

Resources

One of the mandates for the General Conference Department of Women's Ministries is to develop resource materials for the use of women around the world. This we have done and continue to do. Many of these resources are listed in this section for your reference. We will continue to supply you with materials also.

But our office cannot supply all the resources needed everywhere—we do not have the personnel. But more importantly, we do not have the expertise. You in the field have a much better idea many times of what is needed and how to supply that need.

Resources for those who work in your territory are of two types: Those you produce and those you find and you should be constantly collecting and evaluating such resources.

- 1) ***Those you produce:*** Women's Ministries directors should be developing materials and adapting materials so that they are best suited to your constituency. When you develop materials, please be generous and share also with others in your division as well as those in other divisions. If developed by someone other than the division director, such material should be sent to the division director and she should send a copy to other leaders in that division and to the General Conference. We will make it available to others. Materials developed in languages other than English is always appreciated at the General Conference and by other divisions. When sending such material, however, please send an English summary and the following information:

Title

Content

Who developed it

Language

Any other information to help us know with whom it should be shared.

- 2) **Those you find:** Each division director (and union and conference in turn) should be on the constant lookout for good materials produced by other Church departments, materials from other divisions, material by other denominations and women's groups. Is it useful? Theologically acceptable? Appealing to women? If so, share that information. Materials that are available in languages other than English are especially hard to find and of value.

Guidelines of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

A Statement regarding Abortion

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

- 1) Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.
- 2) Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.
- 3) In practical, tangible ways the Church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These ways should include:
 - a. strengthening family relationships

- b. educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality
- c. emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning
- d. calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles
- e. creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion
- f. offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies
- g. encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children

The Church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.

- 4) The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships.
- 5) Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.
- 6) Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a

religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

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

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

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

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

A Statement on Abuse and Family Violence

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

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

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

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

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

A Statement on AIDS

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

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

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

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

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

A Statement on the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the AIDS Epidemic

Rationale

The global epidemic of AIDS profoundly impacts the worldwide gospel mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Church leaders are called to respond through initiatives in education, prevention, and community service, and through personal acts of kindness to persons and families involved in the crisis. AIDS is no respecter of national boundaries, church membership, gender, marital status, education, income, or position in life. In many countries of the world, it is decimating the population, taking the lives of many individuals, including Seventh-day Adventist Church members. All persons, especially young people growing up in an era of moral laxity, need to be taught biblical principles regarding sexuality and God's design that sexual intimacy be experienced within the protection of the marriage covenant. Leadership should provide credible information to members—presented in their own language and sensitive to their own culture. The Church is called to be both a prophetic and a compassionate voice—the mouthpiece and hands of God as it extends the ministry of Christ into the community.

The global mission of the Church, in reaching out to all races and peoples, draws into church fellowship many who are infected by the AIDS virus prior to joining the church or who are affected by having family members with AIDS. The epidemic is of such magnitude that no family will ultimately remain untouched. Many are infected through no action of their own. A judgmental attitude is always inappropriate, especially since the source of the infection cannot be determined with certainty. Many have experienced shame, fear, and agony as family members suffered and died with AIDS, often feeling compelled to secrecy regarding their painful situation. Just as Christ came to offer healing to a suffering world, so Seventh-day Adventists are commissioned to compassionately care for those who suffer and are affected with the virus of AIDS. Members can safely serve as care givers, at home or in health care facilities, if they are educated in appropriate ways of doing so.

Recommendations

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes its Christian responsibility to respond to the global AIDS crisis and its devastating affect on humanity and wishes to respond in multiple ways which include:

1. Extending the teaching and healing ministry of Christ, who without prejudice cared for all in need, by engaging in efforts to reduce the risk of individuals acquiring AIDS, and compassionately and non-judgmentally caring for all those affected when an individual suffers from AIDS.

2. Designating a person in each division, along with such personnel and financial resources as may be secured, to respond to AIDS challenges through appropriate initiatives and cooperative efforts with other entities in the community or country at large.
3. Developing and managing AIDS education programs using the resource HIV/AIDS Guide when applicable.* Programs should be contextualized for relevant cultural and linguistic needs and directed to:
 - a. Pastors: Through continuing education and ministerial meetings designed to equip pastors to deal with members touched by the AIDS crisis. Pastors need information on prevention, compassionate ministry, and applied ecclesiastical functions such as conducting a funeral service for a person infected with AIDS.
 - b. Teachers: As continuing education and in-service training with emphasis on conveying spiritual values and developing skills among youth for coping with sexual pressures.
 - c. Parents: By their modeling a lifestyle that upholds Christian values, recognizing that marriage relations and any use of alcohol or other abusive substances has a direct negative effect on their children's sexual values and practices.
 - d. Church members: Through sermons, Sabbath School Bible Study Guides, premarital counseling and marriage-strengthening activities, seminars regarding AIDS, and educational curricula which provides information regarding sexuality in general and AIDS in particular.
 - e. Communities: By recognizing the opportunity for Christian witness and ministry in the community at large, providing appropriate community outreach, and participating in cooperative endeavors.
4. Protecting and strengthening marriage by:
 - a. Upholding the ideal of abstinence from premarital sex.
 - b. Advocating premarital HIV testing for both potential partners as part of the church-based preparation for marriage.
 - c. Elevating God's ideal for fidelity in marriage.
 - d. Recommending protective measures against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

5. Intentionally transmitting Christian values to the next generation, recognizing that individual sexual values are established in youth. Priority should be given to providing accurate information, a forum for open discussion, and emphasis on the moral dimension of decision making regarding sexuality.

**Provided by the Health and Temperance Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in cooperation with the General Conference AIDS Study Commission members.*

These guidelines were voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996.

A Statement of Consensus on Birth Control

Scientific technologies today permit greater control of human fertility and reproduction than was formerly possible. These technologies make possible sexual intercourse with the expectation of pregnancy and childbirth greatly reduced. Christian married couples have a potential for fertility control that has created many questions with wide-ranging religious, medical, social, and political implications. Opportunities and benefits exist as a result of the new capabilities, as do challenges and drawbacks. A number of moral issues must be considered. Christians who ultimately must make their own personal choices on these issues must be informed in order to make sound decisions based on biblical principles.

Among the issues to be considered is the question of the appropriateness of human intervention in the natural biological processes of human reproduction. If any intervention is appropriate, then additional questions regarding what, when, and how must be addressed. Other related concerns include:

- likelihood of increased sexual immorality which the availability and use of birth control methods may promote;
- gender dominance issues related to the sexual privileges and prerogatives of both women and men;
- social issues, including the right of a society to encroach upon personal freedom in the interest of the society at large and the burden of economic and educational support for the disadvantaged; and
- stewardship issues related to population growth and the use of natural resources.

A statement of moral considerations regarding birth control must be set in the broader context of biblical teachings about sexuality, marriage, parenthood, and the value of children—and an understanding of the interconnectedness between these issues. With an awareness of the diversity of opinion within the Church, the following biblically based principles are set forth to educate and to guide in decision making.

