

Dear Elder Wilson and the leadership team:

I am writing to you as a member of the General Conference Executive Committee, and a concerned lay Seventh-day Adventist in the Southern Asia Division.

In the past few years, I have begun to have concern about the integrity of church management in the Southern Asia Division. It is no secret that the wider Indian culture is rife with corruption. And of course, we are aware that there will always be rumors that circulate. However, the sheer number of reports emerging in our division about unprofessional practices in the church and among church leadership make me feel that there are ethical matters in the SUD (and maybe in other divisions) that need to be addressed. I will note these as examples:

- A report by a major Indian newspaper that three members of the administration of Spicer Adventist University have been identified as holding fake doctorate degrees.
- A recent, thoroughly-documented report from a heavily-funded project to build a conference center in South East Andhra Conference by a group headquartered in the Williams Lake, British Columbia congregation, which group recently withdrew its funding after the conference's failure to account to donors for a significant fraction of the money spent.
- A number of situations in the Indian church that have had to be taken up by government authorities, including sexual abuse / fraud allegations and the refusal to enforce holding a constituency meeting in North Tamil Conference since 2007, which is now being supervised by the courts at great legal cost to the church.

Whether or not all of the reports are true, there is a feeling among some Seventh-day Adventists in our country that accountability mechanisms are not in place, audit systems do not ensure robust fiscal practices and efficiency in operations are rarely tracked and reviewed.

I believe that if the work of God is to go forward, these allegations need to be dealt with forthrightly, for I fear our reputation is being diminished among church members and in the public mind. I have communicated with our division leaders and am sure they are engaged in addressing these issues coming in with concrete solutions. I have had conversations around setting up a grievance redress mechanism, institutionalizing a whistle blower policy and reviewing and assuring accountability systems. As a lay member, I would play my part in helping our division get back on track.

Meanwhile, Elder Wilson, I am writing to request that we address the matter of accountability mechanisms, compliance to fiscal policies, integrity and ethical behavior in church leadership during our autumn meeting in 2018. It would be my hope that this discussion would include not just principles given in the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible, with which all are familiar, but practical matters, such as:

- What are the accountability mechanisms and systems that need to be in place to ensure honest use of church funds and efficient management of church institutions? Are there

score cards in place that would spur institutions to maintain standards and strive towards efficient use of resources?

- What is the role of GCAS in determining whether fraud has occurred?
- To what extent, if any, are foreign (or local) donors protected or assisted when they give money to projects in India or other distant fields? Is there any appeal if they feel church employees have misused their donations?
- Is there a policy whereby employees are encouraged to be whistleblowers and are protected in the church?
- Is there a grievance redressal mechanism in place? For instance, to some complaints, GC leaders have referred members back to the division administration, who may in turn refers them to union leaders. If these leaders do not appear to be responding to concerns expressed by members, to whom are church members to turn?

I would be happy to be of help in any which way possible to have this discussion in the autumn council. I am a Medical Practitioner and a Health Management Specialist by training and work from Ranchi, Jharkhand of India in Jhpiego - a multi-national company affiliated with the Johns Hopkins University. We are a grant receiving organisation and fiscal prudence, accountability and efficient systems are essential for our survival and growth.

Yours in Christ,
Suranjeen Prasad Pallipamula