

A decorative graphic on the left side of the cover, consisting of several overlapping, curved, wavy bands in various shades of blue, creating a sense of motion and depth.

Officially Challenged

Dave Fiedler

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Related to the “Official Statements”

Directed by the Hand of the Lord (Free PDF download from adventistcitymissions.org)

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Officially Challenged

ON the morning of July 4, 2025, the president of the General Conference surprised Adventists around the world by stating that an incorrect version of the “Official Statement” dealing with Immunization had been posted on the church’s website¹ for many years.² This announcement provided a welcome—but only partial—resolution to a question which had perplexed many since the day before when the president had read into the record a version of the “Official Statement” that differed substantially from what they had read many times.

Because the statement had been the center of much discussion and was well-known to thousands of Adventists, many were stunned and confused that a significantly different statement could be proclaimed “official.” An unwelcome dilemma of dishonesty or administrative incompetence swirled in many minds.

The explanation offered on July 4 was quickly “fact checked,” and found to be correct—sort of. The church’s flagship website (adventist.org) had indeed for years carried the statement which the president dismissed as “preliminary,”³

1. For clarity, a *website* is commonly a collection of multiple *web pages*.

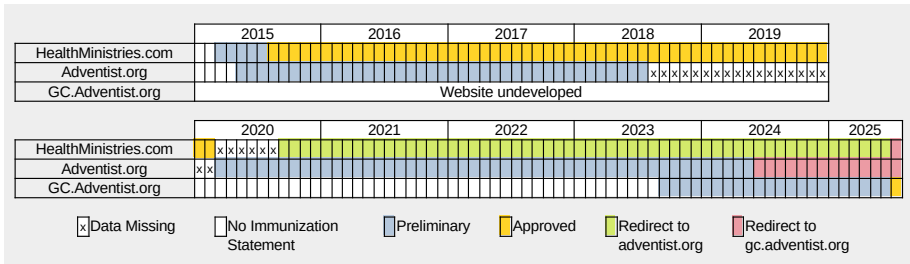
2. “General Conference President Ted Wilson Issues Corrective Statement on Immunization Remark,” Adventist News Network, July 4, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20250704161752/https://adventist.news/news/general-conference-president-wilson-issues-corrective-statement-on-immunization-remarks>

Please note that all references to “archive.org” are to the Internet Archive, which preserves time-stamped versions of websites. These links make it possible to see what a website looked like on specific dates in the past. Readers are invited to explore these links.

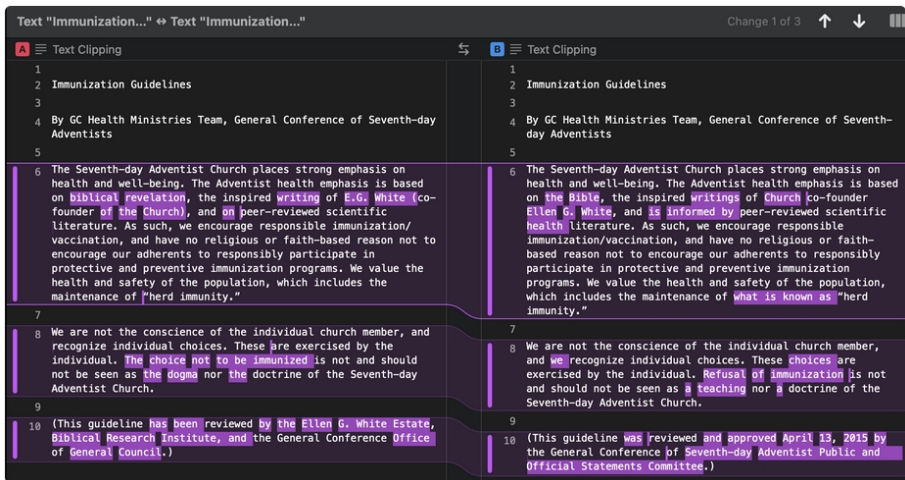
3. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150320171154/http://www.adventist.org:80/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/>

while evidence for the existence of the “final version” was found posted on the church’s Health Ministries website (healthministries.com).