1. **Responsible stewardship.** God created human beings in His own image, male and female, with capacities to think and to make decisions (Isa 1:18; Josh 24:15; Deut 30:15-20). God gave human beings dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26, 28). This dominion requires overseeing and caring for nature. Christian stewardship also requires taking responsibility for human procreation. Sexuality, as one of the aspects of human nature over which the individual has stewardship, is to be expressed in harmony with God's will (Exod 20:14; Gen 39:9; Lev 20:10-21; 1 Cor 6:12-20).
2. **Procreative purpose.** The perpetuation of the human family is one of God's purposes for human sexuality (Gen 1:28). Though it may be inferred that marriages

are generally intended to yield offspring, Scripture never presents procreation as an obligation of every couple in order to please God. However, divine revelation places a high value on children and expresses the joy to be found in parenting (Matt 19:14; Ps127:3). Bearing and rearing children help parents to understand God and to develop compassion, caring, humility, and unselfishness (Ps 103:13; Luke 11:13).

3. Unifying purpose. Sexuality serves a unifying purpose in marriage that is God-ordained and distinguishable from the procreative purpose (Gen 2:24). Sexuality in marriage is intended to include joy, pleasure, and delight (Eccl 9:9; Prov 5:18, 19; Song of Sol 4:16–5:1). God intends that couples may have ongoing sexual communion apart from procreation (1 Cor 7:3-5), a communion that forges strong bonds and protects a marriage partner from an inappropriate relationship with someone other than his or her spouse (Prov 5:15-20; Song of Sol 8:6, 7). In God's design, sexual intimacy is not only for the purpose of conception. Scripture does not prohibit married couples from enjoying the delights of conjugal relations while taking measures to prevent pregnancy.

4. Freedom to choose. In creation—and again through the redemption of Christ—God has given human beings freedom of choice, and He asks them to use their freedom responsibly (Gal 5:1, 13). In the divine plan, husband and wife constitute a distinct family unit, having both the freedom and the responsibility to share in making determinations about their family (Gen 2:24). Married partners should be considerate of each other in making decisions about birth control, being willing to consider the needs of the other as well as one's own (Phil 2:4). For those who choose to bear children, the procreative choice is not without limits. Several factors must inform their choice, including the ability to provide for the needs of children (1 Tim 5:8); the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the mother and other care givers (3 John 2; 1 Cor 6:19; Phil 2:4; Eph 5:25); the social and political circumstances into which children will be born (Matt 24:19); and the quality of life and the global resources available. We are stewards of God's creation and therefore must look beyond our own happiness and desires to consider the needs of others (Phil 2:4).

5. Appropriate methods of birth control. Moral decision making about the choice and use of the various birth control agents must stem from an understanding of their probable effects on physical and emotional health, the manner in which the various agents operate, and the financial expenditure involved. A variety of methods of birth control—including barrier methods, spermicides, and sterilization—prevent conception and are morally acceptable. Some other birth-control methods¹ may prevent the release of the egg (ovulation), may prevent the union of egg and sperm (fertilization), or may prevent attachment of the already fertilized egg (implantation). Because of uncertainty about how they will function in any given instance, they may be morally suspect for people who believe that protectable human life begins at fertilization. However, since the majority of fertilized ova naturally fail to implant or are lost after implantation, even when birth control methods are not being used, hormonal methods of birth control and IUDs, which represent a similar process, may

be viewed as morally acceptable. Abortion, the intentional termination of an established pregnancy, is not morally acceptable for purposes of birth control.

6. Misuse of birth control. Though the increased ability to manage fertility and protect against sexually transmitted disease may be useful to many married couples, birth control can be misused. For example, those who would engage in premarital and extramarital sexual relations may more readily indulge in such behaviors because of the availability of birth control methods. The use of such methods to protect sex outside of marriage may reduce the risks of sexually transmitted diseases and/or pregnancy. Sex outside of marriage, however, is both harmful and immoral, whether or not these risks have been diminished.

7. A redemptive approach. The availability of birth-control methods makes education about sexuality and morality even more imperative. Less effort should be put forth in condemnation and more in education and redemptive approaches that seek to allow each individual to be persuaded by the deep movings of the Holy Spirit.

¹Some current examples of these methods include intrauterine devices (IUDs), hormone pills (including the “morning-after pill”), injections, or implants. Questions about these methods should be referred to a medical professional.

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

A Statement on Children, Well-being and Value

Seventh-day Adventists affirm the right of every child to a happy and stable home environment, and the freedom and support to grow up to be the person God intended. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the fundamental importance of children by voting the “Convention on the Rights of the Child.” In harmony with many of these lofty principles, and considering the value Jesus placed on children when He said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt 19:14, NIV), we seek to aid children who suffer from the following destructive influences:

Poverty—Poverty impacts children’s development, robbing them of necessary food, clothing, and shelter, and adversely affecting their health and education.

Illiteracy—Illiteracy makes it difficult for the parents to earn wages or care for their family or for the child to reach his or her potential.

Poor health care—Millions of children have no access to health care because they lack the proper insurance coverage or they live where medical care is unavailable.

Exploitation and vulnerability—Children are corrupted and exploited when they are used for cheap labor, sweat shops, armed conflict, and the perverted sexual pleasure of adult predators, and are exposed to sexually explicit materials in the mass media and on the Internet.

Violence—Every year many children die violent deaths. The vast majority of individuals who suffer in armed conflicts are women and children. Children bear deep physical and psychological scars, even after the fighting stops.

In response to the above issues and needs, Seventh-day Adventists stand for the following rights of children:

1. The right to a loving and stable home where there is safety and freedom from abuse.
2. The right to adequate food, clothing, and shelter.
3. The right to proper health/medical care.
4. The right to an education that prepares children for a positive role in society by developing their personal potential and giving them earning capacity.
5. The right to a religious and moral education in the home and church.
6. The right to freedom from discrimination and exploitation.
7. The right to personhood, respect, and the development of positive self-esteem.

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.

A Statement of Consensus on Care for the Dying

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

Pain and suffering afflict every human life. Physical, mental, and emotional traumas are universal. However, human suffering has no expiatory or meritorious value. The Bible teaches that no amount or intensity of human suffering can atone for sin. The suffering of Jesus Christ alone is sufficient. Scripture calls Christians not to despair in afflictions, urging them to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:7-8), patience (James 1:2-4), and endurance in tribulations (Romans 5:3). The Bible also testifies to the overcoming power of Jesus Christ (John 16:33) and teaches that ministry to human suffering is an important Christian duty (Matthew 25:34-40). This was the example and teaching of Jesus (Matthew 9:35; Luke 10:34-36), and this is His will for us (Luke 10:37). Christians look in anticipation to a new day when God will end suffering forever (Revelation 21:4).

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

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

medical interventions that only prolong suffering and postpone the moment of death is morally different from actions that have as their primary intention the direct taking of a life.

