Special AT Update

**Breaking News from the Pacific Union Special Constituency Session**

**Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women to Gospel Ministry:** In a lengthy and often dramatic debate on the merits of ordaining both men and women to the gospel ministry, elders Ted Wilson, Doug Batchelor, Ernie Castillo, Randy Roberts, and both Ron Wisbey and his son, Randy, joined other high-profile proponents and opponents in discussing a motion that produced a nearly 80-percent vote in favor of permitting ordination of women in the territory of the Pacific Union Conference (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah). Referenced during the debate were the following articles on the Adventist Today Web site, available by clicking the following headlines: [Editorial: Is the Women's Ordination Issue about Unity or Uniformity? (by David Newman)] and [Analysis of What is Happening with the Ordination of Women Pastors (by Gary Patterson)].

**Prayer Vigil, Discussions on Sabbath Look to Historic Session in the West:** Anticipating a pivotal and even historic special constituency session the next day, an estimated 1,000 Adventists gathered on the campus of the denomination's largest church, in Loma Linda, California, and smaller groups chose other locations to prepare their hearts and minds through prayer and inspiration for the following day's discussion and vote.

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Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women to Gospel Ministry

Submitted: Aug 19, 2012
By AT News Team
Updated August 20, 2012

For the third time this year a union conference constituency session has voted to authorize ordination to the gospel ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The vote was 79 percent in favor despite a personal appeal from Elder Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference, to reject the concept and two short speeches by Doug Batchelor, the noted television evangelist and senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Church.

Perhaps the most unexpected development of the day was a speech by Elder Ernie Castillo, a vice president of the North American Division and former executive secretary of the Pacific Union. He pointed out that the actions of these union conferences are in direct response to steps taken last fall by the GC Officers to force the NAD to back off on a policy that would have permitted commissioned ministers, including women, to serve as conference presidents. What is known as Working Policy E 60.

"This is not rebellion," Castillo said directly to Wilson in front of the entire body. "This is a reaction. People who for 40 years have been repressed and discriminated against will eventually react. That is sociology 101."

Wilson and Lowell Cooper, one of the GC vice presidents, made the same appeal that they presented to the Columbia Union Conference constituency session in July, although the language was somewhat softened with no reference to unspecified "grave consequences." The delegates were asked to wait until the GC completes a study of the denomination’s theology of ordination launched last year. "It will be something more than ever before," Wilson promised.

"It will be a very open and fair process. It is not window-dressing but an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to unite us." He indicated that it would be balanced and gender-inclusive with lay members as well as clergy. He stated that the list of members of the committee that will integrate the studies at the world level will be announced soon.

Many delegates throughout the day specifically rejected this appeal largely because the GC has conducted three previous studies of the topic. Each time almost all of the Bible scholars involved have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in the Bible or Adventist heritage to prohibit extending ordination to women, yet the final recommendation is always negative because of "unity."

"The majority of Adventists are opposed to this," asserted Batchelor who has circulated video of sermons and printed materials for some time stating that women's ordination is unbiblical. "There are Bible distinctions between the roles of men and women," he said, advancing a position similar to that taught by the Southern Baptist Convention. He referred to a statement by Ellen White in the book Acts of the Apostles (page 95) to support his belief that women should not serve as ordained ministers despite the fact that she carried those credentials herself.

"It feels like there has not been fairness" in presenting the case against women's ordination, Batchelor said. "This has been presented as an issue of equality," stated Elder Steven Bohr, pastor of the Fresno Central Church, "but it is not really about equality. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal, but have different functions." He cited an editorial (not written by Ellen White) in the Signs of the Times (January 24, 1895) which he said states that women should not serve as local elders.

The recommendation of the union conference executive committee to authorize ordination without gender discrimination was presented by Elder Larry Caviness, president of the Southern California Conference, and Elder...
Randy Roberts, senior pastor of the largest Adventist congregation in the world, the Loma Linda University Church. Roberts said that the recommendation is rooted in one of the fundamental doctrines of the denomination, number 14 among the 28 fundamental teachings, which states that “differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ” and cites Galatians 3:27-29.

Roberts pointed out that there are at least five policies on this topic that are clearly stated in the Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy which are disregarded in many parts of the world and these variances have not caused significant disunity. He named these policies: (1) that deaconesses are to be ordained, (2) that women may serve as local elders, (3) that women serving as local elders are to be ordained, (4) that women may be employed as pastors, and (5) that women employed as pastors may conduct baptisms, weddings and the same sacred duties that men conduct.

Roberts called upon his training and experience in family counseling to make the observation that “there are few ways to more quickly fracture a family than to require uniformity.” He stated that the church in North America has no agenda to force the church in other parts of the world to implement the five policies cited above, “Where they feel it is inappropriate in their cultural context to implement these policies they should be free to do so, and in Europe and North America “where it is necessary in our cultural context, we should be free to move ahead with the ordination of women to the ministry.”

Others who spoke in favor of the recommendation included Elder Ben Maxson, pastor of the Paradise (California) Church and a former department director at the GC; Elder John Brunt, senior pastor of the Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace (California) and a respected New Testament scholar and former dean of the School of Religion at Walla Walla University; Elder Charles White, pastor of the Camelback Church in Phoenix and a great-grandson of James and Ellen White; and Dr. Randal Wisbey, president of La Sierra University. His father, Ron Wisbey, a retired minister and former union conference president in the Columbia Union, made one of the most moving statements.

“I have waited for over 30 years to be able to attend a meeting like this and speak to an actual motion to end gender discrimination in ordination,” the elder Wisbey said. “We allowed women pastors to baptize and the church did not split. We gave them the same level of pay as men and the church did not split.” Wisbey stated that he was told at each step that it would split the denomination. “Getting out in front has always been the road to change.”

Earlier in the afternoon it appeared that the proposal might not be approved. The bylaws committee had recommended a small change in the wording of one article which reads, “All the policies, purposes and procedures of this Union shall be in harmony with the working policies and procedures of the North American Division and the General Conference …” The proposed amendment would have inserted “in general” at the beginning of this article and replaced “shall” with “will” in order to provide some small latitude for policy variances.

This amendment failed by about four votes because changes in the bylaws require a two-thirds majority. A solid majority of 280 to 149 voted in favor, but that was only 65 percent of the delegates voting. The union conference officers were prepared for this and went ahead with the rest of the agenda. There was an appeal from delegates as to whether it was legal to do so and the parliamentarians ruled that the recommendation about ordination did not require that the bylaws amendment be adopted.

Wilson spent considerable time in this presentation responding to points made in articles by Gary Patterson and J. David Newman that Adventist Today has published recently. He did not name Patterson, Newman or Adventist Today, but clearly had these items in mind in his indirect references. In fact, he expressed appreciation for the “homework done on this topic,” but expressed the view that their conclusions were wrong and “more homework needs to be done.”

Adventist Today has been told that the North Pacific Union Conference has decided not to move ahead with an action similar to those taken in the Pacific Union, Columbia Union and North German Union. Adventist Today has also discovered that the rumor published by Spectrum, the journal of the largest organization of Adventist academics, that Wilson had a teleconference with union conference officers to discuss sanctions against these unions is not true. It remains to be seen what the next developments will be in this topic.

Adventist Today would like to hear from members of local conference executive committees that may discuss presenting female candidates for ordination. Adventist Today would also be interested in hearing about conferences that may vote resolutions against the practice, advocating continued gender discrimination.

Share your thoughts about this article:
114 comments

Jim Walters
2 days ago

The first motion, to make the PUC constitution “in general” compliance with world church documents, failed to receive the 2/3 majority needed—by 4 votes, as you indicate. It likely would have passed if one of two different approaches had been taken: a) if the PUC Ex Committee had decided to make the recommendation at a regularly scheduled constituency session—one not linked to the controversial issue of WO, or b) the progressives had been as organized as evidently were the conservatives, who disproportionately controlled the microphones.

The main motion, of course, dealt with WO, and the vote was gratifying—4 to 1 in favor. Your report of Pastor Randy Roberts’ speech is accurate and quite complete, but mere recitation of facts fails to capture his rhetorical eloquence and religious depth. This is abundantly shown in Roberts’ tiered understanding of church doctrine (e.g., our fundamental belief on equality) and our policies on non-discrimination that are not always followed worldwide, with leniency shown to the non-compliant. And there is his concluding citation of various leaders (e.g., the apostle Paul, Abraham Lincoln, Ellen White) whose courageous actions proceeded and created consensus. It’s time Roberts
receives his due as the thought leader in Adventism he has become.

Kevin Riley  
2 days ago

While I totally support ordaining women to anything from janitor to GC President (should they be qualified) I am glad this amendment did not pass. As one of the speakers pointed out, the words ‘in general’ are far too vague to be in any policy or by-law. We should have our church operating in harmony with our policies. If they cannot, then change the policies, don’t change the constitution or by-laws by adding nebulous wording we will squabble over for decades.

I hope that this will continue to change people’s view that women’s ordination is being pushed by an unrepresentative group of liberals arguing solely from the basis of western culture. It is supported by a wide range of church members for what are biblical reasons. If we can convince the members of the BRIs in Africa and elsewhere of that, then we may see a fair and impartial consideration of all the evidence - even if in the end they don’t reach the conclusion we do.

The conclusion on this issue is not, if I may use a foreign (to me) sporting analogy, a ‘slam dunk’ for either side. I suspect in the end it will be, in rugby terms, a ‘try’ rather than a ‘goal’. As long as we reach a resolution that allows us to move forward united, if not uniform in belief or practice, perhaps we will in the end conclude this process was worthwhile (or maybe not).

William Noel  
2 days ago

Kevin,

The phrasing "in general" can be used to hide a whole lot of meanings, prevent taking a position and delay real decision. Our church needs clear leadership, not bureaucratic procrastination.

Stephen Ferguson  
2 days ago

"Roberts pointed out that there are at least five policies on this topic that are clearly stated in the Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy which are disregarded in many parts of the world and these variances have not caused significant disunity. He named these policies: (1) that deaconesses are to be ordained, (2) that women may serve as local elders, (3) that women serving as local elders are to be ordained, (4) that women may be employed as pastors, and (5) that women employed as pastors may conduct baptisms, weddings and the same sacred duties that men conduct."

Very interesting. Why then hasn’t the Church in these parts of the world (I assume Developing World) been ‘crushed’ for their ‘rebellion’ (to use the oft-stated claim) for failing to adhere to GC policy for all these years?

Why should the Western Church be expected to adhere strictly to GC policy when the Developing World doesn’t – isn’t that a little hypocritical?

 Doesn’t this all just prove that there needs to be a degree of flexibility and common sense in applying these standards across a world SDA Church comprising members from hundreds of nations, thousands of languages and tens of thousands of cultures?

Kevin Riley  
2 days ago

The GC, clearly, unequivocably, in session, allowed these decisions to be made on a church by church or conference/mission by conference/mission basis with consultation all the way up to Division level. I fail to see how the divisions that chose not to ordain women as elders or employ women as pastors are in breach of policy. The only failure I see with these policies is restricting them artificially to elders rather than accepting they apply to elders and pastors. I also believe teh vote at teh last GC allowed women to be ordained as deaconas, but did not demand that women be voted in as deacons. The decision to allow women to be ordained as deaconesses was made years ago, as the first deaconess was ordained in Melbourne while Ellen White was here, so we can’t argue that is a nw development.

There is too much misinformation getting around on this subject. It does not help the arguments of either side. The last thing we want is for this to resemble a political stoush any more than it already does.

Stephen Ferguson  
2 days ago

And shouldn't Ted's response, if he truly cares about unity, to seek a similar approach?

John Bunting  
2 days ago

Kevin, I was interested in your belief about the vote about women being ordained as deaconesses. My understanding was different BUT I have been unable to track down the actual minutes.

Does anyone here have access to the minutes to settle the point? Better still is there an internet link available?
I thought about it afterwards, and I had a feeling it may not have been until the 70s or 80s that ordaining deaconesses was officially voted. The first was on January 6, 1900 in the Ashfield church in Sydney (not Melbourne as I thought) - reported in Adventist Review Jan 16, 1986 by Arthur Patrick. I tracked down the official story, and it was the Spring Council, 1975, that approved women being ordained as deaconesses and allowed women being ordained as elders (in NAD). The same 1975 council decided women would be given missionary rather than ministerial licenses. The 1984 Annual council reaffirmed the decision on women elders and extended it to any division that wanted to do so (and promised a ‘final’ answer to the WO question at GC ’85). So I guess we could conclude that women should/must(?) be ordained as deaconesses and may be elected as elders, and if they are elected as elders they need to be ordained. Only by not ordaining deaconesses is the world church acting contrary to GC policy. When it comes to women as elders and pastors, that has from the beginning been an opt-in policy, not a requirement.

There is a document called “An outline of the history of ordination issues” at http://www.aaw.cc/GetInformed/TheoPP_Articles.html

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

‘…although the language was somewhat softened with no reference to unspecified “grave consequences.”’

Thank goodness for that.

If Wilson’s real concern is Church unity, which he has stated repeatedly over and over again, hopefully he will now downplay all this.

Hopefully he will make the point that this will have little or no practical impact on other Unions around the world, in the same way as the failure of the Church in the Developing World to ordain women deacons and elders (as required per GC policy) has had little impact on Western Church that does.

Finally, hopefully Wilson will de cease throwing gasoline on the rafters of our Church building, at the same time as he claims there is the risk of fire!

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

Ted Wilson will be only one voice at the annual council in October. Don’t look for any real action until then. A lot will depend on how rational the discussion is then. We should all be praying for God to be in control from the beginning. Not much else we can do apart from that - unless you are in the habit of writing to your union or division president. Not that I am recommending that. I know and like both my union and division president :)

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

But what action can we expect then?

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

Very hard to predict. Some will be pushing for a harsh response - perhaps even expelling the unions for rebellion. Others will be arguing for a soft approach, perhaps a plea for the unions not to put the decision into effect until after the study on ordination finishes in 2014. I am sure many will be looking for a compromise that leaves the authority of both the GC and the unions intact. There are steady men and women on both sides who will be looking above all for God's will in this. What we don't need is intense lobbying from either side. The unions have made their decisions, now we need to let the GC decide its response. All union presidents will be at the council. There are a number of unions apart from CUC and PUC that support ordaining women, as do some divisions (at least three fairly solidly, and others with reservations). So no side will be without a voice.

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

I hope you are right.

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

‘…to reject the concept and two short speeches by Doug Batchelor, the noted television evangelist and senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Church.’

I really love and respect Doug Batchelor, but it is good to see that the power of Sevy-Celebrity was rejected. That is a very good sign for a health polis in my opinion. We don't want to be a Church of Apollas or Paul but of Christ.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

The last thing we need is a charismatic leader who is not chosen by God as a prophet. I don't know Doug Batchelor, and don't think much of him as a theologian, even though numerous people have assured me he is 'the greatest theologian in our church today'. Had I not had too many experiences of praying "God, someone should do X" and being asked to do X, I would be praying for a prophet. I am not qualified, and do not want the job, and in this instance I am quite happy to believe Paul made a mistake when he said 'desire to prophesy'. But I would encourage others to pray for a prophet. If God says 'OK, you've got the job' I promise to pray for you every day. :)

teresaq
In reading the transcript of DB's anti-women sermon I have to wonder if he is really against WO, playing the part, or knows people will follow whatever he does, or something else. The sermon was just so clumsy, yet I have seen some laud it to the high heavens for being so "full of bible". Personally I am not sure how, "my mother said", "semen", "Virginia Slims", etc is bible but to each his own.

William Noel
2 days ago

I, too, respect Doug Batchelor-- up to a point. But there are some areas he jumps into where that discussion is a distraction from his ministry and where his viewpoint may or may not be supportable. He needs to focus on his ministry and stay out of other issues.

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

"...to reject the concept and two short speeches by Doug Batchelor, the noted television evangelist and senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Church."

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Austin Archer
2 days ago

I find it odd that there was no mention in your report of Pastor Andrea King's moving account of her call to the ministry. Three persons spoke for the Union Executive committee, not two. This is particularly ironic, since she was the only major presenter who was a woman!

teresaq
2 days ago

Someone is saying, "the German Union may have just deferred to the wishes of the Division and agreed to wait on this issue. There is also an unconfirmed report I received tonight that Pennsylvania may have withdrawn their support for the CUC's WO agenda."

That particular person is not that reliable a source, yet I was interested if anyone has heard anything.

David Borton
2 days ago

I would like to know, as well, whether the Pennsylvania Conference has decided to withdraw support for women's ordination. I live in PA and, after reading the PA President's blog, think that he is in favor of women's ordination.

Jean Corbeau
2 days ago

Someone who watched the proceedings described the reaction to the vote: "The applause, the high fives, the wolf whistles (yes, I heard at least one wolf whistle) the hugs, and the general post-game-win-like actions of the attendees after the vote to ordain women carried, clearly bespoke the kind of spirit that was ruling the meeting, and it was not the Spirit of God, but another spirit, the spirit of antichrist." People were behaving like they would at a football game. Very sad.

I think this proves what many of us have been saying all along. The spirit behind this demand for WO, has been plagued by attitudes that were anything but Christlike.

Edwin A. Schwisow
2 days ago

I once knew an ordained male minister who taught that any display of joy or even a smile was inappropriate for an end-time people preparing to meet the Lord. Happiness and joy at an outcome—even at the appearance of the little cloud in the East, for example—was not to characterize God's end-time people. I fail to identify the expression of joy at the recognition of God's Spiritual outpouring on women of the church as somehow an evidence of apostasy or inattention to proper end-time demeanor. When a member of our family was recognized as possessing a special Spiritual Gift, I was there with the family to praise the Lord, audibly and otherwise, though I do not possess the gift of whistling. There was "great joy" at the event, not because we are a family that rejoices in sin, but because we extol the gifts of the Spirit and welcome any opportunity to acknowledge their presence among us. The vote permitting the ordination of women does one thing, and one thing alone—it opens the doors for Adventist people in the Pacific Union territory to wholeheartedly welcome the full retinue of Spiritual Gifts on women of the church, in these Final Days. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Doctorf
a day ago

Jean,

The "spirit of the antichrist"? Really? And just who is this "antichrist"? Maybe it is not a person or demon. Maybe the term is symbolic representing attributes in people that are not christlike. A big Army HUA to the PUC that voted to end this unchristlike discrimination against WO.

God's Will Paramount
Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women to the General Conference... 

I am from England and stayed up until the last Amen, watching an excellent live stream, from the opening remarks. Thanks PUC. There was a common and stark denominator in the ladie's interventions which can be summarised in one word: emotional! They could each get a gold medal in that field. Having said that, Ted Wilson was crystal clear. He was in essence saying (my paraphrase, mostly my words) "Please, please, please, in all humility and love, etc. I am asking you, nay begging you, as the one invested with the authority to represent the World church of 7th day Adventists of which you are part and parcel and have made enormous contributions to from day one, vote AGAINST women ordination today and let's sort this out as a church family, once and for all, in 2015. Give the process we have in place time to reach there. You have nothing to lose and fear. Trust me. Just be a little more patient. You have waited so long, what difference really is it going to make to wait yet a little longer to keep us all walking together hand in hand towards a full, fair and final resolution." Yes, it was one woman who stood up and have the chair shut him up through parliamentary procedure...I was sitting on the edge of my chair to witness such boldness and temerity. The chair did after appealing to her to let him conclude his remarks. Wow!!! After all was said and done, Wilson's and associates's explanations, clarifications and appeals for restraint was simply and purely lost on death ears. The motion carried. The 70% (so I understand) of the delegates would rather give Dr Randy Roberts a long and loud, standing ovation, and send their GC president home packing, with egg on his face. Quo vadis? If I were in Ted Wilson's place I would resign. I guess I would have a mighty indigestion trying to swallow so much humble pie in front of the whole world wide church family, live-streamed, in such a short period of time. How much credibility and authority do you really have left after you have been so humiliated and your speeches have been so profoundly rejected, not once, but twice, for the whole Adventist world to watch and witness, live! How can you lead under such circumstance - lamed and limping, nursing your bruised and battered leadership stance? May the Lord have mercy on us all as we continue to seek His will for the best good of the church.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

I think that is the saddest thing about the whole issue: we have now publicly demonstrated that we are a deeply divided family that no longer has trust in each other. I see it on here also. Those who oppose WO have obviously not heard a thing that those in favour have said because they keep repeating 'no biblical argument, all about culture'. Those who agree with WO do not trust the GC enough to wait, because they are worried that if they wait any chance of being heard will be taken away from them, or the outcome will be 'thanks for waiting, but you need to wait some more, and we can't say when or if your waiting will be over'.

