

1 PREXAD/AdHoc/PreC/GCDO03AC/03AC to LCC

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3 153-03G SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST GUIDELINES FOR  
4 EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

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6 VOTED, To approve the document, Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines for Employer and  
7 Employee Relationships, which reads as follows:

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9 Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines for  
10 Employer and Employee Relationships

11  
12 Introduction

13  
14 Seventh-day Adventist church members, entities, and institutions are located in nearly every  
15 political and legal system of the world. From time to time members and church administrators seek  
16 guidance on how Christians should respond to requests or demands put upon them by employers, labor  
17 organizations, and governments. In view of the wide variety of political, legal and cultural situations it is  
18 impossible to offer specific recommendations that apply equally in every location. Biblical principles and  
19 spiritual values however, provide a common foundation.

20  
21 The history of employer-employee relationships is witness of the excesses and shortcomings to  
22 which human institutions and organizations are prone. Industrialization of societies introduced major  
23 changes in how work was organized, administered, and accomplished. Guilds or associations of persons  
24 in the same trade gave way to labor unions that became collective bargaining agents on behalf of  
25 employees. Relationships between trade unions and employers have ranged from adversarial to  
26 collaborative.

27  
28 Today the workplace environment is influenced by numerous forces: political systems,  
29 legislation and trade policies, economics, technology, labor unions, and professional organizations.  
30 These fulfill functions ranging from industry regulation, practitioner licensing, definition of work,  
31 employee advocacy and representation, codification of best practices, and the scrutiny of ethical  
32 conduct. The multiplicity of organizations and functions defy generalizations. Therefore, it is important to  
33 identify and reiterate general principles and values that provide a Christian basis for dealing with  
34 particular issues in the workplace.

35  
36 The Seventh-day Adventist view of employer-employee relationships is based on teachings and  
37 narratives in the Bible, especially those dealing with creation, sin and its effects on persons and  
38 communities, salvation provided through Jesus Christ, and the ultimate restoration of harmony and

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1 perfect order in the universe. Scripture affirms and balances the value of individuals with the importance  
2 and good of society as a whole.

3  
4 The counsel of Ellen G White on employer-employee relations is rooted in historical situations of  
5 her time and a prophetic insight concerning social and economic conditions in the future. She gave stern  
6 warnings about the trade union practices of her day. She was fiercely protective against incursions on  
7 the conscience of individuals or the intrusion of barriers to Church mission. Some would assert that the  
8 situation is considerably different today. To the extent that things are different one needs careful  
9 discernment in identifying and applying principles upon which her counsel rested.

10 Principles and Values

11  
12 1. Human beings, though corrupted by sin, still carry the likeness of God (Gen 1:26, 27).  
13 Thus all are to be treated with respect and justice. The freedom to exercise moral and ethical judgment  
14 is an essential ingredient in the dignity of personhood.

15  
16 2. For a Christian, the Lordship of Jesus Christ permeates the whole of life; its attitudes,  
17 actions, and relationships. (Isa 8:13; Matt 6:24; Acts 5:29, Col 3:23, 24) Other authority sources in  
18 life are subordinate to Christ's authority and, unless complementary to it, are neither safe nor reliable.

19  
20 "The world is not to be our criterion. Let the Lord work, let the Lord's voice be  
21 heard."—TM 463

22  
23 "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy  
24 strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.' These words sum up the whole duty of  
25 man. They mean the consecration of the whole being, body, soul, and spirit, to God's service. How  
26 can men obey these words, and at the same time pledge themselves to support that which deprives their  
27 neighbors of freedom of action? And how can men obey these words, and form combinations that rob  
28 the poorer classes of the advantages which justly belong to them, preventing them from buying or selling,  
29 except under certain conditions!"—Ellen G White, Letter 26, 1903

30  
31 3. The workplace environment should be characterized by an atmosphere of mutual  
32 service and mutual respect. Adversarial relationships between employer and employees, born of  
33 suspicion, self-interest, and rivalry deny dignity to persons and ignore the larger interests and needs of  
34 society. (James 5:1-6)

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- 1           4.       The workplace should not dehumanize people. Employees should have access to a
- 2 process of consultation and genuine discussion in matters affecting their labor and the conduct

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1 of the business or industry that employs their talents and skills. (1 Kings 12:6,7; Mark 10:42-45; Phil  
2 2:3-8)

3  
4 5. Christians should refrain from violence, coercion, or any method incompatible with  
5 Christian ideals as instruments in the attainment of social or economic goals. Nor should Christians lend  
6 their support to organizations or employers that resort to such actions.  
7 (2 Cor 6:14-18; 10:3)

8  
9 6. Seventh-day Adventist employers should support and demonstrate liberty of  
10 conscience, fair wages and working conditions, equality of opportunity, justice, and fairness for all  
11 (Luke 10:27).

12  
13 7. Spiritual autonomy and integrity for church entities include freedom to uphold and  
14 maintain basic religious tenets and practices, such as Sabbath observance, freedom to establish  
15 operating policies in harmony with church objectives, and freedom to employ only those who support  
16 church teachings and objectives.

17  
18 8. In order to fulfill its divine mission the Seventh-day Adventist Church refrains from  
19 alignment with or endorsement of political organizations. Church members are urged to preserve and  
20 protect their own liberty and independence from alliances that may compromise Christian values and  
21 witness.

22  
23 “We are now to use all our entrusted capabilities in giving the last warning message to the world.  
24 In this work we are to preserve our individuality. We are not to unite with secret societies or with trade-  
25 unions. We are to stand free in God, looking constantly to Christ for instruction. All our movements are  
26 to be made with a realization of the importance of the work to be accomplished for God.”—7T 84

27  
28 9. Seventh-day Adventists recognize the need for governments and therefore seek to  
29 be citizens who support law and order. Social and legal situations vary greatly in different parts of the  
30 world. Civil and religious liberties do not exist in equal measure throughout the world. For these  
31 reasons divisions of the General Conference may approve more specific working policies, reflecting the  
32 spiritual principles stated here, in light of legal, political or cultural realities and practices in their areas.  
33 All are encouraged to counsel widely so as to maintain principle-based decisions that preserve the  
34 integrity of the Church’s witness and mission. (Current examples of division-approved statements  
35 include the North American Division Working Policy HR 30 and the South Pacific Division Executive  
36 Committee Statement on “Seventh-day Adventists and Trade Unions,” May 22, 2003.)