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

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

- 1) A person who is approaching the end of life, and is capable of understanding, deserves to know the truth about his or her condition, the treatment choices and the possible outcomes. The truth should not be withheld but shared with Christian love and with sensitivity to the patient's personal and cultural circumstances (Ephesians 4:15).
- 2) God has given human beings freedom of choice and asks them to use their freedom responsibly. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this freedom extends to decisions about medical care. After seeking divine guidance and considering the interests of those affected by the decision (Romans 14:7) as well as medical advice, a person who is capable of deciding should determine whether to accept or reject life-extending medical interventions. Such persons should not be forced to submit to medical treatment that they find unacceptable.
- 3) God's plan is for people to be nourished within a family and a faith community. Decisions about human life are best made within the context of healthy family relationships after considering medical advice (Genesis 2:18; Mark 10:6-9; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 5-6). When a dying person is unable to give consent or express preferences regarding medical intervention, such decisions should be made by someone chosen by the dying person. If no one has been chosen, someone close to the dying person should make the determination. Except in extraordinary circumstances, medical or legal professionals should defer decisions about medical interventions for a dying person to those

closest to that individual. Wishes or decisions of the individual are best made in writing and should be in agreement with existing legal requirements.

- 4) Christian love is practical and responsible (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; James 1:27; 2:14-17). Such love does not deny faith nor obligate us to offer or to accept medical interventions whose burdens outweigh the probable benefits. For example, when medical care merely preserves bodily functions, without hope of returning a patient to mental awareness, it is futile and may, in good conscience, be withheld or withdrawn. Similarly, life-extending medical treatments may be omitted or stopped if they only add to the patient's suffering or needlessly prolong the process of dying. Any action taken should be in harmony with legal mandates.
- 5) While Christian love may lead to the withholding or withdrawing of medical interventions that only increase suffering or prolong dying, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice "mercy killing" or assist in suicide (Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13; 23:7). They are opposed to active euthanasia, the intentional taking of the life of a suffering or dying person.
- 6) Christian compassion calls for the alleviation of suffering (Matthew 25:34-40; Luke 10:29-37). In caring for the dying, it is a Christian responsibility to relieve pain and suffering, to the fullest extent possible, not to include active euthanasia. When it is clear that medical intervention will not cure a patient, the primary goal of care should shift to relief from suffering.
- 7) The biblical principle of justice prescribes that added care be given the needs of those who are defenseless and dependent (Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 24:11-12; Isaiah 1:1-18; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54). Because of their vulnerable condition, special care should be taken to ensure that dying persons are treated with respect for their dignity and without unfair discrimination. Care for the dying should be based on their spiritual and medical needs and their expressed choices rather than on perceptions of their social worthiness (James 2:1-9).

As Seventh-day Adventists seek to apply these principles, they take hope and courage from the fact that God answers the prayers of His children and is able to work miraculously for their well-being (Psalm 103:1-5; James 5:13-16). Following Jesus' example, they also pray to accept the will of God in all things (Matthew 26:39). They are confident that they can call on God's power to aid them in caring for the physical

and spiritual needs of suffering and dying individuals. They know that the grace of God is sufficient to enable them to endure adversity (Psalm 50:14-15). They believe that eternal life for all who have faith in Jesus is secure in the triumph of God's love.

This consensus statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 9, 1992.

A Statement on Chemical Use, Abuse, and Dependency

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, officially organized in 1863, early in its history addressed the use of beverage alcohol and tobacco. The Church condemned the use of both as destructive to life, family, and spirituality. She adopted, in practice, a definition of temperance which urged "total abstinence from that which is injurious, and the careful and judicious use of that which is good."

The position of the Church with respect to the use of alcohol and tobacco has not changed. In recent decades the Church has actively promoted anti-alcohol and anti-drug education within the Church, and united with other agencies to educate the wider community in the prevention of alcoholism and drug dependency. The Church created a "Stop-smoking Program" in the early 1960's which has had a worldwide outreach and helped tens of thousands of smokers to quit. Originally known as the "Five-Day Plan" to stop smoking, it may well be the most successful of all cessation programs.

The creation of hundreds of new drugs in laboratories, and the rediscovery and popularization of age-old natural chemicals, such as marijuana and cocaine, have now gravely complicated a once comparatively simple problem and pose an ever-increasing challenge to both the Church and society. In a society which tolerates and even promotes drug use, addiction is a growing menace.

Redoubling its efforts in the field of the prevention of dependency, the Church is developing new curricula for its schools and support programs to assist youth to remain abstinent.

The Church is also seeking to be an influential voice in calling the attention of the media, public officials, and legislators to the damage society is suffering through continued promotion and distribution of alcohol and tobacco.

The church continues to believe that Paul's instruction in 1Corinthians 19:20 is applicable today, that "Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Ghost" and we "should glorify God" in our bodies. We belong to God, we are witnesses to His Grace. We must endeavor to be at our best, physically and mentally, in order that we may enjoy His fellowship and glorify His name.

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

A Statement on Child Sexual Abuse

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

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

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

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

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

As a Church we believe our faith calls us to:

1. Uphold the principles of Christ for family relationships in which the self-respect, dignity, and purity of children are recognized as divinely mandated rights.
2. Provide an atmosphere where children who have been abused can feel safe when reporting sexual abuse and can feel that someone will listen to them.
3. Become thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact upon our own church community.
4. Help ministers and lay leaders to recognize the warning signs of child sexual abuse and know how to respond appropriately when abuse is suspected or a child reports being sexually abused.
5. Establish referral relationships with professional counselors and local sexual assault agencies who can, with their professional skills, assist abuse victims and their families.
6. Create guidelines/policies at the appropriate levels to assist church leaders in:
 - a. Endeavoring to treat with fairness persons accused of sexually abusing children.
 - b. Holding abusers accountable for their actions and administering appropriate discipline.
7. Support the education and enrichment of families and family members by:
 - a. Dispelling commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up child sexual abuse.
 - b. Building a healthy sense of personal worth in each child which enables him or her to respect self and others.
 - c. Fostering Christlike relationships between males and females in the home and in the church.
8. Provide caring support and a faith-based redemptive ministry within the church community for abuse survivors and abusers while enabling them to access the available network of professional resources in the community.

9. Encourage the training of more family professionals to facilitate the healing and recovery process of abuse victims and perpetrators.

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

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

Additional materials on Child Sexual Abuse are available at the:

NAD Distribution Center
5040 Prescott Ave.
Lincoln, NE 68506

A Statement on Drugs

The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges every individual and every nation to cooperate in stamping out the worldwide drug epidemic that undermines the social structure of nations and on the individual level often kills its victims or leads them into lives of crime.

Seventh-day Adventists believe the Bible teaches that each human body is a "temple of the living God," which should be cared for intelligently (2 Cor. 6:15-17).

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 21 states, "Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible. ... Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them. ... Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness."

For vibrant living, Seventh-day Adventists urge everyone to follow a lifestyle that avoids tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, and the misuse of drugs.

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, June 1985, at the General Conference session in New Orleans, Louisiana...