We divide the church into 'us' and 'them' and refuse to see 'them' as sincere fellow church members. If we cannot find a way to disagree in a Christian manner, what is the point of pretending to be a Christian church. And no, I don't believe the rejoicing would have been any less had the vote gone the other way. It may have been less demonstrable, but the opponents of WO would have rejoiced that they had finally put the worldly feminist liberals in their place. I do not believe that supporters of women's ordination, or even of women in ministry while not ordained, can expect any grace should the issue of women working as pastors or being elders come up for a vote in 2015. The division will still be 'us' and 'them', or should I say 'right' and 'wrong'.

And whose fault is that. Don't just put it all on those demanding equality after 3 decades of broken promises. How well has President Wilson done in helping keep the Church together by playing down this issue? He has warned that our house might burn down whilst at the same time splashing gasoline everywhere. He came to the CUC and PUC holding a match, saying, 'My way or I let this place burn!' Perhaps we need a leader who genuinely can be like Peter, rather than the firebrands Paul (liberal) and James (conservative), in keeping us all together in the broad Church that we are.

Jean Corbeau
2 days ago

And so we come closer to fulfilling Sister White's prediction that the church would "appear as about to fall." What we saw yesterday can only hasten us to that dire situation.

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

As hard as it may be to believe (or condone), by not educating the church on arguments for WO (and against, although others have filled in the gap there), there may have been little else the GC could have done except to counsel patience. Had a vote been taken at any GC since 1975, women would not have been permitted to hold any office that required ordination. Whatever the BRI's conclusion is, and no matter what the GC may recommend - even if the Executive Committee issued a united appeal to support WO as being biblical - there is still a real danger of the GC in 2015 will still vote 'no' to WO.

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

Yes but:

1. If I recall previous articles on AToday, these 'ordination studies' have pre-ordained (pun intended) conclusions, because they go to all the BRI across the world, and the conclusion will no doubt be something to the effect of there being no unity on the issue.

2. We aren't talking about the world church accepting it. We are talking about the world church tolerating it. Perhaps the Unions think that given what you say is correct, it is much harder to stop something that is happening than it is to
Jean Corbeau  
a day ago  

"Perhaps we need a leader who genuinely can be like Peter, rather than the firebrands Paul (liberal) and James (conservative)..."

So now we're even criticising Paul and James, both of whom wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But such is the bewitching nature of rebellion. I puzzled how Paul can be considered liberal when he was so plain about not allowing women to have ecclesiastical authority, and he was so opposed to homosexuality.

William Noel  
a day ago  

Jean,  

Excuse me, but your lack of faith is showing. God has led our church through more divisive issues and He will lead us through this one. We got through the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s with the results of seeing racial barriers destroyed and greater unity develop in the church. God has an amazing ability to bring good out of circumstances that look terrible in the moment. But you will not capture the blessings God has for you in this situation so long as you are focused on your perception of a problem instead of God's ability to bring good out of it.

John Bunting  
2 days ago  

I too stayed up but missed part of Ted Wilson's talk by dropping off to sleep briefly so I missed the end of it B-( !

I expected to be bored but some of the presentations in favour of the motions were excellent & inspiring. Randy's ovation was well deserved.

I do not know what the situation regarding ordination of women as deaconesses is like in your part of the BUC but my straw polls show that most members are not aware women can be ordained (even one minister was not aware two months ago) and where members were aware, they are seldom ordaining deaconesses. Although the typical cultural background of the local church membership is rapidly changing in the BUC area, one would have thought that the BUC would have made some effort to publicise/encourage it - if they have, there seem to be a lot of members who missed out. As there are still quite a number of churches with female elders I assume that some churches would be happy with ordaining deaconesses.

This only confirms my expectations that ordination of women as pastors is unlikely to take place in our Union within the next 2 or 3 decades whatever happens in other parts of the world - or at the GC Sessions for that matter. But then I am a pessimist!

Kevin Riley  
2 days ago  

I am sure I remember deaconesses being ordained for a long time in Australia, but as I was only 13 in 1975 when it was approved, I can't guarantee it was before then. But I also know that not all churches ordain deaconesses, and not all deaconesses want to be ordained. Some find it hard enough to come up the front and set up the communion service between SS and church, and being the centre of attention - even as part of a small group - would be enough for some of them to decide not to be deaconesses. I believe my current church ordains deaconesses and deacons together, so there is no distinction. About half our elders are female, and one of our pastors, and there has been no real distinction between deacons and deaconesses for years when it comes to service in church, so I doubt that ordaining women to any position would cause any problem for most members.

William Noel  
2 days ago  

John,  

You have illustrated how a topic can be an issue in one part of the world but not in another. That is exactly the reason it is difficult to manage the church uniformly around the globe and why our leadership should stay focused on spreading the Gospel while leaving alone topics that distract from it. No, WO does not need to be a global issue, nor should it be allowed to become a global issue. I regard it like musical preferences in worship where you find large contrasts from one culture to another. We need to let the church adapt to the culture so it can be more effective in each culture.

William Noel  
a day ago  

Our challenge in 2015 is not to decide the issue of women's ordination, but to elect a real leader for the world church.

Joe Erwin  
2 days ago  

An organization that claims to stand for fairness and rightness cannot persist long in practices that are seen as unfair by most of the people in their larger social context.

There are, of course, regional differences in the extent to which the dominant socio-cultural context "sees" practices as fair or unfair.
Perhaps there is not a SINGLE correct answer for the church everywhere (or in every time) it exists. Maybe situational flexibility is the only pathway to unity. Or does the church have to be RIGHT about everything all the time everywhere because there is only ONE correct policy?

Stephen Ferguson
2 days ago

We don't even claim to stand for fairness and rightness - we even claim that it is one of our fundamental beliefs (#14), just like the Sabbath, Trinity or Bible!

Glen
2 days ago

In regard to Pastor Bachelor it says: "He referred to a statement by Ellen White in the book Acts of the Apostles (page 95) to support his belief that she taught against women serving as ordained ministers despite the fact that she carried those credentials herself."

Yes, Ellen White had a state issued minister's license, but I cannot find evidence that the church leaders laid their hands on her and ordained her. If there is such evidence I would like someone to post it here. Thanks.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

There has never been (AFAIK) any claim Ellen White was ordained as anything. The claim is she was granted, and accepted, an ordained minister's credential. The evidence for that has been available on line for years, and acknowledged by the White Estate (and anyone who bothered to check) for decades. Both she and the church was of the opinion that God's calling as His messenger made any recognition by the church redundant. While ordination is on one hand the acceptance by the church of God's calling, it is also a public recognition that the person being ordained speaks on behalf of the church and is subject to the church. Ellen White spoke for God to the church, and while she was a loyal member, her relationship was substantially different to that of a pastor or evangelist, or even of a NT prophet.

Issuing an ordained ministers credential was the best the church could do to recognise her calling, while still being aware that it wasn't an 'accurate' credential. But we have never had a "God's Messenger" credential, so what else could they do? When it comes to the question of women as pastors, Ellen White is not relevant. There are even conceptual problems with trying to extrapolate her authority to women in general. It does illustrate that God can and does call women to authoritative positions, but prophets have never been easily categorised as church employees.

William Noel
2 days ago

Glen,

In the Biblical practice of laying-on of hands those in whom a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit was present did it to pass along that empowerment to those who were less empowered. So it was not the church leaders who should have been laying hands on Ellen White, but vice versa.

Joe Erwin
2 days ago

It seems like there is a remarkable consistency in the proportion of those favoring no gender discrimination, about 4:1 ratio. So, at least in these assemblies, for every person opposing WO, there were four who favored it. That is impressive. What will the 20% do now? Split off into some cultish group, or stay and grumble about it?

All4Him
a day ago

Joe... I can guarantee that if you took all church members (grassroots) not the voting elite you would find a greater number of women and men that oppose WO for Biblical and SOP reasons. The website petition OneinChrist that was started in January with well over 1K signing it that first month has only 1,967. And the Christorculture site started much later has currently has 7,780 and growing.

It stands as a 4:1 ratio in the **opposite** direction Joe.....

We are not some cultish group. Go to a GYC event and ask the young men and women there what they believe on this subject, you just might be a little shocked by their answers. I know many men and women who in there hearts know it is not right yet are afraid of offending someones feelings say nothing. Though I have seen the lines becoming more black and white from shades of gray.

Are we ready now for a law suit when a male pastor decides to come out of the closet after coming out of the seminary and state that it has been voted that ordination is "without regard to gender." One you leave "thus saith the Lord" you open up the doors for all kinds of deviations of Truth. And mark my words, this will be the path soon taken by many who also want to push that agenda. So now we can keep up with the Presbyterians, Lutherans and Methodist and not feel left out?

William Rodriguez
a day ago

I just read page 95 of Acts of the Apostles. I don't see any reference there against or for WO. Sister White is writing about the ordination of the seven deacons. To me this chapter offers an exposition of that historical event, and an affirmation that God called these men to such a position of responsibility. Yes, she speaks of their qualifications; "The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God’s people in the time of Moses and of
David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that he who is called to stand in a position of leading responsibility in the church “must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Titus 1:7-9. – {AA 95.2} – AA 95.2*.

I'm not against WO. I believe that if a person is called by God to work in the ministry, God's will will be done. I'm just saddened by the feeling of discord and division that this issue has caused.

William Noel
a day ago

If I recall correctly, Doug Batchelor's view comes from God directing the selection of men. We need to discern whether that was what was appropriate for the societal practices of the time and if the same conditions exist today. We must also consider things like the Apostle Paul's declaration that he became "all things to all people" so that more could be reached with the Gospel and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given without regard to race, sex or social status.

Rudy Good
a day ago

It might just be that WO is not really the source of the discord and division, but more fundamental underlying attitudes that the WO issue has brought to the surface. If that is the case it might also be better that the division and discord are focused on this issue rather than some others.

J. David Newman
a day ago

The saddest part of this whole debate is how pointless it is----on both sides. You have heard me write in blogs before. Ordination itself, as we practice it, is a Roman Catholic practice not a biblical practice. The word ordain does not even appear in the Greek. All the texts that those opposed to WO used were not about ordination but about women serving or not serving. That is one of the reasons why there is so much confusion. It is also very very difficult for Elder Wilson since he does not even believe that women can serve as elders yet that is a voted position of the church. I pastored a church less than five miles from the church where he is a member. Before he became GC president he was chair of the board. One year the nomination committee brought a recommendation that a woman become elected as an elder in that church. He had enough influence that he vetoed the recommendation and it never came to the church for a vote. And there are still no women elders in that church of over 200 members.

So I feel very much for our president. How do you lead a world church when you personally are opposed to not just ordination of women pastors but the existence of women elders as well?

Jean Corbeau
a day ago

It is encouraging to see Elder Wilson hold his ground and not give in to the rabble. We wouldn't even be having this debate if the church had not departed from Scripture more than 30 years ago by allowing women to become elders. The fruits of rebellion ripen slowly sometimes, but we are now reaping what we have sown. Only the Lord can rescue us from ourselves.

William Noel
a day ago

David,

It is painful to see the leader of our church so stiffly disregarding the guiding of the Holy Spirit.

Patti Grant
a day ago

William Noel, I agree, and it was also painful to see the leader of our church imperiously disregard the time limits allotted to guest speakers as well as Elder Ricardo Graham's request that speakers not delegate portions of their own time to additional speakers. It is clear that Ted Wilson is determined to impose his will on those he labels as "rebellious."

Rudy Good
a day ago

David,

I respect what you say and who you are, but I want to ask you an impertinent question. What do you mean when you say you "feel very much for our president"?

It occurs to me that one problem with where we are in the church is that so often those who most clearly see the
spiritual landscape and its pitfalls are not bold enough in decrying bad leadership. In our desire to be gentle, humble, and respectful we let those driven by something other than the Spirit of God to rule the day with their unchallenged rhetoric and propaganda.

We are all human and Ted Wilson is as capable as the next person to be right or wrong. I do not question his sincerity as an individual. I do question his leadership. While every human being may have spiritual blind spots, we should never hesitate to boldly and candidly challenge church leadership that chooses a course that is clearly intended to bind its members to loyalty to the organization rather than to Jesus Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. When followers of Christ submit to this kind of leadership the cause of Christ suffers and church becomes impotent.

It appears to me that Ted is ambitious, somewhat narrow minded, and enjoys exercising power in ways that do not serve the church. I think these are characteristics that are a temptation to many who head the conferences, unions, divisions, as well as GC offices of importance and power. It is the nature of worldly principalities and powers. Men that succumb to these temptations regardless of their perceived piety are "the" real danger to the church. They develop a constituency of people with similar spirits in both the church employees and members and use that influence to dominate the church.

I am sad for those who choose this course. But, I don't have much sympathy when they wind up entangled by the power structures they hope to use and manipulate. The WO issue has been fanned into heated flames by the Ted's posture. It is hard to imagine a righteous motive on Ted's part for what he is doing. If the SDA church is headed for division, then certainly Ted will have a lot to do with precipitating the crises.

I know that there is a vocal and empowered segment of the church membership that will decry what I say as an unwarranted attack on a great leader. It has always been this way, those who see themselves as more righteous than most of those around them want a leader who justifies and encourages their self-righteousness. This is the spirit of the Pharisees that opposed Christ. Sadly, this same spirit has remained near to the heart of Adventism throughout most of its history. In the last 20-30 years there seemed to be some hope that this Spirit was fading from Adventism. It is hard for me to hold my tongue when it appears that the current leadership is determined to restore and perpetuate that spirit.

Pastor Andrea Trusty King's testimony of her call to the ministry, is strangely lacking from the commentary following the vote. While Elder Castillo and Past Roberts spoke eloquently in favor of women's ordination, their presentations all the more supported embracing those, like Pastor King, who have answered God's call. It is past time that we recognize that we cannot decide on whom God's Spirit will be poured.

I'm thankful that my union, the Columbia Union, has been at the vanguard of encouraging women in ministry. May God continue to pour out His Spirit and may we respond in doing the work of the Kingdom.

Jean, I hear what you are saying. Once we allowed women elders we cannot really forbid women pastors. And yes, we now have, officially, women pastors. The debate now is no longer theological, the church has made its decision, rightly or wrongly, the issue now is simply one of fairness and justice. What biblical principle do you use for saying that two people doing the same job cannot be recognized in the same way?

And how do you dismiss more than 1,000 women elders and more than 100 women pastors in the NAD?

You are right we really need the Lord more than ever.

I'm sure that that quote may not apply to the conservative position on WO which insists on a surface reading of Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women... http://www.atoday.org/article/1354/news/august-headlines/pacific-union...
certain passages of Scripture?

Elaine Nelson
a day ago

I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard about the "shaking coming" for every new situation with which the church was confronted. Such overuse of this EGW quotation diminishes its importance each time it is used. It's like the boy who called "wolf" when nothing was imminent, then when the wolf actually approached, everyone was unmoved.

If ordaining women is evidence of the "shaking" such people will be really shaken out of their boots when much greater changes come.

David Barr
a day ago

I wish I had 50 cents for every time I heard "soon" or "last days". I think my piggy bank would not only be heavier but have mo' money than Elaine's.

All4Him
a day ago

ad·vent/ ˈadˌvent/ Noun:
1. The arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

We could start a new sect called "Seventh-Day-VENTist" instead of ADVENTist. (I will not take the time define vent....) If you do not think we are in the "toenails" of Daniel 2 then where are we folks. I think we ought to wake up and smell the trumpets....

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

I believe Jesus tells two related but largely opposite stories about His Comming.

In Matt 24, He talks about a situation where Jesus comes before they were expecting. Like the days of Noah, they don't think Jesus will ever come, and continue about their daily lives, eating and drinking, getting married, working in the fields. The Master in v48 says to himself, 'my Master won't be back a while', yet Jesus does return before the expected time.

By contrast, in Matt 25 and the parable of the ten virgins, the Bridegroom returns much later than expected. In fact, the Bridegroom takes so long that all of them (not just 5 of them) fell asleep.

The point being, I believe Jesus (and/or the redactor Matthew) is making an important point. We need to be careful of acting like the boy who cried wolf, looking at every single little thing in the world (or in the Church, like WO) as evidence that this is the end. People get tired of that, and so tired they end up asleep, like the virgins. However, it is equally dangerous to think the end will never come, as the Master did, because in that story the 'signs' were not as dramatic as many first thought, and life pretty much continued right up to the end like in the days of Noah.

Something to think about.

Jean Corbeau
about 23 hours ago

Mock on. You won't be mocking when it's all over.

Elaine Nelson
about 23 hours ago

Jean,

Does that mean that there will be "grave consequences"?

Angie Williams
a day ago

I dont know President Wilson personally, but God put President Wilson in office for such a time as this. He is the man for the job. The mindset of many adventist today is secular and liberal, seekers of prosperity, title, worldliness. This vote means nothing to God if it rebels against His word which is the highest authority we've been given. Being allowed vs being approved by God are two different things. God will allow acts of rebellion to expose breaches that have covered up by a history of sophistries. Scripture says not to add or take away from the word of God or will be found a liar. We support our President. But most importantly God stands behind him.

Jean Corbeau
a day ago

Thanks for that, Angie, and thanks for that timely quote from TM. Interestingly, I've included that statement in my next sermon, which is on the shaking.
Praise God Jean!:)
Patti Grant
a day ago

Would some knowledgeable person please give me a brief background on what Elder Ernie Castillo referred to as steps taken last fall by GC officers "to force the NAD to back off on a policy that would have permitted commissioned ministers, including women, to serve as conference presidents"? Working policy E 60.

I would also like to know what specific time limits were provided to guest speakers, as opposed to those two minutes given to delegates. Due to time constraints some delegates may have had to leave before the vote was taken in order to get to the airport for their flights. I thought it was the height of hubris that TW disregarded those limits, as well as inserting two other speakers into his own allotted time, which had specifically been denied to him before the meeting started. Quite revealing.

Kevin Riley
a day ago

NAD voted to change the wording from saying that a president must be 'an ordained minister' to 'an ordained/commissioned minister'. The GC (correctly) pointed out that as a division of the GC and not a separate entity, NAD could not change GC policy. That is when it became obvious that any change would have to come at union level, which is a separate entity with its own constituency, and so has authority in the area of ordination.

ANN
a day ago

Pastor Roberts thankfully addressed all the points comprehensively with a beautiful spirit. As for those who consider this to be rebellion, he covered that in an understandable, Biblical way. From Manuscript 10, 1905, Ellen White says: "Our church members see that there are differences of opinion among the leading men, and they themselves enter into controversy regarding the subjects under dispute. Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices."

Ann Fisher
a day ago

This is the first time I have expressed my opinion publicly, but I feel compelled to share my feelings at this time. As a young woman I felt a call to ministry, but in those days a woman in ministry was unthinkable. So I married one instead. We have spent our lives working for the church as missionaries in the former Far Eastern Division with the Chinese people and in America—almost exclusively in education.

As many of you may know, most of the pastors in mainland China are ordained women. God has used women in a mighty way to grow and nurture the church in China. This was done without any vote by the GC or any man claiming "church authority." God chose these women, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the results are evident to the glory of God.

I have not heard one word from Ted Wilson about these Chinese pastors causing division in the world church. In fact, the growing church in China is celebrated. Why is church unity dependent on church uniformity? We are not all the same. Cultures are very diverse, even in Biblical times. Paul had to contend with the Judaizers who couldn't accept any differences in policy when gentiles were introduced into the church. We have our share of those today.

For decades American Adventists couldn't wear wedding rings, while good Adventists in other countries around the world wore them in good standing. It wasn't until church leaders from these other countries were elected to the GC and came to Washington with their wedding rings, that the church culture here in America was forced to make a change in policy. These were cultural issues that were not universally enforced in the church. I don't recall any great divisions in the world church because of that issue.

