-5; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 5:5-8

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on Tuesday, April 1, 1997, in Loma Linda, California.



STATEMENT ON CHOOSING A COUNSELLOR

In moments of crisis or distress, people often realise that a very positive option to dealing with their trauma or difficulties is to seek the help and guidance of a professional counsellor. A couple who feel 'stuck' in their relationship and doesn't know what to do to resolve their conflict and anger may decide that counselling offers real benefits and hope. But how do you go about choosing an appropriate Counsellor?

Deciding to begin Counselling may have very important consequences for the rest of your life. Individuals, couples and families are most likely to benefit from the experience of counselling if they enter into it with a clear understanding of what to expect.

Specific Qualifications

A professional counsellor may be either a clinical or counselling psychologist, a certified social worker, a marriage and family counsellor, a pastoral counsellor, a child psychologist or a psychiatrist. When you are referred to a Counsellor, it is proper to ask about the following:

- * Is the Counsellor's specific training, experience and credentials pertinent to dealing with your case?
- * What are the Counsellor's values in areas of special significance to you? (Is he/she a committed Christian, What are his/her views on Scripture, Prayer, Marriage, Divorce, Lifestyle etc).
- * What is the counsellor's particular treatment approach and do you feel comfortable with this approach Does he/she seek to facilitate change by improving your behaviour. (Behavioural), giving you new insights into your problems (Psychoanalytic/Cognitive) or helping you to get in touch with your feelings (Experiential), or is it a combination of all these approaches?
- * Does the Counsellor have an associated or

a referral system for emergencies when he/she is out of town?

- * Is the Counsellor a current member of any professional organisation?

Most competent and qualified Counsellors are members of professional organisations that have strict guidelines and standards in ethical and professional behaviour. These guidelines are designed to protect the consumer and uphold the quality of service provided. Competent counsellors are also trained to respect your wishes and gladly make a further referral if they feel that they are unable to help you or that your problems are outside of the field of their professional expertise.

Counsellor Responsibilities

What are the Counsellor's responsibilities towards you and the Counselling process?

- * First, he/she will take time to establish a working relationship with you.
 - * Then he/she will take time to identify carefully the types and extent of your concerns.
 - * Next, the level of stress and your ability to cope with these concerns will be assessed.
 - * The counsellor will usually then discuss with you a Counselling plan including goals, methods, and the appropriate length of time required to achieve these goals.
 - * Periodically as you progress in this counselling process, joint assessment will be made to see if the desired goals are being achieved.
 - * Termination of the Counselling process will occur when you feel that you have received what you wanted to achieve.
- Other areas of responsibility to you as a 'client' are:
- * Competent Counsellors must not reveal any information about a client to anyone.

He/she will guarantee strict confidentiality in all circumstances except when it is clear that a person is in danger to themselves or to another person. The Counsellor will take steps to protect those individuals under such threat. He/she may also choose to report any knowledge of the abuse and neglect of a child or an incompetent or disabled person.

- * Erotic contact between a Counsellor and client is unethical and immoral and always unacceptable behaviour. To take advantage of a vulnerable person who comes for help is an act of aggression that should always be considered a serious offence.

It is not uncommon for some people to feel frustrated with their Counsellor. However, if an individual does have questions or concerns about what happens in the Counselling process, these should be raised first with your Counsellor. If you feel you are not being heard, you probably are not! If you are still feeling dissatisfied you always have the option of ending the Counselling contract and switching to another Counsellor of your choice. Competent Counsellors recognise their own limitations. They accept that they are human and are unable to be all things to all people.

Focus of Counselling

At times Counsellors may choose to 'treat' or work with an individual. Marriage and family Counsellors mostly prefer to work together with a couple or in some cases the whole family. Often the person who is identified as 'the problem' (the symptom bearer) may not be the person with the problem at all. In marriages and families symptoms such as depression, anger, fear and anxiety can be transmitted to other family members, who become the symptom bearers.

The Counselling Process

There is an old adage that says, 'Things get worse before they get better.' This applies to Counselling! What we repress or deny needs to be confronted. Like Jesus did with Nicodemus, a Counsellor may need to confront a person's fears and game-playing, to get to the heart of an issue. Particularly difficult is the problem of forgiveness. We all tend to be

so magnanimous that we forgive others and trust in God who has forgiven us, but our pride and perfectionism makes it difficult to forgive ourselves. A Christian Counsellor, who understands that healing often begins with forgiveness, may need to help us face our pride, which may hurt and be awfully scary, before healing can occur. It is still the truth that sets us free!

The Christian Counsellor is someone who is in the business of helping individuals to be restored in the image of God. This image is basically one of love. It is only in such restoration that the fearful find peace and the broken hearted find healing. As the Apostle John says, it is only through the development of perfect love that fear is cast out (1 John 4:18). A skilled and sensitive Counsellor, who is a Christian, can minister to the wounded of our world in gentle ways. He or she can help individuals, couples and families to find the way of escape to freedom, health and spiritual growth. The Christian Counsellor is like the quiet shepherd who finds and binds the lost sheep. Through the ministry of Counselling God's grace can become a reality as it brings with it the gift of healing, affirmation and hope.



STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

In harmony with the Fundamental Belief of Seventh-day Adventists in the divine ordination and nurture of family life it is affirmed that:

Marriage was instituted in Eden by a loving Creator for the purpose of meeting the needs of mankind for an enduring human relationship which would provide mutual respect, companionship, fidelity, sexual fulfilment and procreation (Gen 2:18-28; Ex 20:14; Matt 19:4-6). Therefore, Christian marriage is a divinely ordained life-long commitment between a man and woman in which love may mature, understanding grow, the marriage privileges be enjoyed, and the responsibilities borne (1 Cor 7:1-5).

The relationship which exists between Christ and the church becomes the Scriptural model for Christian couples. Husbands are to love and protect their wives and wives are to love and respect their husbands. While Christian marriage preserves the God-given right of each partner to develop his or her own individual talents it does so in the context of voluntary submission of husband and wife to one another. The church will be as solicitous to nurture this marital commitment as it is eager to sustain and depend each member's dedication to Christ (Eph 5:21-23; Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19).

Sexuality is an integral part of every human being. The expression of sexual relations, while not limited to procreation is to be confined to the marriage relationship. Aware of their wider accountability to a world facing

hunger and overpopulation the responsible Christian parents will carefully consider and limit the size of their family for which they can adequately care (1 Tim 5:8; Gen 1:28). Contraception is a legitimate means of limiting the size of a family and allows for the fulfilment of normal and God-given sexual needs.

Once conception occurs new life begins. Scripture does not declare the time when personhood begins but stresses that God is the lifegiver and protector of even the unborn child. Therefore, abortion has an alternative to contraception is untenable for the Christian. When an abortion has occurred the church will show compassion for those who may suffer (Ex 21:22; Ps 139:13-18; Jer 1:4-5; Luke 1:39-66).

Since God intended that man's sexual needs be met in the heterosexual, monogamous union of husband and wife any deviation from this ideal is a perversion of the divine plan. Therefore the church cannot accept the practice of sexual aberrations. Nevertheless the community of believers will provide compassionate help and guidance for those involved in such practices who desire to change to God's ideal (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10; 2:1).

According to the Bible, marriage is intended to be indissoluble as long as both partners live. Divorce, except for marital infidelity, is contrary to Scripture as a means of solving interpersonal problems. Healing through reconciliation is the better way (Matt 19:3-9).

Where irretrievable marital breakdown has occurred the church is to be a caring community of believers showing compassion and providing support to those involved in the tragedy (Rom 7:1-3; Col 3:12-19). Just as marriage is God's means for meeting the needs of men and women so it is His plan that the home they establish should provide a warm, caring environment for the birth and development of children. The Christian family is the learning centre where behaviour and values are modelled and taught. Christian parents should assume responsibility for mothering and fathering in all aspects of family life recognizing the uniqueness of their role. Consequently they should provide leadership and loving discipline for their children in accord with the word of God (Ex 20:12; Deut 6:4-25).

It is the church's responsibility to provide assistance for parents and children in strengthening family unity and cohesion. This should include education and preparation for those contemplating a life-changing event such as marriage, parenting, bereavement, help in facilitating adjustment to retirement, and diminishing capacities in old age, as well as understanding and support for those in crisis and in need (Acts 5:11).

Strongly unified Christian families, dedicated to sharing the good news of Salvation, when joined together in a church, form a network of interdependent support systems, which are effective in extending the Kingdom of God.



STATEMENT ON DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

The Church, in all of its relationships, seeks to operate like an extended family, providing encouragement, nurture and support to every individual within the community of faith. As such, it is committed to not only building up and strengthening marriages and families, but to fostering the individual growth and spiritual development of each person.

In moments of crisis, the Church also seeks to be caring and responsive to the needs of its members. It does not abandon them nor does it stand aloof from their pain and hurts when things go wrong. The Church is especially sensitive to those distressed by interpersonal conflict, marital disharmony or those experiencing marital breakdown, separation or divorce.

The Church sees as its charter, the command of Christ to proclaim salvation and redemption in all of its utterances and relationships. It seeks to offer healing, hope and wholeness to people in every area of their lives. However, the Church must provide certain guarantees to those who are wounded and hurting. It must make it safe for them to risk being open with us so that they can begin a journey towards healing and redemption. There are three guarantees we must make to people if we want to share salvation with them:

1. That they will be loved - always, under every circumstance, with no exception.
2. That they will be totally accepted - without reservation.
3. That unreserved forgiveness can be theirs - no matter how

miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, this forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth.

A. Love

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

1 John 3:14. The New Testament word used here for love is "agape." "Agape" love is God's love. It exists in human relationships as a gift from God and is demonstrated in the act of a person unconditionally accepting another person. Its presence affects the emotions and the behaviour, motivating us to act in Christ-like ways towards others.

B. Acceptance

The separated or divorced constantly refer to the lack of acceptance that they feel in the church community. They tell us that they feel like second class citizens. This constitutes a real challenge for the Church. It must come to the place of accepting them the way Jesus accepts us. Unreserved acceptance of people needs to be a habit with us. There is no other way to get close enough to people to help them at the level of their deepest needs. It is only when we cultivate the habit of accepting people, that they will trust us to model the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Because we are accepted in the Beloved, we must be accepting of the beloved. Some people fear that such acceptance will breed license for marital breakdown. However, our acceptance of a

brother will make him strong. It will never confuse him in questions of right and wrong if our teaching and personal lifestyle establish clear standards. For example, a person who uses profanity is not going to think you approve of such language just because you accept him personally. But if you communicate personal rejection to such a person, he will not remain in the church community long enough to be touched by God through the Church. Jesus accepts us though we have much in our lives that offends His holiness. His acceptance of us does not imply approval of our unworthy behaviour. His acceptance is our model in ministering to others.

C. Forgiveness

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32.

Forgiving another person is an act of grace. It means that you are willing to release another person from your own personal judgment. It may not mean that you agree with what they have said or done, it simply means you will not act as their judge. You will not pronounce a guilty verdict on them.

The divorced or remarried are not to be held in social punishment in order to teach them a lesson, but are to be warmly accepted in the mercy and grace of God. We cannot preach forgiveness for all the sins that may have caused the death of a marriage while failing to preach forgiveness for the death itself. Sins of hostility, resentment, silence, impatience, bitterness, and pride have

kept growing and growing until they were impossible to handle, and the marriage died. While the Church at times has found it difficult to recognize and accept a legal divorce, it has many times passively sat by while an emotional divorce was in existence for many years.

When love, acceptance and forgiveness prevail, the Church of Jesus Christ becomes what Jesus was in the world - a centre of love designed for the healing of broken people, a powerful force for God.

Ministers therefore, need to lead their churches toward a new sense of compassion, mercy, and redemption. They must help the Church to understand the tragedy of divorce and not to assume that there is some simplistic answer to every marital breakdown. If the Church can redeem these hurting people and open doors of hope to them, they will find new life and be an added resource to aid the Church in its mission of sharing the good news of salvation to the world.

