Adventist officers release statement regarding a local conference's recent election of president

Seventh-day Adventist world church officials today released a statement regarding a local conference that recently elected as president a person who is not recognized by the world church as an ordained minister. Ordination is one of the criteria for being a conference president. The statement, in its entirety, follows:

Moving Forward Together

A response from the General Conference to recent actions in North America

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been called by God as an urgent, end-time voice proclaiming God’s love and last day message to the world. He has commissioned us to proclaim the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 to people worldwide desperately looking for hope. The message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is unique and is heaven-sent. Our top priority as a church is knowing Jesus ourselves and sharing His message of redemption. Nothing is to stand in the way of this proclamation as we unite to reach every “nation, kindred, tongue and people” with the “everlasting gospel.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a fellowship of believers bound together by a common commitment to Christ, the truths of the Bible, a worldwide church organization and a mission to the world. Each of these elements is vitally important in preserving the unity of the church and keeping it from fracturing. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not organized as a collection of independent units. Although each Conference/Mission, Union and the General Conference (which
includes the divisions) have their own constituencies, they are also united by common commitments, mutual trust and agreed upon policies. The Church, the body of Christ, is inter-related. Actions that affect one part of the body affect the whole. The Apostle Paul stated it succinctly in these words, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Working Policy, which is the recording of our agreements as to how we will work together to do the Lord’s work and mission, serves as one of the practical unifying agents that the Holy Spirit uses to bind the church together. Policy is not inflexible. It can be changed but it reflects the understanding of the collective group, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When personal convictions are placed ahead of the collective policy decisions of the worldwide church, troubling precedents are set. God works in an orderly way and wishes His church to exemplify this sanctified behavior through the power of the Holy Spirit. Humility and submission to God for the good of the church body as outlined in the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy are fundamental Biblical principles for the benefit of the church.

At the 2012 Annual Council in a voted action entitled, "Statement on Church Polity, Procedures, and Resolution of Disagreements in the Light of Recent Union Actions on Ministerial Ordination," the world church strongly indicated that it does not recognize as ordained ministers individuals who do not meet the criteria outlined in policy. It deeply concerns the world leadership of the church that recently a local conference constituency elected as a conference president an individual who is not recognized by the world church as an ordained minister. Ordination to the ministry is one of the criteria set forth for being a conference president. General Conference administration is working with the North American Division administration as they deal with the implications of this local conference action, which is contrary to the 2012 Annual Council action.

The world church is currently working together in a Theology of Ordination Study Committee with participation by all divisions to better understand the functions of ordination as well as the role of women in relation to ordination to the gospel ministry. A careful process is functioning and reports will be given to the 2014 Annual Council with the expectation that this subject will go to the 2015 General Conference Session for a decision under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We have every confidence in the Lord’s leading of His precious remnant church. By God’s grace and through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, the church will find its way through this challenging time as we move forward with the unique message and mission entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist movement. It is God’s plan that we proclaim His end-time, prophetic truth to every corner of the globe and especially the enormous metropolitan centers of the world through “Mission to the Cities” utilizing every form of comprehensive urban evangelism including comprehensive health ministry and many other methods. We urge all church members and leaders to pray that the Holy Spirit will unite us to fulfill Christ’s promise that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) United in Christ’s love, bound together in a common Biblical message, linked through a common church organization and committed to one another with mutual respect and trust through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are confident this church will triumph at last and proclaim Christ’s eternal message of truth to the ends of the earth in anticipation of Jesus’ soon second coming.

—The General Conference Executive Officers
The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America yesterday approved a recommendation from its Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) that affirms both men and women for ordination to ministry.

Each of the Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions are now in the process of establishing and holding their own TOSC in response to a call from the 2010 General Conference Session to examine the theology of ordination.

North America’s TOSC’s recommendation to the division Executive Committee was:

“That we receive the Biblical study of ordination prepared by the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee and affirm the conclusion that all people, men and women, may receive ordination as an affirmation of the call of God, and that the North American Division supports the authorization of each division to consider, through prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, its most appropriate approach to the ordination of women to gospel ministry.”

The division’s TOSC was comprised of 14 members. The division’s executive secretary, G. Alexander Bryant, told delegates, “As we looked to staff this committee, we sought for balance and different perspectives that will represent all viewpoints of the division.”

The church in North America’s review of the committee’s report will now be given to the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee, along with the reports from the 12 other divisions. Reports from all 13 divisions will then be synthesized by the General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Committee.

The following is the world church’s timeline regarding the Theology of Ordination:

From December 2013 - June 2014 — The General Conference’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee will analyze the materials received from the divisions and prepare a combined report.
June 2014 — Report will be reviewed by General Conference executive officers.
June 2014 — Report will be reviewed with the President’s Executive Administrative Council (PREXAD) and the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM).
October 2014 — General Conference administration will process the report for the 2014 Annual Council.
October 2014 — Annual Council will review the report and, if needed, take any appropriate action. If voted material needs to be placed on the 2015 General Conference Session agenda, it will be processed accordingly.

Click HERE for more information and links to NAD TOSC presentation materials.
Adventist Peace Fellowship offers grants to students, certification to churches

Adventist Peace Fellowship, a Seventh-day Adventist supporting ministry, is introducing steps for university students to organize their own APF chapters and receive APF grants. Churches can also take steps to become listed as official Adventist Peace Churches in support of the organization’s goals to promote peace and social justice.

On their website, APF recently launched profiles of more than 60 church members or friends of the Adventist Church who have contributed to the public through their advocacy of peace and social justice.

APF is a lay-organized, nonprofit organization dedicated to interfaith work, according to its website. It was founded in 2001 with a focus on questions of war and peace in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11.

“Adventists already engaged in peace and justice issues can connect with each other and to share what they’re doing with the larger Adventist community,” said AFP director Ron Osborn. “There are many congregations out there already doing peace and justice work, but they may not be aware of other congregations and individuals who are doing things. The APF provides a platform and network for these persons to work together.”

AFP board member Ante Jeroncic, an associate professor of religion at Andrews University, says the organization reminds Adventist about their historical roots.

“What is so amazing about our pioneers is the way in which they nurtured both an apocalyptic awareness and a radical social consciousness, seeing the latter as being informed by the former. In that sense, the mission of APF consists in challenging us to live up to that vision in obedience to Christ,” Jeroncic said.

For more information, visit www.adventistpeace.org.
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