

The Controversy In Newport Over the Teachings of Jeff Pippenger

From the Leaders of the Newport WA

Seventh-day Adventist Church

(February 2012)

Why this paper?

For many months our local church has experienced conflict and division because certain teachings advocated by Jeff Pippenger and his supporters have been earnestly (and sincerely) presented to our members, and even to first-time visitors, as being part of a Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Message *from God*. We have even been told that if we don't believe these teachings *we are resisting the Holy Spirit and are in danger of losing our souls*. Honestly, such a situation demands that we take a decided position, on one side or the other. We simply can't remain neutral. To begin with, we want to affirm our belief in the latter rain (Rev. 18:1), in "present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12), and in life or death matters. But we also believe this inspired warning from Ellen White:

We are to pray for divine enlightenment, but at the same time we should be careful how we receive everything termed new light. We must beware lest, under cover of searching for new truth, Satan shall divert our minds from Christ and the special truths for this time. **I have been shown** that it is the device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation. This is made the absorbing theme, the "present truth..." 1 SM 159*

The enemy is at work, to divide, to scatter. Now as never before he will make determined efforts to scatter our forces. 1 SM 87

[* All emphasis inside the quotations used throughout this paper is supplied]

Based on the above counsel to "be careful how we receive everything termed new light," we closely examined (see below) the major issues. As a result, we concluded that "the enemy" has indeed been "at work" to "divide" our local church, and that as leaders, it was our duty to take appropriate action. So, on January 25, 2012, we called a meeting (explained below). Less than two days later, we were informed by someone living outside of our area that there were "already thousands of individuals (literally thousands) who are aware of the ongoing controversy taking place in the Newport church." We assume that this person is a supporter of Mr. Pippenger's views, and that the "thousands" he mentions are too. This same person then requested that we provide "Bible and SOP... or even Church Manual" support for our actions. This is a fair request, thus this paper. It is time to clarify our position publicly.

We Affirm

First, we affirm: That sinners are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not works (Eph. 2:8,9), that we shall *not* be "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23), our confidence that God led William Miller and his associates in the early 1800s (GC 368), that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was established by God to give the Three Angel's Messages to the world (Rev. 14:6-12), our confidence in "the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10), and that our church's mission "is to carry the gospel to the world" (AA 9). When the Seventh-day Adventist Church was first organized, "*Light was given by His Spirit that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church*" (TM 26, 1902). "Again and again the angel has said to me, 'Press together, press together, press together'" (Ev 102).

Our attitude

We do not enjoy controversy. It is also not our work to judge anyone's character, or to decide destinies. Nor do we disagree with everything Jeff Pippenger and his supporters teach. We also share their earnest desire that every Seventh-day Adventist delve deeper into our prophetic foundations and prepare for Christ's coming. Truly, we hope to meet every reader of this paper in heaven. That said, we also disagree with many of Mr. Pippenger teachings that we consider to be speculative, that is, without solid biblical support.

Four issues

This document is not a comprehensive analysis of The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message, but here we will address four key areas that have created controversy in our church.

1) The pioneer view of "the daily" (Dan. 8:12) has been promoted by Jeff Pippenger supporters as part of a Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Message from God. To clarify, we have not taken a position stating that the pioneer view is wrong, nor do we have any burden to oppose those who think they were right. Nor will we ever *forbid* honest belief and inquiry either way. *But we see a larger issue.* In the early 1900s, a fierce conflict arose within Adventism over the correct interpretation of "the daily." In response, Ellen White wrote:

Confusion has resulted, and the minds of some of our brethren have been *diverted* from the thoughtful consideration that should have been given to the work that the Lord has directed should be done at this time in our cities. *This has been pleasing to the great enemy of our work.*
1 SM 167

Even more pointedly, the Lord's messenger wrote this about "the daily" controversy:

