



**December 4, 2018**

Re: Official Upper Columbia Conference Position on World Church Affirmation Sabbath

### **Our Mission**

The Upper Columbia Conference (UCC) of Seventh-day Adventists executive committee and administration, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are actively engaged in equipping and empowering our many ministries to carry the gospel message to our communities. We rejoice at the successful growth of our ministries and are humbled by the many evidences of God's power working throughout our conference.

### **Our Concern**

We currently face a distraction to our high calling and ask each of our members to prayerfully join us in refocusing our collective efforts on God's mission.

A group calling themselves the World Church Affirmation Sabbath (WCAS) has begun operating within the Upper Columbia Conference causing disruption in the churches and hindering the work of God.

We do not impugn the WCAS members' motives or character or their desire to serve the mission of our church. And yet, the fruits of their efforts, under the banner of the WCAS, have increasingly led to further dissension among our members and the spread of false information. This includes speculation about the intentions of duly elected church leaders here in our conference, in our North Pacific Union and through the North American Division.

Currently, the WCAS is circulating a Statement of Harmony certificate among our churches and pastors requesting a pledge of loyalty to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "irrespective of votes of the Division, Union, or Conference voted policies."

In the newsletter that accompanies the Statement of Harmony, the WCAS urges each individual church pastor to call a special church board and/or business meeting to have their church members vote their loyalty to the General Conference's policies and voted actions, overriding any conflicting policies or voted actions of their conference, union, and/or division. Once the pastor has their church board's vote, they are instructed to sign the Statement of Harmony certificate and return it to an anonymous post office box in Spokane, Washington.

It appears as though this group has appointed themselves as guardians of the General Conference policies and voted actions, taking upon themselves the role of "independent watch dog" of individual Adventist churches and their members.

### **Our Response**

No Seventh-day Adventist denominational entity has empowered any group to request church members to sign a statement of harmony—not the General Conference, divisions, unions or conferences. No authoritative body within the Adventist church has made such a request.

Not only has the WCAS group not been empowered to ask churches to sign a Statement of Harmony, but also their document implies that the Upper Columbia Conference is out of harmony with our beloved world church. This, absolutely, is false.

The Upper Columbia Conference is, and will always remain, an integral part of the world Seventh-day Adventist Church, working in harmony with our Adventist beliefs, policies and mission.

The WCAS, *itself*, is in violation of the policies, procedures and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>1</sup> Assuming the self-appointed role of “watch dog” over the Upper Columbia Conference actions, to ensure that no vote goes against a General Conference vote or policy. This has resulted in the WCAS’s attempt to organize supporters into secretive political action groups of voting blocks to control the outcome of the voting process during the conference nominating committees and the conference constituency meetings.<sup>2</sup>

This divisive move to political action is in direct opposition to the Church Manual, page 114, that states,

*“Nothing of a political nature should be allowed to come into this work. Men and women of known piety and loyalty and who are able to attend the session should be nominated as delegates...It is not permissible for church or conference delegations to organize or attempt to direct their votes as a unit. Nor is it permissible for the delegates from a large church or the conference to claim preeminence in directing affairs in a conference session. Each delegate should be susceptible to the direction of the Holy Spirit and vote according to personal convictions. Any church or conference officer or leader attempting to control the votes of a group of delegates would be considered disqualified for holding office.”*

Any attempt to circumvent this church policy is spiritually dangerous as it encourages members to conspire against God’s appointed leaders and demonstrates a lack of faith in God’s ability to lead His church through the power of His Holy Spirit. God still is in charge of His church.

Therefore, let it be known that the WCAS is:

- Not authorized nor recognized as a group of the Upper Columbia Conference.
- At variance with the transparency of truth that is the foundation of the Adventist church, operating using an anonymous post office box as their address.
- Inappropriately collecting data from individual churches to further their political agenda.
- Not aligned with the Spirit of Prophecy<sup>3</sup>
- Out of harmony with the SDA Church Manual (p. 114) regarding the selection and duty of delegates.
- Recognized as causing false alarm and division among God’s people – distributing unauthorized materials that divide God’s people, spread disharmony and bring reproach upon God’s church.



The Upper Columbia Conference executive committee and administration hereby states unequivocally that it is not seceding from the world church. The newsletters, promotion materials and other subversive actions of the WCAS implying otherwise must not be tolerated.

We call upon our pastors, churches and members to seek unity in our common mission, not in sowing discord among us. We ask that the following be carefully observed:

- No conference church, school or property should provide meeting space for the WCAS meetings, public or private.
- No UCC pulpit should be used to promote the WCAS activities or agendas.

### **Our Appeal**

How may we avoid division and dissension while we work through our disagreements? Our church manual invites us as members, church leaders or any entity to bring our appeals to the next highest level within our church organization. The Matthew 18 principle is what we all must seek to follow.

Many of you know the North American Division (NAD) has made a formal request to General Conference leadership to reconsider and rescind newly adopted world church compliance procedures. This appeal is not an act of rebellion. It follows an intentional and appropriate process to register disagreement, while maintaining respect within the family of God. As this process moves forward, we appeal to our own conference family, our church members throughout the Inland Northwest, to follow the Matthew 18 principle. Let us pray for one another and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us forward together.

All future efforts of the Upper Columbia Conference must continue to be directed, in love and respect, to actively work to equip and empower ministries to reach as many souls as possible, in the short time we have left to finish God's work. We must not allow anything to divert us from our mission.

May God help us to stay the course in humble service to His will.

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<sup>1</sup>SDA Church Manual, Published by the Secretariat General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa Idaho, 2016

<sup>2</sup> In the WCAS Mission Statement in section titled, Principles of Action, it states: "6. Participants learn how to work effectively in board and constituency meetings."

<sup>3</sup> The document requested by the WCAS requires allegiance to policies and voted actions of the General Conference—first and foremost—regardless of the policies or voted actions of the division, unions, or conferences. This is in direct opposition to the counsel of Ellen White.

In 1901–1903 the union conferences were established. Ellen White declared at the 1903 session, "It has been a necessity to organize union conferences, that the General Conference shall not exercise dictation over all the separate conferences" Ellen White, "Regarding Work of General Conference," MS 26, 1903. Regarding Work of General Conference. Oakland, California. April 3, 1903. This manuscript is published in entirety in 14MR 279-280.

The 'Statement of Harmony' is, itself, not in harmony with the Spirit of Prophecy.