

## Hospitality Begins at Home: Seventh-day Adventist Churches Craft Welcoming Statements

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church has officially published many encouraging statements welcoming all people.

*“As imitators of Jesus we welcome all people, inviting them into our faith communities and sacrificially serving them. . . . Modeling the love of Jesus Christ, Adventists welcome people from all walks of life to join them for Sabbath School, the worship service, the communion service, Bible study groups, and other church-based activities.”*

—North American Division Statement on Human Sexuality (Nov. 2, 2015)

*“We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all.”*

—Seventh-day Adventist Church Fundamental Belief “Unity in Christ”

In practice, however, Adventist churches at times have been exclusive and repellent. We have closed doors to people who didn’t behave like us or think like us or look like us. Sometimes we have cared more about being right than about being kind. We have confused acceptance with agreement. We have been too motivated by fear. We have turned away thirsty seekers of the free water of life.

Now is the time to be more intentional concerning the openness and warmth of our local church climates. As important as a mission or vision, a welcoming statement gives the church a face.

Below is a list of Seventh-day Adventist churches that have published a church welcoming statement. The breadth and richness of approaches is inspiring. The list comes from the website (<https://adventistchurchwelcom->

[ingstatements.org/](http://ingstatements.org/)) where statements from 21 different churches may be read.

What about your church? Do you have a welcoming statement to share? Would you like to create one as an act of hospitality and neighbor love?

### Advent Hope, New York, NY

Worshipping God together is an opportunity to meet one another as we meet the God who welcomes us all. We exist as a Church to live in loving, worshipful relationship with God and in loving community with all members of the human family. We gather every Saturday morning to practice this way of being in the world, taking time to be present to God, who is always present to us, and to be present to one another. We believe that the good news of welcome, reconciliation and healing through Jesus is for everyone; it changes us and changes the world. So, wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here. We value diversity because we are all reflections of God’s image, an essential part of a shared story. Join us as we rehearse this story, pray, give thanks, lament, question, and learn to love together.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath day of the Lord your God . . .

Why Saturdays? Embracing the teaching of the ten commandments, Seventh-day Adventists recognize Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath. This practice is derived specifically from the Fourth Commandment found in Exodus 20:8–11, which calls for us to work the first six days of the week and to rest on the seventh. In celebrating the Sabbath, we aspire to follow Jesus’ own example in this practice, observing Friday night sundown

to sunset on Saturday night as a time to rest and be present to God and one another.

Adventists observe the Sabbath in a variety of ways. We refrain from work and the distractions of media and commerce. Participation in Saturday-morning Bible studies and worship services attends us to God and God's work in the world. We celebrate life as the creation of God by enjoying time with friends and family and taking in the beauty of the natural world. Outdoor activities are a favorite way of remembering and celebrating God's creative work on the Sabbath. Most importantly, Sabbath offers the gift of peace. We are reminded in resting that God has made peace with humanity through the Jesus Christ; and that peace extends to all our brothers and sisters in the human family. The divine gift of our reconciliation with a God who never stops loving us makes our reconciliation with one another possible as well. In a world so often filled with anxiety and division, the Sabbath affords us the opportunity to rest in the peace of God.

### **Central Coast, Wyong, New South Wales**

The Central Coast Community Church is a community of people who are on a journey together. We believe passionately that Jesus Christ, the Carpenter of Nazareth and the Creator of this world, makes a fantastic difference in our lives. Knowing Him makes our individual life stories make sense within His story.

Everyone is welcome at our church. We hope that especially those who have had no religious or church background feel loved, accepted, and forgiven amongst us. We come from a rich, varied background. Some are from a religious background, which can be both positive and negative. Others have little or no religious heritage. It is fantastic; we are on a journey of discovery and we get to journey together.

You will be challenged at our church. Forget the religious trappings, rituals, taboos, or just playing church. We are a church that is a safe place to hear and experience a dangerous message. The message is that Jesus created us because He loved us. If we allow Him into our lives, amazing things will happen.

As a community, we are learning what it means to live a life with Jesus at the center of our existence. As His disciples, we want to be constantly changing and growing with Jesus Christ. Come, check us out. We are not perfect, far from it. Come join our story, maybe it is your

story as well.