It has been presented to me that this is not a subject of vital importance. *I am instructed that our brethren are making a mistake in magnifying the importance of the difference in the views that are held.* I cannot consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. **The true meaning of "the daily" is not to be made a test question.** I now ask that my ministering brethren shall not make use of my writings in their arguments regarding this question ["the daily"]; *for I have had no instruction on the point under discussion,* and I see no need for the controversy. Regarding this matter under present conditions, silence is eloquence. The enemy of our work is pleased when **a subject of minor importance** can be used to divert the minds of our brethren *from the great questions that should be the burden of our message.* **As this is not a test question,** I entreat of my brethren *that they shall not allow the enemy to triumph by having it treated as such.* 1 SM 164

As Newport leaders, we believe this counsel and refuse to allow Satan to triumph in our church.

2) The idea that probation closes early for the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the commencement of the Sunday Law has been promoted by Jeff Pippenger supporters as part of a Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Message from God. This teaching is *not clearly taught* in the Bible or SOP. Yes, "judgment begins at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17), and yes, Daniel 11:40-45 portrays events leading to the close of probation, but we see only *one* general "close of probation" in Scripture (see Daniel 12:1; Rev. 7:1-3; 22:11) taking place at one solemn moment *after* (not *when*) the mark of the beast is enforced, and only *after* every soul, including Seventh-day Adventists, have faced this "test" and made a settled decision. Notice carefully:

The time is not far distant when *the test* will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged *upon us.* 5T 81

Thus when "the mark" (Sunday law) hits "every soul," including "us" (SDAs), this is when "the test" comes. In school, a test comes first, then performance, and then a grade is given. No teacher has ever pronounced a grade when a test is first passed out! But this is what Jeff Pippenger and his supporters seem to be saying when they warn that when the Sunday Law is first enforced, *then* probation closes for the Adventist Church. Ellen White disagrees. In 5T 81 she wrote that the enforcing of the mark is "the test" for "us," *not* the grade, and that the close of probation comes after all have made their choice.

When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth...An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; ***the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received "the seal of the living God."*** **Then** Jesus ceases his intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts his hands, and with a loud voice says, "It is done;" and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as he makes the solemn announcement: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; ... [Revelation 22:11.] **Every case has been decided for life or death.**" GC 613

It's logical to conclude that if probation closes early for the Adventist Church at the Sunday law, then surely the "righteous" would know about it. But Ellen White wrote:

The righteous and the wicked will still be living upon the earth in their mortal state—men will be planting and building, eating and drinking, ***all unconscious that the final, irrevocable decision has been pronounced in the sanctuary above.*** GC 491 (1911)

Notice carefully,

When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in all ages have professed to be followers of Christ have been examined and decided, ***then, and not till then, probation will close,*** and the door of mercy will be shut. GC 428 (1888)

Thus probation *cannot* close until every soul, including those living after the Sunday law is enforced, makes a final decision for life or death. Finally,

...there is no command for anyone to search the Scriptures in order to ascertain, if possible, *when probation will close.* ***God has no such message for any mortal lips.*** RH Oct. 9, 1894

God has not revealed to us the time when this message will close, or *when probation will have an end.* 1 SM 191

Thus Ellen White is clear that no one knows, will know, or should ever teach, exactly when probation closes—which would include the idea that "Probation closes for the Adventist Church at the Sunday Law"—and they certainly shouldn't make such views a test. The important thing is to be ready today.

3) The idea that a "2520 year prophecy" exists in Leviticus 26 has also been promoted by Jeff Pippenger supporters as part of a Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Message from God. We acknowledge that many Millerites believed the 2520 theory, that it was listed on their 1843 and 1850 "charts," and that Ellen White stated that the Lord directed those charts. *We believe this.* Yet we also know that post-1844 "Adventists" who became "Seventh-day Adventists" not only laid aside some ideas as unbiblical, but also accepted new ones that in 1844 they did not hold (such as the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary truth, and the non-immortality of the soul).