In writing to G I Butler, President of the General Conference, on April 21, 1887, on the subject "Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who have Violated the Seventh Commandment," E G White said:

"I wish that we had much more the Spirit of Christ and a great deal less of self and less of human opinions. If we ere, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing." (Letter 16, 1887).

Most of the separated and divorced people in our churches feel the hurt, shame and rejection for what has happened to them. They do not need intemperate condemnations to bring home to them a consciousness of guilt - they are often wrapped in it. To come to Christ with their hurt and guilt should lead to an experience of renewal. Jesus came to

heal the broken hearted. We have been entrusted with His great commission to proclaim the good news that all may be forgiven and reconciled to their Father. We must cultivate within the Church the kind of caring and accepting community, in which people who have broken marriages can seek forgiveness from God, have their wounds bound, and receive assistance and encouragement in forging a new life.

The Church's Task

When it comes to dealing with marital breakdown, the Church must do more than talk about it, it must see that its primary task is to be the people of God in a caring, supportive community.

First of all, the Church must commit itself to being a community of truth, a community in which believers tell the truth about their own lives. The Church must be willing to hear the stories of pain, suffering, and failure in the lives of its members; and those who tell the stories must receive from the Church both lamentation and the healing balm of Christ. When the Church is open and honest about pain and suffering, it can then confront, in love, even the most difficult of human failures and crises - marital breakdown.

Second, the Church must commit itself to being a community of love, not quick to judge. Since divorce often brings with it stigma and feelings of guilt, those currently free of pain must welcome those who suffer, in the name of Christ; and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, they must place themselves at one another's disposal.

Third, the Church must commit itself to being a community of joy, a community in which the new life in Christ is celebrated, a community that calls others to celebrate the new life in Christ. By living as a community of joy, but regularly celebrating God's goodness to us

in Jesus Christ, the Church ministers to those who are saddened, joyfully acquainting them with the one who has known their sorrows.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

A. Family Violence Defined

Family violence involves an assault of any kind (be it verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, active or passive neglect) that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family be they married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. According to current research family violence occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socio-economic levels, and in families from all types of religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

B. Common Examples of Family Violence

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways: It may be an attack on one's spouse which can take the form of either physical violence, emotional abuse, marital rape, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behaviour. It could be the mistreatment or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen by parent(s) or other guardians that results in injury or harm. It may include physical violence, verbal or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, and physical or educational neglect. It can manifest itself in the relationships of siblings to other siblings or of children to parents. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material and medical abuse or neglect.

C. Scripture and Family Relationships

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christ's

followers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. such relationships are characterised by love and acceptance, rather than tyrannical control or abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, Christians seek to affirm and build others up, rather than abuse or tear each other down. Disciples of Christ seek to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept both male and female as equals, and to acknowledge that every person irrespective of race or creed has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way is to violate personhood and to devalue the individual.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as 'the household of faith' and suggests that it should function as an extended family offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to everyone, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged.

He sees the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as the feelings of betrayal, rejection and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust and wholeness.

D. The Responsibility of the Church

Regrettably, family violence occurs to some degree in many homes. However, it can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of self and others.

It is our belief that the SDA church has a responsibility -

1. To care for those involved in

family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth
 - b. Highlighting to the community the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defence of its victims
 - c. Providing a ministry of reconciliation to families affected by violence and abuse including both the victims and the perpetrators
 - d. Guarding against ostracism within the family or church community
2. To strengthen family life by
 - a. Providing family life education
 - b. Seeking to understand the origins of family violence
 - c. Developing ways to prevent the recurring cycle of family violence

We believe that the church has a moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and in the community. Any indications or reports of abuse must be taken seriously. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following Scriptural passages: Exodus 20:12; Matthew 7:12; 20:25,26; John 13:34; Romans 12:10,13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:2,3; 6:4; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence involves an assault of any kind—verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, or active or passive neglect—that is committed by one person or persons against another within a family, whether they are married, related, living together or apart, or divorced. Current international research indicates that family violence is a global problem. It occurs between individuals of all ages and nationalities, at all socioeconomic levels, and in families from all types of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The overall rate of incidence has been found to be similar for city, suburban, and rural communities.

Family violence manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, it may be a physical attack on one's spouse. Emotional assaults such as verbal threats, episodes of rage, depreciation of character, and unrealistic demands for perfection are also abuse. It may take the form of physical coercion and violence within the marital sexual relationship, or the threat of violence through the use of intimidating verbal or nonverbal behavior. It includes behavior such as incest and the mistreatment or neglect of underage children by a parent or another guardian that results in injury or harm. Violence against the elderly may be seen in physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, material, and medical abuse or neglect.

The Bible clearly indicates that the distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships in the church and in the family. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to

seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or tear one another down. There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority. Motivated by their love for Christ, His disciples are called to show respect and concern for the welfare of others, to accept males and females as equals, and to acknowledge that every person has a right to respect and dignity. Failure to relate to others in this way violates their personhood and devalues human beings created and redeemed by God.

The apostle Paul refers to the church as "the household of faith" which functions as an extended family, offering acceptance, understanding, and comfort to all, especially to those who are hurting or disadvantaged. Scripture portrays the church as a family in which personal and spiritual growth can occur as feelings of betrayal, rejection, and grief give way to feelings of forgiveness, trust, and wholeness. The Bible also speaks of the Christian's personal responsibility to protect his or her body temple from desecration because it is the dwelling place of God.

Regrettably, family violence occurs in many Christian homes. It can never be condoned. It severely affects the lives of all involved and often results in long term distorted perceptions of God, self, and others.

It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:

- a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
- b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
- c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling with Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community.
- d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
- e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.
- f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.
- g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or

perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.

2. To strengthen family life by:
 - a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.
 - b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.
 - c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.
 - d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.
3. To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

If we are to live as children of the light, we must illuminate the darkness where family violence occurs in our midst. We must care for one another, even when it would be easier to remain uninvolved.

The above statement is informed by principles expressed in the following scriptural passages: Ex 20:12; Matt 7:12; 20:25-28; Mark 9:33-45; John 13:34; Rom 12:10, 13; I Cor 6:19; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:2, 3, 21-27; 6:1-4; Col 3:12-14; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 5:5-8.



STATEMENT ON FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)



STATEMENT ON GENETIC INTERVENTIONS

Most of the new developments in genetics are the result of increased knowledge concerning the fundamental structure of genes, not only in humans but throughout all the realms of life on earth. Among these developments are genetic mapping, new means for genetic testing, new possibilities for genetic engineering, and a variety of eugenic strategies that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. In short, new genetic knowledge has produced unprecedented power. With that power has come the potential for immense good or harm. And with such great power also comes great responsibility. From the standpoint of the Christian faith, we are accountable for the use of this power not only to global humanity, but also to every realm of created life that God has entrusted to our stewardship. Ultimately we are accountable to the Maker of the universe who holds us responsible for the care of each other and of the earth.

When creation came forth from the Creator's hand it was "very good." (Gen 1:31). The genetic endowment which Adam and Eve received from their Creator was without defects. The genetic diseases from which humans now suffer are not the result of normal variation. They have developed through harmful mutation. In restoring the human genome to a healthier condition, modern sciences may attempt to recover more of creation's original condition. To the extent that helpful genetic interventions can be conducted in harmony with Christian principles, they are to be welcomed as cooperation with

the divine intention of alleviating the painful results of sin.

Any attempt to state comprehensive principles of ethics for genetic interventions must confront the complexities of a rapidly changing field of science. Since the discovery of the molecular structure of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), knowledge of genetics across an ever wider range of life forms has burgeoned.

Many of the increases in information and technological ability have been accompanied by significant ethical concerns. We can only begin to imagine future questions that will arise as genetic science progresses. The complexity of the issues and the pace of change make it likely that statements of relevant Christian principles will require expansion and modification as time passes.

One example of an area of rapid change is genetic mapping. An international, scientific effort known as the Human Genome Project is attempting to construct a detailed genetic chart, or "map," of all the human chromosomes. The goal is to provide a comprehensive description of the sequence of the millions of DNA base pairs which human chromosomes contain. Researchers plan to use this information to facilitate the identification and isolation of human genes, thereby providing a helpful aid in understanding human development and in treating human diseases. New details about the identity, role, and function of human genes are continually emerging.

Increased knowledge about the identity of human genes has

given rise to a variety of new possibilities for genetic testing. In the past, genetic information about an individual was largely inferred from the person's family history or clinical observations of the person's phenotype, or physical expressions of a person's genes. Today, a growing number of sophisticated genetic analyses make it possible to identify defective genes that cause genetic diseases such as cystic fibrosis, Huntington's Chorea, and some types of cancer. Many of these tests can now be performed prenatally. The potential exists for identifying hundreds of genetic characteristics, including a wide range of genetic disorders.

A further result of basic genetic knowledge is the capacity to alter genes intentionally, or genetic engineering. Through the use of enzymes which are able to excise specific segments of genes, it is possible to change the genetic makeup of cells by deliberately inserting, removing or changing specific genes. Genetic engineering presents astonishing new possibilities, including the transfer of genes across biological boundaries, such as from animals to plants. The potential for improving life forms seems endless. Genetically engineered plants, for example, can be made more productive, more resistant to diseases, or less susceptible to internal processes of decay.

Genetic engineering has directly benefited human medicine. It has made possible, for example, the production of human insulin and human growth factor, neither of which was previously obtainable in sufficient quantities.

Genetic engineering also makes it possible to treat diseases through genetic alteration. With this type of treatment, a patient whose cells have missing or defective genes receives needed genetic material. No one knows how many genetic diseases may eventually be treated in this way, but initial successes with diseases such as cystic fibrosis give hope that other genetic disorders may be treatable.

Increased genetic knowledge also produces new possibilities for eugenics, or endeavours to improve the gene pool of various species, including human beings. In broad terms, such attempts fall into two categories. Negative eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to prevent harmful genes from being inherited. Positive eugenics uses strategies whose goal is to promote the transmission of desirable genes. An example of negative eugenics, common in the past, is the sterilization of individuals considered to have defective genes capable of being inherited. An example of positive eugenics is artificial insemination by donors who have been selected for traits, such as high intelligence, that are deemed desirable.

Ethical Concerns

In order to provide focus, it is helpful to consider a sampling of current ethical concerns for which we seek to state Christian principles. These concerns can be placed in four basic categories: the sanctity of human life, the protection of human dignity, the acceptance of social responsibilities, and the safekeeping of God's creation.

Sanctity of human life. If genetic determinism reduces the meaning of humanhood to the mechanistic outworkings of molecular biology, there is serious potential for devaluing human life. For example, new capacities for prenatal genetic testing, includ-

ing the examination of human pre-embryos prior to implantation, generate questions about the value of human life when it is genetically defective. How serious must a genetic defect, prenatally diagnosed, be before it is an ethically legitimate reason for discarding a pre-embryo or for inducing an abortion? Some conditions, such as trisomy 18, are generally deemed incompatible with life. But the relative seriousness of most genetic defects is a matter of judgment.

Protection of human dignity.

The protection of personal privacy and confidentiality is one of the major concerns associated with the new possibilities for genetic testing. Knowledge about a person's genetic profile could be of significant value to potential employers, insurance companies, and to those related to the person. Whether genetic testing should be voluntary or mandatory, when and by whom the testing should be done, how much and with whom the resulting information should be shared are matters of significant ethical concern. Difficult decisions must be made about whether there are exceptions to the usual expectation of confidentiality and privacy when persons may suffer considerable harm because of a lack of information. At stake is the protection of persons from stigma and unfair discrimination on the basis of their genetic makeup.

