

Supplementary Model Guidelines on Sexuality and Gender for Church Institutions in the Lake Union Conference

In light of the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission in the context of the Three Angels' Messages (Revelation 14:6-12), the following general principles have been developed by church leadership, theologians, and medical experts within the Lake Union and its affiliated conferences. They can serve as a guide and supplement in implementing the General Conference and North American policy statements on issues of gender and sexuality.

1. **Support for NAD & GC Policies** - All Seventh-day Adventist Church® (Adventist Church) institutions in the Lake Union have a responsibility to follow the policy statements on gender and sexuality of the North American Division and the General Conference in relation to employment, school and camp enrollment, and church leadership and membership. These statements can be found collected at the Lake Union Conference website.
2. **Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender Persons and Church Attendance and Membership** - Persons identified as connected to the LGBT+ community are welcome to attend and worship in our churches, and should be welcomed with Christian care, concern, and compassion. Those who have committed themselves to lives of biblical purity, and have purposed to both live by and support biblical sexual standards as understood by the Adventist Church, should be welcomed into membership and, where appropriate, positions of service and leadership.
3. **LGBT Persons and Church Life** - LGBT persons are welcome to attend our churches, and should be treated with care and respect. Where needed, the leadership of the church may counsel persons in same-sex relationships as to appropriate public behavior in our churches, where displays of romantic affection between same-sex persons would not be acceptable. Children of such couples should be made welcome in Sabbath School and other child and youth-related ministries, insofar as they are respectful of church teachings on these matters.
4. **Transgender Persons at Church** - Transgender persons (those persons whose outward representation of gender is at odds with their biological sex¹) who attend our churches should also be treated with care and respect. So as to respect the rights and concerns of all, transgender persons should generally be asked to use the restrooms of their biological sex.² Offer should be made, if available, to allow them to use a single-stall

¹ The Church acknowledges in its documents the rare condition known as intersex, where there is demonstrable biological ambiguity in one's sexual identity. At times, early misidentification of gender will result in the need for such persons to transition back to their actual birth sex. The references and guidelines to transgender in this document do not refer to such medically identified cases.

² Exceptions could be made for persons who have surgically transitioned to the opposite gender, as the appearance and characteristics of such persons would make it difficult and inappropriate for them to use the restrooms of their birth sex.

bathroom, such as a family or pastor's restroom.

Membership and leadership should be reserved for those that are committed to the teachings of the church on the congruence between biological sex and gender. This does not mean that those who have previously undergone transsexual surgeries should reverse those processes. But any leadership or volunteer roles such persons play should be chosen carefully to prevent the appearance that the church supports transgenderism or transsexuality (the transition from the gender of one's birth sex to another gender representation), or that would create confusion among young people regarding the topic.

- 5. LGB and Transgender Persons as Students or Campers at Schools, Camps, and Other Church Affiliated Institutions** - At our Adventist Church elementary and secondary schools, camps, and other similar organizations, all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity should be treated with dignity and respect. Our schools and camps should be open to all who wish to attend, regardless of a young person's sexual attractions or temptations, as long as they are respectful of and agree to abide by the beliefs and teachings of the Church in their attitudes, speech, and actions. Sexual identity is at times fluid in young people and creating early labels can unduly inhibit someone's development to a healthy sexual identity. Thus, we discourage the open labeling or identifying of young people as gay, or any other alternate sexual category. Still conference, church and school leadership should seek ways to provide Christian support for those contending with these matters of sexuality and gender identity.

Students, campers, or enrollees will generally be expected to present an outward gender identity that is consistent with their biological, birth sex.³ Visible forms of transitioning are prohibited for people who are enrolled or affiliated with church institutions. All people will also be expected to refrain from promoting views or ideas that are inconsistent with the biblical teachings on this matter, as presently expressed by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in its statements. As a general rule, all students, campers, and enrollees will be expected to use the changing rooms and bathrooms of their birth sex.

- 6. Transgender Persons as Employees or Volunteers at Church Schools, Camps, and Other Church Affiliated Institutions** – Employees and volunteers at our Adventist Church camps, elementary, primary, and secondary schools, and other church institutions are expected to abide by and support the Adventist Church teaching on gender and

³ While this guideline should be consistent in elementary, primary, and secondary schools, it may be that colleges and universities, especially at the graduate level, who are dealing with fully emancipated adults, may have some greater flexibility, within Biblical boundaries, to deal with these matters. It may be that they will receive applications from persons who have already transitioned to a gender opposite their birth sex, but who no longer support gender-change ideology. The Adventist Church's understanding of the biblical teaching allows for some flexibility in these situations. These circumstances are highly unlikely, however, to occur beneath the college and university level.

sexuality. As such, it would not be appropriate for employees and volunteers to seek to transition from their birth sex, and they will be expected to support the church's teachings on gender identity. Varying from these standards will result in a discontinuation of employment or voluntary role with the Adventist Church or related institution. Those seeking employment with the church should be made aware of the Adventist Church's teaching on gender and sexuality, and this expectation should be disclosed as part of the Church institution's employment application paperwork. (See the Model Gender and Sexuality Disclosure Statement prepared by the Lake Union Conference.)

7. **Transgender Persons Who Have Undergone Transsexual Surgery as Potential Church Employees** - It may be that persons will seek employment who have already undergone surgical transition to another gender appearance, but who now regret it. The church's teaching does not require such persons to undergo gender identity reversal surgery. But the employment of such persons by church institutions should be handled with great care. If they were to be placed in positions of public prominence or exposure, it could send confusing signals regarding the church's teachings on the matter. It may be that discrete roles and jobs could be appropriately played by such persons. Hiring personnel and committees should weigh the burden and benefits of such employment arrangements. They should seek to preserve the privacy and dignity of such persons, with the need for the church to promote and advance its mission and teachings.
8. **Questions About These Matters Directed to the Union Committee on Sexuality and Gender for Counsel** – If situations arise that are not covered by either the standing Church guidelines or policies, or this set of Guidelines, church leaders may seek further guidance from the Lake Union Committee on Sexuality and Gender, chaired by the Secretary of the Lake Union Conference.