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Appendix 1: A Seventh-day Adventist Framework for Relating to Sexual Orientation Differences on the Campus of Andrews University

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Toward a Faithful and Compassionate Response

Andrews University is a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning and an integral expression of the church's mission. The University holds and is accountable to the church's biblical position on human sexuality and marriage detailed in the official statements and guidelines of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its North American Division.¹ The following statement seeks to provide a framework from which the University can faithfully and compassionately implement the Scriptural teachings of the Adventist church within the specific context of Adventist higher education.²

Andrews University strives to be a community where students can flourish in a growing knowledge of God's Word and His personal plan for their lives. This community includes students who are oriented to the same or more than one sex, who are transgender,³ or who question their sexual orientation or gender identity (commonly referred to with the acronym LGBT).⁴ The University is committed to creating a safe and caring climate where such diverse groups are treated with dignity and respect, in keeping with their value as persons created in the image of God.

Belonging and Participation. Many same-sex oriented individuals consider themselves to have a meaningful, personal commitment to Christ.⁵ Sadly, many of these have been mistreated or have felt rejected by the church and sometimes by their own families. While this is not the experience of all, the fear of being hurt or marginalized may still be present. This can cause deep wounds and conflicts about God, religious identity, belonging and self-worth. It also places students at greater risk for depression and self-harm.⁶ The University believes that God's family is comprised of all who seek to follow Him.⁷ All students who live in harmony with the values of the University and the biblical standards of the Adventist church—no matter their sexual orientation—are welcome to participate and lead as members of our community.⁸

Campus Climate. In order to create a safe and caring campus climate, the University prohibits all harassment, including that based upon perceived or actual sexual orientation. No one should publicly disclose or speculate on the sexual orientation of another person without their permission, as this can result in harm. Even as biblical teachings will be shared and upheld on campus, those who speak about sexuality are expected to do so in a considerate manner, avoiding the perpetuation of hurtful stereotypes. On the basis of sexual orientation, in itself, students are not to be treated differently in academic, work, residential or other campus environments, except as the University may deem it appropriate in response to housing and residential concerns. All students, irrespective of sexual orientation, are afforded equal protection in situations of alleged sexual misconduct. Students who experience or observe any mistreatment or oversight related to sexual orientation should report it immediately to the Student Life office, where it will be handled in a timely and confidential manner.

Romantic Relationships and Marriage. The University upholds the Bible understanding of the Adventist church that sexual intimacy belongs only within marriage, defined as "a lifelong union between a man and a woman."⁹ Likewise, we believe that romantic relationships are appropriate only between a man and a woman. Thus, while we support the development of meaningful friendships, we require students to refrain from sexual relations outside of marriage and from romantic behaviors between individuals of the same sex, understanding that not all displays of affection are romantic in nature.

Singleness, Friendship and Community. The position of the church and the University means that, while all students are called to sexual abstinence before and outside of marriage, those who are same-sex oriented face the prospect of living without spousal companionship. In a cultural context where same-sex marriage is legal and widely celebrated, this may be especially difficult. It is our responsibility to support and include those who are single by creating an environment where they can find genuine friendships and a loving church family, whether they are single by preference, out of circumstance or as a result of their biblical convictions.¹⁰

Dialogue and Discernment. As University educators, we are committed to leading the conversation on human sexuality, teaching students to discern and develop a sexual ethic grounded in an Adventist understanding of Bible truth. This dialogue may take

place in designated small group or classroom settings and is critical to helping students assess a number of other widely available cultural and theological viewpoints. Administration will seek to assure that public discussions are facilitated with a commitment to clarifying and upholding the church's biblical position on sexuality, while respecting the contributions, confidentiality and views of every student.