We were members of Pioneer Memorial Church when Esther Knott joined the pastoral team. I still remember the first sermon Esther preached at PMC. It was my first experience hearing a woman preacher. I was so emotionally touched, that I cried. God created us in His image—both male and female. However, we women only get to hear God's message through male voices, and thus only experience one side of God's image. Men can never understand this, and they are the ones in our church with the power to make the decisions for all of us. We need to see God through a woman's eyes as well as a man's to get a complete picture of God.

As a grandmother, I pray that if my granddaughter hears a call from God to ministry she will not be discouraged and disheartened by men who wish to hold on to power in the false name of a loving God who needs every Christian—male, female, young and old—to call a lost world to repentance before it is too late. The harvest is ripe. Don't turn away half of the reapers!

William Noel
a day ago

Ann,

Thank you for reminding us of how the calling to ministry is personal, from God and how many can be effective who have been overlooked.

We need to expand our concept of "ministry." Some in the New Testament, like Paul and the other Apostles, were evangelists. But the Holy Spirit empowered many to perform other roles we don't hear about. The Apostolic Church should be our model for how the church is to operate today under the direct and intimate guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In that church there were no paid clergy. What is more, our concept of a "pastor" is based entirely on
Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women to... http://www.atoday.org/article/1354/news/august-headlines/pacific-union...

An institution preoccupied with perpetuating its own distinct identity at the expense of the Christian fundamentals will inevitably become out of touch and end up with an impotent spiritual message. IMO, Ted's position on the WO is one more indication that he has no idea what is really happening in the pews of the NAD churches and why the majority of churches are dying. He has energized his constituency within the church, but those are the very ones who share the spiritual blindness.

An institution preoccupied with perpetuating its own distinct identity at the expense of the Christian fundamentals will inevitably become out of touch and end up with an impotent spiritual message. IMO, Ted's position on the WO is one more indication that he has no idea what is really happening in the pews of the NAD churches and why the majority of churches are dying. He has energized his constituency within the church, but those are the very ones who share the spiritual blindness.

J. David Newman
a day ago

On thinking alike Ellen White said this: "One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God.

He needs to be brave enough to admit that the GC in session has made mistakes. Even gatherings like that do not always hear the voice of God clearly. Ellen White said there were times when it was not the voice of God. It was Ellen White who said, "There are some lessons that are never learned only through failure. Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 12-16-02. Now she was speaking specifically about Peter but the principle applies to organizations as well. The actual divisiveness in this situation will be if Elder Wilson continues to pursue the Unions and try and impose some form of "punishment" as he intimated at the Columbia Union Session.

Rudy Good
a day ago

Well David,

I have reflected some on different things you said and I can imagine some very difficult things and I am sure there are many I can't imagine. But, Ted seems to be committed to reversing some of what I see as advances the church has made in not taking itself so seriously. IMO, we cannot take the true head of the church seriously when we take ourselves so seriously. Ted is trying to exercise something akin to the papal model without the structure and authority we call God. Ideally the church leadership should be so attuned to the Holy Spirit that God helps them recognize divine calling in a person. Unfortunately that is rarely the case and this controversy over the ordination of women is proof of how little our church leaders are connected with the Holy Spirit.

Jack Hoehn
about 9 hours ago

Oh, Ann, thank you for revealing your lovely soul. We do need to hear more from godly women like yourself, who have so patiently born this cross, but who rejoice when the Spirit moves us forward towards Eden restored. Forgive us men for being so slow to move.

J. David Newman
a day ago

Rudi
You write,
"I respect what you say and who you are, but I want to ask you an impertinent question. What do you mean when you say you "feel very much for our president"?"

It is not an impertinent question. It is a good question. Unless one has served in top leadership positions one has no idea of the challenges that are unique to that position. I have known Elder Wilson ever since he led a group of seminary students for a field school of evangelism in Glasgow Scotland. I was a pastor in that country and a participant in the field school. At the General Conference session in New Orleans in 1985 my children baby sat his children during the session and we would often chat when we came to pick up our children. I believe he is sincere in what he is doing.

He is trying to keep a world church together without a papal system. In the Catholic system the pope has the power to remove any bishop that he so chooses. Not so in our system. Right after the Davenport fiasco Elder Pierson, GC president, and Neal Wilson, NAD president traveled to Mid America to ask the Union Exec Comm to fire its president. The Committee did. Then the two men travelled to the Southwestern Union to make the same request. The Exec Comm listened and then said "No Thanks. We like our president and we will keep him." And they did.

I grew up in the mission field, pastored in Michigan, Scotland, Ohio, and Maryland. During my 11 years at the GC I traveled the world and found how difficult it was to communicate effectively every time. Culture is important. The challenge for Elder Wilson is that he has not clarified in his own mind what is unity and what is uniformity. The decision on women elders was made a division decision. The mistake was making women pastors a world decision. If it had remained a division decision we would not be here now.

He needs to be brave enough to admit that the GC in session has made mistakes. Even gatherings like that do not always hear the voice of God clearly. Ellen White said there were times when it was not the voice of God. It was Ellen White who said, "There are some lessons that are never learned only through failure. Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, 12-16-02. Now she was speaking specifically about Peter but the principle applies to organizations as well. The actual divisiveness in this situation will be if Elder Wilson continues to pursue the Unions and try and impose some form of "punishment" as he intimated at the Columbia Union Session.

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What bothers me most is the apparent lack of spiritual discernment. Adventism and its distinctives have some importance in the grand scheme, but we keep giving them the highest priority as if we believe the fundamentals of Christianity in is members and progeny.

J. David Newman
a day ago

On thinking alike Ellen White said this: "One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God.
But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. **We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light.** The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance. Satan can sow discord; Christ alone can harmonize the disagreeing elements. Then let every soul sit down in Christ's school and learn of Christ, who declares Himself to be meek and lowly of heart. Christ says that if we learn of Him, worries will cease and we shall find rest to our souls. {11MR 266.1}

Rudy Good
a day ago

That is a very interesting quote I have heard some similar, but this one is especially poignant. It is very applicable to the current situation. Unfortunately, there are so many statements that there almost always seem to be another that will appear to contradict the plainest statements.

Kevin Riley
a day ago

Unfortunately too many people are still portraying this as a dispute between a small group which refuses to accept the authority of the Bible and the world church (particularly in the person of the GC President) standing firm in support of the Bible, rather than a difference in understanding of what the Bible means and how it should be applied. Until the GC President and others can convince the majority that this is a legitimate difference of opinion - and Ted Wilson has said that - we will not see the issue resolved. Why would people who have been convinced that the Bible is solidly against WO, and that all its supporters argue from culture rather than then the Bible, bother to even listen to arguments in favour? Until they can do that, we cannot expect them to consider allowing diversity in this issue. Given that situation, a brave GC President would deal with the issue at Annual Council rather than GC session - as was done with the decision to ordain women as elders. The GC has already approved women working as pastors, and granting them almost all the rights of ordained pastors, so all that is left is the decision on ordination. That is why the GC settled it for me!

Angie Williams
a day ago

Im posting the remaining part of this good quote

"The great truths of the Word of God are so clearly stated that none need make a mistake in understanding them. When as individual members of the church, you love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself, there will be no need of labored efforts to be in unity, for there will be oneness in Christ as a natural result. **MR 11 266**

This brings me to also wonder if Truth seeker is right in suggesting that there may be an element of insubordination in the current situation. For if the President of GC has asked church leaders/members to hold off on this move and they refuse, then in God's eyes that is an open act of rebellion against the church that has been given highest earthly authority. Which leads me to question...

Why or how can the Holy Spirit of the living God even be a part of any of these future ordination services, when technically they are being done in a state of rebellion(disunity) against His world church? President Wilson kindly asked for this to just be postponed with a plan of action, 2 conferences said no=disunity. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?....Matt 7:22. The more serious issue has shifted from wo to rebellion.

God's Will Paramount
a day ago

That settles it for me!

Forrest Howe
a day ago

Here's a question I want to ask. If a church entity, ie. a union is at odds with a world church voted policy which is in turn a violation of a higher authority, ie Fundamental Belief, then is the union really in rebellion or out of harmony with the world church? Wouldn't the world church policy be void?

Kevin Riley
a day ago

No, not void, just in need of changing. If the GC removed gendered language from 2 or 3 sentences, then the policy would come into line with the FB, and the practice in every union and division when it comes to ordination would be in line with policy. We could keep intact, without change, all we say on the qualifications for ordination, as the only reference to gender is in the introductory sentence where it says 'man' and later where it says 'the candidate and his wife'. It would literally take no more than five minutes for that to be re-written and all would be well again.

Truth Seeker
a day ago

"...the progressives had been as organized as evidently were the conservatives, who disproportionately controlled the microphones."

You aren't serious are you, Walters? The allegation has been made that the whole show was rigged in favor of WO and confirmed that even in the preliminary meeting in Loma Linda (was it?) on Sabbath that those opposed were not even given a chance to express their views. One view predominated this rebellious meeting; so much so it was
stifling.

One hopes that the GC will soon take the appropriate action to quell the wildfire of insubordination.

Kevin Riley
a day ago

And should that action set the whole church on fire, what then? I thought the NAD president gave the best speech of the day.

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

"One hopes that the GC will soon take the appropriate action to quell the wildfire of insubordination."

These types of statements always make be laugh. Pres Wilson warns of 'grave consequences' through schism. Then people like Truth Seeker demand a civil war to 'crush the rebellion'. Then others suggest this is proof of the shaking.

Don't you think these explosive statements are self-fulfilling prophecies? Wilson and the conservatives warn of the dangers of the house burning down, but then spread gasoline everywhere by playing up the issues rather than trying to calm down the situation. Then he and others light a match, saying, 'My way all we let this whole house burn down'. That is a pretty problematic strategy if you ask me.

Has anyone stopped and thought that if this is the shaking, and the Church appears it might fall, it is because people like Truth Seeker are the ones ready to start a fight that ignites in a civil war? Pres Wilson's #1 job now should be to calm things down, not ratchet them up.

Tapiwa Mushaninga
a day ago

I believe the NAD and some of its unions are aristocratic. the irony is that while they are supposedly fighting for equality they think they are better than everyone else if they believed in equality then why would they not wait for a GC session? Counterfeit equality is self evident

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

In contrast to Ted Wilson II, the son and namesake of a previous GC president.

The Unions in NAD (and the rest of the Western Church - people forget Europe and South Pacific) do not think they are better than everyone else. If they did, they would be suggesting the whole world adopt WO. Rather, they want to achieve equality in their own Unions and to be left alone by the GC to do so. It is the Developing World who is trying to subject its own cultural views onto the Western Church.

Tapiwa Mushaninga
a day ago

Firstly calling our president Ted Wilson II is unChristlike I know you are trying to paint him as a pope. His father was Neil Wilson so why call him Ted Wilson II when his father was Neil not Ted?

Secondly your point of the developing world imposing its will is null and void because it is not the developing that suggested that we not ordain women but it was actually the west! You knew you joined a non women ordaining church and yet you still joined! The non ordaining issue was not imposed by the developing world but we found it like that when we joined as well.

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

Sorry I meant President Wilson II. The point I was trying to make is he seems like a Sevy Aristocrat himself of the highest order. When I grew up in the Church, to convert parents, it use to drive me crazy when people (usually older) would ask who my family was and then think I was a nobody because I wasn't related to anyone they know.

We are an extremely aristocratic Church. No doubt you are probably right in that we are probably more aristocratic in areas of the world, like the US and Australia, where there have been 3, 4 and 5 generations of Adventists. However, my point is Pres Wilson II is an aristocrat himself of the highest order.

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

And I should just say in my slight defence there is Neil C Wilson (#1) who was GC President and now Ted N C Wilson (#2). I think it kind of illustrates my point about an aristocratic Church family. But I do agree with you there are many such aristocratic Church families, especially in the West.

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

"You knew you joined a non women ordaining church and yet you still joined!"

Interesting argument. I think it is worth exploring below in further detail.

God's Will Paramount
a day ago

Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women t... http://www.atoday.org/article/1354/news/august-headlines/pacific-union...
To simply change the wording male in any policy on ordination to "gender" or "gender inclusive" is to open the door to potential problems we never intended and bargained for and put us at odds with the political powers that be. This article from Australia will explain what I mean -

http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/gender_bending_let_me_count_the_ways/.

Twenty three genders (23) are listed there, although most people accept that in the beginning God created male and female, in His own image (Gen 1:27). Sadly, unlike the Church, the world's agenda does not recognise or take God into account in their policies.

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

If a hermaphrodite wanted to become an ordained minister - would you vote to stop them? What about a castrated man? The question might seem silly today, but it was a real life issue in the NT times.

Remember, castrated men were not 'whole men' under Jewish Law and were forbidden from the priesthood and even from entering the Temple. Yet Isaiah prophesied a time when Eunuchs and other incomplete men would be able to enter the Temple.

It was this message that the Ethiopian Eunuch grabbed onto when baptized by Philip. When the Ethiopian returned to his own country, do you think he waited until an ordained Apostle turned up – hardly, he was the Apostle to his country!

This is the radical egalitarian message of the Gospel. Yes, all 23 genders (if such a thing exists), including 'whole men', 'slave men', 'citizen men', Jewish men, Greek men, eunuchs, celibates, asexuals and transsexuals, hermaphrodites and all types of women have equality in Christ.

Edwin A. Schwisow
about 22 hours ago

I think a lot of us grew up in an Adventist church that taught that the male Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices of male animals, and the like, were symbolic precursors to the Son of Man, who would come to earth as a man to fulfill the symbology and do in life what Adam could not do. "It is finished" Jesus declared of this system, and "your house is left to you desolate," and within four decades, not only was the veil torn from top to bottom (initially) but the whole edifice was burned and razed, never again to be rebuilt. Jesus had accomplished that which was needed to erase the sin which had "entered the world through one man," as the Bible makes abundantly clear. Why is it that we still seem so enamored of using the Old Testament as a foundation for our New Testament church?

I can understand that in the process of reaching the Muslims (for example) churches in Indonesia and elsewhere might choose to follow a more Muslim routine of service, with music that appeals to Muslims, and an all-male clergy—with the acknowledgement that this is an accommodation for cultural sensitivities of the congregations involved. This is but another argument for diversity on these matters of non-binding Gospel practice from culture to culture, and even from church to church.

For example, there is one Adventist church not far from my home where a significant number of members feel very uncomfortable displaying the General Conference logo on the church sign. Properly, there is no General Conference edict that requires members of this church to use that logo; in fact, this church is well within its rights to create any kind of art it wishes for its sign, and in this instance seems inclined to emphasize the three angels flying in the midst of heaven. This kind of maleability is not a "weakness" of Adventism, but a strength, and gives local congregations the wherewithall to fine-tune their practices to the perceived needs of the community. This church in question, I might add, is in a part of the country where denominationalism is seen as inauthentic, and many if not most congregations in the vicinity emphasize their ties to the community rather than their ties to any denomination. "Central authority" that "requires compliance" except in the most fundamental areas of faith destroys rather than promotes unity and growth.

Truth Seeker
a day ago

"Rebellion in the church is caused by its members feeling "opposed" to God and to His terms of salvation. Human beings want abundant room to express themselves and to "attract" attention. They do not know or understand that they are working out the plans of Satan." Christ Triumphant, p.227,(Emphasis Supplied)

Need I say more?

Stephen Ferguson
a day ago

So are you saying WO is a salvation issue?

Jean Corbeau
about 17 hours ago

Any kind of rebellion against God's word or will is a salvation issue. God reads the mind. Those who are in rebellion against God will be judged accordingly. Those who sincerely desire to know the truth about this issue (or any other for that matter) will continue to ask for divine enlightenment, and God judges them according to the light they have accepted or rejected.

Edwin A. Schwisow
about 10 hours ago
I have a question for those who hold that women in ministry is a salvational issue. Assuming that one has a choice of two churches, one that insists on keeping Sunday with a male pastor, the other that meets on Sabbath with a woman, is it better to worship on the wrong day with a male than on the right day with a female?

This is not a trick question. Compared to Sabbath breaking, how bad is gender-breaking? Is male-only ordination as thick a pillar for you as the seventh-day Sabbath, or belief in Christ's Second Coming? Will the day come when our "true-and-faithful" church signs will need to carry a subtext, "Seventh-day Adventist Church, (Patriarchal)?"

Stephen Ferguson about 10 hours ago

Please answer Edwin's question. After that, could you clarify for me then that Churches and Adventists that allow the eating of meat are likewise in rebellious apostasy against God's own counsel through SOP and won't be saved?

How about those who don't follow dress reform? How about those who join the military? How about those who wear jewelry? How about those who own an expensive bicycle or car? How about someone who joins a trade Union? How about some who eats bacon or drinks coffee? How about someone who is less than faithful in paying tithe? How about someone who has been divorced?

How about those who believe all the FBs including the Sabbath, Trinity, Soul Sleep and even the Sanctuary doctrine, but don't believe Ellen White was a prophet - or believe in her in a different way than you do?

Perhaps you are being a little bit extreme in elevating WO to a salvation issue? The only other Church I do do that is the Roman Catholic faith. If a Catholic priest is a paedophile, that can be forgiven (and has been much swept under the carpet). But if a female is ordained as a priest, both the one doing the ordaining and the one being ordained are instantly excommunicated! How do you think Jesus Christ would deal with such an attitude?

Stephen Ferguson about 24 hours ago

Tapiwa says, "You knew you joined a non women ordaining church and yet you still joined!"

Interesting argument. If I was old enough to join the SDA Church in its beginning some 150 years ago, I would also be joining a Church that didn't really believe in the Trinity, and where many of its prominent leaders embraced Arianism, Pantheism and a number of aberrations. I would also be joining a Church that embraced legalism and not really salvation by grace through faith. I would also be joining a 'shut door' Church that believed that it was too late to be saved. I would even be joining a Church that still wasn't sure about pork, that thought Sabbath started at midnight - need I go on?

When you joined the Church Tapiwa I assume there was not yet the new FB#11. Did you protest this new addition? Your argument is nothing more than tradition as if our beliefs should be set in stone without the possibility of new light.

I can only think of one major Christian denomination that embraces such an idea - the Roman Catholic faith! And even they are more open to new light than what you are proposing (even John Paul had visions and there was Vatican II). Thus, you seem to be advocating something akin to ultra-traditional Catholicism.

No when I joined the SDA Church, I joined a Church with a long history of be anti-creedal, open to theological discovery, belief in present truth, progressive revelation and new light. When I gave my baptismal vows embracing the SDA fundamental beliefs, I noted none said anything about WO but rather promoted equality in Christ under FB#14 regardless of race, status or gender. When I gave me baptismal vow embracing the SDA fundamentals, I did so on the proviso of the preamble to our FBs, which state categorically:

"Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."

Those seeking gender equality are living up to the philosophy of our pioneers, in seeking revision as led by the Holy Spirit, rather than being secret servants of Papal tradition.

Nathan Schilt about 22 hours ago

Nicely stated, Stephen. I have appreciated your comments on this story.

Many, both pro and con, place great weight on the potential impact of the Union Conference actions on the world institution. This puzzles me. I understand the need for institutions. And I am very grateful for the institutional legacy of Adventism. But institutions, especially church institutions, exist to facilitate and subserve a greater mission than their own self-preservation. Is it possible that they can become too big to fail, or that their subsidiary institutions can become too large and too business-like for the parochial interests of an ostensibly Spirit-driven movement? Might "creative destruction" actually help to grow the Adventist movement and allow/force it to mature and individuate in the lives of diverse communities? Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it is just a grain of wheat; but if it falls to the ground, it brings forth much fruit." Could the same be true of institutions? Is it possible or desirable for institutions to be prepared to die to self?

I suspect it is the unfortunate doctrine of "Remnancy" that has kept the Church, as General Conference, mired in the metanarrative of its eternal destiny. But does anyone really think that the SDA Church will be running a victory lap any time soon? "Remnancy" is it? True and faithful church signs will need to carry a subtext, "Seventh-day Adventist Church, (Patriarchal)?"
Rudy Good  
about 18 hours ago  

Well said, Stephen and Nathan.

Ervin Taylor  
about 14 hours ago  

Stephen and Nate are to be lauded for their "straight testimony" (Hmm. I trying to figure out where I got that phrase). Nate's comment about the effects of believing that the institutional Adventist Church is the "Remnant Church" is spot on.