On May 21, 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized. The day before, on May 20, delegates chosen to elect the General Conference commissioned James White to create two new charts: one on the prophecies to *reflect the church's advancing views*, and the other on the Law of God. In August 1863, James set to work, finishing both charts by October. Three months later, on January 26, 1864, in his official capacity as Review editor, James published a Review article that revealed (through his use of the third person plural, "We") *the official position of the newly organized Seventh-day Adventist Church about "the 2520 theory."* "Is there any prophetic period brought to view at all in Leviticus xxvi? **We** claim that there is not," James White wrote. In the same Review article, the new charts were advertised for sale.

Of deep significance to us is that Ellen White was fully aware of James' Review article, of the Church's official position, and of the new charts. How did she relate to this? First, she never protested either the article, or the new charts. Second, throughout her entire subsequent writing ministry she never specifically mentioned a "2520" prophecy even once, including in *The Great Controversy*, her most comprehensive work on Millerite history. Not only that, *but she actively promoted both of the later charts.*

We shall not hold our peace upon this subject...Send in your orders...we will send you a package of books containing four volumes of Spiritual Gifts, How to Live, Appeal to Youth, Appeal to Mothers, Sabbath Readings, and the two large charts, with Key of Explanation. 1T 689 (1868)

To Seventh-day Adventist church members she wrote:

You can hang up the charts, and show them the truth, as it is there illustrated. RH March 29, 1870

These statements reveal: 1) That the “2520 theory” was never part of “the foundation” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception, 2) Contrary to what we have often heard Jeff Pippenger and his supporters claim, *Ellen White strongly endorsed and supported the revised 1863 prophetic chart.*

The last quote above was written in 1870. Three years later, she also wrote:

If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God. 3T 281 (1873)

Based on this warning, we conclude that the omission of “the 2520” from official Seventh-day Adventist doctrine was **not** “an emergency” or “religious crisis” at all, as some have claimed. If it was, Ellen White would have protested vehemently! *But she didn't.* Look closely,

The warning has come: *Nothing is to be allowed to come in that will disturb the foundation of the faith* upon which we have been building ***ever since*** the message came in 1842, 1843, and 1844. I was in this message, and ever since I have been standing before the world, true to the light that God has given us. ***We*** do not propose to *take our feet off the platform* on which they were placed as day by day we sought the Lord with earnest prayer, seeking for light. Do you think that I could give up the light that God has given? 8T 297

Again, the Seventh-day Adventist Church omitted the 2520 from its official doctrine and revised prophetic chart in 1863-64. If this disturbed our foundation, Ellen White would have said something. *But she didn't.* But she did write that “we [Seventh-day Adventists] have been building” on “the foundation” since 1842-1844, and that “we” (plural) never took “our feet” (plural) off that “platform”! Therefore, contrary to what The Jeff Pippenger Movement teaches, we conclude that the 2520 is not part of either “the foundation” or “the platform” Ellen White was referring to.

What then is our true “foundation”? Here's the answer:

The scripture which above all others had been both ***the foundation*** and central pillar of the Advent faith was the declaration, “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” [Daniel 8:14.]. GC 409

Thus “*the foundation*” of “the Advent faith” is *Daniel 8:14*. What about “the platform”?

God is leading a people out from the world upon ***the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus...*** CET 201

Ultimately,

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, *which is Jesus Christ.*” 1 Corinthians 3:11. “Upon this rock,” said Jesus, “I will build My church.” ... *That Rock is Himself*,—His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church ***built upon this foundation***, the gates of hell shall not prevail. DA 413

The primary “foundation” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Christ Himself. Yet we in Newport have been told that if we don't believe every detail of the Millerite charts, including the 2520, we are “off the foundation” and may be lost, *regardless of our faith in Jesus.*

One Jeff Pippenger supporter who frequently attends our church even wrote a parable about the Millerite charts and us. Describing us as “Foolish—Faithless” who have chosen to following the Serpent, he wrote:

...and so the clan represented by **Foolish—Faithless**, continued on their journey towards the Promise Land... God had lovingly provided 2 tables laden with all kinds of fruit to nourish them as they went. Each fruit supplied nutrients not found in the others. **It was necessary to eat of all the fruit to reach their destination and inherit Eternal Life.** The tables of fruit were mentioned by Habakkuk and by Ellen White (emphasis added).

