



# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

## Respect for All People—Making Churches and Community Safe

The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms the dignity and worth of each human being as the handiwork of the Creator and the focus of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ. The Scripture clearly indicates that a distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept one another, to seek to affirm and empower, and to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

To this end, Seventh-day Adventists, as Christians, seek to live by the highest moral and ethical principles of conduct in their relationships with fellow human beings. We stand with other religious and community leaders who decry all forms of sexual abuse and family violence as well as all trafficking and exploitation of women and children, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, social, economic, and health status. We believe that to remain indifferent and unresponsive is, in effect, to condone, perpetuate, and potentially extend such behavior.

Long-standing Adventist position statements denouncing the sexual abuse of children and family violence and offering practical guidelines for an appropriate and caring church response have endeavored to provide a model for other communities of faith seeking to break silence and to respond appropriately and compassionately to persons who know this devastating experience firsthand.

Many resources have been developed by Adventist professionals and shared through governmental and interfaith networks to educate pastors, teachers, and leaders in both church and community regarding the nature of the problem and how to help individuals and families access the network of social and professional services which can best respond to specific needs. An annual Sabbath in Seventh-day Adventist churches is dedicated to continuing to break silence on these issues and to increasing the Church's effectiveness in the protection of the vulnerable with a view toward prevention.

Seventh-day Adventists take very seriously their responsibility to help make the Church and community a safe place for children. A strong position statement on the well-being and value of children was issued in 2000 enumerating the rights of children and the many challenges facing families and communities charged with their care. Strong child-protection policies have been put in place in Seventh-day Adventist churches and schools in different parts of the world. These policies can provide a model for the development of such guidelines in other places regarding the screening of volunteers and appropriate measures to ensure that perpetrators are reported and removed from positions that put children at further risk. However, the policies are

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valuable only as they are implemented. Seventh-day Adventists have been practically involved, among others, in establishing orphanages. We have also been involved in community activities combating abuse.

Beyond speaking out against violations of human dignity, Seventh-day Adventists are committed to the development of each person to their fullest potential. The Church operates a global educational system. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provides a diversity of family and community development services including micro-lending, food and water security, literacy, HIV/AIDS education and emergency response. Leadership training programs are offered through Adventist churches worldwide in many areas of ministry and community service, such as family life education, health education, women and children's ministries, etc. Seventh-day Adventists view such work as an extension of the ministry of Christ and consider it our privilege to join hands with others in support of all human beings with whom we share this global village.

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*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 St. Louis, Missouri, USA, July 5, 2005.*

