

**INTER- AMERICAN DIVISION**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND  
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY  
ADVISORY**

**APRIL 20- 21, 2016**



 SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST® CHURCH

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

 THE INTERNATIONAL  
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY  
ASSOCIATION



# Contents

Contents .....2

Welcome.....5

**Section 1**

1.1 Introduction..... 6

1.2 Strategic Plans.....7

**Section 2**

**PARL’s Mandate** .....9

2.1 Foundations—Mission and Purpose..... 9

2.2 Church Manual ..... 10

2.3 General Conference Working Policy..... 11

**Section 3** .....15

**Church Statements About Religious Liberty** .....15

3.1 Overview..... 15

3.2 Freedom of Speech and Defamation of Religion.... 15

3.3 Call for Peace ..... 17

3.4 Religious Liberty, Evangelism, and Proselytism..... 21

3.5 Religious Minorities and Religious Freedom ..... 22

3.6 Universal Declaration of Human Rights..... 23

3.7 Roman Catholicism ..... 24

3.8 Tolerance ..... 25

3.9 Religious Freedom ..... 26

3.10 Peace ..... 27

**Church Documents About Religious Liberty** .....28

4.1 Overview..... 28

4.2 Church-State Relations ..... 28

4.3 Ecumenical Movement..... 34

**Section 5** .....42

**Responsibilities of a Union/Conference PARL Director** .....42

5.1 Key Responsibilities of Union/Conference PARL Director      42

..... 43

**Section 6** .....46

**PARL Activities and Events** .....46

6.1 Protocol Lunches ..... 46

6.2 Religious Liberty Dinner..... 50

6.3 Other PARL Events..... 52

6.4 Communication ..... 53

**Section 7** .....56

**PARL World Report** .....56

7.1 Purpose..... 56

7.2 Sensitivities..... 56

7.3 Reporting for PARL World Report ..... 56

7.4 Availability of World Report ..... 57

**Section 8** .....58

**World Adventists in Public Office Association**.....58

8.1 History and Purpose ..... 58

8.2 Relationship with PARL..... 58

8.3 Request for Names and Assistance ..... 59

**Section 9** .....60

**International Religious Liberty Association** .....60

9.1 History of the IRLA..... 60

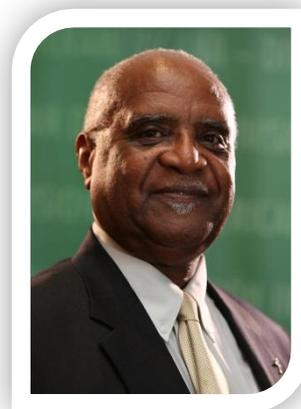
9.2 What is the IRLA? ..... 61

9.3 Mission, Purpose, and Principles of the IRLA ..... 62

9.4 Relationship with the Adventist Church..... 63

9.5 IRLA Meeting of Experts .....	63
9.6 IRLA Publication— <i>Fides et Libertas</i> .....	64
9.7 Steps to Setting up a Regional Association .....	64
9.8 IRLA Bylaws.....	65

## Welcome



Dear PARL Colleagues,

I am delighted to warmly welcome you to the Headquarters of your Division, and particularly to this quinquennial advisory.

First, I wish to pay tribute to Pastor Herrera my immediate predecessor for the work accomplished in the past quinquennium. I am eagerly looking forward to serving you, and serving with you through the exciting activities in which we will engage this quinquennium.

I want to give a very special welcome to Dr. Ganoune Diop, Director of the Department at the General Conference level, to his first Advisory in Inter-America. I look forward to learning more, and working in tandem with you and your team in achieving the goals we have established this quinquennium.

Our agenda for this Advisory is intense, but I trust you will absorb enough to be more effective when you return to your fields. You will discover that one of the main thrusts of the department is to engage the members of the church in sharing the responsibility of being good ambassadors in their communities, rather than depending on “experts” to carry all the responsibilities. We will be depending on you to help in implementing the “Church Ambassador” program throughout the Division.

Let us make the best of our brief time together, and may God continue to bless your work in being a good ambassador. As we impart knowledge and skills through active training of our members, we will help them to become good ambassadors for Christ and His Church.

May this Advisory be a blessing to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leon B Wellington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leon B Wellington, Director

# Section 1

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the Inter American Division (PARL), functions similarly to the foreign affairs ministry in a government or the external affairs department in many corporations. We work mainly with governments, internal organizations, and religious authorities. Our field of activity deals with human rights legislation, geo-politics, protocol, and government. The PARL Department could be, without too much exaggeration, called the “Foreign Affairs Ministry” of the church.

We are the ones who build bridges, try to resolve conflicts, improve legislation, and defend those who are persecuted for their faith, as well as promote and protect religious freedom. Within the last few years, we have developed our presence at the United Nations, the United States government, the Christian World Communions, and non-governmental organizations, and we have given strong support to the International Religious Liberty Association.

In these various areas, we have built a global network of friends and experts belonging to different religious beliefs, but sharing with us the most fundamental values of human rights and human dignity. Our department is the official voice and presence of our church in the global market. Being ambassadors of the church gives us the enormous privilege and responsibility to be also Ambassadors of the Kingdom of God in this world.

In an effort to educate, broaden our base of support among the membership of the Seventh day Adventist church, and promote Adventist Diplomacy, the department will carry out its initiatives at three levels.

### 1. **Church Ambassadors.**

At this level members will be taught the “Twelve Keys to Being a Good Ambassador” and how to better represent the church and its philosophy before the public. The relevant section of the book “**Church Ambassador**” will be used as a text for the training of volunteers.

### 2. **Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Organization.**

Pursue the establishment of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Organizations in each Union to help with the training of Church Ambassadors and to function in their capacities as a liaison between the church, governments, religious organizations as well as other institutions.

### 3. **International Religious Liberty Association.**

The department will seek to establish in every union, a chapter of the International

Religious Liberty Association and through these IRLA chapters organize National Festivals of Religious Freedom in each country.

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department will also:

1. Promote Religious Liberty Sabbath (the 4<sup>th</sup> Sabbath of January each year) and provide program guidelines for the local church.
2. Promote Religious Liberty Dinners and Concerts where individuals and organizations can be awarded for meritorious activities or support of initiatives that promote religious freedom.
3. Give support to Religious Liberty Congresses sponsored by the Unions.
4. Promote the International Religious Liberty Association World Congress.

## 1.2 STRATEGIC PLANS 2016-2020

<b>STRATEGIC ISSUE: CHURCH GROWTH AND CONSOLIDATION</b>				
<b>COMPONENT</b>	<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE AGENT</b>	<b>DESIRED OUTCOME</b>
<b>TRANSFORM AND LIVE</b>	To engage every member as a volunteer for maximum positive impact with the public	Launch the Church Ambassador Initiative.  Recruit volunteers	PARL Department	To help each member see him/herself as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and His Church
<b>EXPLORE AND LEARN</b>	To build social relationships that will enhance greater results in our public outreach activities.	Conduct training of volunteers in each Union to: 1. Interact with the general public 2. Interact with civic leaders, public officials, other denominational leaders, Government officials as well as leaders of commerce. Regional/Union Summits	PARL Department	Achieve a more favorable public perception of the SDA Church, that will bring greater results to the church's public initiatives
<b>CONNECT AND SHARE</b>		Practical application of the training given to volunteers in each pastoral district, the organization of local Church Ambassador chapters for effective functioning.	Union, Conference & Mission PARL Directors	Transform volunteers into willing participants in this aspect of church life.
<b>PROCLAIM AND REAP</b>				
<b>CONSERVE AND DISCIPLE</b>	To help members recognize and skillfully fulfill their obligations to the community they serve	Work with Unions to organize International Religious Liberty Associations (IRLA) in every country of the IAD	PARL Department	To keep members engaged with their communities & maintain a favorable image of the church in the community for positive results in outreach activities

## Section 2

# PARL's Mandate

## 2.1 Foundations—Mission and Purpose

### MISSION STATEMENT

- The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) will act as the point of contact with governments in general matters and foster a clearer understanding of the Christian's duty to God and government.
- The Department will act as the point of contact for inter-church relations, represent the Church before international entities, and network with non-governmental organizations.
- The Department will inform the Church of significant trends in the religious and political world that impact liberty.
- The Department will take positive action to protect and promote religious freedom as the fundamental human right. This includes freedom of conscience and belief, freedom to worship, and freedom for the unrestricted activities of the Church.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

- The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) exists to represent the Church before governments, international organizations, and other religions, always endeavoring to maintain good relationships.
- PARL monitors and interprets current events that may reflect on prophetic scenarios.
- PARL promotes and maintains religious freedom around the world and assists members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who are discriminated against or persecuted for practicing their beliefs.

## 2.2 Church Manual

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The public affairs and religious liberty (PARL) department promotes and maintains religious liberty, with particular emphasis upon liberty of conscience. Religious liberty includes the human right to have or adopt the religion of one's choice, to change religious belief according to conscience, to manifest one's religion individually or in community with fellow believers, in worship, observance, practice, witness, and teaching, subject to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

**Religious Liberty Leader**—The elected religious liberty leader cooperates with both the pastor and the conference or union PARL department. The leader should be of positive spiritual influence, able to meet the general public, interested in public affairs, proficient as a correspondent, and concerned with the preservation of liberty for God's people.

**Religious Liberty Associations**—Each church is considered an informal religious liberty association, and every church member is considered a member of the association. The pastor or an elder is the chairperson.

*General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church Manual, 18th Edition (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2010) pages 92-93.*

## 2.3 General Conference Working Policy

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY— DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

Excerpt from *General Conference Working Policy* (2014-2015) pages 353-355

#### FL 05 Philosophy

The use of force and coercion is inimical to authentic religion. God accepts homage and worship only when they are freely given. While all human rights are of great importance, religious liberty is unique and of special significance. It deals not only with the inter-human dimension, but with a person's relationship with God, the Creator. Seventh-day Adventists therefore view religious liberty as the primordial human right that undergirds all human rights.

Separation of church and state offers the best safeguard for religious liberty and is in harmony with Jesus' statement, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21). The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department encourages, where feasible, such separation. The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department also believes that the union of church and state is a sure formula for discrimination and intolerance and offers a fertile soil for the spread of persecution.

In view of its divinely ordained role, civil government is entitled to respectful and willing obedience, to the extent that civil laws and regulations are not in conflict with God's requirements, for it is necessary "to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

FL 05 05 Religious Liberty—I. Religious liberty includes the fundamental human right to have, adopt, or change one's religion or religious belief according to conscience and to manifest and practice one's religion individually or in fellowship with other believers, in prayer, devotions, witness, and teaching, including the observance of a weekly day of rest and worship in harmony with the precepts of one's religion, subject to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

2. Religious liberty also includes the right to publish literature, operate church schools at all levels, as well as other institutions, ecclesiastic control of doctrine, polity and appointment of ministers and church officials, without outside interference, and the right to have regular international contacts and interrelationships with coreligionist and church organizations in all parts of the world.

#### FL 10 Purpose

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, one of the original core departments of the Church, was established to promote and maintain religious liberty, with particular emphasis upon individual liberty of conscience. In so doing, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department is involved in government relations, inter-church contacts and, where indicated, networks with non-governmental organizations which have kindred goals in upholding religious freedom. The department not only works for the religious liberties of both individual church

members and organized entities of the Church, but also supports the rightful religious liberties of all people.

In view of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the "great controversy" and the climactic events of human history involving union of church and state, eliminating the free exercise of religion, and resulting in persecution of the faithful remnant, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department monitors and seeks to interpret prudently current trends that may reflect the prophetic scenario.

#### FL 15 Departmental Responsibilities

1. The General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department is responsible for developing global religious liberty strategies and programs for the Church, in harmony with FL 05 and FL 10. This program will include appropriate strategic contacts and relationships with various governments, the United Nations, especially the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Commission, and the United States Congress and State Department.

2. In addition to supporting the publishing of *Fides et Libertas*, the journal of the International Religious Liberty Association, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department directly supports the North American Division, financially and otherwise, in publishing *Liberty, A Magazine of Religious Freedom*, for which the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department director serves as a consulting editor.

3. The General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department supports the various divisions in the promotion of the annual Religious Liberty Sabbath and special offerings for religious liberty ministry.

4. The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department director serves as secretary of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty World Affairs Committee, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Committee—General Conference/North American Division, and the Protocol Committee.

#### FL 20 International Religious Liberty Association

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department carries on a number of functions in cooperation with the International Religious Liberty Association. Founded in 1888 by Seventh-day Adventists and reorganized in 1946, the International Religious Liberty Association has enlarged its sphere of support and activity by including on both its Board of Directors and Board of Experts, religious liberty advocates from different faith communities. The director of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department serves as Secretary General of the International Religious Liberty Association. One of the main activities of the association is the conducting of international and regional religious liberty congresses, conferences, and seminars.

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department gives support to the International Religious Liberty Association in publishing the journal *Fides et Libertas* and a newsletter, IRLÁ Information. The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department develops, jointly with the various English-

speaking divisions, policies for the financial support and circulation of this English language religious liberty journal.

#### FL 25 Religious Liberty Litigation

In various countries it may become necessary from time to time to take legal action in defense of the religious liberty rights of church organizations or individuals, including the right of Sabbath observance. However, before resorting to the courts, every effort should be made to settle matters equitably in support of free exercise of religion. Prudence should always prevail when it appears advisable to seek rights or redress through the judicial system, not the least because of the heavy costs that can be incurred and the possible far-reaching consequences of court decisions.

Each division shall establish procedures governing religious liberty litigation.