The Central Coast Community Church is proud to be a part of the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Being part of this movement allows us the full privileges of a church that is committed to Jesus Christ, Biblical truth, and seeing souls won to the kingdom before Christ's soon coming.

### **Charlottesville, VA**

The Charlottesville Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomes you and people of every race, appearance, belief system, sexual orientation, nation, gender, economic level, age, and ability.

Our vision is to be a faith community where all people experience grace, find wholeness, and become great lovers for God.

We would love to have you join our family where our mission is to embody the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. To learn more about what we believe you can visit our About Us page. Please join us for Bible study, worship, prayer, and fellowship.

### **Colorado Springs, CO**

At Central we want you to know that no matter who you are, you are welcome to worship with us and explore issues of faith and life. So, if you are married, single, widowed, or divorced, you are welcome. If you are a hardcore believer or a jaded skeptic, there is a place at the table for you. No matter your orientation or dis-orientation in life, we welcome you to journey with us. We welcome all nationalities and ethnic groups, as well as all socio-economic classes. In this way, we feel we are living the Jesus lifestyle. So, come and join us on this exciting journey we call life and faith.

*First Time Visit? Here's What to Expect.*

Visiting a new church for the first time can be overwhelming, especially if you did not grow up attending church. Sometimes church can seem like a closed society, and unless you know the unwritten rules you will feel awkward about showing up. Questions arise such as where do I park? What door do I go in? What kind of clothes should I wear? When am I supposed to kneel or stand? Which class do I take my kids to? Is this a safe place or are the people a little off? I know the feeling. Even though I have attended church for thirty years, I still get nervous attending a new church for all of the above reasons.

**We extend  
a special  
welcome to  
those who  
are single,  
married,  
divorced,  
gay, filthy  
rich, or dirt  
poor—with  
crying  
newborns,  
skinny as  
a rail, or  
could afford  
to lose a  
few pounds.**

At Central, we want to take all the fear and uncertainty out of attending church. Church should be an enjoyable experience, not a painful one. So, we want our guests and first-time visitors to know that at Central you will find a loving and accepting church, where you are welcome to come just as you are. No need to dress up or dress down. More important than the clothes is the heart. And only God knows your heart.

You can park anywhere you like in the main parking lot or on one of the side streets. If you come later, you will have to look for a spot on one of the side streets. The main entrance is on the north side of the church where you will find two big glass doors and a small atrium. Once inside you will be greeted by warm and caring people, just like yourself. If you need assistance, they can direct you to the classes or restrooms.

We have Bible classes for all ages from infants to adults. Just ask one of the greeters in the main foyer and they will help you find the right class. Because people are diverse, so too is our congregation of about 400. We have all age and ethnic groups represented. We do not focus on any one demographic but try to make Central a safe place for worship and fellowship for all people and all ages. Our worship service reflects this diversity also. Parts of the service are traditional and other parts are very contemporary. The music rotates between traditional and contemporary from week to week. We have a children's story during the service as one way to minister to our children. The sermons are Bible based, practical, and relevant. Three times a month, we have a fellowship meal after church, and a couple times a year we have big social events that allow us to get together for fun outside of the church. When you visit, do not be surprised if people try to learn your name. One of our big values at Central is making connections.

Central is a Seventh-day Adventist congregation but welcomes everyone. Whether you are a lifelong Adventist or just brand new to Christianity, or if you are an atheist or spiritual seek-

er, it makes no difference. Jesus welcomed all people into His presence and we do the same.

### **Florida Hospital Church, Orlando, FL**

FHC is a diverse congregation in Orlando, Florida. Our mission is loving people into a life-long friendship with God.

We are . . . single, married, divorced, female, male, straight, LGBTQ, poor, rich, old, young. At FHC, we welcome any member of the community to join us in worship. We don't care if you're a practicing Christian or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake. We want to offer you grace and peace as you begin or continue your faith journey.

We are FHC, and we're all welcome here.

### **Dallas First Church, Dallas, TX**

Welcome to the Dallas First Church of Seventh-day Adventists (DFC) located in Uptown Dallas! DFC is a Christian community of believers that is made up of a rich and diverse tapestry of cultures and backgrounds.