Another cluster of concerns related to human dignity stems from the possibility of intentionally altering the human gene pool. Medical interventions for genetic diseases may be aimed either at the treatment of bodily cells that are genetically defective or at the alteration of reproductive cells. Changes in human reproductive cells could become a permanent part of the human gene pool. Interventions may also extend

beyond the treatment of disease and include attempts to enhance what have formerly been considered normal human characteristics. What are the implications for the meaning of being human, for example, if interventions aimed at enhancing human intelligence or physique become available?

Acceptance of social responsibilities.

The power that results from new genetic knowledge also raises concerns about the ethics of social policies and the boundaries between individual liberties and social responsibilities. For example, should society develop policies designed to encourage either positive or negative eugenics? Should individuals with serious genetic disorders be given full procreative liberty? Another area of social concern has to do with the use of society's resources. Questions can be raised about the amount of social resources that should be spent for interventions in human genetics when more basic health care is not fully available. Other questions arise concerning the distribution of the benefits and burdens of genetic interventions and how they will be shared by rich and poor within society.

Stewardship of God's creation.

As the powers of genetic engineering are further developed, many changes could be made in various species that inhabit the earth. These changes have the potential for being both permanent and, to some degree, unpredictable. What limits to genetic change, if any, should be accepted? Are there boundaries that should not be crossed in transferring genes from one life form to another? We may hope that genetic changes are intended to enhance life on our planet.

But there are reasons for concern. For example, consideration has already been given to genetic alterations for the purpose of de-

veloping new biological weapons. The exploitation of other life forms for purposes of military security or economic gain should call for careful, moral scrutiny.

It is with ethical concerns like these in mind that we state the following Christian principles for genetic interventions.

Principles

Confidentiality Christian love requires that trust be maintained in human relationships. The protection of confidentiality is essential to such trust. In order to safeguard personal privacy and protect against unfair discrimination, information about a person's genetic constitution should be kept confidential unless the person elects to share the knowledge with others. In cases where others may suffer serious and avoidable harm without genetic information about another person, there is a moral obligation to share the needed information (Matt 7:12; Phil 2:4).

Truthfulness The Christian obligation to be truthful requires that the results of genetic testing be honestly reported to the person tested or to responsible family members if the person is incapable of understanding the information (Eph 4:25).

Honoring God's image In all of God's creation, only human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27). The Christian acknowledgment of God's wisdom and power in creation should lead to caution in attempts to alter permanently the human gene pool (Gen 1:31). Given current knowledge, genetic interventions in humans should be limited to treatment of individuals with genetic disorders (somatic cell therapies) and should not include attempts to change human reproductive cells (germ cell alterations) that could affect the image of God in future generations. All interven-

tions in human beings for genetic reasons should be taken with great moral caution and with appropriate protection of human life at all stages of its development.

Prevention of suffering It is a Christian responsibility to prevent or relieve suffering whenever possible (Acts 10:38, Luke 9:2). For this reason the primary purpose of human genetic intervention should be the treatment or prevention of disease and the alleviation of pain and suffering. Because of the tendencies of sinful human nature, the possibility of abuse, and unknown biological risks, attempts to modify physical or mental characteristics with genetic interventions for healthy persons who are free of genetic disorders should be approached with great caution.

Freedom of choice God values human freedom and rejects the way of coercion. People who are capable of making their own decisions should be free to decide whether or not to be tested genetically. They should also be free to decide how to act on information that results from testing, except when others may suffer serious and avoidable harm. It may be the morally responsible choice to avoid known risks of serious congenital defects by forgoing procreation. While such decisions about procreation and genetic testing are deeply personal, they should be made by the individual with due consideration for the common good.

Stewardship of creation Safeguarding God's creation includes esteem for the diversity and ecological balance of the natural world with its countless species of living creatures (Gen 1). Genetic interventions with plants and animals should show respect for the rich variety of life forms. Exploitations and manipulations that would destroy natural balance or degrade God's created world

should be prohibited.

Nonviolence Using genetic manipulation to develop means of warfare is a direct affront to Christian values of peace and life. It is morally unacceptable to abuse God's creation by changing life forms into weapons of destruction (Rev 11:18).

Fairness God loves all human beings, regardless of their perceived social status (Acts 10:34). The benefits of genetic research should be accessible to people in need without unfair discrimination.

Human dignity Created in God's image, human beings are more than the sum of their genes (Gen 1:27; Acts 17:28). Human dignity should not be reduced to genetic mechanisms. People should be treated with dignity and respect for their individual qualities, and not be stereotyped on the basis of their genetic heritage.

Healthfulness Christians have a responsibility to maintain the health of their bodies, including their genetic health (1 Cor 10:31). This means that Christians should avoid that which is likely to be genetically destructive to themselves or to their children, such as drug abuse and excessive radiation.

Glossary

Base pairs. Pairs of complementary bases forming the DNA structure; the units used to measure the length of DNA. Base pairs consist of adenine (A), which must always pair with thymine (T), and guanine (G), which must always pair with cytosine (C).

Chromosome. The condensed rod made up of a linear thread of DNA interwoven with protein that is the gene-bearing structure of living cells. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). The double helix molecule that encodes genetic information and is the primary hereditary molecule in most species.

Enzyme. A protein that facilitates a specific chemical reaction without changing its direction or nature.

Eugenics. Strategies for attempting to improve the gene pool of a species either by halting the transmission of unwanted characteristics or increasing the transmission of desired characteristics.

Gene. The basic unit of heredity; a section of DNA that contains information for the production of specific protein molecules.

Gene mapping. The process of ascertaining the genetic sequence of a species.

Gene therapy. The medical replacement or repair of defective genes in living cells.

Genetic engineering. The process of altering the genetic makeup of cells or individual organisms by deliberately inserting, removing, or changing specific genes.

Genetic testing. The examination of individuals' genetic makeup for the purpose of identifying possible hereditary traits, including defects or abnormalities.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell.

Genome. All of the genetic material in the chromosomes of a particular organism or individual.

Genotype. An individual's genetic makeup.

Human Genome Project. The international, scientific effort to construct a detailed map of human genes, identifying their structure and function.

Implantation. The attachment of an embryo to the wall of the uterus.

Mutation. A permanent alteration of DNA that can be inherited.

Negative eugenics. Strategies for preventing the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed undesirable.

Phenotype. The observable characteristics resulting from a particular genotype as influenced by environmental factors.

Positive eugenics. Strategies for promoting the transmission of genetic traits which are deemed desirable.

Pre-embryo. A fertilized ovum (or conceptus) prior to implantation and the beginning of pregnancy.

Recombinant DNA. A novel sequence of DNA that is artificially produced by joining segments of DNA.

Somatic cell. Any cell of a body other than reproductive cells.

This document was adopted by the Christian View of Human Life Committee in March 1995 and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), June 13, 1995.



STATEMENT ON HOME & FAMILY

The health and prosperity of society is directly related to the well-being of its constituent parts—the family unit. Today, as probably never before, the family is in trouble. Social commentators decry the disintegration of modern family life. The traditional Christian concept of marriage between one man and one woman is under assault. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in this time of family crisis, encourages every family member to strengthen his or her spiritual dimension and family relationship through mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility.

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. ... Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the church, stated: "The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov.4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences." —The Ministry of Healing, p. 349.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on June 27, 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana.



STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one" (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.



STATEMENT ON ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING HUMAN CLONING

For a number of decades, the prospect that new members of the human family might be produced by cloning was considered farfetched. Recent advances in genetic and reproductive biology, however, indicate that techniques for cloning humans may soon be developed. With this prospect comes the Christian responsibility to address profound ethical issues associated with human cloning. As Christians, with firm belief in God's creative and redemptive power, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to enunciate ethical principles that emerge from their faith commitments.

Cloning includes all those processes by which living plants or animals are replicated by asexual means—methods that do not involve the fusion of egg and sperm. Many natural processes are forms of cloning. For example, microorganisms, like common yeast, reproduce by splitting into two daughter cells that are clones of the parent cell and each other. Cutting a twig from a rose bush or grapevine and propagating it into a complete plant also creates a clone of the original plant. Similarly, many simple animals, such as starfish, can regenerate complete organisms from small parts of a predecessor. Thus the biological principle of cloning is not new.

The new technique is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions, an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At pres-

ent, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

Biologists have developed this technique as a tool for animal husbandry. By this means, they hope to create a herd of valued animals that are genetically identical to a selected individual. The potential benefits from this technology, including the expectation of products for treating human diseases, are of great interest to researchers and to the biotechnology industry. However, the same technological capacity could be used for human reproduction and thus raises serious ethical concerns.

First among these concerns is medical safety. If the current technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer were to be used in humans, ova would need to be obtained from donors. Most of these would perish because of cellular manipulations during early embryonic growth in the laboratory. Others would be lost after implantation, spontaneously aborted at various stages of fetal development. In this respect, sensitivity to the value of embryonic and fetal life would be similar to the development of other methods of assisted

reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization. There would likely be an increased risk of birth defects in children brought to term. At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology.

However, even if the success rates of cloning were to improve and the medical risks were diminished, a number of major concerns would remain. For example, is there anything intrinsically problematic with creating an individual who is not produced through fertilization of an egg by a sperm? Further study is needed to resolve questions regarding the essential nature of procreation in God's design.

Another of the most often expressed concerns is that the dignity and uniqueness of a cloned person may be jeopardized. This risk includes the psychological harm that might be experienced by an individual who would be what some have called the "delayed identical twin" of the individual who provided the initial cell. Do existing persons have the right to exercise such a level of control over the genetic destiny of a new individual?

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce

problems of relationships and responsibilities.

An additional major risk is that cloning could lead to expedient uses of those who are cloned, with their value assigned primarily on the basis of their utility. For example, there could be a temptation to clone individuals to serve as sources of transplantable organs. Others have worried about the deliberate creation of subservient individuals whose autonomy would be violated. Egotistical or narcissistic individuals might be inclined to use the technology in order to "duplicate" themselves.

Finally, the financial costs of cloning would likely be considerable even after significant technological improvements. If human cloning were commercialized, conflicting interests might add to the risk of abuse.

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs*. The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

The following ethical principles are intended to apply to somatic cell nuclear transfer if that technology is ever applied to human beings. The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. Protection of vulnerable human life. Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically

unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.

2. Protection of human dignity. Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.

3. Alleviating human suffering. It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.

4. Family support. God's ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.

5. Stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely

to be very costly. Married couples seeking such assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.

6. Truthfulness. Honest communication is one of Scripture's mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.

7. Understanding God's creation. God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

Given our present state of knowledge and the current refinement of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technique for human cloning is deemed unacceptable by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given our responsibility to alleviate disease and to enhance the quality of human life, continued appropriate research with animals is deemed acceptable.

Glossary

Allele. One of the alternative forms of a particular gene. Each gene of an organism can exist in slightly different forms. Those small differences are responsible for some of the variations that we observe in different individuals within natural populations. Different alleles for genes that produce the blood protein hemoglobin, for example, will affect how well the blood cells will carry oxygen.

Clones. Two or more individuals with identical genetic material. Human clones occur naturally in the form of "identical twins." Though twins begin life with the same genetic material they, nevertheless, develop distinct physical differences (fingerprints, for example). Furthermore, they become fully unique individuals with distinct personalities as a result of their different experiences and independent choices. An individual conceived by somatic cell nuclear transfer would be at least as different from his or her progenitor as natural twins.

Cytoplasm. All the contents of a cell, other than the nucleus. The cytoplasm is the site where many important processes occur, including the assembly of proteins and enzymes, and the manufacture of cell products. The cytoplasm also contains the mitochondria, small bodies that are responsible for the breakdown of food to produce the energy needed for the activities of the cell.

Embryo. The early stages of development of a fertilized egg. In somatic cell nuclear transfer, it refers to the early developmental stages of an enucleated egg after it has been fused with a somatic cell.