\* \* \*

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

### Working Policy No. 075

To avoid creating misunderstanding or friction in our relationships with other Christian churches and religious organizations, the following guidelines have been set forth:

- 1) We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ.
- 2) When interdivision work brings us in contact with other Christian societies and religious bodies, the spirit of Christian courtesy, frankness, and fairness shall prevail at all times.
- 3) We recognize that true religion is based on conscience and conviction. It is therefore to be our constant purpose that no selfish interest or temporal advantage shall draw any person to our communion and that no tie shall hold any member save the belief and conviction that in this way the true connection with Christ is found. If a change of conviction leads a member of our church to feel no longer in harmony with Seventh-day Adventist faith and practice, we recognize not only the right but also the responsibility of that member to change, without opprobrium, religious affiliation in accord with belief. We expect other religious bodies to respond in the same spirit of religious liberty.
- 4) Before admitting to church membership members of other religious organizations, care shall be exercised to ascertain that the candidates are moved to change their religious affiliation by religious conviction and out of regard to their personal relationship with God.

5) A person under censure of another religious organization for clearly established fault in Christian morals or character shall not be considered eligible for membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church until there is evidence of repentance and reformation.

6) The Seventh-day Adventist Church is unable to confine its mission to restricted geographical areas because of its understanding of the gospel commission's mandate. In the providence of God and the historical development of His work for men, denominational bodies and religious movements have arisen from time to time to give special emphasis to different phases of gospel truth. In the origin and rise of the Seventh-day Adventist people, the burden was laid upon us to emphasize the gospel of Christ's second coming as an imminent event, calling for the proclamation of Biblical truths in the setting of the special message of preparation as described in Bible prophecy, particularly in Revelation 14:6-14. This message commissions the preaching of the "everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" bringing it to the attention of all peoples everywhere. Any restriction which limits witness to specified geographical areas therefore becomes an abridgment of the gospel commission. The Seventh-day Adventist Church also acknowledges the rights of other religious persuasions to operate without geographic restrictions.

## Section 3

# Church Statements About Religious Liberty

### 3.1 Overview

The following are official Seventh-day Adventist Church statements, voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference. Each of these statements touch on some aspect of the work of PARL.

PARL directors are encouraged to become familiar with these statements and to use them in correspondence and communication as representing the official views of the Church.

### 3.2 Freedom of Speech and Defamation of Religion

*This statement was approved and voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on June 23, 2010, and released at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-July 3, 2010.*

A distinguishing feature of humans is our God-given ability to communicate in the abstract through speech, symbols, and the written word. Nowhere is this capacity more uniquely expressed than in the domain of faith. Communication concerning religious beliefs is central to our ability to explore meaning and purpose in life, discuss the values that guide our actions, and to share experiences as we search for a closer knowledge of God.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly supports freedom of speech in general, and freedom of religious speech in particular. Although freedom of speech is guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, efforts continue to limit speech at both the national level and at the United Nations. In both settings, significant focus has been placed on limiting speech that offends the religious beliefs of the hearer. Seventh-day Adventists affirm sensitivity and respect in all communication. We are thus concerned about speech designed to offend religious sensibilities. However, we believe that ceding the right to the state to control religious speech creates a far greater threat to the autonomy of people of faith than that posed by offensive speech. Indeed, there are numerous examples today of states citing a desire to protect religious feelings to justify the forceful silencing of peaceful religious speech.

Our opposition to the restriction of speech is not without exceptions. The Church recognizes that in limited circumstances, speech can result in significant, tangible harm to the right to physical safety, the enjoyment of one's property and other similarly compelling rights. In such very limited instances, we recognize the responsibility of the state to act to protect its population. When such limits are necessary, the Church expects governments to target restrictions narrowly to address only the dangerous speech in question.

The Church recognizes a special responsibility of those in power to communicate a message that supports fundamental human rights, including all the facets of religious freedom. This responsibility is particularly pertinent to governments, as they are generally in a unique position to encourage robust respect for the rights of their people, and particularly minorities.

While recognizing the right to freely express religious beliefs, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to self-regulate their speech to ensure it is consistent with biblical teachings. This includes the obligation to be both honest and loving. This is particularly important when discussing another faith as religious passions can prompt a one-dimensional view of others. Honesty does not mean merely stating facts accurately, but also placing information in an accurate context. Seventh-day Adventists will be constrained by Christ's law of love in all they say and do. When the God-given gift of speech is used to communicate in love, we will bless not only our fellow human beings; we will honor the God who made us all with the gift to express ourselves.

### 3.3 Call for Peace

*This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on April 18, 2002 in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

We are living in an increasingly unstable and dangerous world. Recent events have resulted in a heightened sense of vulnerability and personal or corporate fear of violence. Throughout the world, countless millions are haunted by war and apprehension and are oppressed by hate and intimidation.

#### **Total War**

Humanity has, since the middle of the last century, been living in an age of total war. Total war implies the theoretical possibility that, except for the providence of God, earth's inhabitants could wipe out their entire civilization. Nuclear weapons and biochemical arms of mass destruction are aimed at centers of population. Whole nations and societies are mobilized or targeted for war, and when such war erupts it is carried on with the greatest violence and destruction. The justification of war has become more complex, even though advances in technology make possible greater precision in destroying targets with a minimum of civilian casualties.

#### **A New Dimension**

While both the United Nations and various religious bodies have proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century as a decade for the promotion of peace and security in the place of violence in its various forms, a new and insidious dimension of violence has emerged: organized international terrorism. Terrorism itself is not new, but worldwide terrorist networks are. Another new factor is the appeal to so-called divine mandates as the rationale for terrorist activity under the guise of culture war, or even "religious" war.

The rise of international terrorism makes it clear that it is not only a nation or state that makes war, but human beings in various combinations. As one of the leading founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church pointed out a century ago, "The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, human nature is prone to violence. From a Christian perspective, all this inhumanity is really part of a cosmic war, the great controversy between good and evil.

#### **Terrorism Exploits the Concept of God**

Terrorists, in particular those having motivations based on religion, claim that their cause is absolute and that taking lives indiscriminately is fully justified. While they claim to be representing the justice of God, they wholly fail to represent the great love of God.

Furthermore, such international terrorism is totally at odds with the concept of religious liberty. The former is based on political and/or religious extremism and fundamentalistic fanaticism which arrogate the right to impose a certain religious conviction or worldview and to destroy those who oppose their convictions. Imposing one's religious views on other people, by means of inquisition and terror, involves an endeavor to exploit and manipulate God by turning Him into an idol of evil and violence. The result is a disregard for the dignity of human beings created in the image of God.

While it is inevitable that nations and people will try to defend themselves by responding in a military way to violence and terror-which sometimes results in short-term success-lasting answers to deep problems of division in society cannot be achieved by using violent means.

### **The Pillars of Peace**

From both a Christian and practical perspective, any lasting peace involves at least four ingredients: dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

**Dialogue** - There needs to be dialogue and discussion in place of diatribe and the cry for war. Lasting peace does not result from violent means, but is achieved by negotiation, dialogue, and, inevitably, political compromise. In the long run, reasoned discourse has superior authority over military force. In particular, Christians should always be ready to "reason together," as the Bible says.

**Justice** - Unfortunately, the world is rampant with injustice and a fallout of injustice is strife. Justice and peace join hands, as do injustice and war. Poverty and exploitation breed discontent and hopelessness, which lead to desperation and violence.

On the other hand, "God's word sanctions no policy that will enrich one class by the oppression and suffering of another."<sup>2</sup>

Justice requires respect for human rights, in particular religious liberty which deals with the profoundest human aspirations and undergirds all human rights. Justice requires nondiscrimination, respect for human dignity and equality, and a more equitable distribution of the necessities of life. Economic and social policies will either produce peace or discontent. Seventh-day Adventist concern for social justice is expressed through the support and promotion of religious liberty, and through organizations and departments of the Church which work to relieve poverty and conditions of marginalization. Such efforts on the part of the Church can, over time, reduce resentment and terrorism.

**Forgiveness** - Forgiveness is usually thought of as necessary to heal broken interpersonal relationships. It is highlighted in the prayer Jesus asked His followers to pray (Matt. 6:12). However, we must not overlook the corporate, societal, and even international dimensions. If there is to be peace, it is vital to drop the burdens of the past, to move beyond well-worn battle grounds, and to work toward reconciliation. At a minimum, this requires overlooking past injustices and violence; and, at its best, it involves forgiveness which absorbs the pain without retaliating.

Because of sinful human nature and the resulting violence, some form of forgiveness is necessary in order to break the vicious cycle of resentment, hate, and revenge on all levels. Forgiveness goes against the grain of human nature. It is natural for human beings to deal in terms of revenge and the return of evil for evil.

There is, therefore, first of all the need to foster a culture of forgiveness in the Church. As Christians and church leaders, it is our duty to help individuals and nations to liberate themselves from the shackles of past violence and refuse to reenact year after year, and even generation after generation, the hatred and violence generated by past experiences.

**Reconciliation** - Forgiveness provides a foundation for reconciliation and the accompanying restoration of relationships that have become estranged and hostile. Reconciliation is the only way to success on the road to cooperation, harmony, and peace.

We call upon Christian churches and leaders to exercise a ministry of reconciliation and act as ambassadors of goodwill, openness, and forgiveness. (See 2 Cor. 5:17-19.) This will always be a difficult, sensitive task. While trying to avoid the many political pitfalls along the way, we must nevertheless proclaim liberty in the land—liberty from persecution, discrimination, abject poverty, and other forms of injustice. It is a Christian responsibility to endeavor to provide protection for those who are in danger of being violated, exploited, and terrorized.

### **Support of Quality of Life**

Silent efforts of religious bodies and individuals behind the scenes are invaluable. But this is not enough: "We are not just creatures of a spiritual environment. We are actively interested in everything that shapes the way we live and we are concerned about the well-being of our planet." The Christian ministry of reconciliation will and must "contribute to the restoration of human dignity, equality, and unity through the grace of God in which human beings see each other as members of the family of God."<sup>3</sup>

Churches should not only be known for spiritual contributions—though these are foundational—but also for their support of quality of life, and in this connection peacemaking is essential. We need to repent from expressions or deeds of violence that Christians and churches, throughout history and even more recently, have either been involved in as actors, have tolerated, or have tried to justify. We appeal to Christians and people of good will all around the world to take an active role in making and sustaining peace, thus being part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

### **Peacemakers**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church wishes to stand for the uncoercive harmony of God's coming kingdom. This requires bridge-building to promote reconciliation between the various sides in a conflict. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "You will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell" (Isa. 58:12). Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, wants His followers to be peacemakers in society and hence calls them blessed (Matt. 5:9).

### **Culture of Peace Through Education**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates what may be the second largest worldwide parochial school system. Each of its more than 6,000 schools, colleges, and universities is being asked to set aside one week each school year to emphasize and highlight, through various programs, respect, cultural awareness, nonviolence, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as a way of making a specifically "Adventist" contribution to a culture of social harmony and peace. With this in mind, the Church's Education Department is preparing curricula and other materials to help in implementing this peace program.

The education of the church member in the pew, for nonviolence, peace, and reconciliation, needs to be an ongoing process. Pastors are being asked to use their pulpits to proclaim the gospel of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation which dissolves barriers created by race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and religion, and promotes peaceful human relations between individuals, groups, and nations.

### **The Christian Hope**

While peacemaking may seem to be a forbidding task, there is the promise and possibility of transformation through renewal. All violence and terrorism are really one aspect of the ongoing controversy, in theological terms, between Christ and Satan. The Christian has hope because of the assurance that evil—the mystery of iniquity—will run its course and be conquered by the Prince of Peace and the world will be made new. This is our hope.

The Old Testament, despite the record of wars and violence, looks forward to the new creation and promises, like the New Testament, the end of the vicious cycle of war and terror, when arms will disappear and become agricultural implements, and peace and knowledge of God and His love will cover the whole world like the waters cover the oceans. (See Isa. 2:4, 11:9.)

In the meantime, we need, in all relationships, to follow the golden rule, which asks us to do unto others as we would wish them to do unto us (see Matt. 7:12), and not only love God, but love as God loves. (See 1 John 3:14, 15; 4:11, 20, 21.)

1 Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, p. 163

2 *Ibid*, p. 187

3 Quote from Pastor Jan Paulsen, President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

### 3.4 Religious Liberty, Evangelism, and Proselytism

*This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM), for release at the time of the General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, June 29-July 9, 2000.*

Seventh-day Adventists believe that freedom of religion is a basic human right. As Christians, they are persuaded that the dissemination of religion is not only a right, but a joyful responsibility based on a divine mandate to witness.

God has called Christians to evangelism—the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ (Matt 28:19, 20). This is central to Christian life and witness. Thus Christianity is missionary by its very nature.

In affirming global mission and evangelization, Adventists are motivated by willing obedience to Christ's commission and by a sincere desire that every human being be saved and inherit eternal life. They are also motivated by a sense of urgency in expectation of the imminence of Christ's return. In endeavoring to fulfill the gospel commission, Seventh-day Adventists are thus witnessing, preaching, and serving today in more than 200 countries.

In the context of the dissemination of religion, the issue of "proselytism" has arisen because the term "proselytism" is defined in a number of ways and increasingly is being given a pejorative connotation, associated with unethical means of persuasion, including force. Seventh-day Adventists unequivocally condemn the use of such methods. They believe that faith and religion are best disseminated when convictions are manifested and taught with humility and respect, and the witness of one's life is in harmony with the message announced, evoking a free and joyous acceptance by those being evangelized.

Evangelistic and missionary activity needs to respect the dignity of all human beings. Individuals need to be truthful and transparent when dealing with other religious groups. Terminology should be used which avoids offending other religious communities. Statements which are false or ridicule other religions should not be made.

Conversion is an experience of the Spirit, and should therefore in no way be connected to offering and receiving material inducements. While the right to engage in humanitarian activities must be fully recognized, such action must never be linked to evangelism in a way that exploits vulnerable people by offering financial and material incentives to entice them to change religion.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to serving their fellow men by preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (Rev 14:6).

