



Written statement of the Berlin-Central German Conference addressing the documents of the Unity Oversight Committee of/by the General Conference

Preamble

We are distressed about the content and mentality as represented in the documents “Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions” and “Terms of Reference for Compliance Committees. They stand in opposition to our fundamental believes of cohabitation and to our understanding of the community of Jesus Christ. We position ourselves as follows:

I. Unity and Plurality

**“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;
⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4,2-6)**

In the faith in Jesus Christ we are convinced:
Unity in the New Testament means unity in the spirit of Jesus Christ, in love and willingness to serve all human beings. Unity in the church manifests itself in the joint testimony for Jesus Christ. He gives unity in peaceful plurality.

We are opposed to attempts of creating unity through uniformity. The founders of our Church refused to formulate a creed which would become an obligatory standard for all.¹

¹ “To formulate a creed which binds us once and for all is the first step towards apostasy. The second step consists in making the acceptance of this creed a precondition for entering the church. Subsequent steps involve calling members to account based on the creeds, stigmatising them as apostates and, finally, persecuting them” (John Loughborough, Review and Herald, 8. October 1861, 148, quoted from George Knight, A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, Review and Herald Publishing 2000).



II. Trust and the principle of voluntary nature

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13,8)

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Romans 15,7).

In faith in Jesus Christ we are convinced:

Trust and a principle of voluntary nature are fundamental values of the Christian Church. In faithfulness and solidarity members support their local church, return their tithes and sustain the Church through their gifts and talents.

We object to demanding obedience through restriction and pressure. This violates the freedom of opinion and conscience. It promotes a climate of fear and destroys a Church founded on trust and voluntariness.

III. Authority and Service

Jesus called them together and said: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20,25-28).

In the faith in Jesus Christ we are convinced:

Our Church is founded on the authority of the local churches. The task of the Church leadership consists in serving the Church by honoring and supporting the plurality of the different forms therein. Church leadership is accountable to the local churches.

We oppose ourselves to any intent of controlling or unifying the faith or conscience of church members. There is no legitimisation of such an understanding of authority – whether it be through divine power or commissioning.

As a consequence, we call the members of the General Conference Executive Committee,

- 1. to reject the documents of the Unity Oversight Committee at the Annual Council in October,**
- 2. to dissolve the Unity Oversight Committees which have been established without involving the Executive Committee and which, consequently, are unlawful,**

3. to ensure that the Church leadership preserves the above stated values of the Church. Furthermore it has to be clarified whether the current Church leadership continues to have a vote of confidence.

