



# Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA & Canada, Ltd.

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December 7, 2015

Dear Seventh Day Baptist Church,

At the meetings of the General Conference this past summer at Lancaster Bible College, in Lancaster, PA, the General Conference transacted important business. Because of the nature of some of this business, the Conference offices were instructed to notify you by mail after the sessions of the action taken.

Enclosed, you will find three pieces of information which are the result of some of this year's business:

- A Resolution on Child Protection (and introductory resources list)
- Resolution on Marriage
- Church Planting Vision & Challenge

Each of these pieces of business were to be specifically communicated to you before the end of the year. If you wish to download this letter and the enclosed information, please visit the General Conference website where you can download the packet for redistribution by email. This information is public and may be used by your church as you deem appropriate.

Beyond the information enclosed, additional information is available on these topics by contacting either John Pethtel, Director of Church Planting and Pastoral Services or Nick Kersten, Director of Education and History. If you have further questions about this information, you may contact any of the executives by email or call the Center. Please do not hesitate to call or email!

We are praying that your ministries are progressing in advancing God's Kingdom. If there are specific ways we can aid you or pray for you, please let us know.

In Christ's Service,

Robert F. Appel  
Executive Director

## **Resolution on Child Protection**

**Whereas** our Lord Jesus demonstrated his righteous anger at his own disciples, rebuking those who would do anything to prevent children from coming unto him, saying “to such belongs the Kingdom of God,” (Mark 10:14) and condemning those who would harm children, saying “it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6); and

**Whereas** an epidemic of child abuse exists in our culture, with the vast majority of such children being harmed by someone they know and trust, wounding children physically, emotionally, psychologically, sexually, and spiritually with lifelong ripple effects; and

**Whereas** the silence of the church – when we fail to appropriately address sin by not reporting disclosures of child abuse, or not caring for those who disclose child abuse, or not proactively taking steps to prevent child-abuse – is a fundamental failure of servant leadership, rendering the church complicit and culpable before the Lord, driving people away from the safety, healing and hope of Jesus Christ; and

**Whereas** Scripture warns leaders against the careless exposure of believers to temptation and danger, and every jurisdiction acknowledges that child abuse is a serious felony and has its own mandated reporting laws;

**Therefore, be it resolved** that we exhort all member churches to become informed and to take an active stance toward preventing child abuse in the church by screening staff and volunteers, training them in child protection, and actively maintaining child protection policies pertaining to our obligations to love our children and protect their rightful interests as God’s image-bearers from the devastating actions of abusers (Matthew 18:5-6); and

**Be it further resolved** that we remind all member churches that the heinous crime of child abuse must be reported to duly appointed proper representatives of the God-ordained civil authorities, in accordance with local laws, and that we must cooperate with those authorities as they “bear the sword” to punish those who do evil. (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14); and

**Be it further resolved** that we urge all member church leaders to use their influence for the protection of children, by any and all godly means, including preaching and teaching against the heinous sin of child abuse, warning anyone with knowledge of these sins to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Ephesians 5:11), and by supporting victims who often suffer in silence and shame without the vocal

and compassionate support of the church; and by supporting the families of the victims;  
and

***Be it further resolved*** that we urge all member churches to seek to bring reconciliation between all parties involved (2 Corinthians 5:18-21), and restoration of the perpetrator, based upon their repentance, that they would know that there is forgiveness and freedom from their bondage to such sin as given by God (1 John 1:9); and

***Be it further resolved*** that we **recommend** that the General Council examine every possibility to protect children at our annual General Conference sessions and implement any measure that seems prudent and appropriate and to do so in consultation with legal and insurance professionals; and

***Be it finally resolved*** that the SDB General Conference urge all Seventh Day Baptists to renew our allegiance to our Lord Jesus by loving our children as he loves our children, “for to such belongs the Kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14)

(adopted by vote of the SDB General Conference in session, July 31, 2015)

*\*Along with the passage of this resolution, local churches were encouraged to contact their liability insurance provider concerning protection of their children.” Additional resources on this issue will be available in the future on the General Conference webpage ([www.seventhdaybaptist.org](http://www.seventhdaybaptist.org)). If any church needs resources immediately, they are advised to contact the Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services, John Pethel or the Director of Education and History, Nick Kersten.*

#### Introductory Resources to this Issue:

##### Books:

*On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church*, by Deepak Reju.

*Preventing Child Abuse: Creating a Safe Place*, by Beth A. Swagman

##### Websites:

<http://www.challies.com/articles/6-reasons-why-sexual-predators-target-churches>

<http://justinholcomb.com/2015/08/11/9-ways-to-protect-your-children-from-sexual-abuse/>

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sexual-abuse-among-us#When:18:45:00Z>

## **Resolution Affirming Previous SDB Statements on Marriage**

**WHEREAS**, God in His divine wisdom created and intended marriage to be the covenanted, conjugal union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 19:4–6; Hebrews 13:4); and

**WHEREAS**, Seventh Day Baptists through action at their General Conference sessions in 2003 and 2004 strongly affirmed “that the Divinely instituted union of marriage is solely between a man and a woman.”; and

**WHEREAS**, The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that states shall be required to grant legal recognition as “marriages” to same-sex partnerships; and

**WHEREAS**, The redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples is apt to continue to erode the religious liberty and rights of conscience of all who remain faithful to the idea of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bible affirms the value of all human beings as “created in His image” and calls us to love our neighbors, including those who disagree with us about the definition of marriage; now, therefore,

**LET IT BE RESOLVED**, That the delegates to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference session in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, July 26-August 1, 2015, continue to “strongly affirm that the Divinely instituted union of marriage is solely between a man and a woman.”

**LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the religious liberty of individual citizens or institutions should not be infringed as a result of believing or living according to the biblical definition of marriage;

**LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED**, That Seventh Day Baptists love our neighbors and extend respect in Christ’s name to all people, including those who may disagree with us about the definition of marriage.

(adopted by vote on the floor of SDB General Conference sessions, July 29, 2015)

*\*Along with the passage of this resolution, local churches were encouraged to “...contact their liability insurance provider concerning protection for their religious liberties concerning this issue.” Additional resources on this issue will be available in the future on the General Conference webpage ([www.seventhdaybaptist.org](http://www.seventhdaybaptist.org)). If any church needs resources immediately, they are advised to contact the Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services, John Pethel or the Director of Education and History, Nick Kersten.*

## **SDB Churches Challenged to Become Involved in Church Planting**

The Church Planting Task Force (a new subcommittee of the Council on Ministry) recommended a vision to the General Conference to move forward in the work of church planting as well as a challenge to existing SDB churches and their participation in the work of church planting.

The delegates at the 2015 General Conference sessions overwhelmingly approved these items and asked that they be communicated to our churches and their members.

**Vision for SDB Church Planting:** *The SDB General Conference will mobilize SDB churches and church members to actively advance God's Kingdom by cooperating together to plant new churches. We will create a movement of member churches and individuals toward this end by challenging them, equipping them, supporting them, and setting them free to pursue God's leading in this area.*

**Challenge to All SDB Churches:** *We challenge every SDB church and fellowship in the US and Canada to prayerfully seek God's will in the area of church planting and to obey God's calling to take a new step of involvement by participating in one or more of the following ways:*

- *Partnering in prayer with an SDB church plant;*
- *Supporting an SDB church plant through finances, lending expertise, or providing manpower;*
- *Sponsoring an SDB church plant, either on their own or in cooperation with other churches.*

What is the NEXT STEP that your church will take in the work of church planting? If you would like to partner with a church or know what these next steps entail, please contact the Director of Church Development.