The “2 tables” represent the 1843 and 1850 Millerite charts, and “all kinds of fruit” represent every teaching on them, including the 2520. Then the parable says it is “necessary to eat of all the fruit” to “inherit Eternal Life.” Because we have considered (and still do) the writer of this parable to be our Christian friend, its contents sadden us, but also prove our point. “Accept the 2520, or lose heaven” is part of The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message. *In the sight of God, we reject this conclusion as unbiblical, and are even forced to view it as “another gospel”* (read Gal. 1:6-9 and 1 Cor. 15:1-3).

Additionally, another prominent advocate of the 2520 put it like this:

To say that she [Ellen White] doesn’t endorse the 2520 **is to oppose her prophetic gift**, but also you must reject the light that Gabriel revealed to Miller. Where did Gabriel get his understanding of prophecy from? Jesus Christ and God the Father! So now we must call into question the Father and the Son’s knowledge of prophecy. ***If Miller was wrong about the 2520, then Sister White is a false prophet, Gabriel is an angel from the bottomless pit, and God the Father and God the Son are false gods!***

In essence, this statement says that if we reject the 2520, we therefore reject Ellen White’s endorsement of the chart, which means we are rejecting not only her prophetic gift entirely, but falsely accusing the Father and His Son! But what about the other quotes from Ellen White’s pen supporting the 1863 chart, and about the need for unity? *What about those quotes?* And how can the writer say, “To say that she doesn’t endorse the 2520 is to oppose her prophetic gift,” when Ellen White *never* specifically mentioned the 2520 in the first place? So we ask, who is really opposing the Spirit of Prophecy? We reject the above statement as extreme, unreasonable, divisive and unsupported by any direct statement from Ellen White at all.

4) Rejection of legitimate church authority. It’s no secret that Jeff Pippenger and his supporters are now earnestly promoting Points 1-3 to Seventh-day Adventists and calling them “light” from the Holy Spirit that we must believe or risk losing our souls. *But the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not accept these teachings*, and as a result, our leaders are often unjustly accused of being under satanic influence in these matters, just like the above parable accused us leaders in Newport of listening to the sly Serpent.

Just to clarify, we have no illusions that Seventh-day Adventist leaders are perfect. Nevertheless, we in Newport are greatly concerned by what we see as a general trend of hostility toward Seventh-day Adventist leadership and a spirit of divisiveness being fostered by The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message which violates clear Bible and SOP counsel. While we have not heard Jeff Pippenger or his supporters explicitly state that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon, we believe that many of the principles below surely apply:

Those who have proclaimed the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon, have made use of the Testimonies in giving their position a seeming support; *but why is it that they did not present that which for years has been the burden of my message—the unity of the church? Why did they not quote the words of the angel, “Press together, press together, press together”?* Why did they not repeat the admonition and state the principle, that ***“in union there is strength, in division there is weakness?”***

It is such messages as these men have borne that divide the church, and put us to shame before the enemies of truth; and in such messages is plainly revealed the specious working of the great deceiver; who would hinder the church from attaining unto perfection in unity. These teachers follow the sparks of their own kindling, move according to their own independent judgment,

and cumber the truth with false notions and theories. *They refuse the counsel of their brethren, and press on in their own way until they become just what Satan would desire to have them— unbalanced in mind.* TM 56

Our Newport church is a member of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and we believe it is right to seek and to respect the counsel of conference officers. The New Testament plainly enjoins the need to “set in order the things that are wanting” (Titus 1:5), the importance of properly proved and ordained (1 Tim. 3; 5:22) “pastors” (Eph. 4:8), “elders” (Titus 1:6) and “deacons” (1 Tim. 3:12), and the necessity of church leadership (read Acts 15). “Obey them that have the rule over them, and submit yourselves” (Heb. 13:17), wrote Paul. Jesus Christ longs to see humility, love, mutual respect, and unity among His followers (John 13:35; 17:11; Col. 3:12-14).

Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time *when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God!* We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor. *License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time.* 9T 258.

Here “the testimony of Jesus,” which is “the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10) reports not only that “thorough organization is essential,” but also that is to be “*the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God!*”

I warn the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be careful how you receive every new notion and those who claim to have great light. *The character of their work seems to be to accuse and to tear down.* 2 SM 69

In Newport, we are not opposed to “great light,” and always hope to receive it (after testing it), but when the work of those promoting such light “seems to be to accuse and to tear down,” there is then legitimate cause for great concern. “By their fruits,” Jesus said, “you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). Below are seven inspired quotations from the pen of Ellen White—which we are now calling “The Seven Church Quotes”—that we believe are highly applicable to our present situation. We solemnly urge you to read these quotes carefully. Then read them twice. Perhaps even a third time. As you do, we pray that “the Spirit of Truth” (John 16:13) will speak to your heart and mind.

1. *The Word of God does not give license for one man to set up his judgment in opposition to the judgment of the church, neither is he allowed to urge his opinions against the opinions of the church.* If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body. There have ever been individuals of independent minds *who have claimed that they were right, that God had especially taught, impressed, and led them.* Each has a theory of his own, views peculiar to himself, and each claims that his views are in accordance with the word of God. Each one has a different theory and faith, yet each claims special light from God. ***These draw away from the body, and each one is a separate church of himself.*** All these cannot be right, yet they all claim to be led of the Lord. CCh 241

2. There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem *unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God.* AA 163

3. When anyone is drawing apart from **the organized body** of God’s commandment keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judg-

ment against them, *then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.*
3 SM 18

4. God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, *and through it He communicates His purposes and His will.* He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church—Christ’s body—is left in darkness. In His providence, He places His servants in close connection with His church, in order that they may have less confidence in themselves, and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work... There will be, among the remnant of these last days, as there were with ancient Israel, those who wish to move independently, who are not willing to submit to the teachings of the spirit of God, and who will not listen to advice or counsel. Let such ever bear in mind that ***God has a church upon the earth, to which He has delegated power.*** Men will want to follow their own independent judgment, despising counsel and reproof; but *just as surely as they do this, they will depart from the faith, and disaster and the ruin of souls will follow... Satan will become their leader, and they will join him in his constant endeavors to tear down that which God is building up...* MR 311

5. **God** is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinion of his brethren, and justifies his course, ***alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?*** TM 29, 30

6. **The present truth is not difficult to be understood,** and the people whom God is leading will be united upon this broad, firm platform. He will not use individuals of different faith, opinions, and views, to scatter and divide. Heaven and holy angels are working to unite, to bring into the unity of the faith, into the one body. **Satan opposes this, and is determined to scatter, and divide, and bring in different sentiments, that the prayer of Christ may not be answered:** “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” John 17:20, 21. Jesus designed that the faith of His people should be one. *If one goes forth preaching one thing, and another differing with him preaches something else, how can those who believe through their word be one?* There will be difference of sentiments. 1T 326

7. I saw that if God’s people in Wisconsin would prosper, **they must take a decided position in regard to these things, and thereby cut off the influence of those who are causing distraction and division by teaching sentiments contrary to the body.** Such are wandering stars. They seem to emit a little light; they profess and carry along a little truth, and thus deceive the inexperienced. Satan endows them with his spirit, **but God is not with them;** His Spirit does not dwell in them. Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one, as He is one with the Father, “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” ***The oneness and unity of God’s truth-believing remnant people carries powerful conviction to the world that they have the truth, and are the peculiar, chosen people of God. This oneness and unity disconcerts the enemy, and he is determined that it shall not exist.*** The present truth, believed in the heart and exemplified in the life, makes God’s people one, and gives them a powerful influence. 1T 326, 327