Tapiwa Mushaninga  
about 5 hours ago  

Nathan

So want you essentially want is to see Adventism disintergrate into congregationalism no doubt to do as you like without transparency and accountability. Congregationalism is detrimental to the core mission of adventism and simply removes the purpose of why we even exist. If you do not believe that we are the remnant then your reasons for being in this church are disingenuos at best. I mean why did you not raise the issue when you were vowing on your baptism?

Stephen

I am not opposed to new light I am simply saying new light is not diametrically opposed to old light. I still maintain you are inconsistent at the core of your reasoning. Why remain in an entity to which you are opposed to basically most of what it stands for. I do not see you joining the Roman Catholics to change their beliefs. Adventists are rigid nor was I advocating for a non changing entity I am simply saying there are protocols to advocate that change and the unions have violated that. As you also quoted "Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word." note it says at a GC session not at union level!

To me that is clear cut rebellion and that in and of itself is evidence that this is not a God led endevour. You always like categorising those who disagree as Roman Catholics which to me is irony because it your side that wants to build bridges with them!

You are an advocate of lawlessness and anarchy. Why not follow the correct channels to change? Or yeah I forgot you believe People are saved in sin not from it. The sanctuary is a major core doctrine and yet many on this site do not believe it and all those within our ranks who deny the sanctuary all support WO it seems error comes in packages!

Truth Seeker  
about 15 hours ago  

"Those seeking gender equality are living up to the philosophy of our pioneers, in seeking revision as led by the Holy Spirit, rather than being secret servants of Papal tradition."

This gender equality argument is right out of Betty Frieden's playbook; she was notorious for her statements and philosophy. Again Papal tradition is a distraction having not one whit to do with WO. Why not try convincing with succinct Biblical exegesis?

Ervin Taylor  
about 14 hours ago  

That WO reflects proper Biblical exegesis has been demonstrated to everyone who does not have a whole set of dubious assumptions about what all of the Scriptures teach in contrast to a few "key" texts typically taken out of context.

Kevin Riley  
about 6 hours ago  

'Proper exegesis' is not one of those terms anyone has yet defined. Too often it means 'exegesis that gives the answer I want'. I believe there are better and worse ways of exegeting Scripture, but I suspect that at least some of the 'better' ways can lead to a decision that women cannot hold church offices. Obviously some lead to other conclusions.

What is frustrating about the current situation is that neither good exegesis not logic - or even common sense - would ever lead us to where the GC policy currently places us. And that is not the fault of any leader or group of leaders. The GC sessions have approved the current positon of women working as pastors where the Division agrees, and to giving them almost all the rights of an ordained pastor with approval by union presidents, but has refused to take the final step and recognise that work with ordination. The current 'crisis' may have come quicker than expected, but surely everyone saw it coming? As is asked elsewhere - why now?

SDA has the llighit for this time  
about 12 hours ago  

Antonett Archbold  

Good, very good on all the knowledge that we as SDA have. We really are the laodiceans church, having gold that has not being refindiede by fire. Can we call this "women ordination" the fire that we need to be refined. Both parties has good biblical reasons, but none has call, or ask the LORD of LORD what should be done in HIS vineyard. Oh!
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Kevin Riley
about 6 hours ago

I believe that you get to the heart of the issue that has a real potential to divide our church: in so many issues both sides do have good biblical reasons for what they believe, and yet it seems we cannot discuss those issues on that basis but must first cast one side as 'opponents of truth'. I remember this issue was addressed in 1888, but it seems we are determined to forget most of what we should have learnt from that episode in our history. I feel really disheartened when I read harsh responses from either side (here and elsewhere) and then see others approving what was said (and by implication, how it was said). If we cannot discuss any issue as Christians - recognising the 'other side' as also being Christian - what is the point? If I were looking for a reason to become a SDA - or even a Christian - I would find very little in the way so many behave.

I also agree with your other point: why can't we simply come together and ask God to show us the answer? I suspect it is because so many of us are so busy defending/fighting for the church to be the way we want it to be that what God wants has become a lesser issue then being right or winning.

IMO - which may not count for much - both the unions and the GC have behaved childishly over this issue. I can understand to an extent what motivates both sides, but it seems so many 'better ways', in the past as well as now, were not followed which is why we are where we are. Sometimes (way too often in our church) so much blame lies on both sides that it would be better if we just said 'sorry, we messed up' and let God find someone else to do his work. Do we still care about why we are here?

Tapiwa Mushaninga
about 5 hours ago

To an extent I agree with you

Joe Erwin
about 2 hours ago

Kevin's point is a very good one, and it is good to see that Tapiwa agrees, at least to some extent.

The thing is, my guess is that both sides of this argument, or any argument in which those with opposing views advocate seeking God's enlightenment on the issue, is that people will only recognize "the Voice of God" when it tells them what they want to hear. Few admit that God simply is not forthcoming with additional instructions on specific issues.

By His silence, God's instructions may be "I've already informed you to treat others as you wish to be treated, what more do you want?" Or maybe, God is saying "Grow up! Maybe when you are able to make correct decisions in matters like these we can move on to the next phase of development." Or maybe, when you pray for guidance, there is no one there to answer at all.

Kevin Riley
about an hour ago

I prefer to believe that God answers when we ask in faith. If we won't listen, why should he answer? I believe the fact that he calls, equips, and blesses women in ministry is a good pointer to what his answer would be. When what we believe God should be doing is out of sync with what we see him doing, it is time to reconsider our beliefs. When it comes to a choice between humans misunderstanding God, or God getting it wrong, I would back God every time.

Joe Erwin
10 minutes ago

Of course, it is much easier if one is delusional or is able to hallucinate....

Anonymous

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Pacific Union Conference Votes to Authorize the Ordination of Women...
Editorial: Is the Women's Ordination Issue about Unity or Uniformity?

Submitted: Aug 13, 2012
By J. David Newman

The issue of whether women may be ordained as pastors which has been simmering for fifty years has finally boiled over, splattering a wide area of the world church. The first union to vote for ordaining women pastors received little notice. At the fifth constituency session of the North German Union Conference, meeting in Geseke on April 22 and 23, the delegates voted approval of ordination for women serving in pastoral ministry. The resolution was approved by more than a two-thirds majority of the delegates.

But when the Columbia Union of the North American Division voted on July 29, 2012 to ordain pastors without regard to gender a veritable blizzard of objections from the General Conference blanketed the landscape. As reported in a special edition of the *Adventist Review*, August 10, 2012 four separate documents or interviews have been published. Dire consequences are being threatened for these actions. However, no details have been forthcoming about what these consequences might be. (http://us.mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?rand=8lpe6k6lvpo5q)

The Pacific Union Conference is taking up the same issue at its special constituency session August 19. This article will explore the following points: (1) How is the General Conference defining unity? (2) What is unity? And why the issue of women’s ordination is actually a uniformity issue. (3) Did the church make a mistake when it decided that women’s ordination must be a world issue? (4) What is the importance of policy? And when can we differ from a set policy? (5) What does Ellen White say about rigidly following policies?

An appendix records the full report and recommendations from The Council on the Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This council was authorized by the General Conference Executive Committee and convened September 16-19, 1973 at Camp Mohaven, Ohio. As you read this report you will wonder why we are still studying the issue when it made very clear recommendations on the role of women and their ordination. Twenty-six papers were presented and nothing new has come to light that would change their recommendations. Yet, we still keep appointing study commissions.

General Conference Definition of Unity

World Church Leaders recently issued a document entitled *Questions and Answers Regarding Current Issues of Unity Facing the Church*. Question number ten asked, “What is the difference between unity and uniformity?”

There is much that could be said in answer to the other questions the document lists but this article only deals with the subject of unity. Here is how the General Conference defines unity and uniformity: “The difference between ‘unity’ and ‘uniformity’ is in how these words end. They both start with ‘uni’—a Latin prefix meaning ‘one,’ but it is what comes after that ‘one’ that explains the oneness. Unity is ‘the state of being one, being united, as of the parts of a whole,’ but uniformity is ‘the state or quality of being uniform,’ that is, in form being one, but not in heart, mind, and soul.”
(Definitions from dictionary.com.)

It is noteworthy that neither Webster’s nor the Oxford or Random House dictionaries were quoted, but a poor online equivalent. Note that the definition for uniformity is ‘the state or quality of being uniform,’ which tells us absolutely nothing about the meaning of “uniformity” since it is defined by itself “uniform.” It still begs the question: What is uniform?

So we begin with an unclear definition of the difference between unity and uniformity. The document then states that diversity is important. “As evidenced from the Creation account to the story of the Earth made new, God is clearly a God of diversity. He did not make only one kind of animal, plant, flower—or even human. Instead, He created the
duality that we see in the world around us. … But God is not the author of confusion, nor did He intend the world to be fragmented and divided. The purpose of Creation was to give Him glory, and the purpose of the Church is to point people toward God as revealed in His Word.”

This is a good statement with which I agree but it does not help us detect the difference between unity and uniformity. The document then goes on to refer to the words of Jesus in John 17. “When Jesus prayed, ‘That they all may be one’ (John 17:21, NKJV), it was in the context of purpose and mission for those who believed (and would believe) in Him. He pleaded with His Father to ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ (vs. 17). Regarding mission, He prayed, ‘As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world’ (vs. 18). Summing up the unity Jesus desires for His followers, He prayed, ‘And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as you have loved Me’ (vss. 22, 23).”

Again, this is a wonderful statement and if we only had this paragraph we would assume that unity is being one in “purpose and mission for those who believed (and would believe) in Him.” But the next paragraph blurs the distinction between unity and uniformity. “Our goal is to work unitedly toward the realization of the kingdom of God. This is accomplished as a worldwide body of believers by coming together in belief and practice.”

It seems that the General Conference leaders are defining unity as being united in the mission and purpose of the church which involves belief but then they add the word “practice.” And then comes the final paragraph in the document which only continues to muddle the differences.

“Nowhere is this more evidenced than during every quinquennium when the worldwide church comes together in a General Conference Session to pray, worship, fellowship, and conduct the business of the church. It is here, with the input from a wide diversity of representatives from every part of the globe, that the voice of the entire church is heard. It is here where our statements of belief and practice are voted. It is these beliefs—based on the truth of God's Word and the practices that outline how best to accomplish our mission—that guide us and keep us united as we move together in mission.”

The part about “practice” refers, in the main, to the revisions voted to the Church Manual. It is common knowledge that changes come from the grassroots not from the top down. A local church or mission or conference finds a better way to achieve the mission of the church different from what the Church Manual says. They report it to the Church Manual Committee who then decide what changes to recommend to the next General Conference in session.

This document has not explained how diversity takes place in the church. It states the principle of unity but then insists that everyone follow the practice of not ordaining women pastors. It is actually insisting on uniformity.

What Is Unity?

President Ted Wilson made an impassioned plea to the delegates of the Columbia Union Conference on Sunday, July 29, that they vote down the proposed action to ordain pastors without respect to gender. He predicted dire consequences if the union conference voted the recommended motion. However, he did not specify what those consequences might be.

Wilson’s main plea was for unity. He quoted from the prayer of Jesus regarding the need for unity, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity” (John 17:21-23, NIV).

Wilson explained that the unity of the church was at stake. However, he was appealing for was uniformity, not unity. According to the dictionary uniformity is “identical or consistent, without variation in detail.” Unity, on the other hand, is “the state of being one, a whole or totality as combining its parts in one, as of the parts of a whole.” (Definitions from The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, second edition unabridged. 1987. New York: Random House Reference.)

In John 17 we find that Jesus is not talking about uniformity, which is what Wilson was advocating. Yes, Jesus and his Father were one, but they were not uniform, they were not identical. Jesus was a physical being. His Father was not. Jesus had physical limitations resulting from being human; the Father had no human limitations. Jesus could experience physical pain; his Father could not. Jesus could die; his Father could not. Jesus and the Father were one, but they were not uniform.

The English Standard Version Study Bible notes to John 17:11 says, “this is to be a reflection of the unity that has existed eternally between the Father and the Son, namely, the unity of a common mind and purpose, an unqualified mutual love, and a sustained comprehensive togetherness in mission, as revealed in the Father-Son relationship characterized by Jesus’ own ministry … The kind of unity that is central to Jesus’ high priestly prayer is not organizational but is an all-encompassing relational reality that binds believers together with each other and with their Lord—a unity that can only be achieved through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Given such an understanding, to even suggest that not moving together on the subject of women’s ordination is disunity or even rebellion is a trivialization of the need for unity.

In Genesis 2:24 (NIV) it states, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Adam and Eve were united, but they were not uniform. They were separate people with differing characteristics, but they were united in purpose. The General Conference and the Columbia Union Conference are united in taking the gospel to the world, but they are not uniform in how to do that. This is illustrated in the debate on circumcision at the Jerusalem Council. Some conscientious believers came from Judea to Antioch and insisted that circumcision was mandatory for salvation (Acts 16:1).
Paul and Barnabas vigorously opposed them but no agreement could be reached. So the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas along with some other believers to consult with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The leaders called a church council. The issue was debated from both sides. The conclusion was not what you might expect. No decision was made for or against circumcision. The council did not say you did not need to be circumcised. It did not say you had to be circumcised. What it did say was that we don’t want to make it difficult for people to become Christians (Acts 15:18) and then listed four agreements that they did reach a consensus on.

These agreements centered around the immorality so prevalent in society at the time and food, how Jews and Gentiles could eat and fellowship together. The Council asked Jews to be willing to sacrifice most of their laws regarding uncleanness and they asked Gentiles to be willing to adopt two of the Jewish standards: refrain from eating meat from strangled animals and refrain from eating meat with blood. (In other words, the essence of a “kosher” diet.) And they asked both groups to not eat meat offered to idols (Acts 15:20).

Each group could decide what they wanted to do with circumcision but could not enforce either belief on others. Circumcision was not a theological doctrine. It was a practice, or policy if you like, of the community of God. The challenge for us in deciding what is part of unity and what is part of uniformity is to determine what is an absolute that cannot be changed. God exists as an absolute. Not worshipping idols is an absolute. Salvation by grace alone is an absolute. But sometimes we have difficulty separating culture from God’s absolutes.

Paul addressed this issue when writing to the church at Corinth. “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor. 9:19-23, NIV).

Paul says that to win people to Jesus Christ, we must climb out of our comfort zones and become like the people whom we are trying to reach. “Wait a minute,” someone may say, “you mean that we must drink and smoke and gamble to be like the people we are trying to reach?” Absolutely not. Paul makes it clear in this passage that it is not a free-for-all in winning people to Jesus. Paul said that while he would become like one not having the law to those not having the law, he was not free from law. He is still under Christ’s law. What does that mean?

Paul makes a distinction between that which is moral, eternal, and absolute and that which is cultural and relative. He will do whatever it takes to win people as long as it does not violate moral absolutes, such as the Ten Commandments. It means that one will look at things from other people’s points of view, from other perspectives. One should try to understand the other person before trying to be understood.

Here is an example directly from the life of the apostle Paul. He participated in the Jerusalem Council, which decided that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to become Christians. Church leaders then sent him with others to announce this decision to the churches (Acts 15:22-31), to let people know that circumcision was not required.

However, when Paul traveled to Lystra and met Timothy, he decided to take Timothy with him on his missionary journey. There was one small problem: although Timothy’s mother was Jewish, his father was Greek, so he had never been circumcised. I am sure that Timothy was relieved that this was no longer a requirement. But Paul wanted to witness to Jews who still believed in circumcision. So true to his philosophy to live under the law with those who lived under the law, he told Timothy that he would have to be circumcised since they would be witnessing in Jewish territory. Timothy probably lost much of his enthusiasm for missions at that moment. But he agreed, so as to live as they lived (Acts 16:1-3).

On the other hand, Paul resolutely refused to circumcise Titus even when pressured (Gal. 2:1-5) because, while they traveled to Jerusalem, Titus’ responsibility was in Crete in Gentile areas. He identified with the people he was trying to reach.

Paul also was willing to disagree with the strong stance of the Jerusalem Council on meat offered to idols. The Council voted four behavioral requirements one of which said that believers were not to eat meat offered to idols because pagans would think they were worshiping the idol. But in writing to the church at Corinth, Paul says that it is clear to believers that there is only one God and eating meat offered to idols really means nothing.

He writes, “But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do” (1 Corinthians 8:8). But then he gives a caution, “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak” (v. 9). He goes on to explain that if someone who does not know about the true God as well as you sees you eating the food offered to idols they might think you are also worshiping the idol. But if there is no one around to see you then it is not an issue.

The Jerusalem Council, however, did not make any exceptions. Yet, Paul’s disregard for what had been voted did not split the Church. And so today, ordaining women will not split the church, especially since we are not dealing with a doctrinal issue but one of policy.

How does all this relate to the subject of unity? Is the ordination of women pastors a unity question? Is it a moral absolute? Will the church fragment if different parts of the world are allowed to make their own decision in this matter? The answer is clearly no because the decision to allow each division to decide whether to ordain women elders in their territory did not fragment the church.

Elders versus Pastors

Back in the 1970 a very strange decision was made. Key leaders decided that world divisions could decide whether
women could be ordained as elders but not ordained as pastors. The Council on the Role of Women in Ministry appointed by the General Conference Executive Committee to conduct a study of this topic was very clear that there was no theological reason why women could not be ordained as pastors (see below).

The 1973 Annual Council voted to accept the report of this study but took no action except a request that the divisions study the report. At the 1974 Annual Council a cautious approach was begun. The way was opened for women to be ordained as local church elders. But no decision either for or against women being ordained as pastors was made.

The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia reports that, "The 1974 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee opened the way for women to be ordained as local elders. To request the President's Executive Advisory to also arrange for further study of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination and that division committees exercise discretion in any special cases that may arise before a definitive position has been adopted." (Annual Council Actions [1974], p. 14)

"Divisions then began cautiously allowing women to be ordained as local elders. A definitive position was voted at the 1984 Annual Council: 'To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.' *(ibid.)* More than 1,000 women serve as elders in the North American Division, and many more serve other divisions of the world." ("Ordination," The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. 1996. Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

**Church Mistake**

Elder Robert Pierson led the leadership of the church to decide that while divisions could make their own decision regarding women elders the world church had to agree on whether women could serve as ordained pastors. The reasoning went something like this: Local elders are appointed by the local church and can only serve in that church. Pastors, on the other hand, are appointed by the conference and should be available to serve anywhere in the world. If women are ordained as pastors in the local church in America, but other parts of the world will not accept them as pastors, then that will cause a problem.

This reasoning forgets one important point—there is no difference in the Bible between an elder and a pastor. In fact, the word pastor only appears once in the New Testament in Ephesians 4:11. The term "elder" as it applies to local church leaders appears ten times. The original Adventist understanding of this is captured in the tradition of addressing ordained ministers as "Elder So-and-so."

It is true that an elder serves only in the local church. But if he or she moves to another church they may be appointed an elder in that church without being re-ordained (according to the Church Manual). If they move to a part of the world that does not recognize women elders then they will not be called to that position.

It is the same with pastors. Yes, he or she serves a whole conference but they cannot serve outside that conference unless called by another church entity. A pastor cannot travel from America to Africa and raise up a church without the conference in that area calling him or her to do so. If an area of the world does not approve of women pastors they will not call a woman pastor. Just as if a local church does not approve of women elders it will not call a woman to be an elder.

This decision to make women’s ordination to pastoral ministry a world decision neglected to consider the role of culture in making such a decision. One of the delegates to the Columbia Union Constituency Session said that he had served in three of the world divisions. In one division the husband always walked some four steps ahead of his wife. This decision to make women's ordination to pastoral ministry a world decision neglected to consider the role of culture in making such a decision. One of the delegates to the Columbia Union Constituency Session said that he had served in three of the world divisions. In one division the husband always walked some four steps ahead of his wife. The culture would never dream of a woman becoming a pastor. So why would they vote for women's ordination? It makes no sense to them. If the world church had decided that pastoral ordination would receive the same consideration as elder ordination there would be no issue in the church today.

**Ellen White on Unity and Diversity**

Ellen White spoke directly to the issue of different understandings. "One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God. But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists of viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement." ("Love, the Need of the Church," Manuscript 24, 1892; published as Manuscript Release #898 in Manuscript Releases, Vol. 11. 1981. White Estate: Washington, D.C., p. 266.)