Those content with a good overview of the situation will be happy with this chart. Those who want the full blow-by-blow account, with documentation, can go to the appendix.



The take-away from all that is simply that during the pandemic—the first time much attention had been paid to the statement on immunization—there was only the preliminary version to be found. So, what was the difference?



Comparison of the “preliminary” and “approved” versions of the statement. It is worth noting that the denomination’s official website now says that the approved version was “voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee in Silver Spring, Maryland, April 15 (not 13, as on the Health Ministries website), 2015.”

Although there are a number of differences between the text of the “preliminary” and the “approved” versions of the statement, the primary point of discussion has centered on the phrasing in regard to the *basis* of the “Adventist health emphasis.” The preliminary version says it “is based on biblical revelation, the inspired writing of Ellen G. White,... and on peer-reviewed scientific literature.” This parallel grammatical construction—emphasized by the preposi-

tion “on” which describes the church’s position in relation to peer-reviewed literature—depicts a quite different scenario than is implied by the “and is informed by” wording of the final, approved statement.

To many minds, the final version is preferable, inasmuch as it does not lock the church into some poorly defined subservient role to the famously fluid whims of “science.” While all Adventists would agree that “true science” is in agreement with Inspiration, the endless argumentation over this theory or that evidence, and the strong emphasis on positions which we hold to be erroneous⁴ that is perennially seen in the scientific world, holds little appeal for a church that respects Christ’s prayer “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.” (John 17:21) Any acceptance of “scientific authority” such as is implied in the preliminary version holds the promise of trouble. After all, the question in Amos is rhetorical, not a suggestion for experimentation!⁵

The thought that “peer-reviewed scientific literature” was to be considered a satisfactory basis for any denominational position was deeply disturbing to many. And yet the “preliminary” version proliferated widely and quite famously became a center of debate and—too often—a source of “authority” when it came to the issue of deciding what the denomination did, or did not, condone in regard to the pandemic and the widely promoted therapies which were offered the public.

Indeed, the pandemic was barely beginning when the “approved” version of the statement (that is, the only known correct presentation of the statement prior to July 4, 2025, the one posted on the Health Ministries website) disappeared from the internet. What replaced it, what had usurped its intended role on multiple other web pages, is something of a complex tale, with little but dates and web pages to hint at the world-wide turmoil which was enveloping the lives of thousands, both laity and leadership, in the church.

Like feathers on the wind, the preliminary text spread abroad. Indeed, that never-approved “Official Statement” became ubiquitous within Adventism. In addition to the websites noted, one final example is interesting, not because it is really any different from the rest, but because a quirk in the editorial policy of this particular journal nicely highlights one aspect of the challenge:

The Journal of Adventist Education—

<https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/2019.81.2.2>

The unique feature in this case is a notation following the article itself, presumably intended to encourage confidence in the authors’ message. It says: “This article has been peer reviewed.”

4. The Creation/Evolution debate is the poster child for all the above.

5. “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Amos 3:3

Regrettably, the reviewer was no more able to discern the inaccuracy of the quoted “Official Statement” than were the original authors. The point is simply that “peer review” depends on *peers*, people with a similar background, training, and worldview. It’s a great system for identifying *unorthodox* thinking within the peer group, but the chances of it failing to spot *erroneous orthodoxy* are baked right into the methodology. If you really want a system that challenges the basic assumptions of a paper, you need something more akin to the “adversarial system” used in legal proceedings. It’s the lack of that sort of vigorous challenge that brands some proceedings as “kangaroo courts.”⁶

When it comes to these published lists of the “Official Statements,” some of the older ones are among the most interesting because they display “Official Statements” that are not on the current list! We have “Official Statements” about wars in Iraq and Congo, but did you know we once had an “Official Statement” lamenting the “Crisis in Kosovo”?⁷

We used to have an “Official Statement” titled simply “Values,”⁸ but it was dropped some years ago. There was also a statement on “Operating Principles for Health-Care Institutions,” but it too has passed away.⁹

The prize for the most technical sounding titles of all the statements past or present goes to both “Human Gene Therapy”¹⁰ and “Christian Principles for Genetic Interventions”¹¹ in a dead heat.