### 3.5 Religious Minorities and Religious Freedom

*This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Wednesday, September 29, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Throughout history religious minorities have often been subject to discrimination and outright persecution. Today religious intolerance and prejudice are again on the rise. Notwithstanding the affirmation of the freedom of everyone to hold and disseminate religious views and to change one's religion--an affirmation sustained in the United Nations instruments and documents comprising an "International Bill of Rights"--many countries deny this right to their citizens.

International instruments condemn discrimination against minorities, but tragically, some nations have published lists of religious groups described as potentially dangerous sects. Anti-sect commissions have been set up, investigative personnel have been trained, and restrictive laws passed. Hundreds of thousands of innocent believers are now under official suspicion and are treated as second-class citizens. All this violates religious freedom, which is the most basic and essential of the fundamental rights of humankind. Seventh-day Adventists believe in obeying the laws of the land as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God. However, we oppose any law, policy, or activity which discriminates against religious minorities.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church stands for religious freedom for everyone, as well as for the separation of church and state. Scripture teaches that the God who gave life also gave freedom of choice. God only accepts homage that is freely given. Seventh-day Adventists further believe that the law must be applied evenly and without capricious favor. We submit that no religious group should be judged because some adherents may appear to be extremists. Religious freedom is limited when aggressive or violent behavior violates the human rights of others.

In support of Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, and in harmony with its beliefs and its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is fully committed to promote, defend, and protect religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. To that end, we will continue to cooperate with the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international agencies and religious organizations to encourage every nation to implement the fundamental right of religious freedom. In addition, we will continue to promote dialogue and better understanding between governmental authorities and people who belong to religious minorities.

### 3.6 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

*This statement was voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee, November 17, 1998, and released by the General Conference Office of Public Affairs.*

From its very inception in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has supported human rights. Inspired by biblical values, the early Adventists were involved in the struggle against slavery and injustice. They claimed the right of every person to choose beliefs according to conscience and to practice and teach his or her religion in full freedom, without discrimination, always respecting the equal rights of others. Seventh-day Adventists are convinced that in religion the exercise of force is contrary to God's principles.

In promoting religious freedom, family life, education, health, mutual assistance, and meeting crying human need, Seventh-day Adventists affirm the dignity of the human person created in the image of God.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written and adopted by individuals who had emerged from the unprecedented destruction, disorientation and distress of World War II. This harrowing experience gave them a vision of and desire for a future world of peace and freedom. Coming from the best and highest part of the human heart, the Universal Declaration is a fundamental document standing firmly for human dignity, liberty, equality, and non-discrimination of minorities. Article 18, which upholds unconditionally religious liberty in belief and practice, is of special importance, because freedom of religion is the basic human right which undergirds and upholds all human rights.

Today the UDHR is often violated, not least Article 18. Intolerance frequently raises its ugly head, despite the human rights progress accomplished in many nations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges the United Nations, government authorities, religious leaders and believers, and non-government organizations to consistently work for the implementation of this Declaration. Politicians, trade union leaders, teachers, employers, media representatives, and all opinion leaders should give strong support to human rights. This would respond to and help reduce growing and violent religious extremism, intolerance, hate crimes and discrimination based either on religion or anti-religious secularism. In this way, the Universal Declaration will grow in practical importance and luster, and never risk becoming an irrelevant document.

## 3.7 Roman Catholicism

*This statement was recorded on April 15, 1997, by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg*

### **How Seventh-day Adventists View Roman Catholicism**

Seventh-day Adventists regard all men and women as equal in the sight of God. We reject bigotry against any person, regardless of race, nationality, or religious creed. Further, we gladly acknowledge that sincere Christians may be found in other denominations, including Roman Catholicism, and we work in concert with all agencies and bodies that seek to relieve human suffering and to uplift Christ before the world.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to take a positive approach to other faiths. Our primary task is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of Christ's soon return, not to point out flaws in other denominations.

The beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists are rooted in the biblical apostolic teachings and thus share many essential tenets of Christianity in common with the followers of other Christian churches. However, we have a specific identity as a movement. Our compelling message for Christians and non-Christians alike is to communicate hope by focusing on the quality of life that is complete in Christ.

As Adventists relate to Roman Catholicism in particular, both the past and the future enter into our thinking. We cannot erase or ignore the historical record of serious intolerance and even persecution on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic system of church governance, based on extra-biblical teachings such as papal primacy, resulted in severe abuses of religious freedom as the church was allied with the state.

Seventh-day Adventists are convinced of the validity of our prophetic views, according to which humanity now lives close to the end of time. Adventists believe, on the basis of biblical predictions, that just prior to the second coming of Christ this earth will experience a period of unprecedented turmoil, with the seventh-day Sabbath as a focal point. In that context, we expect that world religions—including the major Christian bodies as key players—will align themselves with the forces in opposition to God and to the Sabbath. Once again the union of church and state will result in widespread religious oppression.

To blame past violations of Christian principles on one specific denomination is not an accurate representation of either history or the concerns of Bible prophecy. We recognize that at times Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists, have manifested prejudice and even bigotry. If, in expounding on what the Bible teaches, Seventh-day Adventists fail to express love to those addressed, we do not exhibit authentic Christianity.

Adventists seek to be fair in dealing with others. Thus, while we remain aware of the historical record and continue to hold our views regarding end-time events, we recognize some positive changes in recent Catholicism, and stress the conviction that many Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.

## 3.8 Tolerance

*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.*

Seventh-day Adventists support the United Nations proclamation of 1995 as the Year of Tolerance. This proclamation comes at an opportune time when intolerance is abounding on all continents--bigoted religious extremism, racism, tribalism, ethnic cleansing, linguistic enmity, and other forms of terrorism and violence. Christians carry their share of the blame for prejudice and inhumanity toward humans.

Tolerance, the capacity to endure unfavorable circumstances, is only a beginning. Christians and all people of good will, must go well beyond this negative concept and develop sympathy for beliefs or practices that not only differ, but even conflict with their own. Dialogue is certainly much better than diatribe. Human beings must learn to agree or disagree without violence; they must be able to discuss varying viewpoints without hate or rancor. This does not mean docility or abject submission, but partnership and respect for the equal rights of others. Every person has the right and the responsibility to express both ideas and ideals with verve and vigor, but without reaching the boiling point of violent words or actions.

Finally, tolerance at its best means not only acceptance of other views and people, but moving in benevolence, responsiveness, and understanding toward others--every other human being.

## 3.9 Religious Freedom

*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.*

For more than a century Seventh-day Adventists have been active promoters of religious freedom. We recognize the need to champion freedom of conscience and religion as a fundamental human right, in harmony with the instruments of the United Nations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a presence in 209 countries. With some exceptions, however, Adventists constitute a religious minority, and have at times been subject to restrictions and discrimination. Consequently, they have felt it necessary to stand up for human rights.

As loyal citizens, Adventists believe they have the right to freedom of religion, subject to the equal rights of others. This implies the freedom to meet for instruction and worship, to worship on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), and to disseminate religious views by public preaching, or through the media. This freedom further includes the right to change one's religion, as well as to respectfully invite others to do so. Every person has a right to demand consideration whenever conscience does not allow the performance of certain public duties, such as requiring the bearing of arms. Whenever churches are given access to public media, Adventists should in all fairness be included.

We will continue to cooperate and network with others to defend the religious liberty of all people, including those with whom we may disagree.

### 3.10 Peace

*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.*

One of the great political and ethical issues of our day is the question of war and peace. It is both complicated and convoluted. Despair hovers around hearts and minds, for millions expect a nuclear holocaust without the basic hope of afterlife or eternal life.

Today there is a new situation, unparalleled in history. Human beings have developed the means of humanity's own destruction, means that are becoming more and more "effective" and "perfected"—although these are hardly the right words. Since World War II, civilians are no longer just occasionally or incidentally harmed; they have become the target.

Christians believe that war is the result of sin. Since the Fall of man, strife has been a perennial fact of human existence. "Satan delights in war. . . . It is his object to incite nations to war against one another."--The Great Controversy, p. 589. It is a diversionary tactic to interfere with the gospel task. While global conflict has been prevented during the past forty years, there have been perhaps 150 wars between nations and within nations, with millions perishing in these conflicts.

Today virtually every government claims it is working for disarmament and peace. Often the known facts appear to point in a different direction. Nations spend a huge portion of their financial resources to stockpile nuclear and other war materials, sufficient to destroy civilization as it is known today. News reports focus on the millions of men and women and children who suffer and die in wars and civil unrest and have to live in squalor and poverty. The arms race, with its colossal waste of human funds and resources, is one of the most obvious obscenities of our day.

It is therefore right and proper for Christians to promote peace. The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges every nation to beat its swords into plowshares" and its "spears into pruninghooks" (Isa. 2:4). The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 7 states that men and women were "created for the glory of God" and were "called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment," not to destroy or hurt one another. Christ Himself said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9)

While peace cannot be found in official church pronouncements, the authentic Christian church is to work for peace between the first and second advents of Christ. However, hope in the Second Coming must not live in a social vacuum. The Adventist hope must manifest and translate itself into deep concern for the well-being of every member of the human family. True, Christian action today and tomorrow will not of itself usher in the coming kingdom of peace; God alone brings this kingdom by the return of His son.

In a world filled with hate and struggle, a world of ideological strife and of military conflicts, Seventh-day Adventists desire to be known as peacemakers and work for worldwide justice and peace under Christ as the head of a new humanity.

## Section 4

# Church Documents About Religious Liberty

### 4.1 Overview

The following are not official statements of the Church—that is, they have not been voted by the General Conference Executive Committee. Nevertheless, these documents have been approved by various GC entities and are recognized as useful guides for those engaged with PARL activities.

### 4.2 Church-State Relations

*This document was adopted by the Council of Interchurch/Interfaith Faith Relations of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in March, 2002. The document is used by the Church's Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.*

#### **Preamble**

God is love. His rule of this universe is based on the willing obedience of His creation evoked by His magnificent benevolence.<sup>1</sup> Only a faith that rests in the heart of man,<sup>2</sup> and only actions prompted by love,<sup>3</sup> are acceptable to God. Love, however, is not subject to civil regulation. It cannot be evoked by fiat nor sustained by statute. Therefore, efforts to legislate faith are by their very nature in opposition to the principles of true religion, and thus in opposition to the will of God.<sup>4</sup>

God placed our primordial parents on this earth with the power to choose between good and evil.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent generations born into this world have been granted a similar choice. This freedom to choose, so granted by God, should not be infringed by man.

The appropriate relation between religion and the state was best exemplified in the life of our Savior and example, Jesus Christ. As one of the Godhead, Jesus held unparalleled authority on earth. He had divine insight,<sup>6</sup> divine power,<sup>7</sup> and a Holy charter.<sup>8</sup> If anyone in the history of the world had the right to force others to worship as he dictated, it was Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus never used force to advance the gospel.<sup>9</sup> It is for the followers of Christ to emulate this example.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has, from its inception, attempted to follow the example of Christ by championing freedom of conscience as an integral part of its gospel mission. As the role of the church in society expands, it is appropriate to state the principles that guide our worldwide church in our contacts with the governments of the lands in which we operate.

### **Freedom of Conscience**

At the heart of the Adventist message is our abiding belief that freedom of conscience must be guaranteed to all. Freedom of conscience includes the freedom to believe and fully practice the religious faith of choice, the freedom not to believe or practice religious faith, freedom to change faiths, and the freedom to establish and operate religious institutions in accordance with religious beliefs. We are dedicated to working for the advancement of legal and political protection of religious freedom and in support of the broad interpretation of national and international charters that guarantee the protection of this freedom.<sup>10</sup>

As Christians, Seventh-day Adventists recognize the legitimate role of organized government in society.<sup>11</sup> We support the state's right to legislate on secular matters and support compliance with such laws.<sup>12</sup> When we are faced with a situation in which the law of the land conflicts with biblical mandates, however, we concur with the Scriptural injunction that we ought to obey God rather than man.<sup>13</sup>

The Adventist dedication to freedom of conscience recognizes that there are limits on this freedom. Freedom of religion can only exist in the context of the protection of the legitimate and equal rights of others in society. When society has a compelling interest, such as the protection of its citizens from imminent harm, it can therefore legitimately curtail religious practices. Such curtailments should be undertaken in a manner that limits the religious practice as little as possible and still protects those endangered by it. Limitation of freedom of conscience in order to protect society from offense or similar intangible harms, from hypothetical dangers or to impose social or religious conformity by measures such as Sunday laws or other state mandated religious observances, are not legitimate limitations on freedom.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to stand for the principle of liberty of conscience for all. In keeping with our love for others,<sup>14</sup> we must be ready to work on behalf of groups whose freedom of conscience is inappropriately impinged by the state. Such work may result in personal and corporate loss. This is the price we must be willing to pay in order to follow our Savior who consistently spoke for the disfavored and dispossessed.<sup>15</sup>

### **Participation in Government**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is mindful of the long history of the involvement of the people of God in civil affairs. Joseph wielded civil power in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Daniel rose to the heights of civil power in Babylon and the nation was benefited as a result.<sup>17</sup> In our own church history, Adventists have joined with other religious and secular organizations to exert influence over civil authorities to cease slavery and to advance the cause of religious freedom. Religious influence has not always resulted in the betterment of society, however. Religious persecution, religious wars, and the numerous examples of social and political suppression perpetrated at the behest of religious people, confirms the dangers that exist when the means of the state are used to advance religious objectives.

The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has resulted in a corresponding growth in our ability to exert political influence in some areas of the world. This political influence is not in itself problematic. Indeed, Adventists may properly aspire to serve in positions of civil leadership.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, we must remain ever mindful of the dangers that are associated with religious influence on civil affairs and assiduously avoid such dangers.