Choice and Conduct. While the Bible forbids sexual activity between members of the same sex, it does not address sexual orientation.¹¹ Although there is no consensus on what leads to same-sex orientation, it is usually understood to involve the complex interaction between nature and nurture. In reality, individuals may “experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.”¹² The University understands that identifying with a particular orientation is not, in itself, an indicator of behavior. Thus, as we administer our Code of Student Conduct, we draw a clear distinction between sexual orientation, which is an enduring pattern of attraction to one or both sexes, and behavioral choices, for which one is held accountable.

Wisdom and Grace. Sexual identity development can be a complex process. Some students may have sexual attractions or sexual experiences that do not become an enduring part of their sexual orientation. Such shifts may or may not occur as part of coming to understand one's sexual identity. Reorientation efforts typically attempt to reverse sexual orientation. Some participating in these efforts report decreases in same-sex attraction and even gains in opposite-sex attraction.¹³ Others report no change in same-sex attraction and, at times, harmful effects.¹⁴ The University cannot know how God, in His wisdom, may choose to interact with each person. What we do know is that through God's saving and enabling grace we can all live victoriously through Christ.¹⁵

Identity and Self-disclosure. We believe that Christ is the primary source of a person's identity¹⁶ and that other aspects of the self, such as sexuality, are secondary. We encourage students to develop a wholistic identity, grounded in a loving relationship with Christ, the teachings of His Word and a place of belonging in His church. Self-disclosure of sexual orientation may or may not be appropriate or in a student's best interest.¹⁷ Those who self-disclose may identify with a sexual identity label (e.g. lesbian, gay), or they may avoid such designations.¹⁸ These personal decisions require careful consideration and may be best made with the support and counsel of a trusted helping professional.

Advocacy. Certain sexual identity terms and concepts may be associated with highly politicized social conversations. In personal and classroom discussions, students are free to express their views on sexual orientation issues. However, in public settings, including campus activities and University media outlets, students should not advocate or instigate views or behaviors that are inconsistent with the biblical teachings of the Adventist church. In all settings, students are encouraged to communicate respectfully and to work for the wellbeing of others.

Support and Education. The University recognizes that issues related to sexual orientation can present unique challenges for students, who must navigate the challenging terrain of sexual identity in a Christian environment. Those desiring confidential support will find assistance in the offices of Student Life and Residence Hall deans, the Campus Ministries office, and the Counseling & Testing Center. As a nationally and internationally diverse campus, the University understands that students come to us from cultures and backgrounds with differing attitudes toward sexual orientation.¹⁹ Therefore, we provide culturally-sensitive and biblically-based education that encourages faculty, staff and students to respond in a thoughtful and compassionate manner to all individuals, including those whose orientation differs from their own.

Housing. Students who find themselves in a rooming arrangement with which they are not comfortable due to sexual orientation concerns are encouraged to contact a Residence Hall dean, the director of the University Apartments, or their trip or tour director. Residential and trip or tour staff will work confidentially and respectfully with students to find appropriate solutions to their housing needs, whether on-campus or traveling off-campus.

Summary. Andrews University endeavors to provide all students with an environment where they are safe and can belong. We believe that all persons—regardless of their sexual orientation—when drawn into a close relationship with God and a caring faith community, can flourish within the Bible's teaching on sexuality.

Notes

1. This includes the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' (GCSDA) statement of fundamental belief on [“Marriage and the Family”](#) (2015), its official statements on [Homosexuality](#) (2012), [Marriage](#) (1996) and [Same-Sex Unions](#) (2012), its guidelines on [“Responding to Changing Cultural Attitudes Regarding Homosexual and Other Alternative Sexual Practices”](#) (2014), and the [“North American Division Statement on Human Sexuality”](#) (2015).
2. “Jesus affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices. As His disciples, Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the Lord's instruction and example, living a life of Christ-like compassion and faithfulness.” GCSDA official statement on [Homosexuality](#) (2010).

