

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

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

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

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8 UNITY IN MISSION: PROCEDURES IN CHURCH RECONCILIATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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RECONCILIATION - 2

1 a. Listen and pray.

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

7  
8 b. Consultation with a wider group.

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

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

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

26  
27 c. Write pastoral letters.

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

34  
35 d. Listen and pray again.

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

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RECONCILIATION - 3

1 e. Start phase two of reconciliation.

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

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

10  
11 RECOMMENDED, 2. To request the General Conference Administrative Committee to  
12 recommend to the 2017 Annual Council, procedural steps to be followed in the event that a  
13 resolution of the conflict is not achieved under procedures identified in recommendation 1.  
14 above.

15  
16 Upon the approval of this document, even though the full process has not yet been fully  
17 identified and approved, entities are authorized to implement the process where there are matters  
18 of non-adherence regarding biblical principles as expressed in the Fundamental Beliefs, voted  
19 actions, or working policies of the Church and provide a report through the division, or in the  
20 case of a General Conference institution through the General Conference Administrative  
21 Committee, at the next Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee.

22  
23 Even though conflict resolution will be necessary from time to time, the Seventh-day  
24 Adventist family and organizational units are all called to be part of a prophetic end-time  
25 movement reaching out with a message of hope and salvation to all nations, languages, creeds,  
26 and castes around the world. What a privilege to be part of a Church family that bears “one  
27 another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2), that is “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”  
28 (Eph 4:32), and that strives to work together “that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

29  
30 “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

31  
32 *All Bible references are from the New King James Version.*