Enucleated egg. An egg cell from which the nucleus has been removed. This is usually accomplished by penetrating the cell with a fine glass needle and

withdrawing the nucleus while observing the process under a microscope.

Germ cell. Reproductive cell. In mammals and humans, the germ cells are the sperm and eggs (ova).

Gestation. The period of time it takes an embryo to develop in the uterus from a fertilized egg to a newborn offspring. Gestation begins with implantation of the embryo in the uterus and ends with birth.

Nucleus. The structure within a cell that contains the genetic material or genes. The nucleus is surrounded by a membrane that separates it from the remainder of the cell.

Ovum (plural: ova). An egg cell. A female productive cell.

Somatic cell. Any cell from the body of a mammal or human, other than the germ cells.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer. The technical name for the method used to produce the first animal clone, a sheep called "Dolly." Though the name suggests that a nucleus from a somatic cell was used, in fact, the complete somatic cell was fused with an enucleated egg.

Sperm. A male reproductive cell.

*There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who

would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

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STATEMENT ON PORNOGRAPHY

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It is destructive to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is demeaning, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is desensitizing to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is exploitative, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization."—Saturday Review of Literature, Sept. 20, 1975.

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

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STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES FOR A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE

Introduction

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV). In Christ is the promise of eternal life; but since human life is mortal, humans are confronted with difficult issues regarding life and death. The following principles refer to the whole person (body, soul and spirit), an indivisible whole (Gen 2:7; 1 Thess 5:23).

Life: Our valuable gift from God

1. God is the Source, Giver and Sustainer of all life (Acts 17:25,28; Job 33:4; Gen 1:30; 2:7; Ps 36:9; John 1:3,4).
2. Human life has unique value because human beings, though fallen, are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27; Rom 3:23; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:2; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18,19).
3. God values human life not on the basis of human accomplishments or contributions, but because we are God’s creation and the object of His redeeming love (Rom 5:6,8; Eph 2:2-9; 1 Tim 1:15; Titus 3:4,5; Matt 5:43-48; John 1:3; 10:10).

Life: Our response to God’s gift

4. Valuable as it is, human life is not the only or ultimate concern. Self-sacrifice in devotion to God and His principles may take precedence over life itself (Rev 12:11; 1 Cor 13).
5. God calls for the protection of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction (Ex 20:13; Rev 21:8; Ex 23:7; Deut 24:16; Prov 6:16,17; Jer 7:3-34; Micah 6:7; Gen 9:5,6).
6. God is especially concerned for the protection of the weak, the defenceless and the oppressed (Ps 82:3,4; James 1:27; Micah 6:8; Acts 20:35; Prov 24:11,12; Luke 1:52-54).
7. Christian love (agape) is the costly dedication of our lives to enhancing the lives of others. Love also respects personal dignity and does not condone the oppression of one person to support the abusive behaviour of another (Matt 16:21; Phil 2:1-11; 1 John 3:16; 4:8-11; Matt 22:39; John 18:22,23; 13:34).
8. The believing community is called to demonstrate Christian love in tangible, practical and substantive ways. God calls us to restore gently the broken (Gal 6:1,2; 1 John 3:17,18; Matt 1:23; Phil 2:1-11; John 8:2-11; Rom 8:1-14; Matt 7:1,2; 12:20; Isa 40-42; 62:2-4).

Life: Our right and responsibility to decide

9. God gives humanity the freedom of choice, even if it leads to abuse and tragic consequences. His unwillingness to coerce human obedience necessitated the sacrifice of His Son. He requires us to use His gifts in accordance with His will and ultimately will judge their misuse (Duet 30:19,20; Gen 3; 1 Peter 2:24; Rom 3:5,6; 6:1,2; Gal 5:13).
10. God calls each of us individually to moral decision-making and to search the Scriptures for the biblical principles underlying such choices (John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 2:9; Rom 7:13-25).
11. Decisions about human life from its beginning to its end are best made within the context of healthy family relationships with the support of the faith community (Ex 20:12; Eph 5:6).
12. Human decisions should always be centred in seeking the will of God (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:6; Luke 22:42).

These principles were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.



STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

In His infinite love and wisdom God created mankind, both male and female, and in so doing based human society on the firm foundation of loving homes and families.

It is Satan's purpose, however, to pervert every good thing; and the perversion of the best inevitably leads to that which is worst. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious principle, the association of the sexes has, to a deeply disturbing extent, degenerated into license and abuse which results in bondage. With the aid of many films, television, video, radio programs, and printed materials, the world is being steered on a course to new depths of shame and depravity. Not only is the basic structure of society being greatly damaged but also the breakdown of the family fosters other gross evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are distressing and evoke our pity, and the effects are not only disastrous but also cumulative.

These evils have become more open and constitute a serious and growing threat to the ideals and purposes of the Christian home. Sexual practices which are contrary to God's expressed will are adultery and premarital sex, as well as obsessive sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of spouses, sexual abuse of children, incest, homosexual practices (gay and lesbian), and bestiality are among the obvious perversions of God's original plan. As the intent of clear passages of Scripture (see Ex 20:14; Lev 18:22,23,29 and 20:13; Matthew 5:27,28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Rom 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much uncertainty and confusion prevail. This is what Satan desires. He has always attempted to cause people to forget that when God as Creator made Adam, He also created Eve to be Adam's female companion ("male and female he created them" Gen 1:24 NEB). In spite of the clear moral standards set forth in God's Word for relationships between man and woman, the world today is witnessing a resurgence of the perversions and depravity that marked ancient civilizations.

The degrading results of the obsession of this age with sex and the pursuit of sensual pleasure are clearly described in the Word of God. But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and reestablish the right relationship of human beings with each other and with their Creator. Thus, though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, those who turn to Christ in repentance receive full pardon and choose the better way, the way to complete restoration. By means of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man," and the nurturing ministry of the Church, all may be freed from the grip of perversions and sinful practices.

An acceptance of God's free grace inevitably leads the individual believer to the kind of life and conduct that "will add luster to the doctrine of our God and Saviour" (Titus 2:10 NEB). It will also lead the corporate church to firm and loving discipline of the member whose conduct misrepresents the Saviour and distorts and lowers the true standards of Christian life and behavior.

The Church recognizes the penetrating truth and powerful motivations of Paul's words to Titus: "For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good."—Titus 2:11-14, NEB. (See also 2 Peter 3:11-14.)

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Washington, D.C., October 12, 1987.



STATEMENT ON MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The contemporary world is confronted by grave ethical, medical, and social problems resulting from increasing sexual permissiveness and associated promiscuity. Because Christians are a part of the larger social community, these attitudes and behaviors have infiltrated the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well, demanding that we address them.

So serious are the challenges presented by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that the United Nations, in conjunction with most of the world's governments, the health-care community, religious, political, and economic leaders, has instituted a series of major research and health-education programs that focus on prevention and treatment. The goal is to prevent, cure, and minimize the effects—or at least slow the spread—of these diseases.

At particular risk are youth entering puberty at increasingly younger ages, when they are especially vulnerable to peer pressure and a barrage of media and peer messages that treat casual sex outside marriage as acceptable and normal. Many youth are sexually active early in their teen years and soon become well established in patterns of sexual activity.

Correlated with increased sexual activity is a dramatic increase in STDs associated with serious physical and emotional problems.

Advances have been made along several lines:

- a. Research has provided more accurate data;
- b. Benefits of using condoms to reduce unwanted pregnancy

- c. Dangers of promiscuity have been recognized;
- d. More effective treatment has reduced the spread and progression of many STDs;
- e. Risk of long-term emotional damage resulting from casual sex has been recognized; and
- f. Support has grown for the position that abstinence from extramarital sex preserves sexual and emotional health.

These advances, despite their limitations, have proved beneficial and should be encouraged for their positive effects. Seventh-day Adventist caregivers should be encouraged to participate in promoting such efforts and deserve the support of church members as they do so. A pragmatic approach to dealing with these serious problems and the use of appropriate interventions should by no means be interpreted as endorsement or encouragement of sexual activity outside marriage or of unfaithfulness within marriage. Instead, these efforts must be seen as compassionate attempts to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of detrimental sexual behaviors.

At times, family members, and pastors, teachers, counselors, physicians, and others in helping professions may find themselves working with individuals who, despite strong counsel, refuse to turn from sexual decadence and live by God's high standard of morality. In such cases, those entrusted with ministry may, as a last resort, counsel specific individuals to use

contraceptive and prophylactic methods such as condoms in an attempt to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of spreading life-decimating STDs. Utmost care should be taken when making such an intervention to make it clear to the individual(s) and members of the community involved that this extreme measure should in no way be misconstrued as a scriptural sanction for sexual intimacy outside marriage. Such action on the part of professionals should be considered interim and utilized only in individual cases. Though such interventions may provide a little time for grace to do its work in human hearts, they do not provide a viable long-term solution. The Church must remain committed to making the most of every opportunity to reinforce the wisdom of God's design for human sexuality and to calling men and women to the highest standard of moral conduct.

Biblical Principles

Although the efforts described above are in many ways beneficial, they are only a response to existing situations created by the impact of sin. In the Scriptures, God has set out a superior plan to guide our use of His gift of sexuality. Built upon a series of guiding principles, it presents in practical terms God's ideal for His people who must live in a sin-stricken world.

1. Sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage. Sexuality is a loving gift of the Creator to humanity (Gen 1:26, 27). The gospel calls believers to an appreciation for and stewardship of their sexuality in harmony with the divine

purposes (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:13-20; Eph 5:1-8; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 4:3-7). In God's plan, sexual intimacy is reserved for a man and a woman within the bounds of the marriage covenant (Gen 2:24, 26; Exod 20:14; Proverbs 5; Song of Sol 4:12; 8:8-10; 2:6, 7; 3:5; 8:3, 4; Hos 3:3; Heb 13:4). Sexual fidelity within marriage is crucial to convey a full understanding of God's metaphor comparing marriage to His relationship with His people (Isa 54:5; Hos 2:14-23; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:6-9; 21:9).

2. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is immoral and harmful. Such intimacy has detrimental effects on individuals (Lev 18:6-3; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:18), as well as on the marriage relationship (Prov 5:1-23). It is identified by Scripture as part of the sinful life (Gal 5:19; Col 3:5).

3. God recognizes human frailty. His divine will for human beings and His intent for creation are unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Matt 5:17-20; Acts 20:27). His absolute love for human beings and His redemptive intent are equally unchangeable (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:35-39; Eph 1:1-14; 3:14-19; 1 John 4:7-10). The gospel message, centered in Jesus Christ, binds these truths together (Ps 85:10; 1 John 2:1,2).

God's grace is the only hope for fallen humanity (Rom 3:23, 24; 5:1, 2, 20; Eph 2:1-5). He is patient and long-suffering with human frailty (Num 14:18, 19; Ps 86:15; 103:13, 14; Hos 11:8, 9; Jonah 3:1; 4:10, 11; Matt 23:37; 1 Tim 1: 15, 16). Though God's grace does not give license to sin (Rom 6:1, 2), it is through such grace that God accomplishes His redemptive intent in the circumstances resulting from sin (Rom 5:12-21). God's practical dealings in cases of divorce (Deut 24:1-5; Ezra 10:10, 11; Matt 19:7, 8), polygamy (Exod 21:10; Deut 17:17; 21:15-17; Matt

19:4, 5), the introduction of flesh foods (Gen 1:11, 12, 29, 30; 9:3; Lev 3:17; 11:47), and provision for an earthly monarch (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; Hos 13:11) offer examples of interventions short of God's ideal. Through such cases, we see His grace and mercy at work in a world deformed by sin.