A Statement on the Affirmation of Family

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Statement on Family Violence

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

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

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

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

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

It is our belief that the Church has a responsibility—

1. To care for those involved in family violence and to respond to their needs by:
 - a. Listening to and accepting those suffering from abuse, loving and affirming them as persons of value and worth.
 - b. Highlighting the injustices of abuse and speaking out in defense of victims both within the community of faith and in society.
 - c. Providing a caring, supportive ministry to families affected by violence and abuse, seeking to enable both victims and perpetrators to access counseling with Seventh-day Adventist professionals where available or other professional resources in the community.
 - d. Encouraging the training and placement of licensed Seventh-day Adventist professional services for both church members and the surrounding communities.
 - e. Offering a ministry of reconciliation when the perpetrator's repentance makes possible the contemplation of forgiveness and restoration in relationships. Repentance always includes acceptance of full responsibility for the wrongs committed, willingness to make restitution in every way possible, and changes in behavior to eliminate the abuse.
 - f. Focusing the light of the gospel on the nature of husband-wife, parent-child, and other close relationships, and empowering individuals and families to grow toward God's ideals in their lives together.
 - g. Guarding against the ostracism of either victims or perpetrators within the family or church community, while firmly holding perpetrators responsible for their actions.
2. To strengthen family life by:
 - a. Providing family life education which is grace-oriented and includes a biblical understanding of the mutuality, equality, and respect indispensable to Christian relationships.
 - b. Increasing understanding of the factors that contribute to family violence.
 - c. Developing ways to prevent abuse and violence and the recurring cycle often observed within families and across generations.

- d. Rectifying commonly held religious and cultural beliefs which may be used to justify or cover up family violence. For example, while parents are instructed by God to redemptively correct their children, this responsibility does not give license for the use of harsh, punitive disciplinary measures.
- 3) To accept our moral responsibility to be alert and responsive to abuse within the families of our congregations and our communities, and to declare that such abusive behavior is a violation of Seventh-day Adventist Christian standards. Any indications or reports of abuse must not be minimized but seriously considered. For church members to remain indifferent and unresponsive is to condone, perpetuate, and possibly extend family violence.

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

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

This statement was voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on August 27, 1996, and was sent for consideration by the Annual Council in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996.

Are You a Victim of a Violent Relationship?

- Do you make excuses for your spouse's or friend's rough or harsh behavior?
- Has this individual ever kicked, shoved, or hit you?
- Are you frightened by his or her bad temper?
- Are you afraid to disagree with him or her?
- Do you often try very hard not to displease him or her?
- Do you have to account for the places you go, or for the people you see on a regular basis?
- Does he or she accuse you of being too friendly with or flirting with those of the opposite sex?
- Does this individual control where you work or if you will be allowed to work outside the home?
- Does this individual control all the money and how it is spent?
- Are you afraid not to have sex with this individual, even when for some reason you would rather not?
- Does he or she often criticize, ridicule, and insult you?
- Was this individual's father and/or mother demanding, critical, or violent with him or her in the home?

If several of these behaviors are present in your relationship, seek help immediately. With appropriate outside help, your family relationships can change and improve.

Source: by Alberta Mazat, "Let's Address Family Violence—Quickly!", Adventist Review, February 1996.

A Statement of Consensus Concerning Female Genital Mutilation

Introduction

As part of their mission to the entire world, Seventh-day Adventists have a firm commitment to provide health care that preserves and restores human wholeness. By wholeness we mean the harmonious development of the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions of a person's life, unified through a loving relationship with God and expressed in generous service to others. Because Adventists believe that each human being is created in God's image as a unified person, rather than as a duality of body and soul, we believe in a ministry of grace that affects all aspects of human life, including physical and emotional well-being.

Ministry to the entire person leads Seventh-day Adventists to be concerned about the widespread practice of female genital mutilation.[1] Often referred to as "female circumcision" or, more recently, "female genital cutting," such practices currently affect scores of millions of living women and girls, with additional millions of girls disfigured annually. These estimates do not account for the young girls who die as a result of the more radical forms of genital mutilation. These practices range from excision of the clitoral prepuce to complete removal of the vulva with closure of the vaginal opening. Our central concern, expressed in this statement of principles, is for all forms of female genital injury that lead to physical dysfunction or emotional trauma. Moreover, such procedures are often done with unclean instruments, without anesthesia, on forcibly held young girls between the ages of four and twelve. Hemorrhage, shock, infection, incontinence, damage to surrounding organs, and massive scarring are frequent results. In addition to this physical devastation, genital mutilation is also emotionally traumatic.

Women who have been subjected to genital mutilation are also often afflicted with a variety of long-term gynecological health problems, including fistulas, chronic infections, and problems with menstruation. Upon entering marriage, intercourse is usually a painful, traumatic event, often necessitating reopening of the scarified vaginal opening. Childbirth may also be impeded due to rigid scarring of the tissues. At times, maternal and fetal deaths also result.

In the cultures where female genital mutilation is prevalent, the practice is considered justified for a variety of reasons. It is believed, for example, that such mutilation will preserve virginity in unmarried women, assist in controlling their sexual drive, strengthen sexual faithfulness for married women, and increase sexual pleasure for their husbands. It is also believed that removal of all or part of female genitalia improves cleanliness, is cosmetically desirable, and makes childbirth safer for the infant. Because of these beliefs, women who have not undergone such procedures may be considered unsuited for marriage. Despite evidence against such

reasons, and despite the efforts of numerous human-rights organizations, the practice of female genital mutilation continues in a variety of cultures, with a prevalence exceeding 90 percent in some countries.

In some cultures, female genital mutilation is defended as a form of religious practice. While Seventh-day Adventists strongly advocate protection of religious liberty, Adventists believe that the right to practice one's religion does not vindicate harming another person. Thus, appeals to religious liberty do not justify female genital mutilation.

Biblical principles

The Adventist Church's opposition to female genital mutilation is based on the following biblical principles:

1. *Preservation of life and health.* The Bible presents the goodness of God's creation, including the creation of human beings (Gen 1:31; Ps 139:13, 14). God is the Source and Sustainer of human life (Job 33:4; Ps 36:9; John 1:3, 4; Acts 17:25, 28). God calls for the preservation of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction (Gen 9:5, 6; Ex 20:13; Deut 24:16; Jer 7:3-34). The human body is "the temple of the Holy Spirit," and followers of God are urged to care for and preserve their bodies, including the Creator's gift of sexuality, as a spiritual responsibility (1 Cor 6:15-19). Because female genital mutilation is harmful to health, threatening to life, and injurious to sexual function, it is incompatible with the will of God.
2. *Blessing of marital intimacy.* Scripture celebrates the divinely ordained gift of sexual intimacy within marriage (Eccl 9:9; Prov 5:18, 19; Song of Sol 4:16-5:1; Heb 13:4). The practice of female genital mutilation should be renounced because it threatens the Creator's design for the experience of joyful sexuality by married couples.
3. *Healthful procreation.* For married couples, the gift of sexual union may be further blessed by the birth of children (Ps 113:9; 127:3-5; 128:3; Prov 31:28). The fact that successful childbirth is threatened by female genital mutilation is additional grounds for opposition to this practice.
4. *Protection of vulnerable persons.* Scripture prescribes that special efforts be made to care for those who are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Ps 82:3, 4; Ps 24:11, 12; Isa 1:16, 17; Luke 1:52-54). Jesus taught that children should be loved and (Mark 10:13-16; Matt 18:4-6). The genital mutilation of young girls violates the biblical mandate to safeguard children and protect them from harm and abuse.
5. *Compassionate care.* Love for the neighbor prompts Christians to provide compassionate care to those who have been injured (Luke 10:25-37; Isa 61:1).