When Adventists become leaders or exert influence in their wider society, this should be done in a manner consistent with the golden rule.<sup>19</sup> We should therefore work to establish robust religious liberty for all and should not use our influence with political and civil leaders to either advance our faith or inhibit the faith of others. Adventists should take civic responsibilities seriously. We should participate in the voting process available to us when it is possible to do so in good conscience<sup>20</sup> and should share the responsibility of building our communities. Adventists should not, however, become preoccupied with politics, or utilize the pulpit or our publications to advance political theories.<sup>21</sup>

Adventists who are civic leaders must endeavor to adhere to the highest standards of Christian behavior. As modern-day Daniels, God will lead them and their fidelity to Him will inspire their community.

### **Representation to Governments & International Bodies**

Throughout the history of the People of God, the Lord has seen fit to delegate individuals to represent His message to the rulers of the time. Abraham,<sup>22</sup> Joseph,<sup>23</sup> and Moses<sup>24</sup> all dealt directly with the Pharaoh of their time. Esther's presence in the court of King Ahasuerus resulted in saving God's people from destruction.<sup>25</sup> Daniel was first a representative to the Babylonian Empire<sup>26</sup> and later to Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Mede.<sup>27</sup> Paul carried the gospel to the ruling class of the Roman Empire.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, many of the great reformers stood before the rulers of their day to advocate their position. We would therefore be remiss if we were not to endeavor to represent Christ to the leaders of this world in our current time.

Indeed, Adventists are called to be a voice for liberty of conscience to this world.<sup>29</sup> Integral to this mission is the development of relationships with temporal rulers.<sup>30</sup> In order to do this, the Seventh-day Adventist Church appoints representatives to governments and international bodies that have influence over the protection of religious liberty. This work must be viewed as essential to our gospel mission and should be accorded the resources necessary to ensure our representation is of the highest order.

### **Expectations of Governments**

Governments are established to serve the needs of the governed. As such, they must ensure the protection of the population's fundamental human rights, including freedom of conscience. The state must also endeavor to build communities with public order, public health, a clean environment, and an atmosphere that does not unduly inhibit its citizen's ability to raise families and freely explore the facets of their humanity. It is the state's responsibility to endeavor to eliminate discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, social class, religion, political persuasion and gender and to guarantee its residents equal access to an impartial judiciary. States have a responsibility not only to protect all those living within its borders but also to work for the protection of human rights in the international community and to provide a haven to those fleeing persecution.

## Receipt of Government Funding

Seventh-day Adventists have long debated whether the Church or its institutions should accept government funding. On one hand, the Church has taught that the Lord moves upon the hearts of those in civil power and that the Church should not build barriers that would cut off assistance for the advancement of His cause.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the Church has warned against the union of church and state.<sup>32</sup>

Thus when laws of a nation permit government assistance to churches or their institutions our principles permit receipt of funding that is not accompanied by conditions that inhibit our ability to freely practice and promulgate our faith, to hire only Seventh-day Adventists, to retain governance by only Seventh-day Adventists and to observe without compromise principles expressed in the Bible and the writings of Ellen G White. In addition, to avoid a union of church and state, government funds should not be accepted to pay for religious activities such as worship services, evangelism, the publishing of religious texts, or for the salaries of those working in church administration or in the gospel ministry, except for the provision of spiritual services to those whose lives are so fully regulated by the state as to make the provision of such services impracticable without state involvement.<sup>33</sup>

In instances when the acceptance of government funding does not violate the foregoing principles, careful consideration should be given to whether government funds should be accepted. Ongoing government funding, as opposed to single financial contributions, presents a particular danger. It is virtually impossible for institutions not to become at least partially dependent on ongoing governmental funding streams. Such government funding typically is accompanied by governmental regulation. While such regulation may not violate Christian principles when the money is first received, such regulations are subject to change. In the event that regulations governing the receipt of government funds change to require the abandonment of the principles for our institutions described in the Bible and by Ellen G White, ongoing governmental funding must be refused, even if as a result the institution must be closed, sold or significantly restructured.

When Adventists receive government funding, we must handle such funds with the highest integrity. This includes strict compliance with the regulations attached to the funding and the use of rigorous accounting standards. If procedures are not in place to ensure such compliance, funding must be refused.

In some exceptional circumstances, Adventists can only achieve a presence in a country if we operate programs that are controlled by the government and that forbid an open witness. Considerable prayer and thought must be given to the ramifications of participating in such programs. We should consider whether participation assists the government in maintaining its restrictive policies, whether participation associates the church's name with the coercive government, and whether participation will provide opportunity both in the short and long term for spreading the gospel including the three angels messages<sup>34</sup> in the country concerned. We must assiduously avoid associating the name of Christ with regimes that suppress and brutalize their populace.

## Conclusion

God has put each individual on earth with the capacity to determine right from wrong under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with His Word. This declaration, therefore, is not designed to supersede divine counsel and nor is it designed to be an authoritative interpretation of that counsel. Rather, the declaration serves to encapsulate the understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at this time.

The way in which Seventh-day Adventists conduct our church-state relations has a significant impact on our worldwide efforts. We must therefore approach this area with significant thought and prayer. Working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Adventists will continue to champion the gospel principle of freedom of conscience.

1 "God desires from all His creatures the service of love - service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service." Ellen G White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p 34.

2 Ezekiel 36:26.

3 1 Corinthians 13.

4 The example of ancient Israel under theocratic rule is sometimes used to justify modern efforts to legislate religious mandates. Such justifications misapply Biblical precedent. For a relatively short period of this earth's history, God used particular methods to preserve His message for the world. These methods were based on a mutually agreed upon covenant between God and a family that grew into a relatively small nation. During this period, God directly ruled in a manner He has not chosen to utilize since. The experience of direct rule by God based on a mutually agreed upon covenant, while of invaluable importance to our understanding of the Lord, is not directly applicable to how modern nations should be ruled. Rather, the more applicable example of the relationship between the church and the state is that provided by Jesus Christ.

5 Genesis 3.

6 See, e.g., John 4:17-19.

7 See, e.g., John 11.

8 1 John 2:1.

9 Quite the contrary, Jesus explicitly stated that His "kingdom is not of this world" and therefore his servants were not commissioned to exert power through force. John 18:36.

10 See, e.g., United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 18; The American Convention on Human Rights, Art. 12; The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Art. 8; The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Art. 9; Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Art. 15; Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Art. 5; Constitution of the Republic of South Korea, Art. 20; Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, Art. 116; Constitution of India, Art. 25-28; Constitution of the United States of America, First Amendment.

11 1 Peter 2:13-17.

12 Romans 13.

13 Acts 5:29; "The people of God will recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment and will teach obedience to it as a sacred duty within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, the word of God must be recognized as above all human legislation. 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for Thus saith the church or the state. The crown of Christ is to be uplifted above the diadems of earthly potentates." Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol 6, p 402.

14 Matthew 22:39

15 See, e.g., Luke 4:18; Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 10:30-37.

16 Genesis 41:40-57.

17 Daniel 6:3.

18 "Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard." Ellen G White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p 82.

19 Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. Matthew 7:12.

20 While Seventh-day Adventists are to vote, they are to cast their vote with prayerful consideration. See Ellen G White, *Selected Messages*, vol 2, p 337 (admonishing Adventists to vote); Ellen G White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p 475 (stating that Adventists cannot safely vote for political parties); & Ellen G White, *Last Day Events*, p 127 (Adventists become partakers in the sins of politicians if they support candidates that do not support religious liberty).

21 Ellen G White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p 475.

22 Genesis 12:15-20.

23 Genesis 41.

24 Exodus 4-12.

25 Esther 8.

26 Daniel 3-5.

27 Daniel 1:21 & 5:31-6:28.

28 Acts 23-26.

29 "We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscious." Ellen G White, Testimonies to the Church, vol 5, p 714.

30 "Kings, governors, and councils are to have a knowledge of the truth through your testimony. This is the only way in which the testimony of light and truth can reach men of high authority." Ellen G White, Review and Herald, April 15, 1890.

31 "Just as long as we are in this world, and the Spirit of God is striving with the world, we are to receive as well as to impart favors. We are to give to the world the light of truth as presented in the sacred Scriptures, and we are to receive from the world that which God moves upon them to do in behalf of His cause. God has not closed the door of mercy yet. The Lord still moves upon the hearts of kings and rulers in behalf of His people, and it becomes us who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question not to cut off any favors, or withdraw ourselves from the help that God has moved men to give for the advancement of His cause." Ellen G White, Testimonies to Ministers, p 197-203.

32 "The union of the church with the state, be the degree never so slight, while it may appear to bring the world nearer to the church, does in reality but bring the church nearer to the world." Ellen White, The Great Controversy, p 297.

33 This category includes chaplains retained by the state to provide spiritual services to those serving in the military, those that are incarcerated, those that are in state hospitals, and those whose lives are similarly restricted to state institutions or whose lives are similarly pervasively regulated by the state.

34 Revelation 14:6-12.

## 4.3 Ecumenical Movement

*This study document, intended for internal church use, first appeared in Pattern for Progress, The Role and Function of Church Organization by Walter Raymond Beach and Bert Beverly Beach, was authored by Bert B. Beach, and was released in connection with the General Conference Session New Orleans, Louisiana, June 1985. It is available from the office of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the General Conference.*

The General Conference Executive Committee has never voted an official statement regarding the Seventh-day Adventist relationship to the ecumenical movement as such. A book has been written dealing at length with the subject (B. B. Beach, *Ecumenism-Boon or Bane?* [Review and Herald, 1974]) and a number of articles have appeared over the years in Adventist publications, including the *Adventist Review*. Thus, while there is not exactly an official position, there are plenty of clear indications regarding the Seventh-day Adventist viewpoint.

Generally, it can be said that while the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not completely condemn the ecumenical movement and its main organizational manifestation, the World Council of Churches, she has been critical of various aspects and activities. Few would wish to deny that ecumenism has had laudable aims and some positive influences. Its great goal is visible Christian unity. No Adventist can be opposed to the unity Christ Himself prayed for. The ecumenical movement has promoted kinder interchurch relations with more dialogue and less diatribe and helped remove unfounded prejudices.

Through its various organizations and activities, the ecumenical movement has provided more accurate and updated information on churches, spoken for religious liberty and human rights, combated against the evils of racism, and drawn attention to socioeconomic implications of the gospel. In all this the intentions have been good and some of the fruit palatable. However, in the total picture, the banes tend to outweigh the boons. We shall examine some of these.

### **Adventism a Prophetic Movement**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church stepped upon the stage of history-so Adventists firmly believe-in response to God's call. Adventists believe, it is hoped without pride or arrogance, that the Advent Movement represents the divinely appointed instrument for the organized proclamation of the "eternal gospel," God's last message, discerned from the prophetic vantage point of Revelation 14 and 18. In the focalized light of its prophetic understanding, the Seventh-day Adventist Church sees herself as the eschatologically oriented "ecumenical" movement of the Apocalypse. She begins by "calling out" God's children from "fallen" ecclesial bodies that will increasingly form organized religious opposition to the purposes of God. Together with the "calling out" there is a positive "calling in" to a united, worldwide-that is, ecumenical-movement characterized by "faith of Jesus" and keeping "the commandments of God" (Rev. 14:12). In the World Council of Churches the emphasis is first of all on "coming in" to a fellowship of churches and then hopefully and gradually "coming out" of corporate disunity. In the Advent Movement the accent is first on "coming out" of Babylonian disunity and confusion and then immediately "coming in" to a fellowship of unity, truth, and love within the globe-encircling Advent family.

In understanding the Adventist attitude toward ecumenism and other mainline churches, it is helpful to remember that the early-Advent movement (characterized by the Millerites) had ecumenical aspects: it arose in many churches. Thus, Adventists came from many denominations. However, the churches generally rejected the Advent message. Adventists were not infrequently disfellowshipped. Sometimes Adventists took with them portions of congregations. Relations became embittered. False stories were circulated, some of which unfortunately still persist today. The pioneers had strong views, and their opponents were no less dogmatic. They tended to look more for what separates than what unites. That was an understandable development. Today, of course, the interchurch climate tends to be more irenic and benign.

What are some of the problems Adventists have with ecumenism? Before we endeavor to give a summary answer to this question, it needs to be pointed out that the ecumenical movement is not monolithic in its thinking, and one can find all kinds of views represented in its ranks (that in itself, of course, is a problem!). We will try to make reference to what can be considered mainstream thinking within the World Council of Churches (WCC), an organization now representing more than three hundred different churches and denominations.

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Unity**

The New Testament presents a qualified church unity in truth, characterized by holiness, joy, faithfulness, and obedience (see John 17:6, 13, 17, 19, 23, 26). "Ecumenthusiasts" (to coin a word) seem to take for granted the eventual organic unity and communion of the great majority of the churches. They emphasize the "scandal of division," as if this were really the unpardonable sin. Heresy and apostasy are largely ignored. However, the New Testament shows the threat of anti-Christian penetration within "the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:3, 4). The eschatological picture of God's church prior to the Second Coming is not one of a megachurch gathering all humankind together, but of a "remnant" of Christendom, those keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus (see Rev. 12:17).

There is clearly a point at which unorthodoxy and un-Christian lifestyle justify separation. The WCC misses this point. Separation and division in order to protect and uphold that purity and integrity of the church and her message are more desirable than unity in worldliness and error.

Furthermore, Adventists are uncomfortable with the fact that the WCC leaders seem to give little emphasis to personal sanctification and revival. There are indications that some may view such emphasis as a quaint pietistic hangover, not a vital ingredient of a dynamic Christian life. They prefer to soft-pedal personal piety in favor of social morality. However, in Adventist understanding, personal holiness of life is such stuff as the morality of society is made (with apologies to Shakespeare). Without genuinely converted Christians, any formal organizational unity is really of a plastic nature and of little relevance.