Yet that is exactly where the church is today. Leaders are demanding that everyone move or not move at the same speed because the church has voted a particular policy. Which leads to a discussion of policy.

**The Role of Policy**

The Adventist church is run by "working policies" and there is nothing wrong with that. Policies save us from having to think through the same issue over and over again. For example, churches have established a policy on how to nominate new officers. If there were no policy each year countless hours would be spent trying to figure out the best way to nominate new officers. A policy helps things go smoothly and with a minimum of time spent.

But policies are not set in concrete and there can arise situations when an exception needs to be made to the policy. For example, at the church where I used to pastor we have a policy that families who request the church school subsidy need to be members, contribute financially on a regular basis to the church, and be involved in a volunteer...
ministry. However, we had a family join our church who tried to become involved in a ministry but by the time of their application had not found one to be part of. As we looked at this case we decided to make an exception and waive part of the policy. Of course, it can be dangerous when you make exceptions because other people claim they are an exception also.

There is no doubt a tension concerning how rigidly you apply policies. Some people will make no exceptions while others are generous. When I came to pastor in America my family was held up in New York for five days longer than we had planned. Staying in a hotel was expensive and eating in restaurants was even more expensive. The conference agreed to cover all our expenses. When I turned in my expenses to the conference treasurer he explained that the per diem for one person was six dollars but the per diem for a family was eleven dollars. (There were four people in our family. I was never able to figure out how four people could eat cheaper when in a restaurant together than if they ate separately in restaurants.) But the treasurer said, “We want you to feel welcome in this conference and we will reimburse you the full amount that you spent.” He made an exception to the policy.

It is only a policy, not a doctrine or Biblical principle, that ordination of women has to be a world decision. Why is it so difficult to make exceptions to that policy? Ellen White has written about the dangers of adhering to policy too closely. In the first statement below one can detect a decided tension. It could be used to prove that the church should adopt no policies but then how could it organize itself? What is Ellen White saying here?

“In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included.

“Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ's servants to teach. ‘The law and the prophets, ’ with the record of His own words and deeds, are the treasures committed to the disciples to be given to the world. Christ's name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.” (Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, 826.)

“There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation,” Ellen White is making a distinction between that which is eternal and absolute and that which is temporal and subsidiary. Policies are not to be made tests of faithfulness.

But policies have been voted by the world church therefore they must be of God. “The committee prayed for God to guide them” some will say. This is an interesting point. The Columbia Union Session also prayed and made tests of faithfulness. There is a very interesting background to this statement. Ellen White is writing from Australia. “In the night season I was listening to one who spoke with authority. Words of counsel in regard to the responsibilities that are to be borne in the sacred work of God were spoken. The Teacher said much of this has been done. Men have assumed authority, but the people should not depend upon poor, finite, erring men. They should put their entire trust in the wisdom that finds its strength in the wisdom of God. The inconsistency of centering so many responsibilities in Battle Creek has been presented many times, but the counsels have not been acted upon. The ministry has been divided not only from the center, but also from themselves.” (Selected Messages, Vol 1, p. 259; emphasis added.)

There are women serving as pastors who are ministering in the same way as male pastors. They are recognized in exactly the same way by the laying on of hands. They receive the same salary but they cannot receive the same credentialed recognition. The church did not consider them equal. Once the church had decided that women could be pastors (finally voted at the 1990 General Conference Session) it should have been a non issue whether women could be ordained.

“In each country a man should be appointed to work in the general interests of the cause. He need not be a preacher, and he must not be a policy man. He should be unselfish, a man who loves, who honors, and fears his God. His whole time should be devoted to the work. He should plan unselfishly, and in the fear of God. Let him be general agent for that country, and let him be connected with a council composed of the very best men, that they may counsel together, and attend to the work within their borders. There should be businessmen appointed to do the same in the different states in America.” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 321; emphasis added.)

There is a very interesting background to this statement. Ellen White is writing from Australia. “In the night season I was listening to one who spoke with authority. Words of counsel in regard to the responsibilities that are to be borne in the sacred work of God were spoken. The Teacher said much of this has been done. Men have assumed authority, but the people should not depend upon poor, finite, erring men. They should put their entire trust in the wisdom that finds its strength in the wisdom of God. The inconsistency of centering so many responsibilities in Battle Creek has been presented many times, but the counsels have not been acted upon. The
reproofs and warnings from the Lord have been evaded and interpreted and made void by the devices of men. There has been counter working against God, and the judgment of men has been received." (Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 319)

Ellen White writes on the same page, "In Battle Creek you have evidence that men who have had the most to say are not walking with God. There is abundant activity, but not many are working in partnership with Christ; and those who walk and work apart from Him have been the most active in planning and inaugurating their methods."

Now I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not suggesting in any way that the General Conference leadership is corrupt or not following God. What I do want to state is that just because certain actions come from the highest levels does not automatically mean that they have clearly heard the voice of God.

Probably one of the most famous statements of Ellen White is the following. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall." (Education, p. 57.)

Yes, there will always be tensions. Tension is part of life. Without tension between velocity and gravity planes could not fly. They would either remain on the ground or shoot off into space but when there is the right balance, the right tension between opposite forces (or points of view) progress is made.

Whatever solutions we come to we must be centered on a growing experience with Jesus. It was Jesus who explained that the real test of who are his followers is not how united they are on doctrine or on policy but on how they love each other. 'By this shall all [men] know that you are My disciples, if you love one another [if you keep on showing love among yourselves]" (Amplified Bible).

J. David Newman is the editor of Adventist Today. He just retired as senior pastor of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church near Baltimore and is former Associate Secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association and former editor of Ministry.

ATTACHMENT:

Council on the Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church
By action of the General Conference Committee
Convened September 16-19, 1973
at Camp Mohaven, Ohio

Report and Recommendations

In recognition of the growing evidence of the imminence of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the consequent demand for the utilization of every personal resource available to the Church in fulfilling her commission, the council was led to the following positions.

1. With due recognition of evident individual differences, the equality of all believers was established by creation is being restored through redemption in Jesus Christ (Gen. 1, 2; Gal. 3:28; 3T 484).

2. Redemption of believers in Jesus Christ is shared by them with others through the proclamation of the gospel, in which all believers participate. To aid in this sharing role the Holy Spirit has seen fit to pour gifts upon all (Joel 2:28, 29).

3. As a further aid in carrying out its mission, the Church by divine appointment bestows on certain members specific functions and recognizes the divine calling by ordination.

4. In harmony with the following statement, we see no significant theological objection to the ordination of women to Church ministries: "Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister, but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness."—RH, July 9, 1895.

On the basis of the above positions, it is

Recommended

1. Ordination Roles

a. That qualifications for church offices which require ordination (example, church elders and deacons) be listed without reference to sex. (The ordination of women to such offices does not seem contrary to the spirit of the gospel nor to the specific counsel of Ellen G. White, given above).

b. That, while Inspiration provides no explicit directive in this matter, yet in the view of the principles and the recommendations above, and the fact that the authority for selecting ordinands to the gospel ministry has been vested
by God in His Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
(1) A pilot plan be formulated by the General Conference in Annual Council, enlisting qualified women to pastoral and evangelistic ministry in selected areas;
(2) Ministerial licenses be granted to the participants with the possibility of later ordination as the pilot plan may evidence its growing acceptance by the members of the church.
(3) As evidence is provided by the pilot program, the ordination of women to the gospel ministry be considered, if possible, by the 1975 General Conference Session.

2. General Roles
That, since the function of the Church involves the utilization of all its resources for the completion of its tasks, the eligibility of qualified women, representative of the women in the Church, to participate with men in leadership and administration roles at all levels, be recognized by the church.

3. Home and Family Roles
a. That while we are advocating some wider roles for women in the Church, we reaffirm the primacy of the home and family in the upbuilding of the Church and as a soul-winning agency, and the significant roles of mothers and fathers in their responsibility of maintaining the sanctity of the home in fulfilling its purpose and high calling be fully appreciated:

b. That, in the family context, the husband-and-wife team called to the gospel ministry be recognized as an effective agency in the ministry of the Church on the terms of the counsel contained in MS 43a, 1898 (Gospel Workers 452, 453).

The Minister's Wife
"The minister is paid for his work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and she devotes her time and strength to visiting from family to family and opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Then should her labors be counted as naught?

"Injustice has sometimes been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry. The method of paying men-laborers, and not paying their wives who share their labors with them, is a plan not according to the Lord's order, and if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in. God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as disinterestedly to the work, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, even though they may not ask for this.

"Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages."

4. A Program of Education
That the General Conference initiate a program of education of the Church, which will provide a wider understanding of the principles and recommendations of this Report.

5. Areas of Further Study
That, as a result of the Council’s work, a number of areas calling for further study be recognized, such as:

a. A fuller theology of the entire concept of ordination,
b. A fuller study of the lay ministries of the Church,
c. A fuller study of the professional ministries of the Church.

Implementation of Pilot Program
To implement Recommendation 1-b of the “Report and Recommendations” from the Council on the Roles of Women in the SDA Church, it is

Recommended,
1. That, where the “climate” in the field would appear receptive to a pilot program for women in pastoral and evangelistic roles, Conference/Mission committees in consultation with Union and Division committees take the initiative in appointing qualified women to pastoral/evangelistic responsibilities on a two-year basis, with the expectation of renewal upon evaluation of the pilot program.
2. That ministerial licenses be granted to the appointees in the pilot program.
3. That the General Conference Ministerial Association, Department of Education, and Ministerial Training Advisory Committee be asked to give study to any implications which the pilot program might have for the training of women at all education levels for pastoral/evangelistic roles.
4. That the General Conference Ministerial Association monitor the pilot program and prepare an interim report on it
for the 1974 Annual Council, as a basis for any recommendations concerning the ordination of women to the gospel ministry which would require consideration for the 1975 General Conference Session.

Share your thoughts about this article:
34 comments

Patti Grant
7 days ago

Elder Newman, thank you for shining light on the work of The Council on the Role of Women in the SDA Church. It is clear that if the church had accepted its recommendations 40 years ago it would not still be calling for "further study." Those responsible for shelving the 1973 recommendations bear full responsibility for the unnecessary and divisive conflict in which we are currently embroiled. Likewise, those who chose to withhold open and unbiased publication of both sides of the issue in the Adventist Review, the official organ of the church, bear equal responsibility for the wide-spread lack of basic information on church structure and function evident in comments on the AT and Spectrum websites. The Pacific Union Recorder is commended for providing ample the opportunity for an open and balanced discussion. God grant us clear minds and open hearts as we pray for His guidance in this matter.

Elaine Nelson
6 days ago

This sentence stands out in direct contradiction to the Christian church's initial establishment:

"This is accomplished as a worldwide body of believers by coming together in belief and practice."

Had this been the firm position at Jerusalem, there would never have been a Christian church! That cannot be too strongly emphasized as it is not usually mentioned in all the pronouncements from Silver Spring. It should be given the greatest and widest dissemination. At this stage in Christian history, to return back to pre-New Testament period and apply concepts practiced then is to overlook all the New Testament writings since that time.

Was the Holy Spirit with Peter and the apostles when they made this most memorable decision not to demand uniformity in the first Christians? Was this merely a temporary decision for that time only and ever afterward could be ignored? Were the Jews offended that their devotion to the Law was going to be irrelevant to all Gentiles? Did they secretly hope that there would soon be no Gentile Christians and they could comfortably revert back to Judaism and its rules? Did they even dream that in another generation, the temple would be destroyed and their Christian history would be lost to history?

Today, we are products and converts to that same Christianity that hung by a single thread: Choosing Judaism or an unknown belief. World history was forever changed by that one decision made in Jerusalem, the center and birthplace of Judaism that began the Christian religion. Unity, not uniformity won the day and the ensuing millennia.

Timo Onjukka
7 days ago

Dr Newman, love how you added all that extra fish to the kettle! Lets stir deeply, not get overheated nor scald the soup; lets even call it for what it is. Sadly, there may still be a few stalwarts who will start their hungerstrikes despite. As for me, pass the Ezekiel bread; let us break it together, and allow God to add many to the feast.

This is in stark counterpoint to recent top-level response where not only was it stated repeatedly 'this is not about ordination', and fain anyone on the panel implicitly suggest it was even about "women". Not certain anyone, except perhaps Finley, dared marry the two words together.

J. David Newman
7 days ago

Here is the big question. Since the G C and BRI covened a committee on women's ordination (1973) which recommended ordination why do we need another committee?

Tapiwa Mushaninga
7 days ago

I think there are two issues that are bieng conflated.

the first is whether Women Can serve as pastors and or elders whether ordained, commisioned, knighted etc
the second is whether they can be ordained to ministry

If we can answer these questions then I'm sure it will reduce the semanticsthat so often prevail in these discussions

Stephen Ferguson
7 days ago

And as far as I understand, we are only debating issue #2 - whether women can be ordained to ministry.

Re #1 the SDA has pretty much always allowed women to serve in ministry, to be issued ministerial licences, and to be paid from tithe whilst doing so.

Funny enough, most Churches that have or are going through this issue #1. Because the SDA Church long ago allowed #1, we instead are focused on #2.
Yes. There are clear, recorded votes to allow women to be, and to be ordained as, deacons and elders, and to be employed as pastors (commissioned, not ordained). The GC in 1995 which refused to allow the Divisions to choose whether or not to ordain women as pastors, also voted by a clear majority to allow those women who are employed as pastors to baptise and perform marriages with the conference president's permission. Baptising is a right granted to elders also under the same condition. On logical grounds it is impossible to vote to allow women elders to perform certain functions, but not allow women pastors (who are also ordained elders) not to. As soon as you put in writing 'elders may do XYZ with the permission of their conference president, except if they female and employed as pastors' it looks ridiculous to everyone.

Tapiwa Mushaninga
7 days ago

Thanks for your thoughts Stephen

I believe many actually are against #1 and that # 2 is just an extension of #1. I don't think as many would be against WO if it were into children's ministries or personal ministries.

What do you think?

Stephen Ferguson
5 days ago

Yes, but it is too late to be debating #1 because the Church has allowed women in paid ministry since the time of Ellen White. Women have also been ordained elders for quite some time. Women have also been actively working as pastors for some times, who are 'commissioned' through the laying of hands, which in the biblical rite of ordination.

The only thing we are debating in #2, which is whether the rite of laying hands onto women should be called 'ordination' rather than 'commissioning', and whether women have the right to in turn ordain elders and officially open churches. As the word 'ordain' is not even in the Bible but comes from Papal Tradition, it is just a debate about semantics.

It is 150 years too late to be discussing #1.

J. David Newman
7 days ago

You are right the issue for those against wo is against women as pastors but since the church has officially voted women as pastors the issue now is simply one of discrimination

Kevin Riley
6 days ago

The issue for a number of members is still women working as deacons, elders or pastors, with or without ordination. While the GC has voted it, there is strong opposition from some quarters. The study on ordination could reopen the issue if there is a finding that ordination is restricted solely to males. If we decide the Bible teaches that, we would have no choice but to rescind any decision to allow women to hold those positions. Of course, if we don't find that, then there really is no reason not to allow women to be ordained to any position. However this study concludes, large numbers of members will not be happy with the decision.

Albertho Tulalessy
6 days ago

David Newman..why you keep silent for this issue when you were in GC? why waiting until retired to make this long long presentation? many of our retired pastor do what you did...keep silent for many years and talk much when they retired.

J. David Newman
6 days ago

My dear brother Albertho you do not know me very well. I got fired by the GC president in 1995 from my editorship of Ministry because I took him on in public over proposed changes to the GC constitution. I learned a lesson from that situation. Even though I was right you do not shame your leaders in public. You show them respect. Deal with the situation privately. Or you resign and go somewhere else. Teams need to be loyal to their leader. Three years ago I published an article on the use of tithe, 3,000 words. Ed Reid former stewardship dir for NAD wrote a response objecting to what I wrote that took 14,000 words. I have been castigated by the historic adventists in blogs and websites about some of the things I have written. So I was being a "loyal" opposer long before I retired.

Ned
6 days ago

Would that there were many who had that courage, David, many who would measure well to the quotation of EGW you included in your editorial above. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall." (Education, p. 57.)
Albertho Tulalessy is right, however. Many keep silent for their own income security while employed by the church. There are some who cannot be "bought or sold," of course, as we just witnessed in the vote of CUC and as we hope to see in the vote coming soon for PUC. I thank them and pray for them, for protection from the "kingly" power at the top. It is not easy to face employment insecurity.

Kevin Riley
6 days ago

There are also better and worse ways of being part of the 'loyal opposition'. Our church has, unfortunately, not made being loyal and in opposition to church decisions as easy as it could be. While I understand what David is saying, there are times when church leaders - from the local church right up to GC - count on such loyalty to allow them to act in ways that are disrespectul of the church and their office. When a president - or any leader - refuses to listen to private attempts to get them to see flaws in their plan, while counting on other workers not to take them on in public, I believe it is right to oppose them publicly. It is also biblical, if you have gone through the steps outlined in the gospels, to take the issue before the church. If the leader is shamed by that, it is as much because of their action as anything else.

Tapiwa Mushaninga
5 days ago

But there are far more who agree with him. If he were to subscribe to the voices of the a few privilaged individuals then that would be aristocracy. Are you advocating aristocracy? Ted is a representative world president and it is nice to know that even aa a White American Adventist he also represents me a black african adventist.

Kevin Riley
5 days ago

He should do what he believes is right. And my post was not particularly about Ted, especially as he was not elected President in 1995, but about any leader who refuses to listen to advice. The GC President should try to represent all SDAs, not the majority or any group. I feel sorry for him, as it is likely that, if this issue is not handled well, the church will (if not split) lose a significant number of members. I still believe that can be avoided, but only if the GC focuses on finding a solution rather than siding with one group or the other.

Tapiwa Mushaninga
5 days ago

I agree

Elaine Nelson
4 days ago

There is no evidence that the G.C. has even sought a solution; unless you can say referring the question back to committees ad nauseum to be buried, is a solutuion.

"Sending back for more study" is their jaron for saying, "You might as well forget it, we ain't gonna do nothin'."

Edwin A. Schwisow
3 days ago

Many of my good Adventist friends bewail the prospect that the writings of Ellen G. White are being made of none effect. They see fewer of her quotes in church publications, sermons, and even discussions on Adventist Today blogs. I appreciate their concerns, but find it ironic that many who sincerely fear the lessening of her influence are foremost in denying that God's Spirit empowers women with pastoral leadership capacities today. Certainly Ellen White's ministry included and surpassed in authority any claims of pastors or administrators, male or female, today…

Could the very femaleness of the Messenger be a factor in her diminishing influence among conservatives today? In setting her aside from the womb for ministry, certainly God should have known better than to assign her the wrong chromosome?

Jean Corbeau
3 days ago

Diminishing influece of the SOP among conservatives? Which conservatives have you been talking to? That's certainly not the case among those with whom I'm acquainted.

There continues to be confusion about the difference between the role of a prophet and that of an elder or pastor. A prophet is a spokesman for God, and is chosen by God; his/her messages are from God. The prophet cannot enforce them; only deliver them. A paster, by contrast, is invested with authority by the church, and can make authoratative decisions; baptize; marry; conduct the communion service, and so on. So, those who find her counsel valuable are not being contradictory. They are heeding counsel that was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

David Borton
2 days ago

You use the word "enforce." What do you mean by that? When I served as a pastor for 11 years and grew up an SDA and have been an SDA all my life, I've never known a pastor to "enforce" anything. A pastor may lead a church and influence it's spiritual life through his/her life, preaching and leadership but they never "enforce" anything.

All4Him
3 days ago

*Many of my good Adventist friends bewail the prospect that the writings of Ellen G. White are being made of none effect. They see fewer of her quotes in church publications, sermons, and even discussions on Adventist Today blogs. I appreciate their concerns, but find it ironic that many who sincerely fear the lessening of her influence are foremost
in denying that God's Spirit empowers women with pastoral leadership capacities today. *

Edwin...... what do you think Sister White was explaining when she wrote the following?

*Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be MEN of blameless reputation. 5T 598.

The primary object of our college is to afford young MEN the opportunity to study for the ministry and prepare young persons of BOTH SEXES to become workers in the various BRANCHES of the cause. 5T Page 60.