We expect that some will challenge these “Seven Church Quotes,” and that refutations will be written. But if this happens, we urge the reader to seriously consider that *Inspiration has spoken*, and that if a person is “constantly inclined toward individual independence,” *probably nothing will convince them*. We also urge you to consider that “God has a church on earth” that is “not composed of stray offshoots,” and that “the church militant is not the church triumphant” (CCh 240). Yes, “the church on earth will be imperfect” (TM 46); and yes, “there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world” (TM 49); *but it is still God’s Church*. As leaders in Newport, we cannot avoid the conviction that “The Seven Church Quotes” not only apply to the divisive nature of The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message itself, but also to a general unwillingness exhibited by many of its leaders to submit to the counsel and proper authority of the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general.

The meeting

On January 25, 2012, a meeting was held at our church, called by Pastor Fleck, to discuss how to resolve the division that has resulted from The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message, and to seek a solution to the problem of how this controversy has diverted our focus away from our mission to spread the Three Angel’s Messages to our community. Sixteen attended: the pastor, five elders, and ten additional members who either are, or had been, to some degree, sympathetic with Points 1-3. Differences of opinion were freely expressed. These words were spoken by our leaders: “We love you,” “there is more that unites us than divides us,” “however this meeting ends, we hope to remain friends,” “we don’t want you to leave,” “we are being forced to act because our members are being warned that if they don’t believe these ideas they may be lost.” One of our elders has even been warned that blood might be on his hands if he refused to promote The Jeff Pippenger Message widely.

After nearly two hours of discussion during which it became clear that no easy resolution was possible, and because Pastor Fleck and the majority of the elders realized that The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message was really not compatible with the mission of the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church (which seeks unity in the spreading of the Three Angel’s Messages to the world), Pastor Fleck declared, “I hate doing this, but something has to happen.” He then read from The Church Manual. It states that, after Matthew 18 has been carefully and prayerfully followed, these are legitimate reasons for church discipline:

9. Adhering to or taking part in a divisive or disloyal movement or organization. (see p. 59)
10. Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church. Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 18th edition, revised 2010, p. 62.

Our actions in Newport

“We cannot go on like this,” stated Pastor Fleck. “We cannot focus on our mission to reach our community when there is so much division.”

Two options were then presented by Pastor Fleck to the group:

1. Respect the counsel of the pastor and board of elders to not promote the specific ideas listed above (Points 1-3) as testing “new light” or “Life or Death Present Truth” in our church either by word of mouth or by the passing out of material.
2. If you cannot conscientiously accept option 1, submit a letter to the pastor requesting that your name be removed from church membership.

If you refuse options 1 and 2, then the pastor and the board of elders will recommend to the church board that it recommend to the church at a duly called church business meeting that the names of those who continue to promote these teachings, be removed from church membership.

It was then suggested that a period of a week be given to each person to contemplate and pray about this extremely serious decision, which must be made.

These are solemn realities, especially because,

Very close and sacred is the relation between *Christ and His church*,—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. *Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.* Ed 268

And,

The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising *our church membership* rally to the work, and *unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.* GW 351

When our meeting ended, tears were shed, and hugs exchanged. We 16 are all friends, and this is painful to us. But as leaders, we must follow God's counsel. We realize that people not at our meeting may conclude—from the outside looking in, or by listening to inaccurate reports—that this was an Inquisitional/Sanhedrin-type of tribunal. But they would be grossly mistaken or misinformed, and we hope no one will commit against us the sin of false witness (Ex. 20:16). Did Annas or Caiaphas pray with Jesus or Peter? Did black-hooded Inquisitors pray for Tyndale or Luther? In this entire affair, we trust God as our Witness and Judge.