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Belief**

In many church circles broad-mindedness is seen as an ecumenical virtue. The ideal ecumenist, it is suggested, is not dogmatic in belief and is somewhat fluid in doctrinal views. He greatly respects the beliefs of others, but is less than rigid about his own belief. He appears humble and not assertive about doctrinal beliefs-except those regarding ecumenical unity. He

has a sense of partial knowing. To show religious doctrinal arrogance is, ecumenically, especially sinful.

All this has a laudable side. Humility and meekness are Christian virtues. Indeed, Peter tells us to always be ready to answer and give a reason for our faith, but this must be done with humility, respect, and a good conscience (1 Peter 3:15, 16). However, there is in ecumenical ranks an almost inbuilt danger of softness and relativization of belief. The whole concept of heresy is questioned. Lately, questions are even raised regarding the idea of "paganism."

Typical of some ecumenical presuppositions is the idea that all denominational formulations of truth are time-conditioned and relative, and therefore partial and inadequate. Some ecumenists would even go so far as to advocate the need of doctrinal synthesis, bringing together various Christian beliefs in a kind of cocktail approach. We are told that each church is imbalanced and it is the task of ecumenism to restore balance and harmony. Within the reconciled diversity of the ecumenical movement, presumably everyone, in the words of Frederick the Great, "will be saved in his own way."

Adventists believe that without strong convictions, a church has little spiritual power. There is the danger that ecumenical quicksands of doctrinal softness will suck churches into denominational death. Of course, this is precisely what ecumenical enthusiasts hope for. However, Adventists feel that such doctrinal irresolutions must be vigorously resisted, otherwise spiritual self-disarmament will be the result and a truly post-Christian age would be upon us.

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Scripture**

Adventists see the Bible as the infallible revelation of God's will, the authoritative revealer of doctrinal truth, and the trustworthy record of the mighty acts of God in salvation history (see Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists: 1. The Holy Scriptures). Adventists see the Bible as a unity. For many WCC leaders the Bible is not normative and authoritative in itself. The emphasis is on Biblical diversity, including at times demythologization of the Gospels. For a large number of ecumenists, as is the case for liberal Christianity in general, inspiration lies not in the Biblical text but in the experience of the reader. Propositional revelation is out; experience is in.

Apocalyptic prophecy is given practically no time-of-the-end role. Pro forma references to the Parousia are made, but have no implications for urgency and make little measurable impact on the ecumenical concept of evangelistic mission. There is here the danger of eschatological blindness.

Seventh-day Adventists see the Biblical picture of sin and redemption within the framework of the "great controversy" between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, between God's Word and the lies of the impostor, between the faithful remnant and Babylon, between the "seal of God" and the "mark of the beast."

Adventists are, first and foremost, people of the Word. While believing in the unconditional authority of the Scriptures, Adventists recognize that the Bible was "written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, it not represented. . . . The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21. Many ecumenists would say that the Biblical text is not the word of God but contains this word as men respond and accept it. In contrast, Adventists would say that the

utterances of the Bible writers "are the word of God" (ibid.). God is not on trial; neither is His Word, from criticism notwithstanding. It is man vis-a-vis the Bible who is on trial.

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Mission and Evangelism**

The traditional understanding of mission highlights evangelism, that is, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. The ecumenical approach sees mission as involving the establishment of shalom, a kind of social peace and harmony. Adventists have problems with any tendency to downplay the primary importance of announcing the good news of redemption from the stranglehold of sin. In fact, the traditional, including Adventist, view of salvation has always been the saving of individuals from sin and for eternity. Ecumenical evangelism sees salvation as primarily saving society from oppressive regimes, from the ravages of hunger, from the curse of racism, and from the exploitation of injustice.

The Adventist understanding of conversion means for a person to experience radical changes through spiritual rebirth. The majority emphasis in WCC circles appears to be on changing-converting-the unjust structures of society.

As we see it, in the area of evangelism and foreign missionary work the fruits (or maybe we should say lack of fruits) of ecumenism have often been less evangelism (as we understand it-from Paul to Billy Graham), less growth and more membership decline, fewer missionaries sent out, proportionally less financial support coming in. In fact, the missionary outreach has shifted away from mainline "ecumenical" churches to conservative evangelicals. It is sad to see such a large evangelistic potential lost to the missionary movement, especially at a time of increasingly active and militant Islamic outreach and the awakening of Eastern and indigenous religions.

The recent and successful Seventh-day Adventist One Thousand Days of Reaping campaign ran counter to the ecumenical low-key "joint mission" approach. The latter may sound good in an ecumenical study paper, but soul-winning results are really not there. The paraphrase of an old saying has some relevance here: "The proof of the ecumenical pudding lies in the evangelistic eating."

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Sociopolitical Responsibility**

Admittedly, the whole question of Christian social and political responsibility is a complicated one. The WCC and other councils of churches (such as the National Council of Churches in the United States) are heavily involved in what are usually seen as political questions. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is very much more circumspect in this area (in comparison to evangelism, where the tables are turned!).

Much ecumenical thinking in the area of political responsibility includes or involves: (1) a secularization of salvation; (2) a postmillennial view advocating the gradual political improvement and social betterment of humankind and the establishment through human effort, as divine agents, of God's kingdom on earth; (3) adaptation of Christianity to the modern world; (4) evolutionary utopian faith in progress; and (5) socialistic collectivism, favoring some form of egalitarianism and the welfare state, but not Communist materialism.

Presumably, ecumenical social activists consider Adventism as a utopian vision of pie in the apocalyptic sky by and by; this is wrong. Faced with the many problems of society, Adventists

cannot be, and generally are not, apathetic or indifferent. Witness this: extensive hospital-clinic-health institutions serving millions of people every year; a large educational system circling the globe with nearly five thousand schools; Adventist Development and Relief Agency—a rapidly expanding worldwide service of the church in areas of acute and chronic need. Several other service activities could be referred to.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes it is necessary to distinguish between sociopolitical activity of individual Christians as citizens and involvement on the corporate church level. It is the church's task to deal with moral principles and to point in a Biblical direction, not to advocate political directives. The WCC has at times been involved in political power plays. While Adventism will sow seeds that will inevitably influence society and politics, it does not wish to be entangled in political controversies. The church's Lord did state: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and like her Lord the church wishes to go "about doing good" (Acts 10:38). She does not wish to run the government, either directly or indirectly.

### **Ecumenical Understanding of Religious Liberty**

In the early years of the WCC, beginning with its first assembly at Amsterdam in 1948, religious liberty was placed on the ecumenical agenda. Religious liberty was seen as a vital prerequisite for ecumenical unity. In 1968 a religious liberty secretariat was set up at WCC headquarters. However, in more recent years, the WCC religious liberty stance has been somewhat ambiguous. In 1978 the secretariat was closed down, mainly for what was seen as a lack of funds. This, of course, in itself speaks regarding the priority given to religious liberty in the organized ecumenical movement.

Today the ecumenical tendency is to view religious liberty as simply one of the human rights instead of the fundamental right that undergirds all other human rights. This is, of course, the approach used by the secular mind. Secularists or humanists refuse to recognize religious belief as something apart or above other human activities. There is here the danger that religious liberty will lose its unique character that makes it the guardian of all true freedoms.

It must not be forgotten that historically it has been the balance of power and denominationalism that have neutralized religious intolerance and worked for religious liberty. Formal religious unity has existed only with force. There is thus in society an inbuilt tension between unity and religious liberty. In fact, the eschatological picture of the final events is a dramatic tableau of religious persecution, as the massive forces of apocalyptic Babylon try to squeeze the church of the remnant into the mold of united apostasy.

Finally, the religious liberty outlook becomes increasingly clouded when it is realized that certain ecumenical activists accept fairly easily religious liberty restrictions affecting believers of a different religio-political stamp, who are exerting what is perceived to be a negative social stance. Furthermore, some ecumenical leaders are quite willing, in revolutionary situations, to see religious liberty interfered with and "temporarily shut down," in order to promote unity, nation building, and the "good" of society as a whole.

### **The Influence of Prophetic Understanding**

What we have written so far highlights some of the reservations Adventists have regarding involvement in the organized ecumenical movement. The general attitude of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church toward other churches and the ecumenical movement is decisively influenced by the above considerations and determined by prophetic understanding. Looking back, Adventists see centuries of persecution and anti-Christian manifestations of the papal power. They see discrimination and much intolerance by state or established churches. Looking forward, they see the danger of Catholicism and Protestantism linking hands and exerting religio-political power in a domineering and potentially persecuting way. They see the faithful church of God not as a jumbo church, but as a remnant. They see themselves as the nucleus of that remnant and as not willing to be linked with the expanding Christian apostasy of the last days.

Looking to the present, Adventists see their task as preaching the everlasting gospel to all men, calling for worship of the Creator, obedient adherence to the faith of Jesus, and proclaiming that the hour of God's judgment has come. Some aspects of this message are not popular. How can Adventists best succeed in fulfilling the prophetic mandate? It is our view that the Seventh-day Adventist Church can best accomplish her divine mandate by keeping her own identity, her own motivation, her own feeling of urgency, her own working methods.

### **Ecumenical Cooperation?**

Should Adventists cooperate ecumenically? Adventists should cooperate insofar as the authentic gospel is proclaimed and crying human needs are being met. The Seventh-day Adventist Church wants no entangling memberships and refuses any compromising relationships that might tend to water down her distinct witness. However, Adventists wish to be "conscientious cooperators." The ecumenical movement as an agency of cooperation has acceptable aspects; as an agency for organic unity of churches, it is much more suspect.

### **Relationships With Other Religious Bodies**

Back in 1926, long before ecumenism was in vogue, the General Conference Executive Committee adopted an important statement that is now a part of the General Conference Working Policy (O 75). This declaration has significant ecumenical implications. The concern of the statement was for the mission field and relationships with other "missionary societies." However, the statement has now been broadened to deal with other "religious organizations" in general. It affirms that Seventh-day Adventists "recognize every agency that lifts up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world, and . . . hold in high esteem the Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ." In the church's dealings with other churches, "Christian courtesy, friendliness, and fairness" are to prevail. Some practical suggestions are made in order to avoid misunderstandings and occasion for friction. The statement makes it very clear, however, that the "Seventh-day Adventist people" have received the special "burden" to emphasize the Second Coming as an event "even at the door," preparing "the way of the Lord as revealed in Holy Scripture." This divine "commission" makes it, therefore, impossible for Adventists to restrict their witness "to any limited area" and impels them to call the gospel "to the attention of all peoples everywhere."

In 1980 the General Conference set up a Council on Interchurch Relations in order to give overall guidance and supervision to the church's relations with other religious bodies. This council has from time to time authorized conversations with other religious organizations where it was felt this could prove helpful.

Adventist leaders should be known as bridge builders. This is not an easy task. It is much simpler to blow up ecclesiastical bridges and serve as irresponsible "Christian commandos." Ellen White has said: "It requires much wisdom to reach ministers and men of influence. Evangelism, p. 562. Adventists have not been called to live in a walled-in ghetto, talking only to themselves, publishing mainly for themselves, showing a sectarian spirit of isolationism. It is, of course, more comfortable and secure to live in a Seventh-day Adventist fortress, with the communication drawbridges all drawn up. In this setting one ventures from time to time into the neighborhood for a quick evangelistic campaign, capturing as many "prisoners" as possible, and then disappearing with them back into the fortress. Ellen White did not believe in the isolationist mentality: "Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 78.

### **Usefulness of Observer Relationships**

Experience has taught that the best relationship to the various councils of churches (national, regional, world) is that of observer-consultant status. This helps the church to keep informed and to understand trends and developments. It helps to know Christian thinkers and leaders. Adventists are provided the opportunity to exert a presence and make the church's viewpoint known. Membership is not advisable. Those ecumenical organizations are usually not "neutral." They often have quite specific goals and policies and play sociopolitical advocacy roles. There would be little point in being halfhearted members (at best) or pro forma members (as many member churches are) or often in opposition (as inevitably would be the case).

On local levels, dealing with more practical and less theological issues, one could envision some forms of Seventh-day Adventist membership, with caution, however. We are thinking of such organized relationships as ministerial associations/fraternals, local church organizations, Bible study groups, specific groups or networks to study community needs and help solve local problems. Adventists must not be perceived as simply opting out of any Christian responsibility for the local community.

In recent years, Adventist leaders and theologians have had opportunities for dialogue with other church representatives. These experiences have been beneficial. Mutual respect has been engendered. Worn-out stereotypes and inaccurate and untrue doctrinal perceptions have been removed. Prejudices have been unceremoniously laid to rest. Theological tools and understandings have been sharpened. New dimensions have been recognized and new vistas of outreach opened up. First of all, however, their faith in the Advent message has been enhanced. There is no reason for Adventists to have an inferiority complex. It is a wonderful privilege to be a Seventh-day Adventist and to know that the theological and organizational foundation of the church are sure and secure.

### **Heralds of the True Oikoumene**

Adventists are heralds of the only true and lasting oikoumene. In Hebrews reference is made to "the world [Greek: oikoumene] to come" (chap. 2:5, N.E.B.), the coming universal kingdom of God. In the final analysis, it is this "ecumenism" Adventists are working for. Every other ecumenical movement is ephemeral. In the meantime, it is a Christian duty to "concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ" in one's heart. "Be ready at any time to

give a quiet and reverent answer to any man who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you. Make sure that your conscience is perfectly clear" (1 Peter 3:15, 16, Phillips).