Kevin Riley 3 days ago

What did Paul mean in Galatians 3:28? You have been told that the quotes by EGW don't have to be read as excluding women, especially as she supported women working as licensed ministers who were definitely 'standing as ministers in the sacred desk'. If not, how do you explain them preaching and having ministerial licences? All our pastors then were men, but not all our ministers were. Perhaps she was simply using it as that was the usual practice.

All4Him 3 days ago

Thanks Edwin ;). The same author in Galatians wrote Acts, Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.... The Bible doesn't contradict itself and the SOP points to it. Perhaps she was simply using it as the Biblical practice....

Those two quote were not a fluke they match up with others she makes....

*...field in which our sisters may do good service for the Master. Many lines of missionary work are neglected. In the different churches, much work which is often left undone or done imperfectly, could be well accomplished by the help that our sisters, if properly instructed, can give. Through Needed In Various Branches of the Work --In the various branches of the work of God's cause, there is a wide various lines of home missionary effort they can reach a class that is not reached by our ministers. Among the noble women who have had the moral courage to decide in favor of the truth for this time are many who have tact, perception, and good ability, and who may make successful workers. The labors of such Christian women are needed. -- Review and Herald, Dec. 10, 1914.

Duane White 2 days ago

Thanks David for your always insightful and readable articles. I have two issues: First, why don't we get rid of ordination and just commission all ministers? Two, it bothers me that about half of the CUC constituency is church employed. I favor WO, but it would seem that the vote was pre-ordained, to use a pun.

Stephen Ferguson 2 days ago

Yes, I have always thought that just commissioning everyone is the better compromise. That way Western Unions can demonstrate their strong views about equality in Christ. However, these Western Unions would also be able to say that they are being faithful to the World Church, because they are certainly not ordaining any women either!

As a slightly different alternative, is there anything stopping a male minister from requesting 'commissioning' rather than 'ordination'? Perhaps this should be a grass roots movement? Perhaps young male ministers should adopt a Christ-like approach, refusing to be treated any different from their female counterparts? Perhaps that would work better than all the confrontational who-har by leaders at the top?

Perhaps if something drastic happens at an upcoming GC banning WO (and yes, we know all the constitutional difficulties), this might be an appropriate backup plan. Someone told me once that Canada already does something like this - does anyone know?

Kevin Riley 2 days ago

And when all the pastors in all the conferences that support women's ordination are commissioned and no longer eligible to fill any position requiring an ordained pastor, who will fill those positions? Do you really want to see all the leaders of the church in Australia coming from the one or two conferences that would vote against WO? Or if all voted for it (which is possible), would you be happy to see those positions filled by ordained pastors from areas that do not ordain women?

Stephen Ferguson 2 days ago

That is the Ghandi point

Kevin Riley 2 days ago

Want to explain that a little?

Stephen Ferguson 2 days ago

Don't get me wrong, WO is good if you can get it. But if you can't, a very Christ-like (and Ghandi-like) approach would
be for new male ministers to simple refuse ordination and only accept commissioning. Yes, in the end those individuals and conferences who choose ordination would dominate the leadership - or might have to be brought in from overseas.

But that is a slave-response well in tune with the paradox of Christian victory through submission. The actions of these young men in refusing ordination would probably do more to win over opponents than all the fine, detailed and well research theological arguments and sermons.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

Our current senior pastor asked to have his ordained credential exchanged for a commissioned credential before he was called to our church. The request was refused. But perhaps if enough pastors asked, it would change. I am not sure a young pastor has a choice. For males it may be ordination or nothing. I see your point, but I am not sure it would persuade anyone not already persuaded. Issuing ordinations and commissionings in line with GC policy, but then giving permission for all pastors to do the same things regardless of credentials achieves much the same result. Or, as some US conferences do, issuing one credential (ordained/commissioned) and having one service of ordination/commissioning makes the point just as well also. All point out the stupidity of allowing someone to fill the role, paying them to do so, but then refusing to recognise them as having the role. That's the irony of this whole situation - the pastors will be doing nothing in their church on Monday that they weren't doing on Friday from the POV of their parishoners. They won't even be entitled to a different title. And that is the stupidity (what else can we call it?) of voting to allow anyone to serve in any ministry but not be recognised as doing it.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

I think you will find that church employees usually make up a good percentage of any session, and the 'higher' you go, the more true that becomes. I would be very surprised if church employees - most of them ordained men - did not make up the majority of ever GC session that has not approved women's ordination.

ANP
2 days ago

I don't know about what is happening in Canada, but here's hoping you're right and it will be courageous, young people, committed to the cause of Christ, who will take up the torch like Caleb and Joshua.

Anonymous

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Analysis of What is Happening with the Ordination of Women Pastors

Submitted: Jul 19, 2012
By Dr. Gary Patterson

In order to understand the handling of the issue of women’s ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is important to know how the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination functions and from whence its institutional authority is derived.

There are four principle documents governing the church, and four constituent groups in its structure. The four documents are the 28 fundamental beliefs, the Constitution and Bylaws, the Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy. The four constituent groups are the local church, the local conference, the union conference and the General Conference. Divisions are not constituent organizations, but rather are divisions of the General Conference, providing leadership and direction in defined geographic territories.

The 28 fundamental beliefs, the Constitution and Bylaws, and the Church Manual are determined and modified only by a vote of the General Conference in session. The General Conference Working Policy is determined and modified by vote of the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee.

The four constituent groups have authority over specific functions of the church that belong only to them and may not be taken or countered by the other constituent groups. The local church is the only constituent level which can take action regarding membership issues, church officer election, appointment and ordination of elders, deacons and deaconesses, local church budgets and finance and other such local church functions. The local conference is the only constituent level that can take action regarding the sisterhood of churches, its employees, institutions and finance. It also votes to recommend individuals for ordination to the gospel ministry, to the union conference. But it does not have the power to authorize such ordination. This authority rests with the Union. The division and the General Conference may authorize ordination of their employees, but has no authority over those voted by the union.

The Permission Issue

Ordination is, by General Conference policy, the purview of the union level of governance. This being the case, the General Conference has overstepped its bounds in seeking to tell the unions that they may or may not ordain women to the gospel ministry. It is not within the authority of the General Conference to take such action, just the same as if the taking of such action regarding individual membership, the election of personnel for church offices, or in the sisterhood of churches issues is not the purview of the General Conference Session. These actions belong to the constituent level to which they are assigned by policy and may not be determined or overruled by higher levels of the church structure.

An additional example of this overreach occurs in the General Conference action granting permission for churches to ordain women to the position of local church elder. There was no existing action prohibiting such election or ordination of elders or any other church office on the basis of gender. Therefore, there was no cause for granting such permission from the General Conference. Church officer election is under the authority of the local church constituency and by policy, higher organizations are not allowed to interfere in this process.

The General Conference, union or conference may not, for example, tell the local church whether it can elect women as treasurer or clerk of the church. Likewise they have no authority either to deny or give permission for women to be elected and ordained as elders. They may give advice on such matters, but it is not in their purview
to dictate who may or may not be elected. With no action forbidding such gender choices, the church does not need permission to do as it sees fit.

**How We Got to this Place**

The issue of ordination of women was discussed by the General Conference officers as far back as 1950, at which time it was decided to appoint a committee to study the matter and report back to the officers. Again in 1970, a committee was appointed to study the issue and to report to the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee later that year. In 1973, the report of the Mohaven Committee on women in ministry was accepted by the Annual Council, authorizing continued study. In 1974, the Annual Council voted to continue studying the issue. In 1985, the General Conference Session voted to study it further. In 1988, North American Division Leaders voted to end the discriminatory policies affecting women in ministry.

It was in the General Conference Officer group known as ADCOM in the late 1980’s that this issue was discussed with a view to placing the matter on the General Conference agenda for the 1990 General Conference session in Indianapolis. There were those on the committee at that time who objected to this being placed on the agenda on the basis that this was a matter defined by General Conference Policy to belong to the Union level of authority. There existed no action or policy of the church defining ordination as gender exclusive. Therefore, the General Conference had no authority to tell the unions whom they may or may not ordain.

ADCOM and the Annual Council did, however, place this matter on the General Conference session agenda, counter to their authority to take action on a matter which, by policy, belongs to the union level of governance. The General Conference would be within its right to give council to the unions, but not to usurp the decision process which belonged to the union level.

It is important to be clear on the action taken in this matter at the Indianapolis meeting. It was not, as often represented, a vote forbidding such ordination, but rather the failure of an action to proceed with ordination. Thus the effect of this vote was simply that the proposed action went away. In fact, another action was taken granting performance of the functions of ministry to women pastors. This was done under the authority of a “Commissioned Minister” credential which, for women pastors, paralleled the “Ordained Minister” credential.

The matter continued to be under discussion for the following five years and was again placed on the agenda of the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht at the request of the North American Division. At this meeting it was officially recognized that there was no biblical or theological to support a position of forbidding such ordination, and the vote there again did not forbid it, but rather stated that to avoid division in the world church, the request was denied “at this time.”

At present, the matter is under continuing study. The General Conference officers have outlined a plan whereby “Biblical Research Committees in all divisions have been asked to conduct a study on the theology of ordination and its implications. In addition, during 2012, the General Conference Administrative Committee will appoint a Theology of Ordination Study Committee, with representation from all divisions, to oversee and facilitate the global discussion process and to prepare reports for presentation to the General Conference Executive Committee. The Annual Council 2014 will determine what action, if any, should be recommended to the 2015 General Conference Session.”

**Policy Issues**

Authority for ordination is assigned to the union level of church governance as indicated by General Conference Working Policy L 45 05. It states, “After favorable consideration the local conference committee will submit the
name of the candidate with its findings and convictions to the union for counsel and approval.” There is no gender reference in this policy whatsoever. The policy does allow that the Division and General Conference may handle their own ordination matters separately from the union by submitting for processing the consideration of selected individuals in their employ for ordination to their respective executive committees for authorization. However, it does not allow for interference by either the Division or General Conference level in the action of the union.

Regarding discrimination in ordination, General Conference Working Policy B 60 10 states, “The world church supports nondiscrimination in employee practices and policies and upholds the principle that both men and women, without regard to race and color, shall be given full and equal opportunity within the church to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the building up of the Church. Positions of service and responsibility (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry*) on all levels of church activity shall be open to all on the basis of the individual’s qualifications.”

The asterisk refers to a note at the bottom of the page which reads, “The exception clause, and any other statement above, shall not be used to reinterpret the action already taken by the world Church authorizing the ordination of women as local church elders in divisions where the division executive committees have given their approval.”

This policy establishes two matters which bear on the issue of the current discussion of the ordination of women. First, the policy establishes that the position it takes is discriminatory. The issues of gender, race and color are delineated as being covered by this policy, but it then selects one of these, gender to be specific, as an exception to the policy, thus indicating that discrimination is acceptable in this instance. One can imagine the justifiable outcry if either race or color were selected as a valid reason for discrimination, which brings up the question as to why gender discrimination is acceptable and the others are not.

The footnote establishes the second issue relevant to the discussion. A major point in the argument against unions moving ahead with what is by policy their official domain of decision, is the call for unity in the world church. However, this policy indicates that the unity claim has already been officially breached among the divisions in the matter of the ordination of women as elders. As it states, this issue is to be decided by where “the division executive committees have given their approval.” Thus it already officially exists, in the context of the ordination of women, that the divisions have gone their separate ways by authority of the General Conference Committee action. This makes the argument of unity of no effect, given that it already does not exist by official sanction in the very area of the ordination of women as elders.

What is Unity?

The very sound of the word “unity” is such as to invite an automatic acceptance of the idea. How would anyone dare be opposed to unity. So, for the sake of the discussion, let us assume that we all are for unity in the church. But having made that assumption, the difficult task has only begun, as we must address what we mean by unity. The concept seems to exist that if we just abandon the pursuit of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry that unity will be achieved. But why is this a one-way street? Why is it not just as true that if we approve it, unity will be achieved? The reality is that unity is not achieved by everyone thinking and doing the same thing around the world, but rather by getting along with one another while we do many markedly different things as needed in our varied cultures and the diverse world. It is at this point that we understand that if the General Conference had not sought to enter areas that were out if its jurisdiction, we would be able to move ahead as needed in our respective areas, even as we have in the ordination of women as elders.
Biblical Example

In the early days of the church, the Apostle Peter, quoting from the book of Joel states, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” Acts 2:17 & 18). And on the matter of gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit he asks, “If God gave them the same gift he gave us… who was I to think I could oppose God?” (Acts 11:17) As in the day of Peter, refusal to recognize the calling to ministry of women today is the same as telling them that their calling is not of God. Do we tell the hundreds or even thousands of women who have clearly blessed ministry in North America, or for that matter in China where the work of the church is being advanced primarily by women, that their call is not from God, or at least in some way inferior to the call men receive?

Conclusion: Where do we go from here?

First, we need to recognize that unions deciding whom to ordain without respect to gender is not a violation of policy, but the General Conference making that decision for the unions is. The General Conference needs to recognize its violation of policy and remove itself from usurping action from the union.

Second, we must admit that such discrimination, as recognized and approved in General Conference Working Policy B 60 10, is unacceptable, and we must face two embarrassing questions: (A) Why is it disunity to reject such discrimination in ordination practice? (B) Why is it unity to allow divisions to discriminate against ordaining women elders?

Third, how long must we continue to study this issue? Given that this matter has been under study for over 60 years, there are those who see the current action further stalling tactics by a body which has authority to advise on the issue but does not have the constituted authority to make the decision for implementation anyway. While the General Conference in session is recognized as the highest authority in the world church, it is not entitled to impose its actions on other levels of the church in which it does not have constituted authority.

Dr. Gary Patterson served as an officer of the North American Division of the General Conference and as a member of the GC administrative committee. He was the founding director of the Office of Mission Awareness for the General Conference.

Share your thoughts about this article:

As a member of the NAD Theology of Ordination study committee, I deeply appreciate Dr. Patterson's clarifying where the GC has authority and where it doesn't. It restores my faith in the "democratic process" within the church organization and the possibility of its working in favor of justice.

George Tichy

BINGO! The GC's abuse of power is clearly described and identified in this article. Great explanation of the rules in the SDAC.

Not much more has to be said about this issue. It's clear, and everyone (who wants) can understand it.
"Studying" it since 1950? And no action on this? Time to stop the beautiful statements and do what has to be done to stop the discrimination of women.

Thank you Dr. Patterson!

Stephen Ferguson
about a month ago

Unity and compromise is a difficult topic. There can be people on both sides of a debate (and it routinely happens here) who are poles apart on an issue but agree insofar as they see no viable compromise. By contrast, there are others who have either a conservative or liberal view and yet can agree that compromise is possible.

It seems to me that allowing each Union to exercise its constitutional decision on the issue is appropriate. No one is saying that a Union that doesn't want WO will be forced to have it - only those who do want it can have it. It is a slight but important difference. Likewise, I doubt any local congregations will practically be forced to have a woman pastor if they don't want one, which I would believe is the current situation now anyway?

Similarly, allowing the Gentiles freedom from circumcision in Acts 15 was not a command that Jewish-Christians no longer could be circumcised. I have real difficulty why we can't follow this biblical example here, even if we individually are judaizers of this issue.

Compromise is not the dirty word it is often made out to be. Remember, blessed are the peacemakers.

David Barr
about a month ago

Additionally, in the interests of accuracy and transparency shouldn't the title "President" of "Division X" be replaced with "Vice-President" of "GC Division X"?

Barry Wecker
about a month ago

Thank-you Dr. Patterson for such a clear, rational analysis and presentation of the question as to where the decision to ordain lies within the organization of the SDA church. This should be the basis for decision making and unions should exercise their authority and proceed accordingly. If the General Conference disagrees, then it needs to address the roles of the Union Conferences at the next GC session. We all need to move forward courageously with the ordination of anyone who has been called to ministry regardless of gender and stop wasting time, energy and administrative focus on this issue.

William Noel
about a month ago

Thank you, Dr. Patterson, for that explanation. It was very helpful in clarifying the matter.

Past opposition to the ordination of women as pastors has been loudest from various divisions around the world where society is male-dominated and church leaders are fearful that such actions in North America will cause disruption in the church there. While pending actions here in North America may force reality upon those who oppose the ordination of women, I would prefer to see church leadership at all levels quit crying alarm and start accepting reality.
Thank you Gary for reminding us of the organizational issues involved in this discussion.

Having spent ten years (1994-2004) working at the General Conference and as a member of the General Conference Committee, I was confounded by the continual move towards centralization of power and influence. The SDA church was organized in such a way that the organization was designed to serve the mission. The committee structure was slow but allowed for wide creativity and diversity in accomplishing our mission while adapting to the local situation and what would work best in the local church.

As the centralization of power and influence increased, the role of committees deteriorated into one of granting permission and approving programs presented by a limited few. This further deteriorated into ministry areas and initiatives being assimilated into the presidential part of the church structure. This further weakened the departmental ministries and concentrated influence and power in the hands of a very few.

The decision to approach the WO issue in the way it has been addressed was just an extension of this centralization with few voices raised to address the structural evolution that was under way. This evolution moved the structure further away from empowering the mission being accomplished at the local church. Instead, mission was what the structure attempted to accomplish, thus forgetting the vital role of the local church. More and more, the local church member became a spectator watching the institutional employee struggle to accomplish what was never their role in the first place.

Perhaps WO can be an organizational wake up call that will allow us to focus on returning the mission to the local church and allowing the organization to focus on empowering ministry rather than attempting to control everything in the name of unity. This will require a return to a biblical approach to ministry that recognizes God's calling and gifting for ministry rather than institutional position and power.

We are a global church, not a fragmented regional church. SDAs need to be on the same page around the world regarding the WO issue. The various NAD Union Committees who are unilaterally voted to support WO are the ones who are acting in a flagrant manner.

These comments and discussions are okay from a human perspective/rational, but biblically have no value. The bible and the spirit of prophecy are clear on the ordination of women and a simple study will bear that out. I would like to see Dr. Gary Patterson address this issue from the Bible/SP only. Also, as mentioned before, women ordination in China is only done due to communist govt regulations, China does not have a conference to send their money, that is there reason for their growth. God bless and I hope the Lord's work continues be accomplished.

Thanks for this very helpful explanation of the governance questions involved. I think leaving it in the hands of...
the unions makes an immense amount of sense. This would seem to correspond with how ordination of female elders is handled; some local churches have them, while others don't.

I am sad that the topic was introduced at the GC level and that the waters have been muddied.

Edward Reifsnyder
about a month ago

The article by Gary (a tough raquetball player, by the way) and the post by Ben Maxson are right on point from my perspective.

There are really two issues, although inter-related, going on here. The first is about women in ministry. But perhaps the bigger question is "What is the nature of this church?" This church was never designed to be hierarchical and authoritative. All you have to do is think about the constituent structure of the basic organization's levels, the rights they have to elect and fire their officials and to execute their roles without authority or permission from above, to understand that power and authority do not flow downstream in this church without the consent of the downstream entities.

A 40+ year revisionism about hierarchy probably began with the Merikay Silver case, out of perceived need to make certain legal arguments. Perhaps the self-talk that arose out of statements made in depositions and other legal documents became a self-fulfilling prophecy because we have seen drift toward the assertion of hierachalism (is that a word?) ever since. Ben Maxson refers to this with first hand knowledge. I saw it myself in dealings with Neal Wilson, perhaps the chief architect of the trend.

I see the present moment as an opportunity to drive two stakes into the ground. One is on the issue of women in ministry: we need the blessings of their full service. The other is on the nature of our church: we need to re-assert that we are not a hierchical, authoritative church. I believe confirming both will be salutory.

As to your assertion, 007Grandpa, that "the bible and spirit of prophecy are clear on the ordination of women," there are many of good faith, dedication and scholarship who do not share your perspective. How do you feel about those with other perspectives?

Ali4Him
about a month ago

We do do need to bless the service of our women, they do so much for the Lord. The roles of headship in the home and Church was given by God himself not man. Genesis 3:16 There is a "army" of women who believe that their role of Godly submission is Biblical. Go to the sight ChristorCulture.com and you will see how many of the petition signatures are women.

Just make sure that the stakes you are driving in the ground are not to split the church for many will continue to follow the plan clear teachings of thus saith the Lord.

