

Statement of the Presidents of the Adventist Church in Germany on the Documents of the Unity Oversight Committee of the General Conference

The Administrative Committee (ADCOM) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted and published on Tuesday 17 July on two documents recommended by the Unity Oversight Committee to be submitted to the Executive Committee for adoption in October 2018.

The documents describe a canonical procedure, such as how to treat unions, associations and/or their leaders that do not conform to our rules or beliefs.

In addition, we learned from an unofficial source (Spectrum magazine) that at the same time a whole system of so-called "Compliance Committees" had already been set up, to which the ADCOM (Administrative Committee of the GK) gives far-reaching powers of attorney. Each of these "Compliance Committees" is made up of about a dozen people, almost all of whom are employees of the Church.

We comment as follows on the documents and the establishment of the "Compliance Committees":

1. Basic Principles

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide church based on local churches. In order to lead a world church, we have therefore given ourselves a representative system to lead the church as an organization and as a community of believers. In the recent initiative of the world church leadership, we recognize a threatening development towards a hierarchical church structure, which we will resolutely oppose.

1. Our Understanding of the Church

The Church is based on Jesus' call to man: "Come and follow me" (Mark 2:15, 10:21; John 1:43; 12:26). (Mark 2:15, 10:21; John 1:43; 12:26). In this way, every person is encouraged to enter into a personal relationship with God.

Man's yes to God is a free decision and first describes a relationship of trust between two persons: God and man.

Every believer lives by his faith, a life that is equally committed to freedom and commitment, to maturity and solidarity, to self-determination and responsibility for others.

Where people confess and follow God together, they form a community, a church, based on biblical principles and values. Community life is ordered by persons, spiritual gifts and teaching (Acts 6; Ephesians 4; 1 Timothy 3; 2 Timothy 1:13+14). Structures are important for the welfare of a community. They have serving character and give orientation.

Nevertheless, the following applies:

- The central basic understanding of church as body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12) and as organization is: We are connected by faith in Jesus.
- Faith: In the church as an organization each individual always lives first "by faith", i.e. by his personal knowledge which God gives him and by his free and independent decision of conscience which he makes before God. If structures oppose conscience, the whole community must work to find ways to develop them further, as the NT confirms: Acts 15; Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 10.
- Jesus: He is the foundation (1 Corinthians 3), the cornerstone (1 Peter 2) that carries and holds everything together. The church is a dynamic, living building and not static.

2. Unity in the Church

The unity of the Church is worked and guaranteed by Jesus alone. (John 17:20-23)

The quality of this unity is unmistakable: "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so also they shall be in us..."

Unity, therefore, is first and foremost an undeserved gift founded only in God, and thus it stands before every human effort. For many reasons there is no complete correspondence between this unity existing in God and a concrete ecclesial form. This unity will not be completely realised in this world, even in our church.

In Jesus unity and love, trust and freedom are thought together, and only in this way can God, the Redeemer, be known. As Seventh-day Adventist Church, we can confidently follow this path of unity in diversity.

In our responsibility for our congregations in Germany we let ourselves be guided by this understanding of church and unity, because in it the essential characteristic of church is expressed.

Conclusion

- The documents and the work of the Compliance Committees mark a change of direction in the basic understanding of church leadership: Instead of trust, tolerance, respect, conflict ability and dialogue in controversy, pressure, control, monitoring and stigmatisation of individuals take place. This significantly increases the split-up dynamics of a church and reverses the effort for unity.
- The documents and work of the Compliance Committees promote a spirit of distrust, criticism, evaluation and judgment. This is explicitly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.
- The public stigmatization of individuals is unacceptable because it damages their dignity. We expressly distance ourselves from this.
- The rules existing in our Church are absolutely sufficient to intervene in problems or conflicts. The existing instruments and procedures give us a wide margin of manoeuvre for this.

For this reason, we firmly reject the documents presented by the world church leadership and the establishment of the "Compliance Committees", because in them our understanding of church and how a church is to be led is not reflected.

Within the framework of our mandates as members of the GK Executive Committee, we will work for the rejection of the regulations proposed in the papers.

Werner Dullinger

Johannes Naether

(President)

(Vice President)