## Section 5

# Responsibilities of a Union/Conference PARL Director

### 5.1 Key Responsibilities of Union/Conference PARL Director

<b>BE INFORMED</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stay up to date regarding the constitutional situation and the laws of the country dealing with church-state relations and impacting on religious liberty of individuals, church institutions, and the denomination as a whole.</li> <li>2. Keep informed regarding the international instruments of the United Nations and other international bodies dealing with human rights and religious liberty.</li> <li>3. Learn the history of religious liberty in the division/union territory and, at least in general terms, around the world.</li> <li>4. Keep personally abreast regarding bills that have been introduced in the legislature (parliament) dealing with religious liberty or church-state relations. Where feasible, request a qualified pastor or attorney located in the capital city to watch pending legislation and intervene while bills are still being studied by committees—before they reach the floor of Parliament and are ready to be voted upon or have already become law.</li> <li>5. Send to the Division/Union PARL department copies of relevant constitutional and legal documents in the country concerned and of government or local regulations dealing with religious liberty. The documents should also include court decisions.</li> </ol>
--------------------	--

<b>ORGANIZE</b>	<p>6. Develop a strategic plan for your department, identifying key goals and steps.</p> <p>7. Cooperate closely with the union/conference president and other departmental directors, especially where there is an overlapping of religious liberty and other issues, and support the general plans as voted by the union/conference executive committee.</p> <p>8. Endeavor to see that in each church someone is appointed to be responsible for religious liberty.</p> <p>9. Organize files, archives and library materials for the department containing:- Documents, important correspondence, specialized journals dealing with religious liberty or human rights, relevant books.</p>
-----------------	---

<b>EDUCATE</b>	<p>10. Visit the churches to promote understanding of religious liberty and to keep informed regarding local issues and problems.</p> <p>11. Organize religious liberty conferences, councils, and training seminars for pastors and local religious liberty church directors. One union training seminar should be organized every two years.</p> <p>12. Take part in workers' meetings and seek opportunities to present timely topics dealing with religious liberty.</p> <p>13. In every church, promote the celebration each year of Religious Liberty Sabbath, organizing a special program for the whole day.</p> <p>14. Prepare materials that can be used for Religious Liberty Sabbath.</p> <p>15. Support, where feasible, the circulation of religious liberty periodicals, such as <i>Fides et Libertas</i>, Liberty, and Conscience and Liberty</p>
----------------	---

<b>NETWORK</b>	<p>16. Seek contact and become acquainted with political, religious, and academic (university) authorities of the territory.</p> <p>17. Represent the church in contacts with public authorities (public affairs).</p> <p>18. Join appropriate national organizations; get to know other organizations that share similar goals of promoting religious liberty.</p> <p>19. Organize local seminars or conferences dealing with religious liberty issues in which non-Adventists are invited to participate.</p> <p>20. Contact Adventists who hold public office within your territory. Connect them with the networking organization World Adventists in Public Office Association (WAPOA).</p>
----------------	--

<b>COMMUNICATE</b>	<p>21. Write articles which report on religious liberty situations, analyze the principles of religious liberty, and promote religious liberty in denominational publications, including the union paper.</p> <p>22. Establish or maintain a PARL website and consider social media avenues.</p> <p>23. Every year, prepare a report on the activities of the union/ conference religious liberty department and current issues in religious liberty and send it to the division/union Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director.</p> <p>24. Send news stories to division/union PARL director for possible use in Adventist News Network, <i>Adventist World</i>, and <i>Adventist Review</i></p> <p>25. Identify news or feature stories suitable for video that could be used for <i>Global Faith &amp; Freedom</i></p>
--------------------	--

**TAKE ACTION**

26. Intervene with government authorities on issues concerning government relations with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in order to solve religious liberty problems encountered by church members or church institutions.

27. Prepare briefs and appeals dealing with religious liberty (human rights violations) addressed to international organizations or organs (such as the UN Human Rights Council and the European Court of Human Rights).

28. Support the national religious liberty associations affiliated with the International Religious Liberty Association, including recruitment in support of the association by both Adventists and non-Adventists

29. Organize meetings, conferences, and colloquiums sponsored by the National Religious Liberty Association or the International Religious Liberty Association.

30. Promote the IRLA World Congress in your division, and encourage church leaders and PARL leaders to attend.

## Section 6

# PARL Activities and Events

## 6.1 Protocol Lunches

### PURPOSE

To make friends for the church and to facilitate cooperation in protecting religious freedom, obtaining visas, or assistance with other issues. Protocol lunches are focused on the guest(s) of honor, and in-house guests who attend the lunch are there for the purpose of sharing information about the church and making friends with the official guest(s). In-house guests will also learn about the honored guest and his/her country, organization, to find ways to work together for mutual benefit.

### *SAMPLE PLANNING CHECK-LIST*

Decide who to invite

Clear possible dates with cafeteria

Send formal letter of invitation with suggested date

Work with guest's staff to finalize date and learn if the guest will be accompanied by a spouse or work associate. It is necessary to determine the number of guests before inviting in-house people so you will know how many people are needed to fill the table.

Work on menu with cafeteria (menu based on guest's country of origin).

Choose in-house guests. Include the president and vice presidents; a number of department directors/associate directors from a variety of departments; a good mix of nationalities, ethnicities, and genders, and one or more people of the guest's nationality/native language, if possible

Verbal invitation to in-house guest or assistant. When acceptance is confirmed, follow with e-mailed invitation.

E-mailed invitation to in-house guest and assistant should contain the guest's name and position and biographical information.

Request the in-house guests to meet 10 minutes before the lunch is scheduled to begin so lunch can begin on time and to turn off their cell phone.

Request in-house guests to notify PARL of any change to their plans so someone else can be found to attend the lunch in their place. Empty seats at the table should be avoided, and no one should plan to come late or leave early.

Prepare a printed program (see sample on next page). After a welcome by the PARL director, invite the president or his designee to give a 5-minute welcome speech, followed by remarks from the guest, and then opportunity for questions and answers. The lunch can be concluded with a short thank you speech from the PARL director and the presentation of gifts.

Prepare seating chart and place cards. A seating chart provides for the highest ranking in-house guests to sit close to the guest(s) of honor. It also allows for a better distribution of departments, genders, and nationalities in the room.

Arrange for someone to take pictures during the lunch and to write a news story.

As the date draws nearer, work with the guest's contact person to be sure they have:

- The correct address (or driving instructions)
- Information about parking
- An outline of the program—including time for guest to speak at the lunch
- Your contact information in case there is a problem—heavy traffic, illness of guest, etc.
- Find out if the guest will have a driver or other staff. Although they won't attend the protocol lunch, it is good to provide them with alternate lunch arrangements.

Send a reminder to in-house guests the day before the meal

Send a short note to guest of honor the day before the event to say you are looking forward to their visit. (This may jog their memory if they have forgotten.)

On the day of the event:

- Put place cards and programs on the table
- Coordinate the starting time with the cafeteria
- Remind in-house guests
- Be ready to replace guests who cancel at the last minute
- Give a seating chart to the person who will introduce in-house guests, including any last-minute corrections
- Prepare gifts/informational materials for the guests and take these to the lunch site

Meet the guest(s) in the lobby and give a tour of the building. Giving the tour before lunch allows for flexibility in arrival so the lunch can be held at a specified time. Any private meeting with the president can take place at this time as well.

Conclude the event on time, since officials are very busy people and must stick to their schedule.

Write a note to the guest(s) the same day expressing appreciation for the visit.

## SAMPLE PROTOCOL LUNCH PROGRAM



The Visit of the  
Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary General

Mr. IQBAL RIZA

October 6, 2015

- *Welcome – Ganoune Diop*
- *Prayer*
- *Introduction of the Special Advisor to the*
- *UN Secretary General – Ganoune Diop*
- *Introduction of GC Guests – Karnik Doukmetzian*
- *Remarks - President Ted N.C. Wilson*
- *Remarks by Mr. Riza*
- *Dialogue with Mr. Riza*
- *Photos – Mylon Medley*

***Thank you for the visit***



## 6.2 Religious Liberty Dinner

### PURPOSE

The GC PARL department, in partnership with *Liberty* magazine and the General Conference, has organized an annual Religious Liberty Dinner in Washington, D.C. for more than a decade. Although this event has a national focus—the White House, Washington’s diplomatic corps, and members of the United States Congress—this concept can be adapted for almost any other context. Whether your focus is nation-wide, state-wide or even city-wide, a Religious Liberty Dinner can be an effective means of raising the profile of the Adventist Church and highlighting its commitment to religious freedom.

In establishing a regular Religious Liberty Dinner, your goals may be to:

- Provide an opportunity for people of different beliefs to meet each other on the theme of religious freedom.
- Increase awareness about the rising rate of persecution in the world, or to focus on a specific religious liberty challenge.
- Offer people a positive image of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a human rights defender for all.
- Make friends who share the same values, and to improve visibility of the Adventist Church.

### SAMPLE PLANNING CHECK-LIST

Build a budget.

Select a team and set up a planning committee.

Choose a location, preferably a neutral place such as a centrally located hotel restaurant or public space.

Choose a date.

Invite guests (a minimum of 50 to 60 people, with a mix of Adventist Church leaders and public officials, academic leaders, representatives of NGOs.)  
Decide in advance what ratio of Adventists to non-church members you want.

Select a keynote speaker who can speak compellingly to the issue of religious freedom and who will have the respect of your audience. This could be either a well-known political figure; someone with a personal story about religious discrimination or persecution; an author or leading academic, or a religious freedom activist.

Select awardees who will be honored at the dinner for their contribution to religious freedom. Limit the number of awards given to two or three so that the awards are meaningful. Each award should have criteria established for its recipients. Take wide counsel regarding who should be the recipient of each award. Establish an award tradition, so that the award becomes more significant over time.

Work on menu, design of room, decorations, printed program, and audio-visual needs.

Make a seating chart, making sure that each table has a good mix of Adventists and non-church members.

Prepare a short welcome speech, remembering rules of protocol regarding welcoming special guests such as legislators, diplomats and others.

Brief Adventist invitees ahead of time regarding the purpose of the event and the opportunities they will have to make meaningful connections with others from the wider community who will be attending.

Arrange for a photographer and/or videographer to cover the event, and alert local press.

## 6.3 Other PARL Events

The type of events you plan in your territory will be shaped by the unique challenges and opportunities you encounter. Your goal in planning any event is to reach into one or more of the following communities:

- The academic world—universities and other institutions of higher learning
- Government and public organizations
- The non-governmental community (like-minded religious liberty advocacy groups; other religious groups; other civic or social organizations)
- Adventist Churches
- The broader public

### SAMPLE LIST OF DIFFERENT PARL EVENTS

There are many, many different forms that a PARL event can take. Here are just a few that can be used or adapted.

**Religious Liberty Concert**—invite choirs and musicians to present a musical event that will attract community members, Adventist Church members, local public officials, and perhaps members of the local media. Develop the theme of Religious Freedom with readings, stories or videos between musical items.

**Religious Liberty Sabbath**—coordinating a division-wide focus on religious liberty on the third Sabbath of every January should be standard event in the calendar of every PARL director.

**Religious Liberty Congress**—a meeting that lasts two or three days and that draws a large number of scholars, religious liberty advocates, representatives of NGO community, and representatives of other religious groups. It is an ideal event for attracting attention from the media and the support and participation of government officials.

**Symposium or meeting of experts**—a gathering of scholars at an institution of higher learning to present papers on a specific theme.

**Religious Liberty Festival or Celebration**—a large-scale event typically held in a stadium or similar venue that attracts broad Adventist and community participation in a public demonstration in support of religious freedom, and gratitude to the nation for religious freedom protections. For more information and details on organizing a Religious Freedom Festival, see the publication *Church Ambassador*, which can be downloaded free from the PARL website, [www.adventistliberty.org](http://www.adventistliberty.org).

## 6.4 Communication

### PURPOSE

- To amplify the message and impact of PARL activities.
- To connect people with PARL resources.
- To educate people about the purpose and mission of PARL.

### GOALS FOR PARL COMMUNICATION

Often, a tremendous amount of effort goes into the many logistical details necessary for planning a successful PARL event, yet communication is seen as an afterthought—something that will “take care of itself” afterward.

Being intentional about the communication of PARL messages and activities means:

- Building a communication strategy into the planning phase of every PARL event or activity.
- Maintaining multiple communication platforms so that the message of PARL has a robust online presence. At the least, this should include maintaining a web site, and could also include using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope, and many other social media channels.
- Making better use of existing communication channels, such as Adventist publications and broadcasts.
- Engaging the secular media by inviting them to certain PARL events, and by offering them, where appropriate, an Adventist perspective on religious liberty issues.

### *SAMPLE CHECKLIST FOR AN EVENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY*

#### *Before the event*

Assign a writer to cover the event for Adventist publications

Assign a photographer and, where possible, a videographer, to cover the event.

Where appropriate, alert local print, radio, and television media, and explain why the event is newsworthy. (This can be done through either personal contact, or through a news release.)

### ***At the event***

Assign someone to be a liaison for mainstream media reporters to assist them with getting interviews and with any other needs they may have.

Assign someone to live-tweet the event. Announce to attendees at the beginning of the event the hashtag that will be used. Assign others to Periscope the event, post to Instagram, or use other social media platforms.

Make keynote speakers and other noteworthy participants available for interviews with both the mainstream media and writers covering the event for Adventist publications.

### ***After the event***

Within a few hours of the event, follow up with any mainstream media who were there, and ensure they have all the information they need in order to produce their reports.

Ensure that the photographer has uploaded photos of the event to an online photo gallery.

Have videographer make b-roll and interviews available to Adventist News Network for their report.

Send a report and photos to GC PARL for possible inclusion in Adventist News Network and Adventist Review.

## **IDEAS FOR WRITING PARL STORIES**

- **Human interest**

Are you aware of someone who is facing religious challenges in the workplace, or students who can't pursue their education because of Sabbath exams? If they are willing to tell their story, human interest features, either written or on-camera, can be powerful ways to communicate core PARL values and principles—not just to the Adventist public, but to the broader community through the mainstream media.

- **Issue orientated**

Are Sabbath workplace issues a challenge in your territory? Are laws related to land-zoning impacting religious communities? Is wearing religious garb or treatment of religious minorities a social concern in your community? Are church-state relationships a current political issue? Position yourself as an information resource on questions that

are relevant to your community by writing an opinion piece or analysis of current issues of interest.

