

**COMPETITIVE INTER-SCHOOL SPORTS: Study, Findings, Calls,
Resources:
Short F.A.Q. (Frequently Asked Questions) Information**

This is only intended as a short FAQ in supplementation of the larger paper.

1. **Question:** Why do you say you support the NAD when they have not faithfully upheld their own Working Policy?

Answer: If you read the paper carefully, you will see that while we plainly state that "We believe that on the issue of inter-school competitive sports the NAD has not exercised its authority and responsibility to uphold its own and the General Conference's Working Policy within its geographical territory" (p. 9), we also indicate that in spite of the apparently inert behavior of the NAD, we support their now making a fresh move to carry out the existing Working Policy. Neither the system nor the policy is the problem; it has been a matter of ineffective leadership. Whatever the reasons for this in the past, now that the people of the North American Division have an opportunity to show that they support the NAD, and NAD leadership will become more courageous. We prefer to redeem rather than condemn.

2. **Question:** For a single local church to do such a thing—studying and then releasing its paper like this—seems to encourage congregationalism; does that bother you?

Answer: We oppose congregationalism. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world church. We are bound to the faith of our brothers and sisters, whether they are in Kenya or Ghana or Tasmania or Mongolia or Pittsburgh. Far from being an expression of congregational independence, our paper and its findings *supports* the current working Policy of the General Conference and of the North American Division. So this is a move toward unity rather than away from it. This is a local church standing up and saying, "We shall be faithful to the trust of our brothers and sisters." Thus, our move is anti-congregationalist, and harmonizes with General Conference Working Policy B 05 25 Structural Stability (See p. 66).

Readers should recall that our denomination is built upon a representative organizational model. It is quite thoroughly in order that when a local church has a concern they study it out and share their findings with their sister churches and with their leaders. Perhaps local churches need to assist some of our leaders in this way more often to strengthen them in their work of upholding the distinctive doctrines and practices that make us the people we are.

3. **Question:** Why does the document have such a vigorous tone toward our leaders? Cannot you write a more respectful paper?

Answer: If we did not respect our leaders, we would ask them to resign instead of trusting them to reform. Actually, the final version of the paper has much more refined language than earlier drafts. Respect is earned. Respect comes when those in authority act responsibly. Is the following, from the Preface of the paper a sharp tone?

It is not our desire to suggest that those whose ideas and policies we may disagree with are willfully operating in opposition to God's order. Administrators, physical education teachers, principals, coaches, and parents have invested untold hours and energies to provide for our young people that which no doubt is intended for their good. We make this our starting point, seeking to believe that the motives of all these are sincere. The students, the players themselves, we understand to be driven by what they feel are right motives in their contests and athletic competition. Even those responsible for drafting and voting the SDA-HPERA Guidelines we would like to think have sought to create what they thought was a document that their expectation was, would help Seventh-day Adventist young people.

Therefore we wish to thank the reader ahead of time for also accepting our motives in presenting our findings in as positive a spirit as we can considering the data, in harmony with our intention of aiding others in understanding the source and logic behind our own conviction that competitive inter-school athletics is against the counsel of God. (p. 6).

4. **Question:** Has Mentone itself acted to remove itself from the academy constituency that was in violation of GC and NAD Working Policy and competitive sports? You aren't asking other churches to do what you yourself have not done, are you?

Answer: Yes, we have voted to exit that constituency, and no, we are not asking anyone to do what we ourselves are not doing. In separate actions specific to our own academy, we voted on March 28, 2004 to withdraw from its constituency. These actions were forwarded immediately to the academy administration as well as to our own conference superintendent of education and conference president. We kept these actions separate so as to minimize embarrassment to the academy by seeking to eliminate mention of it in the main text of the paper. Our goal is to reform, not exasperate. Who knows? Possibly, at a later date after studying our materials, even this academy will change its practice and come into harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

5. **Question:** Isn't it a bit high-handed of your church to say that the children cannot play ball?

Answer: We have said no such thing. We stand with Ellen White, who said "I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball..." (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 322). What we have *done* is indicated that we cannot support the continued practice of inter-school competitive sports in Seventh-day Adventist schools.

6. **Question:** Are there some other resources available online on this topic?

Answer: Yes, here are some more:

—Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick published a sermon this fall titled "Jesus, Competitive Sports, and an End-Time Prophet." The following three items from that presentation are available:

Text:

<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/documents/sermons/sermons-kir/kir-jcsetp.php3>

Audio:

<http://www.mentonesda.org/audio/s-kl01nov03-1.mp3>

Accompanying handout:

<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/pdf/cstimeline.pdf>

—Mentone Church's paper, "COMPETITIVE INTER-SCHOOL SPORTS REVISITED: Study, Findings, Calls, Resources" itself contains numerous URLs that link to various online documents pertaining to the topic.

—Additionally, we noticed with interest that two other Seventh-day Adventist resources have recently been published. Apparently God is working in this, for so far as we know, none of the three parties at the time that they were preparing their documents, knew that the others were also preparing work on the same topic until they were published!

—Hope International, in their magazine, *Our Firm Foundation*, February 2004 issue published Harvey Steck's article, "Winning (and Losing) in the Courts," available as a PDF format download at:

http://hopeint.org/NewHome/Our_Firm_Foundation/WebPDF/OFF1902w.pdf, pp. 4-8.

—*Adventists Affirm* just published an article by Christopher Blake, titled "Will There Be Competitive Games in Heaven?" in their Vol. 17, No. 3 issue (Fall 2003), pp. 12-14, which just arrived in our mailbox a few days ago.

7. **Question:** Isn't competitive sports just another hot button issue that gets Adventists distracted from their mission of evangelizing the lost? Why did you spend so much time working on this paper?

Answer: The truth of the matter is that we would far rather spend our time in evangelism and working for the lost rather than dealing with internal issues that face us today. In fact, we have continued our outreach efforts simultaneous to working on this project.

Still we must recognize that God calls upon His church to fulfill its duties in making sure that its own house is in order. Many Bible examples come to mind. Take for example, the story of Israel in fulfilling their God-given mission to conquer the land of Canaan. When one of its members disobeyed God's explicit command, all mission efforts of the Church were halted until the internal problem was solved. In the cases of Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others, God's leaders were commissioned to give calls of reform within the

Church. Responsible calls for reform serve to strengthen the mission of the church, provided the church follows where God leads. Complacency and neutrality are the bane of God's church in these last days. It is only when the church ignores or rebels against God's truth that the church's mission suffers.

In fact, the compromises of the past have contributed to a distortion of the message that the church is charged with delivering to the lost. It is our firm desire to restore the purity of that message so that the church may proclaim it with renewed vigor, power, and enthusiasm; both by precept and by example.

8. Question: Can I share these documents with others who might be interested?

Answer: Yes indeed. The Mentone Church is freely sharing this document with the world church. Download and print out as many copies as you need! In fact, for more information about how this document can be especially helpful in bringing the North American Division into harmony with the world Seventh-day Adventist Church, read the "GreatControversy.org Open Letter."