3. This document does not specifically address the experience or needs of transgender students. Issues related to gender dysphoria and gender identity, while often merged with a discussion of sexual orientation, are distinct enough to merit thoughtful, independent consideration. For that reason the University, along with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is currently giving study to transgender processes in order to shape future practices and policies in this area.
4. Some of the designations used by those who identify on a spectrum of differences related to sexuality and gender identity include, but are not limited to, the following. *Lesbian* (L) and *gay* (G) refer to those who are romantically and sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex, while *bisexual* (B) refers to those who are attracted to more than one sex. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), “While these categories continue to be widely used, research has suggested that sexual orientation does not always appear in such definable categories and instead occurs on a continuum.” APA (2011), [Definition of terms: Sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation](#). *Transgender* (T) refers to those whose *gender identity* (one’s innermost sense of being male, female, both, or neither) does not correspond to their biological sex at birth. This mismatch causes a deep and enduring distress known as *gender dysphoria*. *Intersex* (I) refers to those whose sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, and/or chromosomal patterns do not fit the typical definitions of male or female. *Asexual* (A) refers to those who experience little or no sexual attraction to any gender.
5. Reflecting on a 2009 random, nationwide study of 9,232 adults done by the Barna Group, George Barna states: “A substantial majority of gays cite their faith as a central facet of their life, consider themselves to be Christian, and claim to have some type of meaningful personal commitment to Jesus Christ active in their life today.” See [“Spiritual Profile of Homosexual Adults Provides Surprising Insights.”](#)
6. According to a 2009 study of LGBT adolescents and their families conducted by the [Family Acceptance Project](#), “Highly rejected young people were more than eight times as likely to have attempted suicide [and] nearly six times as likely to report high levels of depression” (page 5).
7. See Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-34; Luke 8:19-21.
8. The North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists offers this guideline on religious leadership within congregations: “In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, only members in regular standing are to fill leadership roles such as teaching and preaching. Leaders are held to a high standard of care as representatives and role models carrying out a sacred trust on behalf of Christ and His church.” [North American Division statement on human sexuality](#) (2015), page 3. While students are not required to be church members in order to fill many leadership positions on campus, all student leaders must be in good and regular standing with the University and are expected to abide by our Code of Student Conduct, which reflects the biblical values and standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
9. “Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.” GCSDA (2015), Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists, [“Marriage and the Family.”](#) See Gen 2:18-25; Matt 19:4-6; Eph 5:21-33. See also the official statement of the GCSDA on [Homosexuality](#). “Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation.... Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev 18:5-23, 26; Lev 20:7-21; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11).”
10. Scripture is consistent in its support of those who are single. God is named as the defender of widows (Ps 68:5; Deut 10:18), and his people are called to this work, as well (Ex 22:22-23; Deut 27:19; Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3-4). God promises to include eunuchs in his family (Isa 56:4, 5) and fulfills that promise with the first Christian convert, who was a eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). Jesus was single and benefited from the close friendship of others (Luke 10:38; John 11:1-3), just as he showed regard for those who were alone and in need of care (Mark 12:43-44; Luke 7:12-15; John 19:26-27). Jesus also acknowledged eunuchs and those who “live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom” (Matt 19:12). The early church cared for widows (Acts 9:36-39; 1 Tim 5:3-16), and Paul—who was single—gave an important place to the unmarried in the mission of the church (1 Cor 7:8, 32-35).
11. See Lev 18:5-23, 26; Lev 20:7-21; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10.
12. The American Psychological Association (2008), [Answers to your questions for a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality](#): “Although much research has examined the possible...influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation” (page 2). The [“North American Division Statement on Human Sexuality”](#) (2015) states: “Given the complexities of the fallen human condition (Rom 3:23), we recognize that individuals may experience same-sex orientation through no choice of their own....In view of the fact that scientists and other experts have not reached a consensus concerning the factors leading to sexual orientation—usually understood to involve the complex roles of ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’—the Adventist Church does not presume to have settled the scientific and social questions regarding the cause of non-heterosexual orientation.” See also Yarhouse (2010), [A Christian perspective on sexual identity](#): “People do not choose to experience same-sex attraction or to have a homosexual orientation as such. They find themselves with attractions toward the same sex. It is unclear why some people experience same-sex attractions or have a homosexual orientation....There are probably many

factors that contribute in one way or another, and these factors probably vary from person to person... Whether an impulse comes 'from within' or is the result of one's environment or, more likely, if an impulse is the result of some combination, Christianity teaches that believers evaluate their impulses in light of God's revealed will for behavior" (page 7). And also the American Psychological Association (2008), [Answers to your questions for a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality](#): "Although much research has examined the possible...influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation" (page 2).

