

Questions on the Document Voted at #GCAC18

By General Conference Communication Department

Following Sunday's vote on the document "Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions", many questions have been asked about the meaning of the vote and how it impacts church governance. In the following article, we try to answer some of these questions.

What was the document about?

"Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions" is an attempt to answer one question and that is "what happens when an Adventist organization acts contrary to the decisions made by the whole body of believers at a General Conference Session and by the Executive Committee?"

What is policy and why does it matter?

When a group of people or an organization decides to come together in any organized way, they agree on a set of rules or policies that each group is willing to abide by. The strength of an organization is found in the commitment of each part of the body to abide by what the majority has decided. A group cannot fulfill its purpose if a majority engages in prolonged fighting over the agreed rules.

How does current working policy deal with non-compliance?

According to current policy, an entity that shows an inability or unwillingness to administer their work in harmony with world church policy is subject to: 1) the entity being downgraded to mission status; 2) the entity's leader being removed from the GC Executive Committee "for cause"; and 3) the entity being disbanded and reorganized.

What will happen now that the document has been approved?

If a matter of non-compliance is identified, the closest organization to the non-compliant entity is responsible for looking into the matter. Only if the local organization is unable to bring the entity into compliance, will GC Administrative Committee (ADCOM) consider activating the relevant compliance committee.

What are the compliance committees and how do they work?

The compliance committees are sub-committees of GC ADCOM and are advisory in nature. As stated above, they are activated only after lower

levels of local governance (conference, union, and/or division) closest to the non-compliant entity have been unable to help bring it back into compliance.

What authority do the compliance committees have?

The compliance committees have no authority. They are advisory in nature and report their findings to GC ADCOM. Any consequences need to be approved by GC ADCOM, the General Conference and Division Officers Committee (GCDO), and finally the GC Executive Committee.

Is a Division of the Church a separate entity from the General Conference?

No. In the Adventist Church, unions, which are comprised of conferences (or, in some cases, churches) make up the General Conference. Divisions are not separate constituent organizations but are part of the General Conference itself and therefore cannot separate itself from the General Conference.

Is this document a top-down, authoritarian process of enforcement?

No. As with all Adventist church governance, it recognizes each level of the church has a certain delegated authority and encourages non-compliance to be resolved as close to the situation as possible. However, the document also recognizes the responsibility of higher levels of church organization to resolve the matter if other church entities are unable to take action.

Does this document change the way our church operates?

No. Church policies are the agreements by which leaders at all levels have decided to follow as we work together for the accomplishment of our mission. Throughout our history, both theological and organizational challenges to the church's authority have arisen. And always God has enabled His Church to overcome these challenges and continue thriving and growing.

I am afraid for my church, what can I do?

We recommend you read [the document](#) for yourself. You can also pray for your church and its leadership. And you can trust that God will take care of each one of us. Everyone agrees that what we want is to move forward as a united church to proclaim the love of Jesus and His soon return. No one, none of your leaders or administrators, disagree with that. We are simply struggling as to how best to do that right now. We ask each of our members to continue to keep us in their prayers as we continue our united mission of reaching each person for Christ, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3, NKJV).

Where can I learn more about the document and how it was developed?

You can learn more about the background of this document and its implications by reading **“Harmony with the World Church: Background Given for Voted Document.”**