Laura Fernandez
about a month ago

Thank you Dr. Patterson. Aside from all the administrative and ethical issues involved the beauty resides on what the Holy Ghost is doing in his church. Many of us are convinced time is really runing out. Millions are
still waiting to hear the word of God but here we are arguing about an issue that have been settled long ago in the courts of heaven. Contrary to what many male christians believe, God doesn't function out of testosterone! The day of Pentecost was a remarkable display of what the power of God can do when we seek the Lord with a sincere and humble heart. It is no secret that pretty soon the Latter Rain will take control. When Jesus came the first time the jews failed to recognize the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies in him. Today many christians are failing to see that God is bringing his people together, in one purpose, to reach one goal, which is to complete the great commission. Like it or not God will elevate the dignity and the women's identity back again to its rightful place. The same she had at the time of creation in the garden of Eden, before the fall. My sisters and I accross generations and centuries have been marginalized for too long...but enough is enough!

When the Spirit of God touches your soul there is no turning back. An army of women is yet to be revealed in these last days. Such an army of young and old consecrated women that the church will be amazed! Women that are just waiting to receive their orders to join the ranks!

Thanks again for what you and other pastors are doing for our cause. God bless you!

All4Him
about a month ago

"Millions are still waiting to hear the word of God but here we are arguing about an issue that have been settled long ago in the courts of heaven."

AMEN LAURA, Why are women waiting to be ordained to spread the Word of the Lord?

"Contrary to what many male christians believe?"

Again please count the women who signed the ChristorCulture petition site

"Women that are just waiting to receive their orders to join the ranks!"

It sadly seems that some are waiting to give the orders befor they "join the ranks". God has given the orders let us strive to follow them......

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

Thank you Dr. Patterson.

This is the clearest explanation of church policy and how the G.C. has overriden its authority in dictating to the unions. The unions must take back their power and rightful position by ordaining all those women within their unions who have been long waiting to receive the official recognition due them. I hope to see many women ordained before the year is over.

Truth Seeker
about a month ago

Patterson, in my view, is in left field in his reasoning where so many are in respect to WO. Both ALL4HIM and 007Grandpa are on target as well as http://tinyurl.com/7a3qact

Wake up and smell the flowers, folks. The continued pressure could well split the church. Efforts toward WO are obviously based on culture and unrelated to theology or the real needs of the church.
Kimberlee Green
about a month ago

Truth Seeker,

How could this issue (WO) split the church and how do you envision the outcome to be? Would there be separate churches established, differing beliefs???

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

Dr. Patterson was giving us the policy by which the church and its divisions and unions operate. He was not taking a position but in outlining the procedure for any changes in church operation, he was doing a great service to the many who have been falsely led to believe that only changes made from the top are recognized. Conversely, we now know that the unions have much more authority to manage their conferences than we were led to believe.

It is not rebellion for a union to exercise its prerogative specifically outlined by the G.C. policy.

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

Dr. Patterson was giving us the policy by which the church and its divisions and unions operate. He was not taking a position but in outlining the procedure for any changes in church operation, he was doing a great service to the many who have been falsely led to believe that only changes made from the top are recognized. Conversely, we now know that the unions have much more authority to manage their conferences than we were led to believe.

It is not rebellion for a union to exercise its prerogative specifically outlined by the G.C. policy.

Moose
about a month ago

Gary,

As usual your clarity of thought is a blessing!

It seems to me that the Union Conferences, in this instance, are fulfilling the purpose for which they were created - to prevent centralization and the assumption of "kingly power" by a few in the General Conference. As much as I hate to admit it, it looks like Union Conferences do have a legitimate reason for existence - a reason why there will probably be an attempt in the near future to abolish them - not from the "liberal" side of the church but from the conservative who see their only hope of preventing our slide into hell in a handbasket to be strong centralized power.

Ben, appreciate your perspective too! Your checks will probably shrinking, but I appreciate both of your courage.

Oh, and by the way, anyone who has read the "Symposium on Women in Ministry" produced by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference by conservative scholars such as Gerhardt Hasel back in the late '70s knows that the attempts to justify exclusion of women from ordination does not, in any fashion, rest on a
solid Biblical foundation!

Thanks again for your willingness to be open and vulnerable.

All4Him
about a month ago

……Attempts to justify exclusion of women from ordination does not, in any fashion, rest on a solid Biblical foundation!……?

First of all 1Timothy 2:13 points back to creation BEFORE sin, verses 14 and 15 were given AFTER sin, and to my knowledge still in effect. Then look at Timothy 3:1 If a MAN desires the office of a Bishop, HE desires a good work. Then in verse 2 it states “the HUSBAND of one wife”....

Secondly, 1Peter 2:25 is talking about the relationship of the Church and Christ which follows straight into 1 Peter 3:1,5,7 which mentions the relationship of a man and wife. So if the sin of submission was abrogated by the cross was the sin of homosexuality done away with also? Please explain.....

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

All4Him,

It's futile to keep discussing a "Bible foundation." Save your breath until a union takes action and ordain its first woman—which is their right an privilege. But unless it's your union, you have no right to protest—it doesn't affect you.

Carlos Camarena
about a month ago

Unless you have lived and worked in a Division outside North America, you really do not know what centralization of power is like: Absolute control, top-down! Since the great majority of GC officers now hail from outside North America, is it not surprising to see the move towards a complete centralization of power. I prophesy, though never having claimed to be a prophet, that this will happen within the next two GC sessions. Heaven help us!

pagophilus
about a month ago

Dr Patterson, Pr Stephen Bohr wouldn't agree with your assessment. He sees the push to ordain women as rebellion in the camp. Please read his newsletter (link below). http://secretsunsealed.org/Downloads/newsletter2Q12web.pdf

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

Doug Bachelor and Pipim should also be listed as those who see this as rebellion. Proving that there will never be unanimity on this subject. But neither is there agreement on many others. Decisions for change will always be welcomed by some and disageed by others.
What is your suggestion for resolving such differences around the world?

Ben Maxson
about a month ago

The SDA Church has a long history of women in pastoral ministry fulfilling many different functions including that of acting conference president. They have served as pastors, evangelists, and teachers dating back to the 1860s. Early pioneers dealt with the same biblical passages that are now being used by those opposing WO. These passages were used against Ellen White as a woman leader in our church by those opposed to her. In fact, many have used her role as “proof” that SDAs were not a true church because her ministry violated these passages. Our pioneer leaders, including James White, Uriah Smith, J.N. Andrews, and others interpreted these passages in the cultural context of the New Testament times and supported women in ministry who were teaching men, especially Ellen White. They did not appear to use her prophetic calling as an excuse or exception. Instead they explained the passages as applying in the specific context of the local NT church rather than a broad principle. They certainly did not see this as a point of doctrine or biblical truth to be applied in our day.

Conservative SDA scholars such as Gerhard Hasel or Frank Holbrook also interpreted these passages in the same cultural context. Thus, while there are some scholars and pastors who oppose WO on what the basis of their biblical interpretation, there are many others who are equally dedicated to biblical truth and our Fundamental Beliefs who support the biblical concepts of the priesthood of all believers and the church recognition of God's calling and gifting for ministry as equally applicable to women.

As a church, we have never taken a doctrinal position on the subject of women in pastoral ministry. The votes that have been taken have been actions voting against moving forward because of what was seen as potential divisiveness. The current debate demonstrates the level of emotion we have invested in this subject. I fear that we are now at a place where regardless of the decision the polarization and division will only continue.

The current arguments opposing WO are by and large a departure from traditional Adventism as demonstrated by many years of SDA history. The current approach to ordination is built on a less than biblical understanding of ordination. Instead, it is based on a church tradition from the Middle Ages that focused on the magisterium and authority of Apostolic Succession which derived legitimacy of ordination based on the ability to trace an unbroken chain of ordinations back to Peter as the first Pope.

The concept of “male headship” applied to the church denies the biblical truth of Christ as Head of His Church. To apply the family role differentiation to the church as a headship issue is to create a further departure from biblical truth and models of servant leadership and the calling of all members to be ministers.

The “slippery slope” argument pointing to homosexuals in church leadership as the next step is confusing apples and oranges. Our church has taken a doctrinal stance on this area based on solid biblical interpretation. Thus, this area or fear can be addressed in a totally different way, with clear doctrinal statements.

I believe it is time for prayerful consideration of a biblical approach that moves us away from the hierarchical approach to ordination that focuses on position and power. This approach to ordination is neither biblical nor Adventist. The biblical approach to “setting apart” for ministry if one of church recognition of God’s calling and gifting for ministry. The positional distinction of pastors, elders, and deacons does not appear until the second or third century and was an adaptation from the positional/power approach of the cultural Roman world. This approach further separates pastors and people. There should be no separation. We are all equal before God.
It is time to face this issue as a policy issue that should be decided at the lowest level possible. Many practices are applied in a flexible fashion around the world without dividing the church. WO can be another such practice that need not be forced on anyone while being implemented in those areas who are open and ready for it.

All4Him
about a month ago

"The concept of “male headship” applied to the church denies the biblical truth of Christ as Head of His Church."??? I think Ellen White explains it very well Ben.....

Shepherds who fail at home will fail at church—He who is engaged in the work of the gospel ministry must be faithful in his family life. It is as essential that as a father he should improve the talents God has given him for the purpose of making the home a symbol of the heavenly family, as that in the work of the ministry, he should make use of his God-given powers to win souls for the church. As the priest in the home, and as the ambassador of Christ in the church, he should exemplify in his life the character of Christ. He must be faithful in watching for souls as one that must give an account. In his service church there must be seen no carelessness and inattentive work. God will not serve with the sins of men who have not a clear sense of the sacred responsibility involved in accepting a position as pastor of a church. He who fails to be a faithful, discerning shepherd in the home, will surely fail of being a faithful shepherd of the flock of God in the.—Manuscript Releases 6:49

"The “slippery slope” argument pointing to homosexuals in church leadership as the next step is confusing apples and oranges."

It mixes "apples and oranges" and is the making of "fruit salad"..... when you deviate from the Word of God and "thus saith the Lord" it will be discrimination. Look at the models/examples given in the God's Word.

"It is time to face this issue as a policy issue that should be decided at the lowest level possible"

God Word should be the needle of the compass for the direction of any decision.... Men and women are making their voice heard 4,180 in just a short time at Christorculture.com. The OneinChrist site that has been out much longer has only 1920..... Some ask how would this issue split the church? Any issue that many women and men take as not being Biblical has the potential for causing a split. We are called to become one in Spirit and in TRUTH.

Kimberlee Green
about a month ago

Yes, that is the crux of the issue of the WO issue-that some of use believe that it is biblical and some of us do not.

White Night
11 days ago

Ben Maxon:
As a former SDA minister and clasmate of yours, I really appreciate your comments and perspective as a retired
Along with Gary Patterson and Ed Reifsnyder, you make the clearest historical, denominational, and biblical points about making the mission of the church relevant to the current situation in the western world. Thank you for not holding back on the truth as you see it.

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

It is immaterial what either Bohr or Bachelor, Pipim, or anyone else thinks about this. "This" being the correct policy according to the church manual that gives the unions the authority to ordain women if it is what their constituent churches desire.

Bohr and Bachelor are in the PUC so they can take their concerns to their union for consideration. Good luck, for they are in the small minority.

Carrol
about a month ago

Thank you, Gary! The matter has been studied long enough. The unions are now doing what they should be doing. If their constituents are ready for this forward step, let’s take it and move on to spreading the gospel with the help of our women!

Kay Rosburg
about a month ago

Gary - thank you so much for this detailed overview of church governance, policy and gender discrimination. This will be so helpful at the July 29 constituency session. We continue to pray for the Holy Spirit's leading on that day. We are having a special prayer service for this upcoming meeting at Sligo Church on Tuesday night, July 24, at 7:00. Anyone in the Washington, DC area is welcome to come join us. And we will also be having a presentation on the theology of ordination by Darius Jankiewicz at Sligo on Sabbath afternoon, July 28, at 3:30....also at Sligo.

Kevin Riley
about a month ago

It is interesting that the three areas that are 'reserved' for ordained pastors - baptising, organising churches and performing weddings - that are so often cited are either not associated solely with ordained pastors in the NT (baptism) or are really peripheral to the work of a pastor. It is usually only the president who gets to organise new churches, so most male pastors will never do so. Even ordination is in the NT the work of the church.

Perhaps we need to revisit the idea that we gave certain roles to ordained pastors for exactly the same reason we gave certain roles to different levels of the church: practical reasons, nothing to do with theology. That is also why we began ordaining pastors - not because it is necessary for them to do their work, but because it was a culturally acceptable way of publicly declaring the person a representative of the church. Perhaps it is time we looked at the work of ministry before we get too hung up on ordination.

Kenneth Comstock
about a month ago

I was surprised at what the author lists as the four main documents governing the church. Surprised at what
seems to be missing from the list. There should be at least one additional document, which should be at the head of that list. In practice I believe that document is governing our church. I'm not sure why the author left it out (?).

h2ovapor
about a month ago

That was my exact thought Kenneth. I created an account just to make this comment & then I saw yours. If there was only one governing document of the church, I would hope it would be the Bible!

Ed Fry
about a month ago

There is immense wisdom in a structure which reserves significant power at the Union level. It allows for regional and cultural differences to be leveraged for the maximization of impact in that region. At the risk of opening a worm can, this same structure is also found in the wisdom of the United States' founding fathers when they adopted the country's 10th Amendment. So many of the U.S.'s political and societal struggles could be mitigated if this "ultimate compromise" were more closely followed rather than trying to find universal, forced solutions at the federal government level.

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

For many years following the Emancipation here in the U.S., segregation was the "law of the land" and enforced differently in the states.

When it became apparent that it was inherently wrong to deny full and equal rights to U.S. citizens based solely on the color of their skin, the Civil Rights Act was passed.

Conditions change over time; and human concepts also change. The U.S. has passed a number of laws against discrimination because of sex in the workplace, and other areas. We have become accustomed to seeing women performing in all sorts of occupations formerly assigned to men. The last fortress and barrier to women is the church. Where there is acceptance and recognition that human abilities are not limited to either sex, it is past time in the U.S. for women to become fully recognized pastors, standing side-by-side with male pastors.

In the countries where there are long traditions of women's limitation to assigned roles, they are not ready for women to be admitted to certain vocations. It should not be forced upon them. But, in Christian charity, those churches should not constrain and try to prevent the first world churches from aiding God's church by using the talents of all who qualify, regardless of sex. Discrimination has no place in God's church: We are all one in Christ Jesus; and ignoring that clear directive to NT Christians is to fail to follow God's word.

All4Him
about a month ago

Elaine if you want discrimination laws to take effect I ask you are you ready for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered to also be placed in the pulpit by discrimination law also?

I think your last fortress and barrier will be the NFL.....
Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

You misunderstand anti-discrimination laws: they cannot force an employer to hire someone, but they can prosecute if the can show that someone with equal qualifications was disqualified solely on race, sex, or orientation. No church would be forced to hire any of those you mentioned. Now, maybe you can sleep peacefully tonight.

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

In addition, churches are exempt from the government of the U.S. meddling in their doctrinal decisions. This discussion is all internal to the church; no civil government should be involved in church decisions.

For church institutions such as hospitals, this is an entirely different proposition. An Adventist hospital cannot discriminate in its hiring practices.

Alvin Masarira
about a month ago

The analysis from Dr. Patterson is quite insightful from a church administrative and policy position. However the debate on WO is not about who has the policy on their side but rather it has become a theological issue. Whether WO is a doctrinal question would be the first issue to clarify. Those opposed to WO are not arguing that the GC is the one with the responsibility to decide on the matter, but rather they argue, WO is a theological issues which can not be decided at any level except at GC level. How it became a theological issue, I don't know. But if one considers that the 1881 GC session already briefly considered the matter, came to no conclusive decision and sent it back to the GC committee, then one can see that back then already, many saw it as a theological matter. I believe we should ordain female pastors. The bible does not forbid that. We ordain elders already and there is no biblical basis to differentiate the role of pastor and elders, it boggles the mind that we don't ordain female pastors.

Elaine Nelson
about a month ago

This is incorrect: the church, in G.C. session has issued statements that women's ordination lacks any Bible directive. How much clearer could it be? There is no theological confusion. It has always been fear of causing divisiveness because the entire world church is not ready to recognize women as pastors. (Translation: the third world countries do not want women pastors ANYWHERE in the church.)

Edward Reifsnyder
about a month ago

On the post by Alvin Masarira, I agree that for many, it is a theological issue. But there is more. Some seem to see it as a rebellion within the church that is organizationally damaging, threatening to "split the church" as a couple of posts above have implied. I daresay some of the leadership of the church could see it in political terms. There could well be calculations as to how it affects international dynamics, governance and authority issues, and how all that could translate into elections at the next GC Session in 2015.

Thinking about in realpolitik terms, some thoughts:
There are going to be split votes, which is historically uncomfortable in church circles. Opinions and positions have likely reached a tipping point where multiple Union conferences in more than one Division will vote to approve women's ordination and move forward to actually ordain women. The key question at this point in time is leaders and members will react to these realities. The time to think about the question of unity will be more pertinent after the votes predicted above than it is now. Everyone will have to decide for themselves whether we have an adequate basis for unity based on a shared mission to spread the gospel of Jesus, based on love, acceptance and fellowship in the body of Christ.

I recently joined a Friday morning Bible study of Romans at that ultimate place of spiritual enlightenment: Whole Foods Market. At my first meeting with the group, it was apparent that the question of predestination was threatening the unity and harmony of the group. I eventually offered the thought that the issue has been hotly debated by good, well-meaning, smart, scholarly people of good faith since at least the 16th century with no resolution. We have managed to reach a state of goodwill among a group of men with remarkably different beliefs. Our study and fellowship continue.

I would hope that we will find a way to unity in the face of diversity of perspectives among good, well-meaning, smart, scholarly people of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Because a realpolitik analysis of the situation would indicate that we will face the question of how to respond to an affirmative vote.

I have heard and read about what Elaine Nelson says, that the WO lacks any Bible directive. I remember a statement from Jan Paulsen, where he says the decision not to ordain is not based on any Biblical basis but on the fear of causing divisions within the church. However the fear of disunity ignores the fact that there is disunity already by NOT ordaining women. I was at GC95 in Utrecht, and I have read a lot on GC Session decisions on this matter, there is nowhere (unless I missed it) where a GC Session categorically said..."we won't ordain women because that would divide the church and NOT because of theological reasons." This sentiment might have been expressed at Annual Councils or in GC Committees, but I don't remember seeing such a categorical statement from a GC Session. No matter where such a statement was issued, it did not filter to the ground. I tried to look for it and I can't find it. Anyone who has it, please give us the reference. The NAD proposal in 95 to allow Divisions to make independent decisions on the matter was defeated. But no clear resolution was made and put to the vote whether the reasons were theological or not. The vast majority of those opposed to it, argue it is theological and use the usual Bible texts to support their position. If they didn't believe it is theological, they wouldn't be fighting so hard against it. The Adventist Theological Society has been leading the "fight" against the WO. They also wrote their documents after GC95 in response to the book "Women in Ministry." What would assist the cause is if the GC Session could take a resolution that "the matter is NOT theological". If that wins the day, it would be much easier to argue it as an administrative and policy issue.
Did anyone hear that the GC is actually forcing the PUC to mail that horrendous "appeal" of them to all Constituents before the meeting on August 19th? It seems that this is their next step of their war against women.

I think that if the PUC cowards to that and actually mails that junk to the Constituents, they should mail Dr. Patterson's article (this one) along with it.

The so-called "appeal" is nothing else but the KGC at its best!!!

Perhaps mailing it to all the PUC delegates, either email or snail mail as I doubt the majority are even aware of this church policy. (They are listed in the PUC Recorder.)

Those who warn of a coming split in the church apparently do not recognize that there has already been a split in the church for 60 years on the issue of women's ordination. Those whose spiritual journey accepts the mandate of Galations 3:28 do so out of principle and conviction, not a spirit of rebellion. The split will be caused by the GC's illegitimate and indefensible authoritarianism that violates their own long-standing policy of church structure and responsibility, "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." Matt. 15:9.