Christians are called to care with compassion for those who have experienced physical and emotional trauma caused by female genital mutilation.

6. *Sharing truth.* Christians are called to overcome error by expressing the truth in a loving manner (Ps 15:2, 3; Eph 4:25). The fundamental truth of the gospel is intended to liberate people from all types of bondage to falsehood (John 8:31-36). Thus, Christians should join in sharing accurate information about the harm of female genital mutilation and the beliefs that underlie this practice.
7. *Respect for cultures.* Christians should be sensitive to and respectful of cultural differences (1 Cor 9:19-23; Rom 12:1, 2). At the same time, we believe that God's principles transcend cultural traditions (Dan 1:8, 9; 3:17,18; Matt 15:3; Acts 5:27-29). The fundamental principles of Scripture provide a basis for the transformation of cultural practices. While we acknowledge that female genital mutilation is firmly entrenched in many cultures, we find this practice to be incompatible with divinely revealed principles.

Conclusion

Because female genital mutilation threatens physical, emotional, and relational health, Seventh-day Adventists are opposed to this practice. The Church calls on its health care professionals, educational and medical institutions, and all members along with people of good will to cooperate in efforts to eliminate the practice of female genital mutilation. Through education and loving presentation of the gospel, it is our hope and our intention that those threatened by this practice will find protection and wholeness and that those who have been subjected to this practice will find solace and compassionate care.

This document was adopted by the General Conference Christian View of Human Life Committee in April, 2000, and was referred to those Church departments and institutions which will find the material useful.

[1]“Currently, the different types of female genital mutilation known to be practiced are classified as follows:

Type I	Excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris
Type II	Excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora
Type III	Excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of vaginal opening (infibulation)
Type IV	Unclassified: includes pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; cauterization by burning of the clitoris and surrounding

tissue; scraping of tissues surrounding the vaginal orifice [angurya cuts] or cutting of the vagina [gishiri cuts]; introduction of corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purposes of tightening or narrowing it; and any other procedure that falls under the definition of female genital mutilation given above.”

This classification is taken from Female Genital Mutilation: A Joint WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA Statement. Published by World Health Organization, Geneva, 1997.

A Statement on Home and Family

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

The church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief No. 22 states the marital relationship "is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church...

Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God."

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

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

A Statement on Homelessness and Poverty

In a world ravaged by sin, the bitter fruits of greed, war, and ignorance are multiplying. Even in so called "affluent societies" the homelessness and the poor are growing populations. More than 10,000 people starve to death every day. Two billion more are malnourished, and thousands more go blind annually because of dietary deficiency. Approximately two-thirds of the world's population remains caught in a cycle of hunger-sickness-death.

There are some who bear liability for their condition, but the majority of these individuals and families are destituted by political, economic, cultural, or social events largely beyond their control.

Historically, those in such circumstances have found succor and advocacy in the hearts of the followers of Jesus Christ. Caring institutions are in many cases begun by the church and later assumed by government agencies, or vice versa. These agencies, aside from any ideological altruism, reflect society's recognition that it is in its own best interest to deal compassionately with the less fortunate.

Social scientists tell us that a number of ills find fertile ground in the conditions of poverty. Feelings of hopelessness, alienation, envy and resentment often lead to antisocial attitudes and behavior. Then society is left to pay for the after-effects of such ills through its courts, prisons, and welfare systems. Poverty and misfortune as such do not cause crime and provide no excuse for it. But when the claims of compassion are denied, discouragement, and even resentment are likely to follow.

The claims upon the Christian's compassion are not ill-founded. They do not spring from any legal or even social contract theory, but from the clear teaching of scripture: "He has showed you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 7:8 RSV)

The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah is precious to Seventh-day Adventists. We see our responsibility in this chapter as those raised up to be "The repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in" (verse 12).

The call is to restore and "to loose the bands of wickedness ... to deal thy bread to the hungry ... bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ... when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him" (verses 6, 7). So as repairers of the breach, we are to restore and care for the poor. If we carry out the principles of the law of God in acts of mercy and love, we will represent the character of God to the world.

In effecting Christ's ministry today, we must do as He did, and not only preach the gospel to the poor, but heal the sick, feed the hungry, and raise the downcast (see

Luke 4:18, 19; Matt. 14:14). But verse 16 explains that it was so that "they need not go away." Christ's own example is determinative for His followers.

In Christ's response to Judas' feigned concern for the poor: "For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me" (Matt.26:11 RSV), we are reminded that it is the "Living Bread" that people most desperately need. However, we also recognize the inseparables between the physical and the spiritual. By supporting those church and public policies that relieve suffering, and by individual and united efforts of compassion, we augment that very spiritual endeavor.

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

A Statement on Homosexuality

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

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

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

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

A Statement on Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning

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

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

The new technique is known as *somatic cell nuclear transfer*. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions, an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At present, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

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

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

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

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

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

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce problems of relationships and responsibilities.

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

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

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs.¹ The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

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

in this field will require periodic review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. *Protection of vulnerable human life.* Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.
2. *Protection of human dignity.* Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.
3. *Alleviating human suffering.* It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.
4. *Family support.* God's ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.
5. *Stewardship.* The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely to be very costly. Married couples seeking such assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.
6. *Truthfulness.* Honest communication is one of Scripture's mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.
7. *Understanding God's creation.* God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this

reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

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

Glossary:

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

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

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

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

Enucleated egg. An egg cell from which the nucleus has been removed. This is usually accomplished by penetrating the cell with a fine glass needle and withdrawing the nucleus while observing the process under a microscope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sperm. A male reproductive cell.

¹There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

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

A Statement on Human Relations

Seventh-day Adventists deplore and seek to combat all forms of discrimination based on race, tribe, nationality, color, or gender. We believe that every person was created in the image of God, who made all nations of one blood (Acts 17:26). We endeavor to carry on the reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ, who died for the whole world so that in Him "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28). Any form of racism eats the heart out of the Christian gospel.

One of the most troubling aspects of our times is the manifestation of racism and tribalism in many societies, sometimes with violence, always with the denigration of men and women. As a worldwide body in more than 200 nations, Seventh-day Adventists seek to manifest acceptance, love, and respect toward all, and to spread this healing message throughout society.

The equality of all people is one of the tenets of our church. Our Fundamental Belief No.13 states: "In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him, and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation."

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.

A Statement on Literacy

The Seventh-day Adventist Church values the unique role that women play in fulfilling the church's mission to spread the gospel. Part of that mission involves meeting the physical, intellectual, and social needs of those around us, just as Jesus did when He lived on earth.