- **Reaction to current events**

Consider the ways in which PARL’s mandate intersects with the headlines that are dominating the daily news cycle. Is there a current court battle that touches on religious liberty issues? Have there been reports of mistreatment or harassment of religious minorities? Could there be a unique “Adventist angle” on a current news situation that you can provide, either in the mainstream media (for instance, with a letter to the editor to your national newspaper, or a commentary piece for a news magazine, or a comment to a journalist reporting on a broader event) or for church members via Adventist publications and media?

- **Event news**

Amplify the impact of your PARL event by including a communication strategy within the planning process, and by ensuring reports are sent out to various Adventist media—both division-wide and through GC communication channels.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH HOPE CHANNEL AND GLOBAL FAITH & FREEDOM**

GC PARL is working with Hope Channel to produce a new series of Global Faith & Freedom—a television program that will communicate the values and stories of PARL worldwide.

We would like to feature reports and stories from each of the world divisions, and Hope Channel will assist us, as far as they can, with collecting stories and interviews via their international media centers.

Please contact Bettina Krause at [krauseb@gc.adventist.org](mailto:krauseb@gc.adventist.org) if you have a human interest or issue-oriented news story that you would like to see featured in Global Faith & Freedom.

Contributing story ideas helps Global Faith & Freedom, but it will also provide extra resources for division PARL directors, who will be able to access the b-roll, interviews, and the finished story package.

## **PARL AND IRLA LOGOS**

Please contact Bettina Krause, [krauseb@gc.adventist.org](mailto:krauseb@gc.adventist.org), for logo files for IRLA and PARL, or if you have questions about their use.

## Section 7

# PARL World Report

### 7.1 Purpose

The purpose of the *World Report* is to draw on the unique experience of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world in order to produce an annual “snap-shot” of the religious freedom environment—constitutional, legal, and social—of every country and territory recognized by the United Nations.

This provides a useful resource not only for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also for governments and NGOs who can benefit from first-hand insights provided by Adventists who are operating within these jurisdictions.

### 7.2 Sensitivities

We are aware that, in some places, reporting on religious liberty challenges can exacerbate an already-tense situation, or create problems for Adventists operating within particular areas.

**In your *World Report* updates each year, please notify us of any potential sensitivities where wording should be adjusted.**

### 7.3 Reporting for PARL World Report

Rather than providing a time-consuming reporting form, we want to make the annual updating process for the *World Report* as quick and as streamlined as possible.

Your assistance in updating the *World Report* is vital, and it involves two steps.

In July each year, we will email you Microsoft Word files of each country in your division from the previous year’s *World Report*.

1. Please review (and have your union directors) review each country entry and mark suggested changes and/or comments directly on the Word document using the “Mark-up” feature.

2. Email the Microsoft Word files, with changes marked, to GC PARL. Include any additional comments, suggestions, or concerns.

We ask that you return all reviewed and marked Word files to us by the **first week of September**.

## 7.4 Availability of World Report

We want the *World Report* to become a trusted, recognized, and well-used resource for religious liberty advocates. It is published each October and is available free for download at the PARL website, [www.adventistliberty.org](http://www.adventistliberty.org).

Printed copies can be ordered from GC PARL for a nominal charge.

## Section 8

# World Adventists in Public Office Association

### 8.1 History and Purpose

The World Adventists in Public Office Association (WAPOA) was established on July 8, 2015, on the side-lines of the General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas. A PARL luncheon brought together some 21 leaders from ten countries—ambassadors, ministers of state, members of parliament, a senator, a deputy chief justice, and high-level officials within international organizations. In the discussion following this luncheon, it was decided to establish an international networking organization for Adventists who hold public office.

Senator Floyd Morris, Senate President of Jamaica, was voted as the first president of WAPOA. Philippine Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Bienvenido V. Tejano, was chosen to serve as the association’s secretary, and Damaris Moura Kuo, president of the Religious Liberty Commission of the Brazilian Bar Association’s São Paulo Division, was selected as its public relations officer.

Since it was established, a WAPOA chapter has been established in Brazil

The goals of this organization are to:

- To connect Adventists in public office for the purpose of increased collegiately and mutual support.
- To affirm the desire of Adventists in public office to carry their spiritual values into the public realm and to reflect Christ’s character in their service to their country.
- To develop a closer and mutually supportive relationship between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Adventists who hold public office.

### 8.2 Relationship with PARL

WAPOA is an independent organization, led and run by officers elected from among its own membership.

However, the PARL department at the GC and at the division level has an important supporting role to play in:

- Encouraging Adventists in public office to form national or regional chapters of WAPOA.
- Connecting Adventists in public office with each other, and with the leadership of WAPOA.
- Maintaining a strong, mutually supportive relationship—providing assistance and advice where needed.

### 8.3 Request for Names and Assistance

Since WAPOA is a new organization, PARL is assisting WAPOA's leadership in collecting the names of Adventists in public office around the world.

We will be sending out a formal request for assistance in identifying Adventists in public office within your division, and we will request that you forward each of these individuals some preliminary information about WAPOA, and an invitation to join its email list.

Who is an "Adventist in public office?" This term includes anyone at a city, state, provincial, national, or international level who is either:

- An elected representative of any public decision-making body (state legislator, national congressperson, city council member, etc.)
- An elected executive (mayor, president, etc.)
- A politically appointed member of any public body
- An executive member of any public body
- A member of the judiciary or any national or international legal panel
- A member of the diplomatic corps of a country
- A representative to, or executive member of, any international body such as the United Nations or African Union, etc.

## Section 9

# International Religious Liberty Association

### 9.1 History of the IRLA

In 1889, during an assembly in the Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan, 110 Adventist leaders decided to charter a new association to promote and defend religious freedom. The church had been very active, publishing a magazine called *The Sentinel*. But it needed an association which could respond more specifically to challenges against religious liberty.

They named it the National Religious Liberty Association. The idea was well received outside of North America and in 1893 the association became the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA). Later on, as books and brochures were published, church leaders organized the Library of Religious Liberty. Then the church set up the Bureau of Religious Liberty. In 1901 the General Conference established the Department of Religious Liberty. In 1909 *Liberty*, the name given in 1906 to the magazine, had a full page for the Religious Liberty Association. It listed 11 regional associations which included foreign countries such as Australia and Great Britain.

In 1946 the IRLA opened its membership to non-Adventists. Today the IRLA has members from many different religions and beliefs, including non-believers.

The purpose of the association is “To defend, promote and protect religious freedom for all people everywhere.” The definition of religious freedom is that given in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”*

## 9.2 What is the IRLA?

The IRLA:

- **IS NON-SECTARIAN**

The IRLA Panel of Experts is made up of a majority of non-Adventists. But the IRLA Board of Directors has a majority of Adventists. In spite of that, the current president and several vice presidents are not members of the Adventist Church.

- **IS VOLUNTARY**

No one receives a salary from the IRLA or its regional associations. All are expected to work on a voluntary basis.

- **ENCOURAGES BROAD PARTICIPATION**

Its goal is to bring people together, no matter what their religion or background, for the purpose of promoting religious freedom for all people. To this end, all association meetings give space and voice to non-Adventists, and invited guests represent a broad cross-section of the religious, academic, legal and political communities.

- **WORKS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ALL PEOPLE**

The IRLA and its regional associations promote the principle of religious freedom. This will undoubtedly yield benefits for the Adventist Church, but that narrow goal is neither the stated nor actual purpose of the IRLA. Its purpose is much wider and is concerned for the rights of all people, no matter what their faith (or lack of faith).

- **ENCOURAGES LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Through the years, the IRLA has worked in partnership with regional and national associations in about 80 countries. Some are active, such as those in Colombia, Brazil, Russia, Romania, Italy, Croatia, and Poland. Some are moderately active, and some are in a state of hibernation.

In 2003, IRLA decided to encourage every country to organize its own national association rather than being a national chapter of the IRLA. In Brazil the name of the association is the Brazilian Association for Religious Liberty and Citizenship (ABLRIC). In Romania it is Conscience and Liberty Association. Both are quite active and both are well recognized by the government of their country. Some of the European countries are under the umbrella of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (AIDLR).

## 9.3 Mission, Purpose, and Principles of the IRLA

### MISSION STATEMENT

The International Religious Liberty Association will disseminate the principles of religious liberty throughout the world; defend and safeguard the civil right of all people to worship or not to worship, to adopt a religion or belief of their choice, to manifest their religious convictions in observance, promulgation, and teaching, subject only to the respect for the equivalent rights of others; support the right of religious organizations to operate freely in every country by their establishing and owning charitable or educational institutions; and organize local, regional, and national chapters as well as seminars, and congresses.

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To disseminate the principles of religious liberty throughout the world.

To defend and safeguard the civil right of all people to worship, to adopt a religion or belief of their choice, to manifest their religious convictions in observance, promulgation, and teaching, subject only to the respect for the equivalent rights of others.

To support the right of religious organizations to operate freely in every country by their establishing and owning charitable or educational institutions.

To organize local, national, and regional chapters, as well as seminars and congresses.

### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

We believe that religious liberty is a God-given right.

We believe that legislation and other governmental acts which unite church and state are contrary to the best interests of both institutions and are potentially prejudicial to human rights, and hold that it is best exercised where separation is maintained between church and state.

We believe that government is divinely ordained to support and protect citizens in their employment of natural rights, and to rule in civil affairs; and that in so doing, government warrants respectful obedience and willing support.

We believe in the natural and inalienable right of freedom of conscience - to have or not to have a religion; to adopt the religion or belief of one's choice; to change religious belief according to conscience; to manifest one's religion individually or in community with others, in worship, observance, practice, promulgation and teaching - subject only to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

We believe that religious liberty includes also the freedom to establish and operate appropriate charitable or educational institutions, to solicit or receive voluntary financial contributions, to observe days of rest and celebrate holidays in accordance with the precepts of one's religion, and to maintain communication with fellow believers at national and international levels.

We believe that religious liberty and the elimination of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief are essential to promote understanding, peace and friendship among people.

We believe that citizens should use lawful and honorable means to prevent the reduction of religious liberty, so that all may enjoy its inestimable blessing.

We believe that the spirit of true religious liberty is epitomized in the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

## 9.4 Relationship with the Adventist Church

The IRLA (and local national or regional associations) should be independent organizations, but with strong links to the church. In practice, this means that the church supports the IRLA and its national associations. Further, it is understood and accepted that the PARL director of the church will be the Secretary General or the Executive Director of the association.

However, it is not necessary for the President of the association to be a Seventh-day Adventist—and, in fact, it can be very helpful for this position to be filled by a non church member.

In some countries the Adventist Church fully supports the association but decides to keep it exclusively Adventist. In that case, the union or conference president will be the President of the association.

But regardless of leadership—whether exclusively Adventist or not—the following principles should be respected.

- When we represent the association, the title we use is that of the association. In the IRLA world congresses, the division presidents are the IRLA regional presidents. The union or conference presidents become the national presidents. All the division PARL directors become IRLA regional Secretary Generals.
- Association events are *public* events, not church events. Be honest and consistent in keeping PARL and association events distinct and separate. Even if the majority of attendees are Adventist Church members, association meetings should not be run as spiritual gatherings.

## 9.5 IRLA Meeting of Experts

Since 1999, the IRLA has sponsored an annual gathering of academics to consider current issues in religious freedom. Members of the IRLA panel of experts include some Adventist scholars, but the majority are religious liberty scholars from non-Adventist universities.

## 9.6 IRLA Publication—*Fides et Libertas*

The IRLA publication *Fides et Libertas* is a scholarly journal published annually. Much of its content is drawn from academic papers presented at the yearly IRLA Meeting of Experts or at IRLA's World Congresses, held every five years.

Current and previous editions of the journal can be downloaded free from the IRLA website, [www.irla.org](http://www.irla.org). Copies of the printed version are available for purchase from PARL at a nominal charge. Contact Gail Banner for more information at [banner@gc.adventist.org](mailto:banner@gc.adventist.org).

## 9.7 Steps to Setting up a Regional Association

- Be sure church administration supports the organization by a vote of its Executive Committee.
- Organize a working group, then a funding board with a president, a secretary, and a few members.
- Write the bylaws in conformity with your purpose, in agreement with church values, and according to legal regulations.
- Follow any other legal requirements of your country in establishing an association.
- Elect your board and your officers.
- Contact GC PARL for advice or assistance, as needed.

## 9.8 IRLA Bylaws

Bylaws

of the

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

[AS REVISED April 2007]

A District of Columbia

Nonprofit Corporation

### ARTICLE I – MEMBERS AND MEMBERS MEETINGS

#### Section 1. Membership

There is one class of members of the Corporation. The members are responsible for certain governance matters as described in the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws and under the laws of the District of Columbia.

#### Section 2. Members

Members who fail to take active part and support of the Corporation during the period between biennial meetings may, at the discretion of the Board of Directors, be deemed to no longer be acting as a member and that member's position may be deemed vacant for purposes of filling all vacancies at the next regular members meeting. The Board of Directors shall serve as the nominating committee for purposes of nominating individuals or organizations to serve as members of the Corporation.

#### Section 3. Members Meetings

Regular and specially called meetings of the members shall be held at the call of the chairperson of the Board of Directors or by the Board of Directors. The Biennial Meeting of the members shall be considered the Regular meeting of the members and shall be held at the time and place as voted by the Board of Directors. In any year that a special meeting of the entire membership takes place, then that meeting shall suffice as the Biennial Meeting for that time period.

#### Section 4. Special Meetings

Specially called meetings of the membership may be called by the Board of Directors by giving notice of the time and place of said meeting.

#### Section 5. Notice

Notice of both regular and specially called meetings shall be provided to the members not less than ten (10) days and not more than fifty (50) days preceding the time of meeting. Written notices shall include the date and place of the meeting and may be delivered in person, by mail, by facsimile or by email.