4. The Church conducts its mission in a fallen world. Existing conditions contrast sharply with God's ideal. Both believers and unbelievers are vulnerable to sexual immorality as one of the tragic results of sin (John 17:15; 1 John 2:15). The Church is called to minister to believers and unbelievers alike, reaching and reclaiming sinners (Matt 28:19; Mark 2:17; 2 Cor 5:20, 21), nurturing the growth of believers (Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-13, 15; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Peter 3:18), uplifting the infinite worth of each individual (Isa 43:3, 4, 7; Matt 12:12; Luke 12:7; 15:1-32; 1 Peter 1:18, 19), protecting the weak and vulnerable (Rom 15:1; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 13:3), promoting and preserving life and health (John 10:10; 1 Cor 6:19; 3 John 2), and calling men and women to take up their lofty position as God's chosen and holy people (Eph 4:1; 5:8; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; 2:5, 9). The ministry of the Church is both to meet individuals where they are (1 Cor 3:1, 2; 7:1-28), and to call them to a higher standard (Luke 19:5-10; John 8:3-11; Acts 17:18-34).

5. A spiritual development process is anticipated in the Christian life. Change for the Christian involves both conversion (John 3:3, 7; Acts 3:19; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 5:17) and growth (Prov 4:18; Luke 2:52; Eph 3:17-19; 4:11-15; 2 Peter 3:18). At conversion, believers accept Christ's perfect life as their own by faith and experience a Spirit-led transformation of values (John 3:5; Gal 2:20). Both external and internal forces may provoke

relapses in thought or conduct (Gal 5:16-18; 1 John 3:20), but commitment to grace-induced progress in the Christian life (1 Cor 15:10; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28, 29) and reliance upon God-provided resources (Rom 8:5-7; Gal 5:24, 25) will produce growth toward Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:1).

The Scriptures call for human beings to progress morally and spiritually throughout their lives (Luke 2:52; 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20). Planning for and facilitating such growth is integral to fulfilling the gospel commission (Matt 28:20; Eph 3:14-24). It is the task of religious education to attend to individual development and to present truth in ways that hearers can understand (Matt 11:15), causing them to stretch but not to stumble (Rom 14:1-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Though some allowance may be made for the unlearned or immature (Matt 13:34; John 16:12; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor 3:1, 2), over time individuals should progress toward a more complete understanding of God's will (John 16:13) and a fuller expression of love for God and one another (Matt 22:37-39; John 13:35; 8:9; 13:11; 1 John 3:14; 4:11, 12). Under God's blessing, the clear presentation of the gospel and careful attention to the disciple-making process will bear spiritual fruit, even among those who have been involved in sexual sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Implications

1. The Church affirms the biblical view of sexuality as a wholesome attribute of human nature created by God to be enjoyed and used responsibly in marriage as part of Christian discipleship.

2. The Church is committed to sharing a biblical view of human sexuality in an intentional and culturally sensitive manner. Emphasis is

placed on appreciating and understanding the human body and its functions, upholding sexual chastity outside and fidelity within marital relationships, and developing skills for decision-making and communication about sexual behavior. The Church is committed to conveying the truth that the misuse of one's own sexuality and the abuse of power in relationships are contrary to God's ideal.

3. The Church calls people to dedicate themselves before God to sexual abstinence outside the marriage covenant and sexual faithfulness to one's spouse. Apart from the wholesome expression of sexual intimacy in marriage, abstinence is the only safe and moral path for the Christian. In any other context, sexual activity is both harmful and immoral. This high standard represents God's intention for the use of His gift, and believers are called upon to uphold this ideal, regardless of the prevailing standards in the culture around them.

4. The Church recognizes the sinfulness of humanity. Human beings make mistakes, use poor judgment, and may deliberately choose to engage in sexual practices that are contrary to God's ideal. Others may not know where to turn for help to live sexually pure lives. Nothing, however, can spare such individuals from the consequences of departing from the divine plan. Emotional and spiritual wounds left by sexual activity that violates God's plan inevitably leave scars. But the Church extends Christ's ministry of mercy and grace by offering God's forgiveness, healing, and restorative power. It must seek to provide the personal, spiritual, and emotional support that will enable the wounded to lay hold of the gospel's resources. The Church must also help persons and families identify and access the full

network of professional resources available.

5. The Church recognizes as morally acceptable the use of contraceptive measures, including condoms, by married couples who seek to control conception. Condoms in particular may be indicated in some marital circumstances—for example, when one partner has been exposed to or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, thus putting the spouse at high risk for infection.

On the other hand, the premarital or extramarital use of condoms—either in an attempt to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy or to prevent the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease raises moral concerns. These concerns must be considered in the context of the divine plan for human sexuality, the relationship between God's creative intent and His regard for human frailty, the process of spiritual growth and moral development within individuals, and the nature of the Church's mission.

Though condoms have proved to be somewhat effective in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease*, this does not make sex outside of marriage morally acceptable. Neither does this fact prevent the emotional damage that results from such behavior. The Church's appeal to youth and adults alike, believers and nonbelievers, is to live lives worthy of the grace extended to us in Christ, drawing as fully as possible upon divine and human resources to live according to God's ideal for sexuality.

6. The Church acknowledges that in cases where a married person may be at risk for transmitting or contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from his or her marriage

partner, the use of a condom is not only morally acceptable but also strongly recommended if the husband and wife decide to continue having sexual intercourse. Users of condoms must be alerted to the importance of using them properly and to the limits of their effectiveness in preventing the transmission of HIV infection.

Appeal

We are facing a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of many people, including church members. Both youth and adults are in peril. The Church must develop, without delay, a comprehensive strategy of education and prevention. The resources of health, social services, educational, ministerial, and other professionals, both within and without the Church, must be mobilized. This crisis demands priority attention—using every legitimate resource and method at the Church's disposal to target the home, school, church, and community. The destiny of an entire generation of human beings is at stake, and we are in a race against time.

*Research indicates that condoms, when correctly used, have about a 97 percent success rate in prevention of pregnancy and about an 85 to 90 percent success rate in prevention of virus transmission, as used by the general population. In those groups who use them

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consistently and correctly, the effectiveness is about 97 percent.



STATEMENT ON TEMPERANCE

From the very inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, temperance has been a major focus, and the church has played a key role in struggling against the inroads of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and other drugs. While some Christian denominations have lessened their emphasis on temperance, Seventh-day Adventists have continued to vigorously oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco and improper drugs. The stand of the church advocating abstinence from harmful substances is well established in the church's fundamental beliefs.

There is evidence indicating that in some areas there has been a relaxation in the promotion within the church of the principles of true temperance. This development, coupled with the relentless advertising campaigns of the alcohol and tobacco industries, has revealed that some Seventh-day Adventists have not been impervious to such negative and insidious influences.

An issue that arises from time to time is the offer of funds to religious organisations by the alcohol or tobacco industries. It is the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that such offers of funds shall not be accepted by the church, nor by any of its institutions. Such money is tainted by human misery and, in the case of the alcohol industry, "has come through the loss of souls of men" (Ellen G White, in *Review and Herald*, May 15, 1894). The gospel mandate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to rebuke evil and not praise or encourage those who manufacture "poisons that bring misery and ruin" and whose "business means robbery" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 337).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms its historic stand for the principles of temperance, upholds its policies and programs supporting Article 21 of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, and calls upon each member to affirm and reveal a life commitment to abstinence from any form of alcohol and tobacco and irresponsible use of drugs. The 1992 Annual Council calls for a revival of temperance principles within the church and urges individuals and church organisations to refuse donations and favours from identifiable alcohol or tobacco industries.



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4. Valuable as it is, human life is not the only or ultimate concern. Self-sacrifice in devotion to God and His principles may take precedence over life itself (Rev 12:11; 1 Cor 13).
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Life: Our right and responsibility to decide

9. God gives humanity the freedom of choice, even if it leads to abuse and tragic consequences. His unwillingness to coerce human obedience necessitated the sacrifice of His Son. He requires us to use His gifts in accordance with His will and ultimately will judge their misuse (Duet 30:19,20; Gen 3; 1 Peter 2:24; Rom 3:5,6; 6:1,2; Gal 5:13).
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11. Decisions about human life from its beginning to its end are best made within the context of healthy family relationships with the support of the faith community (Ex 20:12; Eph 5:6).
12. Human decisions should always be centred in seeking the will of God (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:6; Luke 22:42).

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STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

In His infinite love and wisdom God created mankind, both male and female, and in so doing based human society on the firm foundation of loving homes and families.

It is Satan's purpose, however, to pervert every good thing; and the perversion of the best inevitably leads to that which is worst. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious principle, the association of the sexes has, to a deeply disturbing extent, degenerated into license and abuse which results in bondage. With the aid of many films, television, video, radio programs, and printed materials, the world is being steered on a course to new depths of shame and depravity. Not only is the basic structure of society being greatly damaged but also the breakdown of the family fosters other gross evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are distressing and evoke our pity, and the effects are not only disastrous but also cumulative.

These evils have become more open and constitute a serious and growing threat to the ideals and purposes of the Christian home. Sexual practices which are contrary to God's expressed will are adultery and premarital sex, as well as obsessive sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of spouses, sexual abuse of children, incest, homosexual practices (gay and lesbian), and bestiality are among the obvious perversions of God's original plan. As the intent of clear passages of Scripture (see Ex 20:14; Lev 18:22,23,29 and 20:13; Matthew 5:27,28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Rom 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much uncertainty and confusion prevail. This is what Satan desires. He has always attempted to cause people to forget that when God as Creator made Adam, He also created Eve to be Adam's female companion ("male and female he created them" Gen 1:24 NEB). In spite of the clear moral standards set forth in God's Word for relationships between man and woman, the world today is witnessing a resurgence of the perversions and depravity that marked ancient civilizations.

The degrading results of the obsession of this age with sex and the pursuit of sensual pleasure are clearly described in the Word of God. But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and reestablish the right relationship of human beings with each other and with their Creator. Thus, though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, those who turn to Christ in repentance receive full pardon and choose the better way, the way to complete restoration. By means of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man," and the nurturing ministry of the Church, all may be freed from the grip of perversions and sinful practices.

An acceptance of God's free grace inevitably leads the individual believer to the kind of life and conduct that "will add luster to the doctrine of our God and Saviour" (Titus 2:10 NEB). It will also lead the corporate church to firm and loving discipline of the member whose conduct misrepresents the Saviour and distorts and lowers the true standards of Christian life and behavior.

The Church recognizes the penetrating truth and powerful motivations of Paul's words to Titus: "For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good."—Titus 2:11-14, NEB. (See also 2 Peter 3:11-14.)

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STATEMENT ON MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The contemporary world is confronted by grave ethical, medical, and social problems resulting from increasing sexual permissiveness and associated promiscuity. Because Christians are a part of the larger social community, these attitudes and behaviors have infiltrated the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well, demanding that we address them.

So serious are the challenges presented by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that the United Nations, in conjunction with most of the world's governments, the health-care community, religious, political, and economic leaders, has instituted a series of major research and health-education programs that focus on prevention and treatment. The goal is to prevent, cure, and minimize the effects—or at least slow the spread—of these diseases.

At particular risk are youth entering puberty at increasingly younger ages, when they are especially vulnerable to peer pressure and a barrage of media and peer messages that treat casual sex outside marriage as acceptable and normal. Many youth are sexually active early in their teen years and soon become well established in patterns of sexual activity.

Correlated with increased sexual activity is a dramatic increase in STDs associated with serious physical and emotional problems.

Advances have been made along several lines:

- a. Research has provided more accurate data;
- b. Benefits of using condoms to reduce unwanted pregnancy and the spread of STDs have been documented;
- c. Dangers of promiscuity have been recognized;
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- f. Support has grown for the position that abstinence from extramarital sex preserves sexual and emotional health.

These advances, despite their limitations, have proved beneficial and should be encouraged for their positive effects. Seventh-day Adventist caregivers should be encouraged to participate in promoting such efforts and deserve the support of church members as they do so. A pragmatic approach to dealing with these serious problems and the use of appropriate interventions should by no means be interpreted as endorsement or encouragement of sexual activity outside marriage or of unfaithfulness within marriage. Instead, these efforts must be seen as compassionate attempts to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of detrimental sexual behaviors.