Research indicates that six major challenges in the lives of all human beings—women in particular—are: literacy, poverty, abuse, health, work hours and conditions, and opportunities for training and mentoring. To better meet these needs, the Office of Women's Ministries of the Adventist Church has launched a major thrust on literacy training for 1995.

The inability to read impacts every aspect of a person's life—earning power, career opportunities, access to health care information, and even the ability to raise a child properly. Without the skill of reading, few doors of opportunity can ever be opened.

Teaching reading creates endless possibilities for people to be informed concerning such topics as careers, health, parenting, and marriage, and offers the teacher unexcelled opportunities for touching lives through ministry.

Adventists recognize a more vital reason to share the gift of reading. We believe that the ability to read God's Word—the good news of salvation—should not be reserved for the privileged few. We assert that every man, woman, and child should have access to the truths and uplifting power of the Bible.

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.

A Statement on the Affirmation of Marriage

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

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

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

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

and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

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

A Statement on Pornography

Diverse courts and cultures may debate the definitions and consequences of pornography (the literature of sexual deviance), but on the basis of eternal principles, Seventh-day Adventists of whatever culture deem pornography to be destructive, demeaning, desensitizing, and exploitative.

It is destructive to marital relationships, thus subverting God's design that husband and wife cleave so closely to each other that they become, symbolically, "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

It is demeaning, defining a woman (and in some instances a man) not as a spiritual-mental-physical whole, but as a one-dimensional and disposable sex-object, thus depriving her of the worth and the respect that are her due and right as a daughter of God.

It is desensitizing to the viewer/reader, callousing the conscience and "perverting the perception," thus producing a "depraved person" (Romans 1:22, 28, NEB).

It is exploitative, pandering to prurience, and basally abusive, thus contrary to the Golden rule, which insists that one treat others as one wishes to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Particularly offensive is child pornography. Said Jesus: "If anyone leads astray even one child who believes in me, he would be better off thrown into the depths of the sea with a millstone hung around his neck!" (See Matthew 18:6).

Though Norman Cousins may not have said it in Biblical language, he has perceptively written: "The trouble with this wide open pornography . . . is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes the passions but that it cripples the emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude, but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders, but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization." (*Saturday Review of Literature*, Sept. 20, 1975.)

A society plagued by plunging standards of decency, increasing child prostitution, teenage pregnancies, sexual assaults on women and children, drug-damaged mentalities, and organized crime can ill afford pornography's contribution to these evils.

Wise, indeed, is the counsel of Christianity's first great theologian: "If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good" (Philippians 4:8, 9, Phillips). This is advice that all Christians would do well to heed.

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

A Statement of Concern on Sexual Behavior

In His infinite love and wisdom God created mankind, both male and female, and in so doing based human society on the firm foundation of loving homes and families.

It is Satan's purpose, however, to pervert every good thing; and the perversion of the best inevitably leads to that which is worst. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious principle, the association of the sexes has, to a deeply disturbing extent, degenerated into license and abuse which results in bondage. With the aid of many films, television, video, radio programs, and printed materials, the world is being steered on a course to new depths of shame and depravity. Not only is the basic structure of society being greatly damaged but also the breakdown of the family fosters other gross evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are distressing and evoke our pity, and the effects are not only disastrous but also cumulative.

These evils have become more open and constitute a serious and growing threat to the ideals and purposes of the Christian home. Sexual practices which are contrary to God's expressed will are adultery and premarital sex, as well as obsessive sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of spouses, sexual abuse of children, incest, homosexual practices (gay and lesbian), and bestiality are among the obvious perversions of God's original plan. As the intent of clear passages of Scripture (see Ex 20:14; Lev 18:22,23,29 and 20:13; Matthew 5:27,28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Rom 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much uncertainty and confusion prevail. This is what Satan desires. He has always attempted to cause people to forget that when God as Creator made Adam, He also created Eve to be Adam's female companion ("male and female he created them" Gen 1:24 NEB). In spite of the clear moral standards set forth in God's Word for relationships between man and woman, the world today is witnessing a resurgence of the perversions and depravity that marked ancient civilizations.

The degrading results of the obsession of this age with sex and the pursuit of sensual pleasure are clearly described in the Word of God. But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and reestablish the right relationship of human beings with each other and with their Creator. Thus, though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, those who turn to Christ in repentance receive full pardon and choose the better way, the way to complete restoration. By means of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man," and the nurturing ministry of the Church, all may be freed from the grip of perversions and sinful practices.

An acceptance of God's free grace inevitably leads the individual believer to the kind of life and conduct that "will add luster to the doctrine of our God and Savior" (Titus 2:10 NEB). It will also lead the corporate church to firm and loving discipline

of the member whose conduct misrepresents the Savior and distorts and lowers the true standards of Christian life and behavior.

The Church recognizes the penetrating truth and powerful motivations of Paul's words to Titus: "For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfillment of our hope when the splendor of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good."—Titus 2:11-14, NEB. (See also 2 Peter 3:11-14.)

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Washington, D.C., October 12, 1987.

A Statement on Meeting the Challenges of Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The contemporary world is confronted by grave ethical, medical, and social problems resulting from increasing sexual permissiveness and associated promiscuity. Because Christians are a part of the larger social community, these attitudes and behaviors have infiltrated the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well, demanding that we address them.

So serious are the challenges presented by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that the United Nations, in conjunction with most of the world's governments, the health-care community, religious, political, and economic leaders, has instituted a series of major research and health-education programs that focus on prevention and treatment. The goal is to prevent, cure, and minimize the effects—or at least slow the spread—of these diseases.

At particular risk are youth entering puberty at increasingly younger ages, when they are especially vulnerable to peer pressure and a barrage of media and peer messages that treat casual sex outside marriage as acceptable and normal. Many youth are sexually active early in their teen years and soon become well established in patterns of sexual activity.

Correlated with increased sexual activity is a dramatic increase in STDs associated with serious physical and emotional problems.

Advances have been made along several lines:

- research has provided more accurate data;
- benefits of using condoms to reduce unwanted pregnancy and the spread of STDs have been documented;
- dangers of promiscuity have been recognized;
- more effective treatment has reduced the spread and progression of many STDs;
- risk of long-term emotional damage resulting from casual sex has been recognized; and
- support has grown for the position that abstinence from extramarital sex preserves sexual and emotional health.

These advances, despite their limitations, have proved beneficial and should be encouraged for their positive effects. Seventh-day Adventist care givers should be encouraged to participate in promoting such efforts and deserve the support of church members as they do so. A pragmatic approach to dealing with these serious problems and the use of appropriate interventions should by no means be interpreted as endorsement or encouragement of sexual activity outside marriage or of unfaithfulness

within marriage. Instead, these efforts must be seen as compassionate attempts to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of detrimental sexual behaviors.