Since there seems to be no policy to announce the discarding of “Official Statements,” we are left with nothing but speculation as to why any of them

6. As applied to scientific discourse, such a system might work like this: For every paper contending the universal, unvarying speed of light, the reviewer would be chosen from among the advocates of a variable definition of “C.” But doesn’t everyone *know* that “C” is a constant. Turns out, the answer to that is an emphatic “No.” The danger, of course, is giving credibility to “pseudo science.” But who do you trust to decide what the ultimate truth is? Given the potential for political, economic, and military influence arising from “science,” the idea that no one would try to manipulate it is patently naive.

7. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130928010858/http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat40.html>

War is lamentable... but lamenting wars on an individual basis seems... odd. What does it mean that we’ve dropped Kosovo? Is there a time limit on such things? Does it depend on the lives lost or the monetary damage inflicted? And what about the wars we’ve missed? Don’t we risk offending both Ukrainians and Russians because we passed on that conflict? There’s a lot to be said for trying to stay out of hostilities that have gone on for thousands of years with no sign of resolution, but what about the whole thing with (listed alphabetically so as not to show favoritism) Gaza, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and Israel? Did we just miss the news on that one?

8. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130928011349/http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat56.html>

9. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130928012239/http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat31.html>

10. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240221181818/https://www.adventist.org/documents/human-gene-therapy/>

11. <https://web.archive.org/web/20231207204242/https://www.adventist.org/documents/christian-principles-for-genetic-interventions/>

have been dropped from the list.¹² Given the issues of the time, those last two, in particular, might have found more application than ever before!

Other “Official Statements” have been retained, but modified over the years. Such has been the case with the “Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Mission statements are not universally popular. Plenty of people tend to think of them as an embellishment, a pretty ribbon tied on top of whatever the organization is actually doing. Others, of course, take them quite seriously, working from the premise that if you don’t really know what you’re trying to get done, there’s a good chance you never will. Perhaps you can use the present situation as a diagnostic test to see which camp you fit into. Did you even notice that the church’s mission statement has undergone one major overhaul, and a second minor “tweaking” since it was first announced in 2003?¹³

Finally, it should perhaps be pointed out that, while all of these have been published under the banner of “Official Statements,” there is some in-

12. Other no-longer-current “Official Statements” include:

Trademark—<https://web.archive.org/web/20141019053841/http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/trademark/>

A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music—<https://web.archive.org/web/20141019053341/http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/a-seventh-day-adventist-philosophy-of-music/>

Seventh-day Adventist Church Web Sites—<https://web.archive.org/web/20150724184923/http://www.adventist.org:80/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/seventh-day-adventist-church-web-sites/>

Employer and Employee Relationships—<https://web.archive.org/web/20141019194224/http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/employer-and-employee-relationships/>

Harassment—<https://web.archive.org/web/20131016045733/http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/harassment/6/>

Sexual Harassment—<https://web.archive.org/web/20131016045913/http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/sexual-harassment/6/>

Use of Tithe—<https://web.archive.org/web/20131016050108/http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/use-of-tithe/6/>

Abortion—<https://web.archive.org/web/20131016033542/http://www.adventist.org/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/o/abortion/6/>

Sabbath Observance—<https://web.archive.org/web/20150811034543/http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/o/sabbath-observance/12/>

Total Commitment to God—<https://web.archive.org/web/20150811034524/http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/o/total-commitment-to-god/12/>

13. Three versions of the Mission Statement:

2003—https://web.archive.org/web/20040514060500/http://www.adventist.org:80/beliefs/statements/main_stat1.html

2009—https://web.archive.org/web/20100706070444/http://adventist.org:80/beliefs/statements/main_stat1.html

2014—<https://gc.adventist.org/official-statements/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>

dication that they were not all viewed in the same light. There is a 300-page book published in 2010, for instance, which was described as presenting “all of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s official statements on various issues,”¹⁴ but it then divides them into “Position Statements, Guidelines, and Other Documents.”¹⁵

But enough general background on the “Official Statements.” The focus of the world church has been directed to the now-corrected version of the “Immunization” statement on the General Conference’s website. Why? Because during the height of the pandemic, the voice of the church uniformly declared that peer-reviewed scientific literature was one of the foundations for our “Health Emphasis,” and there were those who didn’t believe that to be true.