#### Section 6. Parliamentary Procedure

The parliamentary procedures for meetings of the membership of this Corporation shall be governed by the Roberts Rules of Order.

#### Section 7. Quorum

Twenty percent (20%) of those eligible to serve as members, including the President (or his designee) and at least two other officers of the Corporation, shall constitute a quorum for a membership meeting.

#### Section 8. Voting

Each member shall have only one vote on any one question. A majority vote of a quorum of members present at any meeting, either in person or by telephone or video conference, shall be the official act of the members, unless otherwise required by the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws or by law. No member shall be entitled to a vote by proxy. The votes of the members of the Corporation shall be taken by voice, unless otherwise determined by the members or by the chair.

#### ARTICLE II – Limitations on Activities

In general, the Corporation has authority to do and perform such acts and transact such business in connection its purposes that are not inconsistent with the law; provided, however, that the Corporation shall not perform any act or transact any business that will jeopardize the tax exempt status of the Corporation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and its regulations as such Section and regulations now exist or may hereafter be amended, or under corresponding laws and regulations hereafter adopted.

No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles, this Corporation shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and its regulations as

such Section and regulations now exist, or may hereafter be amended or under corresponding laws and regulations hereafter adopted.

## ARTICLE III – Board of Directors

### Section 1. Powers

The business activities and management of property of the Corporation shall be conducted and administered by its Board of Directors, which may exercise all of the general powers granted to non-profit corporations enumerated in Section 29-301.05 of the District of Columbia Nonprofit Corporation Act (the “Act”) including subsequent amendments thereto.

### Section 2. Number of Directors

The number of Directors shall be at least five (5). In addition to the regular Directors, the Members may name Advisory Directors who shall provide expertise and assistance to the Board when available. Such Advisory Members shall be entitled to voice and vote when in attendance at any Directors meeting.

### Section 3. Term for Directors

All Directors shall be elected by the members of the Corporation at the regular meeting of the membership and shall serve for a two (2) year term until the next regular meeting of the membership which is held at the time of expiration of the director’s term.

### Section 4. Vacancies

Directors shall have the power to fill vacancies occurring in the Board of Directors between regular meetings of the membership. Persons thus appointed shall serve until the next regular meeting of the membership, unless a director is filling a vacancy created by the resignation or termination of another director and the new director is replacing that person because of the person’s position qualifying that person to serve on the Board in which case the new director shall serve the remainder of the term of the director being replaced. Any director who serves on the Board because of that person’s position shall automatically be terminated as a director if that person resigns or is terminated from the position that qualifies the director to serve on the Board.

### Section 5. Quorum

One-half of the total number of regular directors of the Board of Directors, under the chairmanship of an officer of the Board of Directors, shall constitute a quorum.

### Section 6. Voting

Each Director shall have only one vote on any one question. A majority vote of a quorum of Directors present at any meeting shall be the official act of the Board of Directors.

### Section 7. Notice

The Board of Directors shall meet on a regular schedule as communicated to the Directors or at the call of the Chair. Such meetings shall be held at the principal office of the Corporation or at such other place as the Chair, or the President if requested by the Chair, may determine either within the District of Columbia or elsewhere. The Corporation shall provide reasonable notice to the Directors in advance of any meeting based on the circumstances requiring such meeting but in no case shall notice be less than three (3) days in advance of any meeting unless such meeting is a regular meeting of the Board of Directors according to a schedule regularly provided to the Directors in which case notice shall be deemed to have been given.

#### Section 8. Waiver of Notice

Whenever any notice is required to be given to any Director of the Corporation under the provisions of these Bylaws or under the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation or under the provisions of the Act, a waiver thereof in writing, signed by the person or persons entitled to such notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent to the giving of such notice.

#### Section 9. Assent to Action

A Director of the Corporation who is present at a meeting of the Board of Directors at which action on any corporate matter is taken shall be presumed to have assented to the action taken unless the Director's dissent shall be entered in the minutes of the meeting or unless the Director shall file a written dissent to such action with the person acting as the secretary of the meeting before the adjournment thereof, or shall forward such dissent by registered mail or in person to the Secretary of the Board of Directors within three (3) days after the adjournment of the meeting. Such right to dissent shall not apply to a Director who voted in favor of such action.

#### Section 10. Meeting by Telephone Conference

Board members may participate in meetings of the Board of Directors by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment by which all persons participating can hear each other at the same time, and participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at such a meeting.

#### Section 11. Action by Directors without a Meeting

Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the directors of the Corporation may be taken without a meeting if a consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed by all of the directors. Such consent shall have the same effect as a unanimous vote of the directors and may be stated as such in any articles or documents filed with appropriate office required under the Act.

#### Section 12. Director Conflicts of Interest

Any Director who has an interest in a contract or other transaction presented to the Board or a committee thereof for authorization, approval, or ratification shall make a prompt and full disclosure of their interest to the Board or committee prior to its acting on such contract or transaction. Such disclosure shall include any relevant and material facts known to such a

person about the contract or transaction that might reasonably be construed to be adverse to the Corporation's interest.

No Director shall cast a vote on any matter which has a direct bearing on services to be provided by that Director, or any organization which such Director represents or in which such Director has an ownership interest or is otherwise interested or affiliated, which would directly or indirectly financially benefit such Director. All such services will be fully disclosed or known to the Board members present at the meeting at which such contract shall be authorized. Corporation salaried individuals cannot vote on their own compensation, and compensation decisions will be made by the Board of Directors or as otherwise provided for in these Bylaws.

#### Section 13. Loans to Directors and Officers

No loans shall be made by the Corporation to any Director or Officer of the Corporation.

#### Section 14. Removal of Directors

At a meeting of the Board of Directors called expressly for that purpose, any director may be removed by a vote of a majority of the Directors then in office.

#### Section 15. Committees of the Board

The Board of Directors shall have the right, but not the obligation, to appoint committees of the Board. Any committee formed by the Board of Directors shall not have the authority of the Board of Directors but shall at all times report to the Board of Directors for implementation of recommended actions. The designation or appointment of any committee shall not operate to relieve the Board of Directors or any individual Director of any responsibility imposed upon it or the Director by law.

### ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

#### Section 1. Officers

The officers of this Corporation shall consist of a President, at least one (1) Vice President, a Secretary General/Secretary and a Treasurer. These and any additional officers of the Corporation shall be elected by the Board of Directors. Any officer may concurrently hold more than one office providing that the President or Vice President may not concurrently serve as Secretary or Associate Secretary.

#### Section 2. Election of Officers

Officers of the Corporation shall be elected at the first meeting of the Board of Directors following the regular Meeting of the Members. The Officers terms shall be for one (1) year or until their successors are elected, whichever is later, unless for a longer period provided for herein. At the Board's discretion, Officers may be elected for term not to exceed three (3) years.

### Section 3. President

The President shall preside at all meetings of the members. The President shall be an ex officio member of the Board of Directors and shall serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors. To the extent needed, the Chairperson shall be available to the Secretary General for consultation on matters related to the Board of Directors and its activities.

### Section 4. Vice President

The principal duties of the Vice President(s) shall be to assist the President in the execution of the President's duties and to discharge the duties of the President in the event of absence or disability, for any cause, of the President. The Vice President shall do and perform such other duties as may, from time to time, be assigned by the Board of Directors or the President. In the absence of the President, the Secretary General shall preside at all meetings of the members and the Board of Directors.

### Section 5. Secretary General/Secretary

The Secretary General, who shall also be referred to as Corporation's Secretary, shall be the chief executive officer of the Corporation and shall have general charge and control of all its business affairs and properties. The Secretary General may sign and execute on behalf of the Corporation all bonds, contracts, or other obligations that have been authorized by the Board of Directors. The Secretary General shall be ex-officio a member of the Board of Directors and all standing committees. The Secretary General shall do and perform such other duties as may, from time to time, be assigned to him by the Board of Directors.

In his duties as the Secretary, the person in this position shall be: to give notice of meetings as set by the President or as otherwise regularly scheduled, to countersign all deeds, leases, and conveyances executed by the Corporation unless otherwise called for herein, to affix the seal of the Corporation to all papers required or directed to be sealed, to keep a record of the proceedings of the Board of Directors, and to safely and systematically keep all books, papers, records, and documents belonging to the Corporation, or in any way pertaining to the business of the Corporation, except the books and records incidental to the duties of the Treasurer.

### Section 6. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall have custody of all the funds and securities of the Corporation, and shall keep full and accurate account of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Corporation. The Treasurer shall deposit all monies and other valuables to be held in the name and to the credit of the Corporation in such depository or depositories as may be designated by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall disburse the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board of Directors, taking proper vouchers for such disbursements. The Treasurer shall render to the President and the Board of Directors, whenever either requests, an account of all transactions implemented or completed as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall do and perform such other duties as may, from time to time, be assigned by the Board of Directors or the President.

## Section 7. Other Officers

Deputy Secretaries General, Associate Secretaries and Associate Treasurers of this Corporation are hereby established and may be appointed as deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors. All deputy and associate officers shall do and perform such other duties as may, from time to time, be assigned to them by the Board of Directors.

## Section 8. Removal of an Officer

Any officer may be removed from office at any time, with or without cause, upon the vote of a majority of the Board of Directors whenever, in its judgment, the best interests of the Corporation will be served thereby. Removal shall be without prejudice to any contract rights of the person so removed, but election of an officer shall not of itself create contract rights.

## ARTICLE V - FINANCES, Contracts, Gifts, BANK Accounts and Loans

### Section 1. Handling of Financial Matters

In addition to the Treasurer, such officers or agents of the Corporation, as from time to time shall be designated by the Board of Directors, shall have the authority to deposit any funds of the Corporation in such banks or trust companies as shall from time to time be designated by the Board of Directors and such officers or agents, as from time to time shall be authorized by the Board of Directors, may withdraw any or all funds of the Corporation so deposited in any such bank or trust company, upon checks, drafts, or other instruments or orders for the payment of money, drawn against the account or in the name or behalf of this Corporation, and made or signed by such officers or agents; and each bank or trust company with which funds of the Corporation are so deposited is authorized to accept, honor, cash and pay, without limit as to amount, all checks, drafts or other instruments or orders for the payment of money, when drawn, made, or signed by officers or agents so designated by the Board of Directors until written notice of the revocation of the authority of such officers or agents by the Board of Directors shall have been received by the bank or trust company.

### Section 2. Deeds and Instruments

All deeds and other instruments of this Corporation shall be executed by at least two officers. Legal instruments to be recorded shall be properly notarized and, where necessary, shall carry the corporate seal with attestation by the Secretary or an Associate Secretary. No officer shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by legal instrument, or otherwise, unless approved by the Board of Directors. Any officer may be authorized by the Board of Directors to sign any legal document.

### Section 3. Contracts

The Board of Directors may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

### Section 4. Gifts

The Board of Directors, or as otherwise delegated to the Officers of the Corporation, on behalf of the Corporation may accept any contribution, gift, bequest or devise for the general purposes or for any special purpose of the Corporation.

#### ARTICLE VI - Affiliated Associations

##### Section 1. Affiliation

Associations and organizations in any country with similar objectives may affiliate, as local, national, or regional associations, with this corporation upon a majority vote of the board of directors and subsequent majority vote of members at a biennial or special meeting. The board of directors shall establish requirements for affiliated status.

##### Section 2. Disaffiliation

Affiliated associations may be disaffiliated upon majority vote of the board of directors of this corporation and subsequent majority vote of members at a biennial or special meeting.

#### ARTICLE VII – Publications

##### Section 1. Official Publications

After a resolution by a majority of the board of directors, a majority of members voting at a biennial or special meeting may approve an official magazine, journal, or publication for the corporation.

##### Section 2. Affiliated Publications

Official magazines, journals, or publications of affiliated associations may be known as affiliated publications of the corporation if approved by majority votes of both the board of directors and a subsequent meeting of members.

#### ARTICLE VIII – Amendments

The Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws may be altered, amended, or repealed by a majority of the members of the corporation voting at a biennial or special meeting.

#### ARTICLE IX - CORPORATE Seal and Records; Fiscal Year

##### Section 1. Corporate Seal

The seal of this Corporation shall consist of an ordinary sized circular impression with the words "INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION" in an outer circle enclosing the word "Incorporated."

##### Section 2. Inspection of Records by Members

Upon written request to the Secretary General, a member may inspect, copy, and make extracts of the accounting books and records as well as the minutes of the proceedings of the Board and its committees. Such inspection, copying and, extracting shall take place during

normal business hours. Any such request must be for a purpose reasonably related to the interests of the person as a member. Any inspection, copying or, extracting must be made in person. This privilege shall not apply or appertain to any item designated by the Board as confidential or otherwise deemed injurious to the operation of the Corporation.

Section 3. Inspection Rights of Directors

Every Director shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect: the Corporation's books, records, and documents of every kind; physical properties; and the records of each of its subsidiaries. The inspection may be made in person or by the director's agent so designated in writing. The right of inspection includes the right to copy and make extracts of documents.

Section 4. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of this Corporation shall correspond with the calendar year.

ARTICLE X - DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, the Board of Directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the corporation, transfer all assets of the corporation to a nonprofit organization tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law), as determined by the Members to be used exclusively for the purpose of religious liberty in harmony with its status as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law). None of the same shall inure to the benefit of any private individual member or director or any corporation which is not in harmony with this Article.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I certify that I am the duly elected Secretary General/Secretary of the INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation; that the above Bylaws are the Bylaws of this Corporation as amended upon recommendation of the Board of Directors as affirmed by the vote of the Members present at the Annual Meeting of the Members, held on April 11, 2007; and further, that they have not been amended or modified since that date.

\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary General/Secretary

Date \_\_\_\_\_