As you get to know us, you'll discover that our shared values include pursuing a deeper and more intimate knowledge of God, meeting the needs of both our congregation and our community, leading others into a vibrant relationship with Christ and living out a calling to excellence in every area of life and ministry.

You'll also discover that we enjoy celebrating hope and wholeness, through an emphasis on healthy living, the arts and healthy relationships; as well as our desire to extend our DFC family beyond the borders of our city with the help of media technologies.

Finally, you'll discover that we value Christian education with an equally strong emphasis on spiritual, emotional, physical and academic development through our Dallas Christian Academy.

In the end, DFC exists to provide a place of belonging where people from all walks of life can grow and develop and where they can be connected to God, to each other, and to their community. If you're looking for such a place,

you've found it. Welcome home. Welcome to the Dallas First Church!

We encourage you to pay us a visit in person, become our friend on Facebook, join our worship services and special events online, or send us an email and let us know how we can get to know you better and minister to your needs. We're looking forward to meeting you!

## **Gardena Genesis Community, Gardena, CA**

Gardena Genesis Community Church is deeply committed to the incarnational manifestation of *God's* word in each child, youth, young adult, professional, and family member's life, as well as the well-being of residents in the city of Gardena California. We invite you to join us in our exciting journey at one of our services (11am traditional or 3pm Contemporary-Gospel fusion), live-stream, our Daily Devotionals, or at one of our awesome events. Every engaging experience will be intentional to lead each person into a closer relationship with Christ.

## **Healing Hope, Portland, OR**

We are a community of committed believers in Jesus Christ, living expectantly in the light of His love and His soon coming, and seeking to serve the world around us.

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, or dirt poor—with crying newborns, skinny as a rail, or could afford to lose a few pounds—if you can sing like Andrea Bocelli or can't carry a tune in a bucket—"just browsing," just woke up, or just got out of jail—over sixty but not grown up yet—teenagers who are growing up too fast—those who are in recovery or still addicted—if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion," (we've been there too)—those who are inked, pierced, or both—those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid, or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake—tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts ... and you!

We don't care if you haven't been in church in a long time. Our church is the place for you. No matter what you call family we want you to become an intimate part of our church family.

## **Summit Northwest Ministries, Post Falls, ID**

In 2004, a small group of committed Christians needed to do something different. Not satisfied with doing

church as they had always done it, this group started over. All they had was a bit of equipment, a few friends, and a dream.

This dream was of a church where hurting, confused, depressed, and disenfranchised people could find hope, encouragement, love, acceptance, and salvation.

Summit Northwest Ministries started out in a couple of storefronts in the Post Falls Outlet Mall and soon expanded to three storefronts. Growth and economics mandated a move from the Outlet Malls to a rented church facility on the corner of Hwy 290 and Idaho Road in Newman Lake, WA. Very quickly it was evident that even this new location had become too small, and plans were underway to address the increased growth. Initially the plan was to build on church owned property in Post Falls, but then an opportunity opened up to purchase the old Post Falls Theater. After considering the costs of building new versus remodeling the existing theater building, the decision was made to purchase the theater and remodel it for use as a church. The initial phase of remodeling was completed in November 2013, which allowed Summit Northwest Ministries to Worship in their own facility for the very first time. Even though the location and the attendance changed (100% increase in a few short years), the passion to reach hurting, confused, depressed, and disenfranchised people for Christ never diminished.

In fact, this desire to "share our loving God with hurting people so that they can experience His transforming power in their lives" has become our statement of purpose and the driving force behind what we do. Summit Northwest Ministries is not content to just be a country club church; our goal is to make a difference in people's lives.

## **Worthington, OH**

In the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church we have vowed to become a *Treasury of God's Grace*; a place where people feel safe to laugh, to cry and to be real!

We are *passionate* about *the mission of Jesus*; to *love* God, *serve* others, *disciple* all, and *mentor* the young.

Here we believe that our own *passionate spirituality* is the means through which we are called to spark faith in the hearts of others and, in particular, in the hearts of our children and grandchildren.

In our church we believe that your life was never meant to be lived alone and that *love* can write your story. ■