At times, family members, and pastors, teachers, counselors, physicians, and others in helping professions may find themselves working with individuals who, despite strong counsel, refuse to turn from sexual decadence and live by God's high standard of morality. In such cases, those

entrusted with ministry may, as a last resort, counsel specific individuals to use contraceptive and prophylactic methods such as condoms in an attempt to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of spreading life-decimating STDs. Utmost care should be taken when making such an intervention to make it clear to the individual(s) and members of the community involved that this extreme measure should in no way be misconstrued as a scriptural sanction for sexual intimacy outside marriage. Such action on the part of professionals should be considered interim and utilized only in individual cases. Though such interventions may provide a little time for grace to do its work in human hearts, they do not provide a viable long-term solution. The Church must remain committed to making the most of every opportunity to reinforce the wisdom of God's design for human sexuality and to calling men and women to the highest standard of moral conduct.

Biblical Principles

Although the efforts described above are in many ways beneficial, they are only a response to existing situations created by the impact of sin. In the Scriptures, God has set out a superior plan to guide our use of His gift of sexuality. Built upon a series of guiding principles, it presents in practical terms God's ideal for His people who must live in a sin-stricken world.

1. Sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage. Sexuality is a loving gift of the Creator to humanity (Gen 1:26, 27). The gospel calls

believers to an appreciation for and stewardship of their sexuality in harmony with the divine purposes (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:13-20; Eph 5:1-8; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 4:3-7). In God's plan, sexual intimacy is reserved for a man and a woman within the bounds of the marriage covenant (Gen 2:24, 26; Exod 20:14; Proverbs 5; Song of Sol 4:12; 8:8-10; 2:6, 7; 3:5; 8:3, 4; Hos 3:3; Heb 13:4). Sexual fidelity within marriage is crucial to convey a full understanding of God's metaphor comparing marriage to His relationship with His people (Isa 54:5; Hos 2:14-23; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:6-9; 21:9).

2. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is immoral and harmful. Such intimacy has detrimental effects on individuals (Lev 18:6-3; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:18), as well as on the marriage relationship (Prov 5:1-23). It is identified by Scripture as part of the sinful life (Gal 5:19; Col 3:5).

3. God recognizes human frailty. His divine will for human beings and His intent for creation are unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Matt 5:17-20; Acts 20:27). His absolute love for human beings and His redemptive intent are equally unchangeable (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:35-39; Eph 1:1-14; 3:14-19; 1 John 4:7-10). The gospel message, centered in Jesus Christ, binds these truths together (Ps 85:10; 1 John 2:1,2).

God's grace is the only hope for fallen humanity (Rom 3:23, 24; 5:1, 2, 20; Eph 2:1-5). He is patient and long-suffering with human frailty (Num 14:18, 19; Ps 86:15; 103:13, 14; Hos 11:8, 9; Jonah 3:1; 4:10, 11; Matt 23:37; 1 Tim 1:15, 16). Though God's grace does not give license to sin (Rom 6:1, 2), it is through such grace that God accomplishes His redemptive intent in the circumstances resulting from sin (Rom 5:12-21). God's practical dealings in cases

of divorce (Deut 24:1-5; Ezra 10:10, 11; Matt 19:7, 8), polygamy (Exod 21:10; Deut 17:17; 21:15-17; Matt 19:4, 5), the introduction of flesh foods (Gen 1:11, 12, 29, 30; 9:3; Lev 3:17; 11:47), and provision for an earthly monarch (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; Hos 13:11) offer examples of interventions short of God's ideal. Through such cases, we see His grace and mercy at work in a world deformed by sin.

4. The Church conducts its mission in a fallen world. Existing conditions contrast sharply with God's ideal. Both believers and unbelievers are vulnerable to sexual immorality as one of the tragic results of sin (John 17:15; 1 John 2:15). The Church is called to minister to believers and unbelievers alike, reaching and reclaiming sinners (Matt 28:19; Mark 2:17; 2 Cor 5:20, 21), nurturing the growth of believers (Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-13, 15; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Peter 3:18), uplifting the infinite worth of each individual (Isa 43:3, 4, 7; Matt 12:12; Luke 12:7; 15:1-32; 1 Peter 1:18, 19), protecting the weak and vulnerable (Rom 15:1; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 13:3), promoting and preserving life and health (John 10:10; 1 Cor 6:19; 3 John 2), and calling men and women to take up their lofty position as God's chosen and holy people (Eph 4:1; 5:8; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; 2:5, 9). The ministry of the Church is both to meet individuals where they are (1 Cor 3:1, 2; 7:1-28), and to call them to a higher standard (Luke 19:5-10; John 8:3-11; Acts 17:18-34).

5. A spiritual development process is anticipated in the Christian life. Change for the Christian involves both conversion (John 3:3, 7; Acts 3:19; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 5:17) and growth (Prov 4:18; Luke 2:52; Eph 3:17-19; 4:11-15; 2 Peter 3:18). At conversion, believers accept Christ's perfect life as their own

by faith and experience a Spirit-led transformation of values (John 3:5; Gal 2:20). Both external and internal forces may provoke relapses in thought or conduct (Gal 5:16-18; 1 John 3:20), but commitment to grace-induced progress in the Christian life (1 Cor 15:10; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28, 29) and reliance upon God-provided resources (Rom 8:5-7; Gal 5:24, 25) will produce growth toward Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:1).

The Scriptures call for human beings to progress morally and spiritually throughout their lives (Luke 2:52; 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20). Planning for and facilitating such growth is integral to fulfilling the gospel commission (Matt 28:20; Eph 3:14-24). It is the task of religious education to attend to individual development and to present truth in ways that hearers can understand (Matt 11:15), causing them to stretch but not to stumble (Rom 14:1-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Though some allowance may be made for the unlearned or immature (Matt 13:34; John 16:12; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor 3:1, 2), over time individuals should progress toward a more complete understanding of God's will (John 16:13) and a fuller expression of love for God and one another (Matt 22:37-39; John 13:35; 8:9; 13:11; 1 John 3:14; 4:11, 12). Under God's blessing, the clear presentation of the gospel and careful attention to the disciple-making process will bear spiritual fruit, even among those who have been involved in sexual sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Implications

1. The Church affirms the biblical view of sexuality as a wholesome attribute of human nature created by God to be enjoyed and used responsibly in marriage as part of Christian discipleship.

2. The Church is committed to sharing a biblical view of human sexuality in an intentional and culturally sensitive manner. Emphasis is placed on appreciating and understanding the human body and its functions, upholding sexual chastity outside and fidelity within marital relationships, and developing skills for decision-making and communication about sexual behavior. The Church is committed to conveying the truth that the misuse of one's own sexuality and the abuse of power in relationships are contrary to God's ideal.

3. The Church calls people to dedicate themselves before God to sexual abstinence outside the marriage covenant and sexual faithfulness to one's spouse. Apart from the wholesome expression of sexual intimacy in marriage, abstinence is the only safe and moral path for the Christian. In any other context, sexual activity is both harmful and immoral. This high standard represents God's intention for the use of His gift, and believers are called upon to uphold this ideal, regardless of the prevailing standards in the culture around them.

4. The Church recognizes the sinfulness of humanity. Human beings make mistakes, use poor judgment, and may deliberately choose to engage in sexual practices that are contrary to God's ideal. Others may not know where to turn for help to live sexually pure lives. Nothing, however, can spare such individuals from the consequences of departing from the divine plan. Emotional and spiritual wounds left by sexual activity that violates God's plan inevitably leave scars. But the Church extends Christ's ministry of mercy and grace by offering God's forgiveness, healing, and restorative power. It must seek to provide the personal, spiritual,

and emotional support that will enable the wounded to lay hold of the gospel's resources. The Church must also help persons and families identify and access the full network of professional resources available.

5. The Church recognizes as morally acceptable the use of contraceptive measures, including condoms, by married couples who seek to control conception. Condoms in particular may be indicated in some marital circumstances—for example, when one partner has been exposed to or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, thus putting the spouse at high risk for infection.

On the other hand, the premarital or extramarital use of condoms—either in an attempt to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy or to prevent the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease raises moral concerns. These concerns must be considered in the context of the divine plan for human sexuality, the relationship between God's creative intent and His regard for human frailty, the process of spiritual growth and moral development within individuals, and the nature of the Church's mission.

Though condoms have proved to be somewhat effective in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease*, this does not make sex outside of marriage morally acceptable. Neither does this fact prevent the emotional damage that results from such behavior. The Church's appeal to youth and adults alike, believers and nonbelievers, is to live lives worthy of the grace extended to us in Christ, drawing as fully as possible upon divine and human resources to live according to God's ideal for sexuality.

6. The Church acknowledges that in cases where a married person

may be at risk for transmitting or contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from his or her marriage partner, the use of a condom is not only morally acceptable but also strongly recommended if the husband and wife decide to continue having sexual intercourse. Users of condoms must be alerted to the importance of using them properly and to the limits of their effectiveness in preventing the transmission of HIV infection.

Appeal

We are facing a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of many people, including church members. Both youth and adults are in peril. The Church must develop, without delay, a comprehensive strategy of education and prevention. The resources of health, social services, educational, ministerial, and other professionals, both within and without the Church, must be mobilized. This crisis demands priority attention—using every legitimate resource and method at the Church's disposal to target the home, school, church, and community. The destiny of an entire generation of human beings is at stake, and we are in a race against time.

*Research indicates that condoms, when correctly used, have about a 97 percent success rate in prevention of pregnancy and about an 85 to 90 percent success rate in prevention of virus transmission, as used by the general population. In those groups who use them consistently and correctly, the effectiveness is about 97 percent.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.



STATEMENT ON TEMPERANCE

From the very inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, temperance has been a major focus, and the church has played a key role in struggling against the inroads of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and other drugs. While some Christian denominations have lessened their emphasis on temperance, Seventh-day Adventists have continued to vigorously oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco and improper drugs. The stand of the church advocating abstinence from harmful substances is well established in the church's fundamental beliefs.

There is evidence indicating that in some areas there has been a relaxation in the promotion within the church of the principles of true temperance. This development, coupled with the relentless advertising campaigns of the alcohol and tobacco industries, has revealed that some Seventh-day Adventists have not been impervious to such negative and insidious influences.

An issue that arises from time to time is the offer of funds to religious organisations by the alcohol or tobacco industries. It is the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that such offers of funds shall not be accepted by the church, nor by any of its institutions. Such money is tainted by human misery and, in the case of the alcohol industry, "has come through the loss of souls of men" (Ellen G White, in *Review and Herald*, May 15, 1894). The gospel mandate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to rebuke evil and not praise or encourage those who manufacture "poisons that bring misery and ruin" and whose "business means robbery" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 337).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms its historic stand for the principles of temperance, upholds its policies and programs supporting Article 21 of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, and calls upon each member to affirm and reveal a life commitment to abstinence from any form of alcohol and tobacco and irresponsible use of drugs. The 1992 Annual Council calls for a revival of temperance principles within the church and urges individuals and church organisations to refuse donations and favours from identifiable alcohol or tobacco industries.



STATEMENT ON PORNOGRAPHY

Diverse courts and cultures may debate the definitions and consequences of pornography (the literature of sexual deviance), but on the basis of eternal principles, Seventh-day Adventists of whatever culture deem pornography to be destructive, demeaning, desensitizing, and exploitative.

It is destructive to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is demeaning, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is desensitizing to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is exploitative, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization."—Saturday Review of Literature, Sept. 20, 1975.