Since that meeting took place, some have already likened our actions to popery, and to an unjust restriction of religious liberty. We reject this accusation. Here's why:

Satan well knows that success can only attend order and harmonious action. He well knows that everything connected with heaven is in perfect order, that *subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host.* It is his studied effort to lead professed Christians just as far from heaven's arrangement as he can; therefore he deceives even the professed people of God and makes them believe *that order and discipline* are enemies to spirituality, that the only safety for them is to let each pursue his own course, and to remain especially distinct from bodies of Christians who are united and are **laboring to establish discipline and harmony of action.** *All the efforts made to establish order are considered dangerous, a restriction of right-ful liberty, and hence are feared as popery.* These deceived souls consider it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They will not take any man's say-so. They are amenable to no man. I was shown that it is **Satan's special work** to lead men to feel that it is in God's order for them to strike out for themselves and choose their own course, independent of their brethren. 1T 650

The real test

In our Newport conflict, we have concluded that some have sincerely, yet mistakenly, "*been bringing in false tests*, and had made their own ideas and notions a criterion, magnifying matters of little importance into tests... Thus a spirit of criticism, fault-finding, and dissension had come in, which had been a great injury to the church." Ev 215. In contrast, we believe that the real end-time tests to decide human destinies are "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12), which includes "the message" of the Righteousness of Christ.

The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning. He will not close up the period of probation until *the message* shall be more distinctly proclaimed. *The law of God is to be magnified*; its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. *The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.* 6T 19

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest

in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. ***This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.*** TM 91, 92

Here is the *true Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Message* that **God** commands Seventh-day Adventists to give *to the church and the world*. We believe this is the true message, *and that any other is a counterfeit*.

Warnings about false tests

Very many will get up some test that is not given in the word of God. We have our test in the Bible, —the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus." This is the true test, but many other tests will arise among the people. They will come in in multitudes, springing up from this one and that one. There will be a continual rising up of some foreign thing to call attention from the true test of God. GCB April 16, 1901

The Sabbath question is a test that will come to the whole world. ***We need nothing to come in now to make a test for God's people that shall make more severe for them the test that they already have. The enemy would be pleased to get up issues now to divert the minds of the people, and get them into controversy.*** 3 SM 254

The Lord does not require that any tests of human inventions shall be brought in to divert the minds of the people **or create controversy in any line**. . . . God's tests are now to stand out plain and unmistakable. There are storms before us, conflicts of which few dream. Nothing should come in to divert our minds from the grand test which is to decide the eternal destiny of a world,—*the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*" GCB January 1, 1900

Based on these solemn, inspired quotations, as leaders of the Newport WA Seventh-day Adventist Church, first, WE AFFIRM that for Adventists and the world "the true test of God" is not "the daily," the "2520 theory," belief in an early close of probation for the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the Sunday law, or that a *correct understanding* of any or all the above constitutes or enables one to receive the "Latter Rain." Instead, it is personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ made manifest by practical obedience to the Ten Commandments "written with the finger of God" (Ex. 31:18).

Of great significance to us is the reality that true obedience to the fifth commandment "also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and *for all others to whom God has delegated authority*" (PP 308). *This applies to the official leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. God is preparing a people for heaven where they will submit to the authority of His government forever, and thus it makes sense that part of this preparation is for us to learn how to humbly and appropriately submit *to the authority of His Church on earth*. Additionally, about the ninth commandment, "False speaking in any matter . . . is here included" (PP 309).

As Newport leaders, we tremble at the thought that many may be sincerely promoting teachings that they think come from God, while at the same time they may be transgressing His holy law by manifesting disrespect for legitimate church authority and by false speaking. Truly "the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). If we are honest, we'll all agree that everyone has violated God's law at some point, and thus our only hope of eternal salvation is through personal faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:19-22). He is our righteousness (Jer. 23:6), our foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), "our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, [and] the hope for every believer" (Maranatha 99). As leaders, WE AFFIRM it is high time for every Seventh-day Adventist to be fully devoted to *Him*.