Yes, they were a minority. Yes, some of them held “pseudo-scientific” ideas. Yes, some of them were abrasive and even disrespectful at times. But according to the “approved” version of the “Official Statement”—they were *correct*.¹⁶

No matter that no one at any level of administrative authority or academic expertise recognized the confusion and, occasionally, suffering released on the church by the “preliminary” rather than the “approved” statement, it turned out that those who objected to classing “peer-reviewed scientific literature” as a basis for Adventist belief were correct. Of course, there may be those who think “peer-reviewed scientific literature” is an appropriate foundation for religious beliefs. That’s fair. And they should have opportunity to present their reasons before the General Conference in session, should they wish, so that the decision might be made by those appropriately delegated to decide matters of belief.

If it was a simple oversight failure that resulted in the widespread promulgation of the “preliminary” statement, it was one of epic proportions. The presentation of the “preliminary” statement was repeated many, many times in General Conference departmental publications, and echoed and re-echoed in Union Conference magazines, local Conference newsletters, and special purpose websites like the “Global Campmeeting Adventist Collective.” Adventist hospitals and universities released frequent public service announcements and distributed informational flyers which quoted the statement, ministries such as the Adventist Medical Evangelistic Network endorsed the position, and some Adventist medical personnel gained a degree of notoriety with the same message.

14. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160201032804/https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/>

15. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151016192656/http://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/Statements-2010-english.pdf>

16. That the specific point of the relationship was considered is obvious from the fact that that the wording was eliminated from the preliminary version before the final statement was approved. That said, let the record show that being factually correct is no excuse for unChristlike behavior and attitudes.

Perhaps the most consequential of those who noted both the statement and its 2021 “reaffirmation” were governments around the world. Not all governments care about one’s religious beliefs in the first place, but to have one’s religious belief wrongly defined in an “Official Statement” was a detriment that fell heavily on church members around the world.

On the whole—with only the exception of that “very small minority” who objected to the implied equivalence of Scripture and science, or who opposed the various shots and boosters for one reason or another—the church united on a philosophical platform that was never approved by either the unidentified “General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Public and Official Statements Committee”¹⁷ or the “General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee,”¹⁸ let alone by the General Conference session delegates.

Under the considerable pressures of the pandemic, when church members’ jobs—in both secular and church employment—came into question, this issue became a flash point. The minority of church members who were uncomfortable with the statement were increasingly seen as “out of step” with the mainstream of the church. It is a well developed human tendency to allow our expressions to creep toward the negative when describing someone with whom we disagree, so it’s no surprise that things were said and done “on both sides of the aisle” which sounded demeaning to the other side.

Christian charity was challenged; sometimes it carried the day, sometimes it did not. It’s hard to speak kindly of someone when you see them as advocates of a foolish course of action which runs great risk of harming not only themselves, but others as well. And don’t think that such perspectives were only held on one side of the issue! Within the “official” church, however, the prevailing narrative was solidly “pro-vaccine.”

Consider, for example, the February 2021 release from the Pacific Union Conference’s Church State Council. Presumably addressed to pastors, the memo presents “information which we think will be helpful for you when dealing with this issue.” The first point of this helpful information was probably obvious to those requesting help from the pastors, but the Council is to be commended for speaking honestly: “Please do inform church members that the teaching and policy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ‘pro’ vaccine.”

17. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150816074559/http://healthministries.com/articles/church-health-guidelines/immunization-guidelines>

18. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250704183936/https://gc.adventist.org/official-statements/immunization/>

That's fair. There will be a variety of opinions as to whether or not that position is wise, but if you believe something is beneficial, go ahead and promote it. Just don't try to deny later on that that's what you were doing!¹⁹

Skipping down to point number four: "We encourage those who screen these requests to ascertain the basis of one's religious objection. In many cases, the objection is not religious at all, but is based on health—the belief that the vaccine has a significant risk of harm."²⁰

That fourth point is fairly typical of a line of thought which began to emerge during the pandemic. The argument took a variety of forms, but the central point was the establishment of some hitherto unrecognized separation between "health" and "religion," or between "religious liberty" and "freedom of conscience." The technical language was applauded by some, and simply rejected by others. After all, isn't it the "risk of significant harm" to the Christian's health that lies at the base of Biblical temperance? Wouldn't "significant harm" to one's health rob God of His rightful service? Is there no "religion" in that?

But time passed. The pandemic waned. Boosters multiplied to the point that almost no one kept up to date. Opinions—including *legal* opinions²¹—began to shift as some of the claims for the vaccine fell back to earth. No, vaccination didn't prevent the spread of the virus. No, the risk of the disease to young children was so low that vaccination simply was not indicated. And the idea of exposing women of child bearing age to a medical agent which did, in fact, affect the reproductive organs has been increasingly seen as an unwarranted risk.

The "COVID-19 mRNA vaccine harms research collection,"²² for instance, lists more than 750 peer-reviewed studies which found significant harms associated with the mRNA vaccinations. Given that these studies are the result of human scholarship, it's likely that some of them are inaccurate. It's even possible that some of them are intentionally dishonest, but that has been a common enough feature of science for the last few hundred years as to be no particular surprise.

Still, there are some who can easily dismiss 750 peer-reviewed studies, because they believe *other* studies. Are they "anti-science" or even "conspiracy theorists" because they hold a different opinion? And those who might be alarmed at these particular studies, and feel that the balance of evidence favors a wait-and-see approach before accepting the bribes (everything from free pizza to lottery tickets to college

19. Some church leaders have, unfortunately and unsuccessfully, tried to deny this. The saddest example of this is here: <https://youtu.be/DrjVeAFzonA>

20. <https://tinyurl.com/ynx8bym9>

21. This to the chagrin of those who had accepted point number six of the Church State Council's memo: "We believe these mandates will be upheld in the courts." In fact, in many countries, they have not been upheld, and in many cases significant sums have been awarded to litigants who have sued employers.

22. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250716220533/https://zenodo.org/records/15787612>

tuition discounts), or acquiescing to the pressure, threats, restrictions, and ridicule—are these people to be labeled idiots? Have they no right to believe they can render God better service through depending on His gifts and instruction rather than the ingenious creations of massive (and historically dishonest²³) corporations?

Considerations of this sort, blended with concerns about the church's reluctance—some would say, “absolute refusal”—to engage in open discussion about members' concerns, fueled exasperation and distrust on both sides. Elder Ted Wilson, still the president of the General Conference at the time, put it this way in speaking to the delegates at the 2025 General Conference session:

“We attempted to try to answer some of those questions back in 2022. In fact, questions and answers were provided, et cetera, for people. Unfortunately, people like to twist and misuse anything you say. In fact, it might even happen with what I'm saying now.

“So, we stopped trying to explain. We instead focused on the mission of the church, on evangelism, on gaining everyone towards a particular goal that would enhance our magnificent message and not engage in debate with those—and I have to tell you, in my opinion, it is a very small minority of the Church.”²⁴

Surely all parties can understand the frustration of trying to reason with someone who seems to be only focused on “winning the argument.” What's harder to understand is that “the other guy” may be just as frustrated as you are. In fact, the odds are very good that he thinks you're just about as frustrating as you think he is!²⁵

For a church, for members bound by ties of allegiance to God and His cause, this kind of frustration is dangerous. No matter how justified your frustration

23. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-largest-health-care-fraud-settlement-its-history> is one example of many.

24. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250716215936/https://session.adventistreview.org/session-business/transcripts-will-be-posted-here/>

25. This was, unfortunately, well illustrated in the 2025 General Conference session. On the first day of proceedings, when Elder Wilson advised against including the Immunization statement on the agenda, he spoke with commendable self-control. He was, remember, dealing with people, and with a whole situation, which was extremely frustrating. We might well each ask ourselves if we would have been as restrained, dealing with a situation we honestly believed was characterized by: “a tremendous amount of misinformation,” “a highly misinformed view,” assertions that appeared “unequivocally false,” critics who “twisted the wording, twisted the intent of the General Conference,” “information that has been shared by some people has been erroneous,” people who “like to twist and misuse anything you say,” “conspiracy approaches,” and a “complete fallacy” promoted by “a very small minority of people within the 23-plus million church members who have continued to agitate about erroneous and misleading information.”

Those who have found themselves on “the other side” of this discussion might be quick to conclude that church leadership was either dishonest or incompetent. But surely dishonest leaders would never have drawn attention to the glaring failure of the church website. And, as to incompetence, we would do well to recall that leaders, too, can be misled. No less of an Adventist role model than William Miller rejected the Sabbath, but Ellen White tells us that “others led him to this; others must account for it.” (*Early Writings*, 258)

may be, those ties of membership are not dependent on your frustration level! There are many topics on which we must agree to disagree, and there are some topics on which we are called to stand unflinchingly for truth, even reproving error if need be.

Every difference of opinion, every source frustration, fits in some way into one or the other of these two categories, and any confusion as to which, is a disaster in the making. This is exactly why matters of church discipline, from admonition, to censure and loss of church office, to loss of membership, are entrusted entirely to the local church, to those who best know the individual and the circumstances.

Elder Wilson spoke of 2022 as a time when church administration “stopped trying to explain.” One might assume that this happened before the 2022 General Conference session. This seems like a reasonable conclusion, given the cancellation of Pastor Conrad Vine’s delegate status, and the strong and coordinated appeal Elder Wilson made on behalf of the three top administrators of the church when a motion—backed by more than 25,000 members’ signatures—was made to discuss the 2015 “Official Statement” and the 2021 “Reaffirmation Statement.” His encouragement that the statements *not* be discussed won the vote, but his position that such matters were inappropriate for a General Conference session left many unanswered questions and failed to satisfy many church members’ concerns.²⁶

Following that General Conference session, pressures brought to bear upon both the board of Adventist Frontier Missions (of which Pastor Vine was the president) and the Berrien Springs Village Church (of which he was a member), and the continued dismissal of issues without explanation, have led to an increased level of scrutiny. What, for instance, is the motivation behind the strong commitment to the 2015 “Official Statement” on Immunization?

Or, put another way, what would be the negative impact of simply dropping the statement? If no detriment can be identified, then the statement serves no positive purpose, and should be removed as a simple matter of de-cluttering church policy. Other “Official Statements” have been.

26. The idea he shared at that time was that it was inappropriate for General Conference session time to be spent on such matters. But matters of denominational belief are the highest concern of the General Conference session. Indeed, they can only be decided by General Conference session delegates. As to whether or not “Official Statements” fall into the category of “Beliefs,” see the URL’s given in footnotes 7, 8, and 9. Currently, the [Adventist.org](https://www.adventist.org) website locates the “Official Statements” link in a drop-down menu under the Heading, “What We Believe.”

How can anyone speak authoritatively for the church as a whole, without allowing the specific mechanism established to represent the church as a whole to have its say? Even those who feel that such a role has been granted to the General Conference Administrative Committee would have a difficult time denying the full church the right to review such pronouncements. Such a concentration of unchallengeable power is precisely the kind of excess the Spirit of Prophecy has warned against over and over again. For more on this topic, you may wish to consider the PDF booklet, [*For Such a Time*](#).

In the vacuum created when church administration “stopped trying to explain,” others have looked for explanations in the denomination’s own records. Elder Wilson referred to this July 3, 2025 when he once again appealed to the delegates to *not* discuss the “Official Statements”:

“I would urge us not to be involved in conspiracy approaches, even to the point that somehow the General Conference and the world Church are receiving instructions and are under the thumb or the direction of the United Nations. That, to me, is a complete fallacy. We have no instructions from the United Nations. We have no directives. We have nothing. We are not in contact with the United Nations, except we have a representative that works with other non-government organizations to help in humanitarian areas, to help in health challenges, and to help in religious liberty aspects.”²⁷

This is a factual matter that might be conclusively resolved by the presentation of the appropriate facts. Unfortunately, the facts available to the average church member (and General Conference session delegates, as well) are meager, confusing, and inconclusive. Bear in mind that “facts” are not exactly the same as administrative assertions. Even administrators can be mistaken.