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

Wise, indeed, is the counsel of Christianity's first great theologian: "If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good" (Philippians 4:8, 9, Phillips). This is advice that all Christians would do well to heed.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES FOR A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE

Introduction

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV). In Christ is the promise of eternal life; but since human life is mortal, humans are confronted with difficult issues regarding life and death. The following principles refer to the whole person (body, soul and spirit), an indivisible whole (Gen 2:7; 1 Thess 5:23).

Life: Our valuable gift from God

1. God is the Source, Giver and Sustainer of all life (Acts 17:25,28; Job 33:4; Gen 1:30; 2:7; Ps 36:9; John 1:3,4).
2. Human life has unique value because human beings, though fallen, are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27; Rom 3:23; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:2; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18,19).
3. God values human life not on the basis of human accomplishments or contributions, but because we are God’s creation and the object of His redeeming love (Rom 5:6,8; Eph 2:2-9; 1 Tim 1:15; Titus 3:4,5; Matt 5:43-48; John 1:3; 10:10).

Life: Our response to God’s gift

4. Valuable as it is, human life is not the only or ultimate concern. Self-sacrifice in devotion to God and His principles may take precedence over life itself (Rev 12:11; 1 Cor 13).
5. God calls for the protection of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction (Ex 20:13; Rev 21:8; Ex 23:7; Deut 24:16; Prov 6:16,17; Jer 7:3-34; Micah 6:7; Gen 9:5,6).
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God's grace is the only hope for fallen humanity (Rom 3:23, 24; 5:1, 2, 20; Eph 2:1-5). He is patient and long-suffering with human frailty (Num 14:18, 19; Ps 86:15; 103:13, 14; Hos 11:8, 9; Jonah 3:1; 4:10, 11; Matt 23:37; 1 Tim 1:15, 16). Though God's grace does not give license to sin (Rom 6:1, 2), it is through such grace that God accomplishes His redemptive intent in the circumstances resulting from sin (Rom 5:12-21). God's practical dealings in cases

of divorce (Deut 24:1-5; Ezra 10:10, 11; Matt 19:7, 8), polygamy (Exod 21:10; Deut 17:17; 21:15-17; Matt 19:4, 5), the introduction of flesh foods (Gen 1:11, 12, 29, 30; 9:3; Lev 3:17; 11:47), and provision for an earthly monarch (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; Hos 13:11) offer examples of interventions short of God's ideal. Through such cases, we see His grace and mercy at work in a world deformed by sin.

4. The Church conducts its mission in a fallen world. Existing conditions contrast sharply with God's ideal. Both believers and unbelievers are vulnerable to sexual immorality as one of the tragic results of sin (John 17:15; 1 John 2:15). The Church is called to minister to believers and unbelievers alike, reaching and reclaiming sinners (Matt 28:19; Mark 2:17; 2 Cor 5:20, 21), nurturing the growth of believers (Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-13, 15; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Peter 3:18), uplifting the infinite worth of each individual (Isa 43:3, 4, 7; Matt 12:12; Luke 12:7; 15:1-32; 1 Peter 1:18, 19), protecting the weak and vulnerable (Rom 15:1; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 13:3), promoting and preserving life and health (John 10:10; 1 Cor 6:19; 3 John 2), and calling men and women to take up their lofty position as God's chosen and holy people (Eph 4:1; 5:8; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; 2:5, 9). The ministry of the Church is both to meet individuals where they are (1 Cor 3:1, 2; 7:1-28), and to call them to a higher standard (Luke 19:5-10; John 8:3-11; Acts 17:18-34).

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by faith and experience a Spirit-led transformation of values (John 3:5; Gal 2:20). Both external and internal forces may provoke relapses in thought or conduct (Gal 5:16-18; 1 John 3:20), but commitment to grace-induced progress in the Christian life (1 Cor 15:10; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28, 29) and reliance upon God-provided resources (Rom 8:5-7; Gal 5:24, 25) will produce growth toward Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:1).

The Scriptures call for human beings to progress morally and spiritually throughout their lives (Luke 2:52; 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20). Planning for and facilitating such growth is integral to fulfilling the gospel commission (Matt 28:20; Eph 3:14-24). It is the task of religious education to attend to individual development and to present truth in ways that hearers can understand (Matt 11:15), causing them to stretch but not to stumble (Rom 14:1-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Though some allowance may be made for the unlearned or immature (Matt 13:34; John 16:12; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor 3:1, 2), over time individuals should progress toward a more complete understanding of God's will (John 16:13) and a fuller expression of love for God and one another (Matt 22:37-39; John 13:35; 8:9; 13:11; 1 John 3:14; 4:11, 12). Under God's blessing, the clear presentation of the gospel and careful attention to the disciple-making process will bear spiritual fruit, even among those who have been involved in sexual sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Implications

1. The Church affirms the biblical view of sexuality as a wholesome attribute of human nature created by God to be enjoyed and used responsibly in marriage as part of Christian discipleship.

2. The Church is committed to sharing a biblical view of human sexuality in an intentional and culturally sensitive manner. Emphasis is placed on appreciating and understanding the human body and its functions, upholding sexual chastity outside and fidelity within marital relationships, and developing skills for decision-making and communication about sexual behavior. The Church is committed to conveying the truth that the misuse of one's own sexuality and the abuse of power in relationships are contrary to God's ideal.

3. The Church calls people to dedicate themselves before God to sexual abstinence outside the marriage covenant and sexual faithfulness to one's spouse. Apart from the wholesome expression of sexual intimacy in marriage, abstinence is the only safe and moral path for the Christian. In any other context, sexual activity is both harmful and immoral. This high standard represents God's intention for the use of His gift, and believers are called upon to uphold this ideal, regardless of the prevailing standards in the culture around them.

4. The Church recognizes the sinfulness of humanity. Human beings make mistakes, use poor judgment, and may deliberately choose to engage in sexual practices that are contrary to God's ideal. Others may not know where to turn for help to live sexually pure lives. Nothing, however, can spare such individuals from the consequences of departing from the divine plan. Emotional and spiritual wounds left by sexual activity that violates God's plan inevitably leave scars. But the Church extends Christ's ministry of mercy and grace by offering God's forgiveness, healing, and restorative power. It must seek to provide the personal, spiritual,

and emotional support that will enable the wounded to lay hold of the gospel's resources. The Church must also help persons and families identify and access the full network of professional resources available.

5. The Church recognizes as morally acceptable the use of contraceptive measures, including condoms, by married couples who seek to control conception. Condoms in particular may be indicated in some marital circumstances—for example, when one partner has been exposed to or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, thus putting the spouse at high risk for infection.

On the other hand, the premarital or extramarital use of condoms—either in an attempt to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy or to prevent the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease raises moral concerns. These concerns must be considered in the context of the divine plan for human sexuality, the relationship between God's creative intent and His regard for human frailty, the process of spiritual growth and moral development within individuals, and the nature of the Church's mission.

Though condoms have proved to be somewhat effective in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease*, this does not make sex outside of marriage morally acceptable. Neither does this fact prevent the emotional damage that results from such behavior. The Church's appeal to youth and adults alike, believers and nonbelievers, is to live lives worthy of the grace extended to us in Christ, drawing as fully as possible upon divine and human resources to live according to God's ideal for sexuality.

6. The Church acknowledges that in cases where a married person

may be at risk for transmitting or contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from his or her marriage partner, the use of a condom is not only morally acceptable but also strongly recommended if the husband and wife decide to continue having sexual intercourse. Users of condoms must be alerted to the importance of using them properly and to the limits of their effectiveness in preventing the transmission of HIV infection.

Appeal

We are facing a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of many people, including church members. Both youth and adults are in peril. The Church must develop, without delay, a comprehensive strategy of education and prevention. The resources of health, social services, educational, ministerial, and other professionals, both within and without the Church, must be mobilized. This crisis demands priority attention—using every legitimate resource and method at the Church's disposal to target the home, school, church, and community. The destiny of an entire generation of human beings is at stake, and we are in a race against time.

*Research indicates that condoms, when correctly used, have about a 97 percent success rate in prevention of pregnancy and about an 85 to 90 percent success rate in prevention of virus transmission, as used by the general population. In those groups who use them consistently and correctly, the effectiveness is about 97 percent.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.



STATEMENT ON TEMPERANCE

From the very inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, temperance has been a major focus, and the church has played a key role in struggling against the inroads of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and other drugs. While some Christian denominations have lessened their emphasis on temperance, Seventh-day Adventists have continued to vigorously oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco and improper drugs. The stand of the church advocating abstinence from harmful substances is well established in the church's fundamental beliefs.

There is evidence indicating that in some areas there has been a relaxation in the promotion within the church of the principles of true temperance. This development, coupled with the relentless advertising campaigns of the alcohol and tobacco industries, has revealed that some Seventh-day Adventists have not been impervious to such negative and insidious influences.

An issue that arises from time to time is the offer of funds to religious organisations by the alcohol or tobacco industries. It is the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that such offers of funds shall not be accepted by the church, nor by any of its institutions. Such money is tainted by human misery and, in the case of the alcohol industry, "has come through the loss of souls of men" (Ellen G White, in *Review and Herald*, May 15, 1894). The gospel mandate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to rebuke evil and not praise or encourage those who manufacture "poisons that bring misery and ruin" and whose "business means robbery" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 337).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms its historic stand for the principles of temperance, upholds its policies and programs supporting Article 21 of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, and calls upon each member to affirm and reveal a life commitment to abstinence from any form of alcohol and tobacco and irresponsible use of drugs. The 1992 Annual Council calls for a revival of temperance principles within the church and urges individuals and church organisations to refuse donations and favours from identifiable alcohol or tobacco industries.



STATEMENT ON PORNOGRAPHY

Diverse courts and cultures may debate the definitions and consequences of pornography (the literature of sexual deviance), but on the basis of eternal principles, Seventh-day Adventists of whatever culture deem pornography to be destructive, demeaning, desensitizing, and exploitative.

It is destructive to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is demeaning, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is desensitizing to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is exploitative, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization."—Saturday Review of Literature, Sept. 20, 1975.

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

Wise, indeed, is the counsel of Christianity's first great theologian: "If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good" (Philippians 4:8, 9, Phillips). This is advice that all Christians would do well to heed.

This public statement was released by the General Conference president, Neal C. Wilson, after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on July 5, 1990, at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana.



STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES FOR A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE

Introduction

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV). In Christ is the promise of eternal life; but since human life is mortal, humans are confronted with difficult issues regarding life and death. The following principles refer to the whole person (body, soul and spirit), an indivisible whole (Gen 2:7; 1 Thess 5:23).

Life: Our valuable gift from God

1. God is the Source, Giver and Sustainer of all life (Acts 17:25,28; Job 33:4; Gen 1:30; 2:7; Ps 36:9; John 1:3,4).
2. Human life has unique value because human beings, though fallen, are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27; Rom 3:23; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:2; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18,19).
3. God values human life not on the basis of human accomplishments or contributions, but because we are God’s creation and the object of His redeeming love (Rom 5:6,8; Eph 2:2-9; 1 Tim 1:15; Titus 3:4,5; Matt 5:43-48; John 1:3; 10:10).

Life: Our response to God’s gift

4. Valuable as it is, human life is not the only or ultimate concern. Self-sacrifice in devotion to God and His principles may take precedence over life itself (Rev 12:11; 1 Cor 13).
5. God calls for the protection of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction (Ex 20:13; Rev 21:8; Ex 23:7; Deut 24:16; Prov 6:16,17; Jer 7:3-34; Micah 6:7; Gen 9:5,6).
6. God is especially concerned for the protection of the weak, the defenceless and the oppressed (Ps 82:3,4; James 1:27; Micah 6:8; Acts 20:35; Prov 24:11,12; Luke 1:52-54).
7. Christian love (agape) is the costly dedication of our lives to enhancing the lives of others. Love also respects personal dignity and does not condone the oppression of one person to support the abusive behaviour of another (Matt 16:21; Phil 2:1-11; 1 John 3:16; 4:8-11; Matt 22:39; John 18:22,23; 13:34).
8. The believing community is called to demonstrate Christian love in tangible, practical and substantive ways. God calls us to restore gently the broken (Gal 6:1,2; 1 John 3:17,18; Matt 1:23; Phil 2:1-11; John 8:2-11; Rom 8:1-14; Matt 7:1,2; 12:20; Isa 40-42; 62:2-4).