At times, family members, and pastors, teachers, counselors, physicians, and others in helping professions may find themselves working with individuals who, despite strong counsel, refuse to turn from sexual decadence and live by God's high standard of morality. In such cases, those entrusted with ministry may, as a last resort, counsel specific individuals to use contraceptive and prophylactic methods such as condoms in an attempt to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of spreading life-decimating STDs. Utmost care should be taken when making such an intervention to make it clear to the individual(s) and members of the community involved that this extreme measure should in no way be misconstrued as a scriptural sanction for sexual intimacy outside marriage. Such action on the part of professionals should be considered interim and utilized only in individual cases. Though such interventions may provide a little time for grace to do its work in human hearts, they do not provide a viable long-term solution. The Church must remain committed to making the most of every opportunity to reinforce the wisdom of God's design for human sexuality and to calling men and women to the highest standard of moral conduct.

Biblical Principles:

Although the efforts described above are in many ways beneficial, they are only a response to existing situations created by the impact of sin. In the Scriptures, God has set out a superior plan to guide our use of His gift of sexuality. Built upon a series of guiding principles, it presents in practical terms God's ideal for His people who must live in a sin-stricken world.

1. Sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage. Sexuality is a loving gift of the Creator to humanity (Gen 1:26, 27). The gospel calls believers to an appreciation for and stewardship of their sexuality in harmony with the divine purposes (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:13-20; Eph 5:1-8; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 4:3-7). In God's plan, sexual intimacy is reserved for a man and a woman within the bounds of the marriage covenant (Gen 2:24, 26; Exod 20:14; Proverbs 5; Song of Sol 4:12; 8:8-10; 2:6, 7; 3:5; 8:3, 4; Hos 3:3; Heb 13:4). Sexual fidelity within marriage is crucial to convey a full understanding of God's metaphor comparing marriage to His relationship with His people (Isa 54:5; Hos 2:14-23; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:6-9; 21:9).
2. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is immoral and harmful. Such intimacy has detrimental effects on individuals (Lev 18:6-3; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:18), as well as on the marriage relationship (Prov 5:1-23). It is identified by Scripture as part of the sinful life (Gal 5:19; Col 3:5).
3. God recognizes human frailty. His divine will for human beings and His intent for creation are unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Matt 5:17-20; Acts 20:27). His

absolute love for human beings and His redemptive intent are equally unchangeable (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:35-39; Eph 1:1-14; 3:14-19; 1 John 4:7-10). The gospel message, centered in Jesus Christ, binds these truths together (Ps 85:10; 1 John 2:1,2).

God's grace is the only hope for fallen humanity (Rom 3:23, 24; 5:1, 2, 20; Eph 2:1-5). He is patient and long-suffering with human frailty (Num 14:18, 19; Ps 86:15; 103:13, 14; Hos 11:8, 9; Jonah 3:1; 4:10, 11; Matt 23:37; 1 Tim 1: 15, 16). Though God's grace does not give license to sin (Rom 6:1, 2), it is through such grace that God accomplishes His redemptive intent in the circumstances resulting from sin (Rom 5:12-21). God's practical dealings in cases of divorce (Deut 24:1-5; Ezra 10:10, 11; Matt 19:7, 8), polygamy (Exod 21:10; Deut 17:17; 21:15-17; Matt 19:4, 5), the introduction of flesh foods (Gen 1:11, 12, 29, 30; 9:3; Lev 3:17; 11:47), and provision for an earthly monarch (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; Hos 13:11) offer examples of interventions short of God's ideal. Through such cases, we see His grace and mercy at work in a world deformed by sin.

4. The Church conducts its mission in a fallen world. Existing conditions contrast sharply with God's ideal. Both believers and unbelievers are vulnerable to sexual immorality as one of the tragic results of sin (John 17:15; 1 John 2:15). The Church is called to minister to believers and unbelievers alike, reaching and reclaiming sinners (Matt 28:19; Mark 2:17; 2 Cor 5:20, 21), nurturing the growth of believers (Eph 2:19-22; 4:11-13, 15; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Peter 3:18), uplifting the infinite worth of each individual (Isa 43:3, 4, 7; Matt 12:12; Luke 12:7; 15:1-32; 1 Peter 1:18, 19), protecting the weak and vulnerable (Rom 15:1; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 13:3), promoting and preserving life and health (John 10:10; 1 Cor 6:19; 3 John 2), and calling men and women to take up their lofty position as God's chosen and holy people (Eph 4:1; 5:8; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; 2:5, 9). The ministry of the Church is both to meet individuals where they are (1 Cor 3:1, 2; 7:1-28), and to call them to a higher standard (Luke 19:5-10; John 8:3-11; Acts 17:18-34).
5. A spiritual development process is anticipated in the Christian life. Change for the Christian involves both conversion (John 3:3, 7; Acts 3:19; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 5:17) and growth (Prov 4:18; Luke 2:52; Eph 3:17-19; 4:11-15; 2 Peter 3:18). At conversion, believers accept Christ's perfect life as their own by faith and experience a Spirit-led transformation of values (John 3:5; Gal 2:20). Both external and internal forces may provoke relapses in thought or conduct (Gal 5:16-18; 1 John 3:20), but commitment to grace-induced progress in the Christian life (1 Cor 15:10; Phil 3:12-14; Col 1:28, 29) and reliance upon God-provided resources (Rom 8:5-7; Gal 5:24, 25) will produce growth toward Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:1).

The Scriptures call for human beings to progress morally and spiritually throughout their lives (Luke 2:52; 1 Cor 13:11; 14:20). Planning for and

facilitating such growth is integral to fulfilling the gospel commission (Matt 28:20; Eph 3:14-24). It is the task of religious education to attend to individual development and to present truth in ways that hearers can understand (Matt 11:15), causing them to stretch but not to stumble (Rom 14:1-21; 1 Cor 8:9-13). Though some allowance may be made for the unlearned or immature (Matt 13:34; John 16:12; Acts 17:30; 1 Cor 3:1, 2), over time individuals should progress toward a more complete understanding of God's will (John 16:13) and a fuller expression of love for God and one another (Matt 22:37-39; John 13:35; 8:9; 13:11; 1 John 3:14; 4:11, 12). Under God's blessing, the clear presentation of the gospel and careful attention to the disciple-making process will bear spiritual fruit, even among those who have been involved in sexual sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Implications:

1. The Church affirms the biblical view of sexuality as a wholesome attribute of human nature created by God to be enjoyed and used responsibly in marriage as part of Christian discipleship.
2. The Church is committed to sharing a biblical view of human sexuality in an intentional and culturally sensitive manner. Emphasis is placed on appreciating and understanding the human body and its functions, upholding sexual chastity outside and fidelity within marital relationships, and developing skills for decision-making and communication about sexual behavior. The Church is committed to conveying the truth that the misuse of one's own sexuality and the abuse of power in relationships are contrary to God's ideal.
3. The Church calls people to dedicate themselves before God to sexual abstinence outside the marriage covenant and sexual faithfulness to one's spouse. Apart from the wholesome expression of sexual intimacy in marriage, abstinence is the only safe and moral path for the Christian. In any other context, sexual activity is both harmful and immoral. This high standard represents God's intention for the use of His gift, and believers are called upon to uphold this ideal, regardless of the prevailing standards in the culture around them.
4. The Church recognizes the sinfulness of humanity. Human beings make mistakes, use poor judgment, and may deliberately choose to engage in sexual practices that are contrary to God's ideal. Others may not know where to turn for help to live sexually pure lives. Nothing, however, can spare such individuals from the consequences of departing from the divine plan. Emotional and spiritual wounds left by sexual activity that violates God's plan inevitably leave scars. But the Church extends Christ's ministry of mercy and grace by offering God's forgiveness, healing, and restorative power. It must seek to provide the personal, spiritual, and emotional support that will enable

the wounded to lay hold of the gospel's resources. The Church must also help persons and families identify and access the full network of professional resources available.