Elder Wilson’s denial that the United Nations issues “instructions” and “directives” to the church is reassuring, but far from completely so. There is no record that the nations surrounding Israel pressed them to establish a monarchy. No, it appears from the Biblical account that it was their own desire and determination which led them to be “like all the nations.” Which leads back to the unanswered question of motivation.

It should be noted that “motivation” is an element in the decision making process which is particularly difficult to assess. It is appropriate, then, that no one assert that of which they cannot be certain. But the questions remain, until someone will answer them by way of factual evidence.

Why, for instance is the United Nations mentioned eleven times, in nine of the fifty-nine “Official Statements”? Were the statements on “Drugs,” “Ban on Sales of Assault Weapons to Civilians,” “Caring for the Environment,” “Gambling,” and “Global Poverty” designed to help our church members, or to impress others looking on? Did our second and third statements on “peace” move the world any closer to that unattainable goal than the first statement did? Or did “Environment” add anything of importance to the earlier “Caring for the Environment” statement?

And is there a reason that many of the topics look more like progressive political hot button items than the kind of thing church members might actually

27. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250716215936/https://session.adventistreview.org/session-business/transcripts-will-be-posted-here/>

discuss over potluck? There may be good and worthy responses for all such questions... but without someone going to the trouble of providing them, the odds that church members will understand look very slim.

Elder Sam Neves—formerly in the General Conference Communications department but recently elected to serve in the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department—said it well in a press conference at the recent General Conference session: “Sometimes you do need to have some serious conversations in your family.”²⁸

In his short speech announcing the correction of the Immunization statement, Elder Wilson noted the incongruity of the wrong wording having persisted on the church’s website for ten years. He acknowledged that, “How could that have happened?” is a good question. His next sentence contained a gem of truth that we might consider. He said, “We just have to take the responsibility.”

Too often we think of “taking the responsibility” as receiving some form of punishment. The world does that, quite a lot; the church, hopefully not as much.

But there is a gem there. Often overlooked, but there nonetheless. It is this: the basic element of responsibility is providing an appropriate response. God’s people are not quick to punish, but they do want to be heard, and an appropriate response to concerns expressed—while often time consuming—is the basis for mutual trust and co-operation. It is important that we *not* stop trying to explain, and to do that effectively, we must first listen enough to understand the questions and concerns. This is the groundwork of “responsibility.” It is not unreasonable, and it is certainly attainable within God’s church.

It would be pleasant to end on that happy note, but history has a cautionary tale that might serve us well just now. The saying is that events never repeat exactly, but history does rhyme, and barely a century ago there was a situation, a crisis, that was arguably more dire than what we see today, and yet sufficiently parallel that it has lessons to teach.

When Germany entered World War I, the need for soldiers was a given. In response to that call, church leaders of the European Division, the East German Union, and the Saxon Conference capitulated. The Union president wrote to the flock: “We have bound ourselves together in the defense of the Fatherland, and under these circumstances we will also bear arms on Saturday (Sabbath).”²⁹

The majority of church members apparently found good sense in that, while about two thousand objected. For this, they were disfellowshipped. Of these, an

28. <https://youtu.be/VmhTVKLajPo>

29. <https://web.archive.org/web/20250716220144/https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=gHBV>, footnote 11

unknown number of young men (eighty?) were executed by army firing squad. From this, the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement was born.

Regrettably, but quite understandably from a human point of view, those who had lost loved ones felt a great wrong had been done. Those who had tolerated the action preferred not to talk about it.

The situation was... *awkward*. Neither side was perfectly Christlike in their handling of the situation, and there was blame enough to spread around.³⁰

A century later, it's hard to say how much it all matters anymore. Jesus has not returned, but there are two denominations, still today.