Final thoughts

We realize this paper will be scrutinized, thus it is the product of many minds, many hours, and much prayer. Soon we will all face Satan's deadly mark, and when we do, surely Jesus Christ desires us to present a united front. If this document is ever read by "thousands of individuals (literally thousands) who are aware of the ongoing controversy taking place in the Newport church," and if it results in even one Seventh-day Adventists becoming more committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and more obedient to His Law, then we can only rejoice in Heaven's mysterious providence. We appeal to everyone reading this to remember that the "gold tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18) "is faith that works by love," and that these are the very virtues that Jesus urges us to *buy from Him* to prepare for His return. "We may be active, we may do much work; but without love, such love as dwelt in the heart of Christ, we can never be numbered with the family of heaven" (COL 159).

The signs of the times reveal to us that the coming of our Saviour is at hand. We should work with every God-given ability to win souls to Jesus Christ. If self is hid with Christ in God, *we shall have no differences to alienate us one from another. If we can fasten the mind upon Christ, in whom our hope of eternal salvation is centered, we shall have that oneness with Christ that he prayed might exist among his disciples; and the burden of our message will be, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* YI August 2, 1894

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself be "the burden of our message"!

In closing, as we have already seen, Ellen White has served us solemn notice that during a "religious crisis" remaining neutral is "the very worst type of hostility against God" (3T 280). Based on this, we must take a stand on one side or the other. Therefore, as leaders of the Newport WA Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Upper Columbia Conference, first, WE AFFIRM, as stated previously, that "the true test of God" in these last days is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4) and practical obedience to the Ten Commandments (Rev. 14:12). Secondly, and this is motivated by our sincere desire to help others avoid dangerous and subtle errors, WE DENY that The Jeff Pippenger Movement and Message is from God.

WE REJECT all false tests.

Lastly

Because it was brought to our attention a week after the January 25 meeting that there remained some confusion about exactly what the Newport church leadership was really asking of its members and how they were to respond, **we will here clarify our request:**

Revised, Resolved

That the members of the Newport WA Seventh-day Adventist Church involved in this controversy make a choice, either to support our church's **God-ordained** mission and goal of focusing our attention on reaching our community with the gospel of Jesus Christ and The Three Angels Messages (Rev. 14:6-12; 9T 19), and to seek unity with us in such a holy endeavor (see John 17:21-23), **OR** to continue promoting The Jeff Pippenger Movement with its Latter Rain, Present Truth, Life or Death Messages (specifically, but not limited to, Points 1-3 listed above), which we honestly believe are not only divisive in nature, but are also unsupported by the Bible, by a careful study of the writings of Ellen White, and by the fundamental teachings of the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church. If you chose the first option, then you will not promote Mr. Pippenger's material on our church premises, or privately.

Again, The Church Manual specifies these as legitimate reasons for church discipline:

9. *Adhering to or taking part in a divisive or disloyal movement or organization.* (see p. 59)

10. Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th edition, revised 2010, p. 62.

If you are a member of our Newport church and were at that January 25th meeting, we request that you please indicate your decision in writing, one way or the other, to the pastor no later than Wednesday, February 15th.

We love you and sincerely hope you make the decision to move forward with us!

Seeking peace and unity in Jesus,

Ron Fleck, Newport Pastor
Randy Bierwagen, Newport Head Elder
Dwain Hendrickson, Newport Elder
Charles Lawson, Newport Elder
Gilbert Navarro, Newport Elder
Steve Wohlberg, Newport Elder

Our doctrinal stand on Points 1-4 have been read and affirmed by:

Bob Folkenberg Jr., Upper Columbia Conference, President
Doug Johnson, Upper Columbia Conference, Vice President
Gerald Haeger, Upper Columbia Conference, Ministerial and Evangelism
Larry Kirkpatrick, Bonner's Ferry SDA Church Pastor
John Stanton, Sandpoint SDA Church Pastor
Dayv Lounsbury, Spirit Lake SDA Church Pastor
Paul Selchow, Edgemere SDA Church Head Elder

This document, plus other insightful articles on this topic, can be found at: www.weaffirmsda.com.