5. The Church recognizes as morally acceptable the use of contraceptive measures, including condoms, by married couples who seek to control conception. Condoms in particular may be indicated in some marital circumstances—for example, when one partner has been exposed to or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, thus putting the spouse at high risk for infection.

On the other hand, the premarital or extramarital use of condoms—either in an attempt to lower the risk of unwanted pregnancy or to prevent the transmission of a sexually transmitted disease raises moral concerns. These concerns must be considered in the context of the divine plan for human sexuality, the relationship between God's creative intent and His regard for human frailty, the process of spiritual growth and moral development within individuals, and the nature of the Church's mission.

Though condoms have proved to be somewhat effective in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease,¹ this does not make sex outside of marriage morally acceptable. Neither does this fact prevent the emotional damage that results from such behavior. The Church's appeal to youth and adults alike, believers and nonbelievers, is to live lives worthy of the grace extended to us in Christ, drawing as fully as possible upon divine and human resources to live according to God's ideal for sexuality.

6. The Church acknowledges that in cases where a married person may be at risk for transmitting or contracting a sexually transmitted disease such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) from his or her marriage partner, the use of a condom is not only morally acceptable but also strongly recommended if the husband and wife decide to continue having sexual intercourse. Users of condoms must be alerted to the importance of using them properly and to the limits of their effectiveness in preventing the transmission of HIV infection.

Appeal:

We are facing a crisis that threatens the lives and well-being of many people, including church members. Both youth and adults are in peril. The Church must develop, without delay, a comprehensive strategy of education and prevention. The resources of health, social services, educational, ministerial, and other professionals, both within and without the Church, must be mobilized. This crisis demands priority attention—using every legitimate resource and method at the Church's disposal to target the home, school, church, and community. The destiny of an entire generation of human beings is at stake, and we are in a race against time.

¹Research indicates that condoms, when correctly used, have about a 97 percent success rate in prevention of pregnancy and about an 85 to 90 percent success rate in prevention of virus transmission, as used by the general population. In those groups who use them consistently and correctly, the effectiveness is about 97 percent.

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

A Statement on Women's Issues

Seventh-day Adventists believe that all people, male and female, are created equal, in the image of a loving God. We believe that both men and women are called to fill a significant role in accomplishing the primary mission of the Adventist Church: working together for the benefit of humanity. Yet we are painfully aware that throughout the world, in developing and developed nations, adverse societal conditions often inhibit women from fulfilling their God-given potential.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has identified several major problems, well-documented by research, that often keep women from making valuable contributions to society. Stress, the environment, and increased demands have placed women at greater risk for health problems. Poverty and heavy workloads not only deprive women of their ability to enjoy life, but also impair their physical and spiritual well-being. Family violence takes a heavy toll its victims.

Women are entitled to the God-given privileges and opportunities intended for every human being—the right to literacy, to education, to adequate health care, to decision making, and to freedom from mental, physical, or sexual abuse. We also maintain that women should play an increased role in the leadership and decision-making bodies of both church and society.

Ultimately, we believe that the church will fulfill its mission only when women are empowered to achieve their full potential.

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.

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Other Resources

- # *Prayer and Love Saves* (PALS) prayer seminar program
- # *International Women's Day of Prayer* manual
- # Devotional Books produced by the GC Department of Women's Ministries:
- *Among Friends* (1993)
 - *The Listening Heart* (1994)
 - *A Gift of Love* (1995)
 - *A Moment of Peace* (1996)
 - *Close to Home* (1997)
 - *From the Heart* (1998)
 - *This Quiet Place* (1999)
 - *In God's Garden* (2000)
 - *Fabric of Faith* (2001)
- # Megabook: *A Touch of Joy*
- # Literacy materials:
In the Beginning - Reading and Writing Through the Bible by Ruth Colvin
Tutor by Ruth Colvin, Judy Cheatham and Lester Laminack
So You Want to Begin A Literacy Program by Ardis Stenbakken
- # *Facts for Life* book on health presentations by UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, and UNFPA. (Available(\$1/copy) in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.) Write to:
- UNICEF House - DH40
 Facts for Life Unit
 3 UN Plaza
 New York, NY 10017
 USA
- # Other valuable resource books:
- *Designing Effective Women's Ministries*, by Jill Briscoe, Laurie McIntyre, and Beth Seversen.
 - *Women's Ministries Institute*, by Pat Clary.
 - *Successful Women's Events*, by Madlyn Hamblin and Cari Haus.
 - *Women's Ministry Handbook*, by Carol Porter and Mike Hamel.

- *Never Thirst Again: A Woman's Guide to Creative Bible Study*, by Dorothy Eaton Watts.
- *A Woman's Place*, Rosa Taylor Banks, editor.
- *The Best You Can Be*, by Dorothy Eaton Watts
- *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, by the United Nations

The Hesperian Foundation: Publishers of popular health books. The Hesperian Foundation is a non-profit publisher of health books seeking to empower people to take charge of their own care. Books are available in both English and Spanish. For information or a brochure, contact them at:

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 Berkeley, CA 94712-2577
 USA

Tel: (510) 845-4507
 Fax: (510) 845-0539
 Email: hesperianfdn@igc.apc.org

- *Where Women Have No Doctor*, by A. August Burns, Ronnie Lovich, Jane Maxwell, and Katharine Shapiro.
- Other titles available include:
 - Where There is No Doctor*
 - Where There is No Dentist*
 - Disabled Village Children*
 - Helping Health Workers Learn*
 - A Book for Midwives*

Use local resources in your area such as:

- Government ministries
- Adventist and/or local colleges and university women
- Adventist and/or local medical institution women

Use the General Conference Women's Ministries seminars and guidelines, available from your division's Women's Ministries director.

Use the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*

Other addresses to which you may write for catalogs and materials:

Pacific Press Publishing Assoc.
 P O Box 5353
 Nampa, ID 83653-5353
 U S A

Review and Herald Publishing Association
55 West Oak Ridge Drive
Hagerstown, MD 21740
U S A

Advent Source
5040 Prescott Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68506
U S A

American Bible Society
1865 Broadway
New York, NY 10023
U S A

Literacy Volunteers of America Inc.
635 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13203
U S A

New Readers Press
US Publishing Division of Laubach Literacy
Department S98
P O Box 888
Syracuse, NY 13210-0888
U S A

Women's Ministries Logo



General Conference Women's Ministries Logo
(Available on disk from your division office)