13. The research of psychologists Mark Yarhouse and Stanton Jones revealed that some who participated in religiously mediated change efforts experienced substantial decreases in same-sex attraction and significant increases in heterosexual attraction and functioning. Other participants found that their same-sex attraction diminished to the extent that they could live a chaste life in keeping with their faith commitments. Yarhouse qualifies these results as follows: "As important as these findings are for those considering a change attempt, most people do not experience change of sexual orientation; the reported changes are best thought of as gains along a continuum of attraction rather than changes from homosexual to heterosexual. Indeed, most people who report a heterosexual outcome would acknowledge some experiences of attraction to the same sex." Yarhouse (2010), [A Christian perspective on sexual identity](#), page 10. See also Adventist Review (March 19, 2014), [In God's image: Summit on human sexuality—Panel members tell moving stories of brokenness, change](#).
14. Some have raised concerns about sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE). "All major national mental health organizations have officially expressed concerns about therapies promoted to modify sexual orientation. To date, there has been no scientifically adequate research to show that therapy aimed at changing sexual orientation (sometimes called reparative or conversion therapy) is safe or effective." American Psychological Association (2008), [Answers to your questions for a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality](#), page 3. See also American Psychological Association (2009), [Appropriate therapeutic responses to sexual orientation](#): "We cannot conclude how likely it is that harm will occur from SOCE. However, studies...indicate that attempts to change sexual orientation may cause or exacerbate distress and poor mental health in some individuals, including depression and suicidal thoughts. The lack of rigorous research on the safety of SOCE represents a serious concern, as do studies that report perceptions of harm" (page 42). These reports about potential harm from change efforts should be considered with the results of the Yarhouse and Jones study, which found that religious attempts to change sexual orientation "did not appear to be harmful on average." Yarhouse and Jones, "A Longitudinal Study of Attempted Religiously Mediated Sexual Orientation Change," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 37:404-427, 2011, page 424.
15. See Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 15:57; 2 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 12:9-10; Phil 4:13; Jude 1:24-25.
16. See John 1:12; Rom 6:6; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Cor 12:27; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:27; Eph 1:5; Col 2:9-10; Col 3:1-3; 1 Pet 2:9; 1 John 3:1-2.
17. Legate, N., Ryan, R. M., & Weinstein, N. (2012). Is coming out always a "good thing"? Exploring the relations of autonomy support, outness, and wellness for lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. *Social Psychological & Personality Science*, 3, 145-152. This research "suggests that people experience greater wellness when they come out in certain contexts, but certainly not all contexts" (page 150). Identity disclosure in controlling social environments may not be beneficial, and individuals should be able to self-determine when and where it is safe for them to identify.
18. Some Christians merge their faith identity with a sexual minority identity (e.g. "gay Christian"). Other Christians, while they may acknowledge their same-sex orientation, choose not to use sexuality differences to define or label themselves (known as *dis-identifying*) and may choose an alternate designation, such as "in Christ."
19. A study by the Pew Research Center in 2013 found a global divide on views of homosexuality, with greater acceptance in more secular and affluent countries. Attitudes varied widely, from rejection rates as high as 98% in some countries to acceptance rates as high as 88% in others. While these rates have remained fairly stable in recent years, the greatest changes have taken place in the United States and South Korea, where acceptance rates have grown by at least ten percentage points since 2007. Pew Research Center (2013), [The Global Divide on Homosexuality](#).