Life: Our right and responsibility to decide

9. God gives humanity the freedom of choice, even if it leads to abuse and tragic consequences. His unwillingness to coerce human obedience necessitated the sacrifice of His Son. He requires us to use His gifts in accordance with His will and ultimately will judge their misuse (Duet 30:19,20; Gen 3; 1 Peter 2:24; Rom 3:5,6; 6:1,2; Gal 5:13).
10. God calls each of us individually to moral decision-making and to search the Scriptures for the biblical principles underlying such choices (John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 2:9; Rom 7:13-25).
11. Decisions about human life from its beginning to its end are best made within the context of healthy family relationships with the support of the faith community (Ex 20:12; Eph 5:6).
12. Human decisions should always be centred in seeking the will of God (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:6; Luke 22:42).

These principles were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.



STATEMENT OF CONCERN ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

In His infinite love and wisdom God created mankind, both male and female, and in so doing based human society on the firm foundation of loving homes and families.

It is Satan's purpose, however, to pervert every good thing; and the perversion of the best inevitably leads to that which is worst. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious principle, the association of the sexes has, to a deeply disturbing extent, degenerated into license and abuse which results in bondage. With the aid of many films, television, video, radio programs, and printed materials, the world is being steered on a course to new depths of shame and depravity. Not only is the basic structure of society being greatly damaged but also the breakdown of the family fosters other gross evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are distressing and evoke our pity, and the effects are not only disastrous but also cumulative.

These evils have become more open and constitute a serious and growing threat to the ideals and purposes of the Christian home. Sexual practices which are contrary to God's expressed will are adultery and premarital sex, as well as obsessive sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of spouses, sexual abuse of children, incest, homosexual practices (gay and lesbian), and bestiality are among the obvious perversions of God's original plan. As the intent of clear passages of Scripture (see Ex 20:14; Lev 18:22,23,29 and 20:13; Matthew 5:27,28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Rom 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much uncertainty and confusion prevail. This is what Satan desires. He has always attempted to cause people to forget that when God as Creator made Adam, He also created Eve to be Adam's female companion ("male and female he created them" Gen 1:24 NEB). In spite of the clear moral standards set forth in God's Word for relationships between man and woman, the world today is witnessing a resurgence of the perversions and depravity that marked ancient civilizations.

The degrading results of the obsession of this age with sex and the pursuit of sensual pleasure are clearly described in the Word of God. But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and reestablish the right relationship of human beings with each other and with their Creator. Thus, though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, those who turn to Christ in repentance receive full pardon and choose the better way, the way to complete restoration. By means of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man," and the nurturing ministry of the Church, all may be freed from the grip of perversions and sinful practices.

An acceptance of God's free grace inevitably leads the individual believer to the kind of life and conduct that "will add luster to the doctrine of our God and Saviour" (Titus 2:10 NEB). It will also lead the corporate church to firm and loving discipline of the member whose conduct misrepresents the Saviour and distorts and lowers the true standards of Christian life and behavior.

The Church recognizes the penetrating truth and powerful motivations of Paul's words to Titus: "For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good."—Titus 2:11-14, NEB. (See also 2 Peter 3:11-14.)

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Washington, D.C., October 12, 1987.



STATEMENT ON MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

The contemporary world is confronted by grave ethical, medical, and social problems resulting from increasing sexual permissiveness and associated promiscuity. Because Christians are a part of the larger social community, these attitudes and behaviors have infiltrated the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well, demanding that we address them.

So serious are the challenges presented by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that the United Nations, in conjunction with most of the world's governments, the health-care community, religious, political, and economic leaders, has instituted a series of major research and health-education programs that focus on prevention and treatment. The goal is to prevent, cure, and minimize the effects—or at least slow the spread—of these diseases.

At particular risk are youth entering puberty at increasingly younger ages, when they are especially vulnerable to peer pressure and a barrage of media and peer messages that treat casual sex outside marriage as acceptable and normal. Many youth are sexually active early in their teen years and soon become well established in patterns of sexual activity.

Correlated with increased sexual activity is a dramatic increase in STDs associated with serious physical and emotional problems.

Advances have been made along several lines:

- a. Research has provided more accurate data;
- b. Benefits of using condoms to reduce unwanted pregnancy and the spread of STDs have been documented;
- c. Dangers of promiscuity have been recognized;
- d. More effective treatment has reduced the spread and progression of many STDs;
- e. Risk of long-term emotional damage resulting from casual sex has been recognized; and
- f. Support has grown for the position that abstinence from extramarital sex preserves sexual and emotional health.

These advances, despite their limitations, have proved beneficial and should be encouraged for their positive effects. Seventh-day Adventist caregivers should be encouraged to participate in promoting such efforts and deserve the support of church members as they do so. A pragmatic approach to dealing with these serious problems and the use of appropriate interventions should by no means be interpreted as endorsement or encouragement of sexual activity outside marriage or of unfaithfulness within marriage. Instead, these efforts must be seen as compassionate attempts to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of detrimental sexual behaviors.

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5. A spiritual development process is anticipated in the Christian life. Change for the Christian involves both conversion (John 3:3, 7; Acts 3:19; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 5:17) and growth (Prov 4:18; Luke 2:52; Eph 3:17-19; 4:11-15; 2 Peter 3:18). At conversion, believers accept Christ's perfect life as their own

by faith and experience a Spirit-led transformation of values (John 3:5; Gal 2:20). Both external and internal forces may provoke relapses in thought or conduct (Gal 5:16-18; 1 John 3:20), but commitment to grace-induced progress in the Christian life (1 Cor 15:10; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28, 29) and reliance upon God-provided resources (Rom 8:5-7; Gal 5:24, 25) will produce growth toward Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:1).

The Scriptures call for human beings to progress morally and spiritually throughout their lives (Luke 2:52; 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20). Planning for and facilitating such growth is integral to fulfilling the gospel commission (Matt 28:20; Eph 3:14-24). It is the task of religious education to attend to individual development and to present truth in ways that hearers can understand (Matt 11:15), causing them to stretch but not to stumble (Rom 14:1-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Though some allowance may be made for the unlearned or immature (Matt 13:34; John 16:12; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor 3:1, 2), over time individuals should progress toward a more complete understanding of God's will (John 16:13) and a fuller expression of love for God and one another (Matt 22:37-39; John 13:35; 8:9; 13:11; 1 John 3:14; 4:11, 12). Under God's blessing, the clear presentation of the gospel and careful attention to the disciple-making process will bear spiritual fruit, even among those who have been involved in sexual sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Implications

1. The Church affirms the biblical view of sexuality as a wholesome attribute of human nature created by God to be enjoyed and used responsibly in marriage as part of Christian discipleship.

2. The Church is committed to sharing a biblical view of human sexuality in an intentional and culturally sensitive manner. Emphasis is placed on appreciating and understanding the human body and its functions, upholding sexual chastity outside and fidelity within marital relationships, and developing skills for decision-making and communication about sexual behavior. The Church is committed to conveying the truth that the misuse of one's own sexuality and the abuse of power in relationships are contrary to God's ideal.

3. The Church calls people to dedicate themselves before God to sexual abstinence outside the marriage covenant and sexual faithfulness to one's spouse. Apart from the wholesome expression of sexual intimacy in marriage, abstinence is the only safe and moral path for the Christian. In any other context, sexual activity is both harmful and immoral. This high standard represents God's intention for the use of His gift, and believers are called upon to uphold this ideal, regardless of the prevailing standards in the culture around them.

4. The Church recognizes the sinfulness of humanity. Human beings make mistakes, use poor judgment, and may deliberately choose to engage in sexual practices that are contrary to God's ideal. Others may not know where to turn for help to live sexually pure lives. Nothing, however, can spare such individuals from the consequences of departing from the divine plan. Emotional and spiritual wounds left by sexual activity that violates God's plan inevitably leave scars. But the Church extends Christ's ministry of mercy and grace by offering God's forgiveness, healing, and restorative power. It must seek to provide the personal, spiritual,

and emotional support that will enable the wounded to lay hold of the gospel's resources. The Church must also help persons and families identify and access the full network of professional resources available.

5. The Church recognizes as morally acceptable the use of contraceptive measures, including condoms, by married couples who seek to control conception. Condoms in particular may be indicated in some marital circumstances—for example, when one partner has been exposed to or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, thus putting the spouse at high risk for infection.

On the other hand, the premarital or extramarital use of condoms—either in an attempt to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy or to prevent the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease raises moral concerns. These concerns must be considered in the context of the divine plan for human sexuality, the relationship between God's creative intent and His regard for human frailty, the process of spiritual growth and moral development within individuals, and the nature of the Church's mission.

Though condoms have proved to be somewhat effective in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease*, this does not make sex outside of marriage morally acceptable. Neither does this fact prevent the emotional damage that results from such behavior. The Church's appeal to youth and adults alike, believers and nonbelievers, is to live lives worthy of the grace extended to us in Christ, drawing as fully as possible upon divine and human resources to live according to God's ideal for sexuality.

6. The Church acknowledges that in cases where a married person

may be at risk for transmitting or contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from his or her marriage partner, the use of a condom is not only morally acceptable but also strongly recommended if the husband and wife decide to continue having sexual intercourse. Users of condoms must be alerted to the importance of using them properly and to the limits of their effectiveness in preventing the transmission of HIV infection.

Appeal

We are facing a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of many people, including church members. Both youth and adults are in peril. The Church must develop, without delay, a comprehensive strategy of education and prevention. The resources of health, social services, educational, ministerial, and other professionals, both within and without the Church, must be mobilized. This crisis demands priority attention—using every legitimate resource and method at the Church's disposal to target the home, school, church, and community. The destiny of an entire generation of human beings is at stake, and we are in a race against time.

*Research indicates that condoms, when correctly used, have about a 97 percent success rate in prevention of pregnancy and about an 85 to 90 percent success rate in prevention of virus transmission, as used by the general population. In those groups who use them consistently and correctly, the effectiveness is about 97 percent.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.



STATEMENT ON TEMPERANCE

From the very inception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, temperance has been a major focus, and the church has played a key role in struggling against the inroads of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and other drugs. While some Christian denominations have lessened their emphasis on temperance, Seventh-day Adventists have continued to vigorously oppose the use of alcohol, tobacco and improper drugs. The stand of the church advocating abstinence from harmful substances is well established in the church's fundamental beliefs.

There is evidence indicating that in some areas there has been a relaxation in the promotion within the church of the principles of true temperance. This development, coupled with the relentless advertising campaigns of the alcohol and tobacco industries, has revealed that some Seventh-day Adventists have not been impervious to such negative and insidious influences.

An issue that arises from time to time is the offer of funds to religious organisations by the alcohol or tobacco industries. It is the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that such offers of funds shall not be accepted by the church, nor by any of its institutions. Such money is tainted by human misery and, in the case of the alcohol industry, "has come through the loss of souls of men" (Ellen G White, in *Review and Herald*, May 15, 1894). The gospel mandate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to rebuke evil and not praise or encourage those who manufacture "poisons that bring misery and ruin" and whose "business means robbery" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p 337).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms its historic stand for the principles of temperance, upholds its policies and programs supporting Article 21 of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, and calls upon each member to affirm and reveal a life commitment to abstinence from any form of alcohol and tobacco and irresponsible use of drugs. The 1992 Annual Council calls for a revival of temperance principles within the church and urges individuals and church organisations to refuse donations and favours from identifiable alcohol or tobacco industries.