May God bless His people now, in the hour of their need.

30. <https://assets.eud.adventist.org/response-materials/guilt-and-failure-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church-regarding-the-outbreak-of-the-fi>

Appendix

The situation with the publication of the “Official Statement” on Immunization is complicated since both the Health Ministries web page (“Church Health Guidelines”) and the Adventist.org web page (Official Statements Guidelines) first carried the “preliminary” version of the 2015 Statement; by March 4 for the former³¹ and March 20 for the latter.³² In both cases it was dated March 2, well before its final approval in April. On the Health Ministries site the statement was said to have been “reviewed by the Ellen G. White Estate, Biblical Research Institute, and the General Conference Office of General Council.” On the main church website, there was no attribution.

This version was soon replaced with the “approved” statement on the Health Ministries site, no later than August 16, 2015.³³ At that point the statement was described as “reviewed and approved April 13, 2015 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Public and Official Statements Committee.”

But apparently the memo didn’t get passed around. The authoritative listing of these “Official Statements” on the church’s main website continued to display the preliminary version until at least May 9, 2019.³⁴ Then, for some unknown reason the adventist.org website’s listing of “Official Statements” failed to include “Immunization” until sometime between October 20 and 30, 2021,³⁵ despite featuring other, later, statements.³⁶ And yet, more than six years after the statement was “reviewed and approved,” it was still the incorrect preliminary version which went up on the official denominational website.

31. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150816074559/http://healthministries.com/articles/church-health-guidelines/immunization-guidelines>

Please remember that the exact dates for most of the website changes considered here are impossible to determine from the Internet Archive. In most cases, it is only possible to establish “boundary dates,” from the first and last times the web page or some particular piece of content was saved by the Archive’s “web crawler.”

32. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150320171154/http://www.adventist.org:80/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/>

33. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150816074559/http://healthministries.com/articles/church-health-guidelines/immunization-guidelines>

34. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190509161112/https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/-/immunization/>

35. <https://web.archive.org/web/20211020014239/https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20211030032121/https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/immunization/>

36. Four such subsequent statements were included:

Statement on Transgenderism—2017

Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—2018

Statement on the Biblical View of Unborn Life and Its Implications for Abortion—2019

One Humanity: A Human Relations Statement Addressing Racism, Casteism, Tribalism, and Ethnocentrism—2020

<https://web.archive.org/web/20211020014239/https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/>

Meanwhile, the Health Ministries' "Church Health Statements and Guidelines" page was removed from their website sometime after February 19, 2020.³⁷ A new "Resources > Links" page appeared by September 2020. It featured "teaser" portions of each statement, but had a "Read More" button that took the reader to the adventist.org website for the full statement. But that was still the preliminary version of the statement, and now dated April 15, 2015.

In September 2023, when the statement finally appeared on the gc.adventist.org website, it was the wrong one,³⁸ and it remained that way for the next thirty-three months. In June of 2024, the Health Ministries' redirect was switched over to gcadventist.org. For thirteen months that was still the preliminary version. Only after Elder Wilson made his public correction, on the night of July 3, 2025, was the "approved" text displayed on the General Conference website. Since then, this means that the reader sees "on peer-reviewed scientific literature" in the teaser text on the Health Ministries page, but "is informed by" on gc.adventist.org.³⁹



37. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200219020113/http://healthministries.com/articles/church-health-guidelines>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20200216133650/http://healthministries.com/articles/church-health-guidelines/immunization-guidelines>

The "Church Health Guidelines" page (with the correct statement) was removed from the Health Ministries website in early 2020. Its general function was eventually taken up by a new page, with a similar title. The Health Ministries website included the "GC Health Statements and Guidelines" web page on or before the fifth of March, 2020.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240305223800/https://www.healthministries.com/gc-health-statements-and-guidelines/>

Ironically, this new web page did not retain the correct text of the previous "Church Health Guidelines" page. Instead, it used just a portion of the incorrect "preliminary" version of the statement that was current on the General Conference website at the time.

38. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230928084139/https://gc.adventist.org/official-statements/immunization/>

39. As of July 17, 2025