



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST OFFICE FOR REGIONAL CONFERENCE MINISTRY

**Statement from the North American Division Regional President's Council
Concerning Clergy Sexual Misconduct in Our Ranks**

Our Model: the Good Shepherd

As ministers of the Gospel, charged with supervising the work of the Church, we are called to follow the example of the Good Shepherd who is willing to give His life for the protection of the flock (John 10:11-18).

The Good Shepherd commands us "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves" (Matthew 7:15). As such it is our sacred responsibility to protect and nurture the members entrusted to our care against predators.

Our Challenge: Clergy Misconduct

In recent decades we have witnessed the damage caused in the aftermath of clergy sexual misconduct across denominational lines regardless of religious affiliation. Regrettably the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not immune as no human institution can claim a monopoly on vice or virtue.

The Spirit of Prophecy counsels us that immoral acts are magnified when perpetrated by those set apart in leading the Lord's work. "The root of the whole matter is unchaste thoughts [that] are entertained which lead to improper attentions and advances, then to improper actions. All this is bad enough in men who have only a common work to do, but it is a hundredfold worse in those who have accepted sacred positions of trust". Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce p. 193

The physical, mental and spiritual havoc resulting from unethical sexual behavior leaves its victims with indelible scars having eternal consequences. Jesus warned "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! (Matthew 18:7). Inevitably our church will periodically encounter more incidents of clergy misconduct until Jesus returns.

Our Policy on Sexual Misconduct:

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct we follow the North American Division Policy on Sexual Harassment enacted by the 1993 Year End Meeting.

(See: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19940127-V171-04.pdf>)

This policy defines Pastoral Sexual Misconduct. A range of behaviors which includes sexual harassment (verbal and/or physical), sexual advances, and/or sexual contact between an ordained, licensed, or

commissioned minister and his/her congregation or counselees constitutes pastoral sexual misconduct. Pastoral sexual misconduct occurs when any person with pastoral responsibilities engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, or approved volunteer, staff member, etc., whether adult, adolescent, or child. When a person in a position of religious leadership takes advantage of a vulnerable person, the ministerial relationship is violated.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not condone nor excuse sexual misconduct or sexual harassment by any of its employees or volunteers. As such, it has established this policy to deal with such allegations. The policy calls for the establishment of a Sexual Ethics Commission to be established in each conference to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct and make findings and recommendations to conference administration and executive committee. The Commission is composed of individuals having specialized training and expertise in the area of sexual misconduct.

The policy establishes a thorough sexual ethic protocol for investigating and confronting misconduct when it occurs. This process includes confidentiality and other necessary protections for the victims who come forward with allegations.

We encourage anyone who has been impacted by pastoral or employee misconduct to come forward to the current employer of the individual so that the sexual misconduct can be investigated and the individuals dealt with according to the policies of the church and the Church Manual.

Our Pledge to Our Constituents

As leaders of the Regional work, we owe our membership the utmost protection. We have a moral obligation to confront immorality and unethical behavior within our ranks no matter how unpleasant or uncomfortable it gets. We therefore pledge, before God and to our members that:

- 1) We will take all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously and initiate protocols outlined by the North American Division Policy on Sexual Harassment whenever we receive a complaint.
- 2) We will offer maximum confidentiality, protection and respect to any person coming forward to present a complaint against employees under our supervision.
- 3) We will place employees accused of sexual misconduct on administrative leave until a determination is made in regards to the allegations made against them.
- 4) We will follow due process in allowing persons accused of misconduct a fair hearing in responding to allegations of sexual misconduct.
- 5) In order not to perpetuate the cycle of sexual misconduct, we will not move employees with known predatory tendencies to other employment postings or use our networks to facilitate the inner-denominational transfers of such persons.
- 6) We will not adjudicate sexual misconduct cases in which our professional or personal relationships with accused individuals undermine an objective and impartial process. Instead we will recuse ourselves and refer the matter to the next higher administrative unit of the church.

- 7) As leaders of God's Work, we will ourselves exemplify and model moral ethical standards that we demand of our employees by living pure lives that honor God.

The Members of the Seventh-day Adventist Regional President's Council

Elder Henry J. Fordham, III, President
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Elder Marvin C. Brown, III, President
Allegheny West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Elder Roger Bernard, President
Central States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dr. R. Clifford Jones, President
Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dr. Daniel Honore, President
Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Elder William L. Winston, President
South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Elder Benjamin Jones, Jr., President
South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Elder Gregory O. Mack, President
Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Elder Calvin Watkins, President
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Dr. Kenneth Manders, President
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