Ordaining women to be Apostles or Deacons has no biblical basis in the Scriptures, that is why there is resistance by GC. Are we people of the Book, or a people who bow the whims of the popular culture around us? Jesus ordained 12 men, and little later 70 more male apostles/disciples. After the death of Judas, the Apostles lead by the Holy Spirit ordained Matthias to fill Judas' position as the 12th Apostle. Later on in the book of Acts, seven Deacons were appointed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And shortly thereafter, Paul was called by Jesus to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Note, before Jesus death on cross, and after His death on cross, all Apostles and Deacons that were ordained, were men!

What about Junia nad Phoebe? It is now generally admitted that the name often in the past referenced as 'Junias' is a reference to a female Junia who is called an 'apostle', and Phoebe who is clearly called a 'deacon'?

What about Colossians 2:16 or 1 Corinthians 16:2 do these change Gods commands for the seventh-day? Or Luke 23:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:8 change the Bible's true teachings on the state of the dead? You need to twist Scripture hard to squeeze out an ounce of proof when it comes to elimination of Biblical commands or examples for Men to be the spiritual leaders of the home and church.
What about Colossians 2:16 or 1 Corinthians 16:2 do these change God's commands for the seventh-day? Or Luke 23:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:8 change the Bible's true teachings on the state of the dead? You need to twist Scripture hard to squeeze out an ounce of proof when it comes to elimination of Biblical commands or examples for Men to be the spiritual leaders of the home and church.


Let the Spirit work through the Constituents. Fair enough???

Do we believe the Spirit will guide the Constituents? Aren't they the ones in charge according to the organizational map of the Remnant Church?

People should believe more in their church's administrative organization.

Patti it was God who spoke in Genesis 3:16 not man. And it is to God's actions that Paul refers back to in 1 Timothy 2:13. Now that I understand that Jan Paulsen was the one that said that WO is not a Biblical issue, it easier to see the anger for anyone who dare believe otherwise....like Elder Wilson.

Dr. Patterson's article should put a stop to the never-ending discussions about whether the G.C. can direct, or order the union conferences not to ordain women.

It is completely up to the unions for that decision and the only tactic that the G.C. has, is to infer that they, and they alone make such decisions and that unions would be in defiance if they went ahead and ordained women.

Thanks again, Dr. Patterson for giving us the straight facts. Re-read it if not convinced.

To All4Him: I have found the official SDA Church position on WO. See the link below. It was NOT Jan Paulsen who said the matter is NOT Biblical. It was the 1990 GC session. It said, there is NO clear Biblical basis NOT to ordain or TO ordain female pastors. But to preserve the unity of the church, we rather not ordain. I think that settles that question. Those who say the GC Session voted against ordination because of Biblical reasons are inaccurate. The issue is church unity and not a clear "thus saith the Lord." By the way, the website carrying this statement is actually from AdventistAffirm, which OPPOSES women ordination.
Thanks Alvin, I was going by the statement you had made above, and I see now where it came from. The commission itself did not have a consensus so it would be a twisting things to say that the GC voted against ordination for Biblical reasons.

Bob Pickle
about a month ago

Like I've said before, if WO really is a righteous cause, it shouldn't need misinformation to support it.

After quoting from GC Working Policy L 45 05, Patterson states: "There is no gender reference in this policy whatsoever." And yet L 45 10 refers to the ordination candidate and his "wife," an obvious reference to gender. Then L50 explicitly uses the word "man." Let's not be so eager to promote WO that we resort to the deceitful spin of worldly lawyers.

While acknowledging that a GC Session is the highest authority in the church, patterson contends that a GC Session "is not entitled to impose its actions on other levels of the church in which it does not have constituted authority." This makes no sense. Is Patterson not aware that GC and NAD Working Policy explicitly states that a GC Session is the highest authority on earth under God? And that thus the GC Session's properly constituted authority trumps that of all other church entities, meetings, and sessions regardless of topic? And if Patterson is not aware of this basic policy, why is he writing an article such as this one as if he is an authority on the topic?

George Tichy
28 days ago

You are not very happy with Patterson's article, are you?

He stated the facts in a way that they make sense and are revealing about the real organizational structure of the
church.
Some people don't like it when "too much" revealing info is revealed to the body...

Bob Pickle
about a month ago

Patterson makes three points about the 1995 GC Session: (a) There was official recognition that "there was no biblical or theological to support a position of forbidding such ordination. (b) "[T]he vote there again did not forbid it." (c) "[T]he request was denied 'at this time.'"

I do not believe that any of these points are true, but would welcome anyone emailing me quotations from the official record that support this. I have read the motion that was voted upon, and nothing in that motion said "at this time," and nothing acknowledged that there was no biblical support. Further, since the motion directly requested authorization to ordain women, the voting down of the motion was an official action against ordaining women.

Bob Pickle
about a month ago

AToday's emails promoting this article used the subject, "Breaking News on Ordination of Women Pastors." Breaking news? Where's the breaking news? A retired church worker states his opinion. How is that breaking news?

Yet on April 29 a conference constituency session voted down a strongly pro-WO proposal, and thus far AToday has not covered that story as far as I can tell. Certainly that April 29 vote should be considered breaking news.

Someone previously indicated that AToday is only covering session votes if there is a press release from that conference or union. Thus, if there isn't a release, there is no story. That's sounds plausible, until you consider the fact that Gary Patterson is not a conference constituency session vote, following which that conference issued a press release. Therefore, I think we have here conclusive evidence that AToday is showing too strong of a bias on WO, to the point of calling pro-WO personal opinion pieces containing clearly identifiable misinformation "Breaking News," while apparently considering constituency session votes against WO to be not news at all, much less breaking news.

Edwin A. Schwisow
about a month ago

The appearance of the article in finished form was sudden and unexpected, and presented for the first time (as far as is known) a cohesive listing of the roles of governance (across the spectrum, from general to local), with special focus on ordination as a function of the unions around the globe. The information may not be new, but its very antiquity (and by some counts suppression of the information) makes its presentation at this time of newsbreaking quality.

As to a local conference voting not to ordain women, by definition the usual and ordinary is not news—that a conference (for example) endorses continued observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is not news. It's status quo, the expected, the routine....no offense to the Sabbath intended, I keep it religiously and gladly....

To my knowledge, *Adventist Today* does not promote women's ordination any more than it promotes ordination of men (in fact, I recall an article or two AGAINST both men's and women's ordination, but this is by no means
a "position" taken by the magazine). But AT does promote dissemination of relevant information about ordination and its history, so leadership and laity can make informed decisions, as the Spirit opens and closes doors. The article by Dr. Patterson will be seen, I believe, as a watershed moment in the history of this discussion....

Bob Pickle
about a month ago

Ed, thanks for the reply.

"As to a local conference voting not to ordain women, by definition the usual and ordinary is not news ...." I don't think that that would be an accurate description of what took place. A somewhat pro-WO was passed, but a strongly pro-WO motion was voted down. It was an unusual session. The officers I think were unanimously re-elected, but not before attention was drawn to GC & NAD Working Policy's statements about the authority of GC Session votes, and the importance of officers working within church policy if they are to be re-elected. There were other things too. And this session occurred in Mid-America, right where the current agitation began with the March union committee vote.

"The article by Dr. Patterson will be seen, I believe, as a watershed moment in the history of this discussion...." But what about Patterson's article (a) leaving the false impression that GC Working Policy L 45 has no reference to gender? (b) his failure to recognize that GC and NAD Working Policy states that a GC Session is the highest authority under God on earth, which pretty much trumps the authority of all other church organizations? and (c) his apparently false description of the 1995 vote as including an official recognition that there is nothing biblical or theological that prohibits WO, that that vote didn't forbid the practice, and that that vote explicitly stated that the denial was only "at that time"?

To me, publishing an article that contains critical, substantive factual errors like this suggests too strong a bias, unless it is one of two or more opinion pieces presenting contrary views. Publishing articles against all ordination, Okay, but what about an article against WO but not against men's ordination? Shouldn't there be at least one?

Patty McLennan
about a month ago

Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:18, Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1Corinthians 15:22; Ephesians 5:22-25; 1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timoty 2:12-14; 1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:18-19
Titus 2:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:7-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35, 37, 38; 2 Thessalonians 2:15;
1 Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 19:7-9

May the blessing of God's word be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path.

God's Will Paramount
29 days ago

Perhaps the most crucial question that is yet to be answered is: "Can I as a pastor, or a church leader, or a church member, hear God's voice amongst so many voices in the age old debate on WO?" If I can't then I have nothing to contribute. If I can, it will be the result of much humble and prayerful reflection (yes, why not accompanied by fasting), bathed in alone time with the Lord, and His Word. As exciting and as "enlightening" (at times we are more confused than enlightened), as those myriad of ideas floating around are, no amount of blogging,
arguing back and forth, will be a substitute for this very simple and only effective way forward. Hence, when God's people approach any vote on WO in this fashion, the result will be understood and believed to be that of the Lord. We can then proceed, joyfully, and by faith, and get on with each other, in love, engaged fully in His Mission. Can we not see that the hour is late! His Will must be paramount.

William Noel
29 days ago

What I would like to know is if you are encouraging your members to discover the Holy Spirit working in them to empower and guide them into active ministries. If so, then it is likely at some point you will have to address the question of the ordination of women as either elders or pastors. If not, the entire topic is hypothetical.

All4Him
29 days ago

William there is a wide realm of ministries for men and women and we do need to prayerfully study Gods word as well as SOP......

Needed in Various Branches of the Work.--In the various branches of the work of God's cause, there is a wide field in which our sisters may do good service for the Master. Many lines of missionary work are neglected. In the different churches, much work which is often left undone or done imperfectly, could be well accomplished by the help that our sisters, if properly instructed, can give. Through various lines of home missionary effort they can reach a class that is not reached by our ministers. Among the noble women who have had the moral courage to decide in favor of the truth for this time are many who have tact, perception, and good ability, and who may make successful workers. The labors of such Christian women are needed.-- Review and Herald, Dec. 10, 1914.

Kevin Riley
29 days ago

What has not been explained in this debate is how a group of Bible texts that on a literal reading seem to be about what women can and can't do, has somehow becomes a debate based on 'well, of course women can do these things, they just can't be ordained to do these things, because that would go against everything the Bible teaches'. It does not seem to me, on any possible reading of the texts, that ordination is the issue.

All4Him
29 days ago

(a class that is not reached by our ministers) in the above quote.... is not ordination for Elders and Ministers? EGW never thought of herself as ordained yet look at the work she was able to do....

Ellen White is clear in her writings on this matter... "Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be MEN of blameless reputation. 5T 598.

Acts 6:3, Acts 6:6,
Choose Wise Men—For years the Lord has been instructing us to choose wise men,-men who are devoted to God,—men who know what the principles of heaven are,-men who have learned what it means to walk with God,—and to place upon them the responsibility of looking after the business affairs connected with our work. This is in accordance with the Bible plan as outlined in the sixth chapter of Acts. We need to study this plan; for
it is approved of God. Let us follow the Word.—The Review and Herald, October 5, 1905

There is a reason she says let us follow the Word............

Louise Clark
29 days ago

What does the Bible say about elders---Must be the husband of one wife

Kevin Riley
29 days ago

Then why do we ordain unmarried men? Or men who have had more than one wife?

Stephen Ferguson
29 days ago

Or men who don't have God-fearing children who are still in the Church, which is actually another criterion?

Stephen Ferguson
29 days ago

I would love for someone to explain to me how young Timothy or celibate Paul satisfied these criteria?

TruthWave7
29 days ago

The bottom line in this debate is that the SDA is at a crossroads, in that there are two camps, those who value the clear examples and texts of Scripture, and those who brush aside the most plain texts in the Bible for societal and culture motives. We are facing another reformation moment in history, where two sides will clearly be seen. They cannot be reconciled, because one rejects plain texts of the Bible and example of Jesus regarding WO, while the other uses obscure texts to try and persuade others to see things in "new light".

Stephen Ferguson
29 days ago

Exactly, those against WO are seeing this through their cultural patriarchal lenses, not through the clear word and message of the Bible, where under the New Covenant there is no male or female, Greek or Jew, free or slave. The same logic that white Christians once used to subjugate human beings in chains of other races is now used against the other gender.

If the Bible texts WO were applied strictly, only older married men with obedient children all still in the Church could be and remained ordained ministers. How many ordained Pastors do you know you fit those criteria? Not many I guess. Many new ordained pastors are unmarried and don't have children. Many if not most older ordained pastors have the most rebellious children, who have left the Church.

All4Him
29 days ago

Truthwave.....
"We are facing another reformation moment in history, where two sides will clearly be seen."
The camp who value the "clear example of text and scripture" is rising. What people do not realize is that the "sifting and shaking" must take place before the later rain hits. These storm clouds brought on by the mixing current culture and the simple Truth of Gods Word.

Soon our nation will be blaming it's woes on the "current culture" and will be making a dramatic step to turn the nation "back to God" and we will be tested on much greater matters. If we can not follow Gods Word on lighter issues how can we hold to it when the storm is greater?

Stephen, if Paul's Words about the right to salvation in Galations 3:28 ment their are not any God given roles of male and female. And after the cross there is no need for submission or headship....does this also allow homosexuality for gender plays no role now?

ChristorCulture has in a short time raised 4,400 petition signatures.... OneinChrist has 1,921 and has been up since January.

TruthWave7
29 days ago

@Stephen Ferguson: The Bible texts that you quoted against WO came right from the writings of Paul, in the NT. Do you deny the inspiraiton of Paul's clear message to the NT church regarding women's divine place in the church? It more of an issue of God's order, the Man being the head, and the women being workers for God in various ministries, but not filling the position of an Apostle, or Bishop. And yes, modern day Pastors should be held to the Guidelines in the NT, if we did it, it would make a big difference in the spiritual condition of our churches.

Stephen Ferguson
29 days ago

I believe Paul was talking about the office of Elder. The office of Elder is different from the office of Apostle, which is what equates to our concept of clergy. Whilst the office of Elder was for older, married men with obedient children, the office of Apostle was bestowed by the Holy Spirit alone.

This point was made clear by the method of appointment of Matthias, which was chosen by lots, which is actually the origin of our word clergy (it literally means chosen by lots). Only Elders needed ordination, because they lacked the authority Apostles had by being chosen by the Holy Spirit.

Technically, I don't believe in WO. I agree Elders should perhaps only be older, married men with obedient children. However, ordination is not even needed for any Apostle, man or woman, because they are called by the Holy Spirit.

The office of Apostle and Elder were combined sometime in the early Papacy. By maintaining the argument against having women clergy, you are upholding Papal Tradition over scripture.

I don't pretent to explain it perfectly. I am only trying to poorly explain the article 'Leadership in the Early Church During the First Hundred Years' by Prof. Robert M. Johnston of Andrews University. Prof. Johnston's work has been referred to on previous AToday articles.

P.S. If you disagree with this and still insist the eldership criteria apply to clergy, but maintain a position against
WO, explain to me how Timothy or Paul could satisfy the eldership criteria.

Stephen Ferguson
29 days ago

Some quotes from 'Leadership in the Early Church During the First Hundred Years' by Prof. Robert M. Johnston of Andrews University:

“For my purpose in this paper the most important feature of this type of ministry [charismatic leadership of the Apostle and Prophet] is that a person was called to it directly by Christ or his Spirit. It was not an office to which one was elected or humanly appointed. It was a function to which one was divinely called. The church could extend its recognition of that calling, but its reception did not depend upon such recognition and normally preceded it.” [2]

“The Twelve” was so firmly established as a synonym for the original group of apostles that Paul referred to them thus even when they had become only eleven (1 Cor 15:5)! Furthermore, it was important that the office not be seen as bestowed by human choice or appointment, so the vacancy was filled by casting lots after prayer (Acts 1:23-26).” [3]

“In three of Paul’s letters we find lists of spiritual gifts, and in three of these lists we find apostles, in each case heading the list (1 Cor 12:28; 12:29-30; Eph 4:11). By placing apostleship among the charismata, Paul completes its “democratization,” making it available to anyone to whom the Holy Spirit should choose to distribute it.” [5]

“They brought the Seven before the apostles, and having prayed they laid their hands upon them. This was the beginning of the appointive ministry, leaders selected by the people and given authority by the laying on of hands. This action was a far more momentous event than is commonly recognized because it inaugurated a completely new type of ministry and church leadership. It was this type that was destined to prevail over the other two kinds and replace them.” [7]-[8]

“First it should be noted that the laying on of hands did not bestow a spiritual gift… Second, they were chosen by their peers, apparently elected in some fashion. Third, their office was created for pragmatic reasons, to fill a need (chreia, 6:3).” [8]

“The apostles and prophets had been replaced by the bishops, the gifts of the Spirit by elected officers” [12]

So who is acting according to scripture and the example of the New Testament Early Church, and who is acting like a Papist in upholding Roman Catholic tradition, by attempting to combine Eldership with Apostleship/Clergy? Who is acting like a Papist in trying to apply the criteria for appointed leadership, of Elder and Deacon, to Apostleship/Clergy who are appointed solely by the Holy Spirit?

TruthWave7
28 days ago

The fact is that the Holy Spirit was guiding men in their selections of who would be called. The bigger fact, was that they were all men who were appointed as Apostles and Bishops. This explodes the idea that there was women Apostles and Bishops.
Kevin Riley  
28 days ago

You are still ignoring Junia being called an 'apostle'. That was recognised by Chrysostom (who knew his Greek and was not a feminist) and there is a tradition that she went on to become a bishop. And I will accept that 'apostle' may not imply authority when a clear example of a non-authoritative male 'apostle' is provided. Until then, I will accept 'apostle' at face value - as a person with great authority in the early church. The same applies to Phoebe as a deacon.

TruthWave7  
27 days ago

The evidence put forth that 'Junia' was an apostle's inconclusive at best. It is not hard evidence as when compare to the very clear actions regarding the all males apostolic order as recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Your grasping at straws to try and put forth a women as an Apostles, when the evidence is just not there.

Stephen Ferguson  
27 days ago

Where is your evidence that Apostles can be non-Jews or not circumcised?

TruthWave7  
25 days ago

You bring up diversionary issues, the BIG fact was that they were all MALE.

Stephen Ferguson  
28 days ago

Kevin already mentioned Junia, the female apostle. Weren't all the Apostles all circumcised Jews? How many of our clergy fit those criteria? I am not sure if one can rely on such reductionist reasoning.

Truthwave7, you still haven't answered my question. How could celibate Paul or young Timothy had satisfyed the criteria of one wife with obedient children? Or do you now concede Prof. Johnston's thesis that Paul was addressing appointed leadership in the Early Church (i.e. bishop/elder/deacon, chosen by men, hence the need for criteria) and not charismatic leadership (i.e. apostle and prophet, chosen by the Holy Spirit)?

I am willing to concede that women could possibly be prohibited from certain forms of appointed leadership, but obviously with Phoebe as deacon women were allowed certain degree of appointed leadership. For me personally, I think Paul was addressing the cultural realities of the day. However, if you now want to say that the SDA Church forbids women from being GC administrators, and each local church can decide to prohibit women elders, then go for it.

However, I am struggling to see how you can say men get to choose who are to be chosen for charismatic leadership (i.e. apostles and prophets), given these are offices chosen by the Holy Spirit - not men! I think it very apt that in the early history of the SDA Church, God chose a white man, then a black man, and then finally a woman to lead our church in charismatic leadership.

Stephen Ferguson  
28 days ago
And again, I didn't originally have this view about WO. I came to this conclusion after Prof. Johnston's article was mentioned in another article in WO. It would be great if we could actually try and learn something here, not just blow our own horns.

Elaine Nelson
28 days ago

Isn't a woman a vice president of the G.C.? How did that happen? If she is not ordained, she could never become president, despite valuable information she could offer. But, unlike the U.S. presidency, in case of death, a VP would not automatically succeed. Also, unlike the U.S., SDA presidents are chosen quite differently: the members have little participation. This promotes the feeling that the "church" is the G.C. leaders rather than members. In U.S. presidential voting, there is an intense interest and feeling that we the people have actually voted our desires; not always as we vote, but nevertheless, it is a much more open process.

Stephen Ferguson
28 days ago

Don't you think though it is all a really stupid argument. If we already have women in highest leadership positions in the Church, and who are pastors and ministers in local churches, what is the point of not ordaining them? Let me again quote from Prof. Johnston, who makes clear ordination did afford human recognition on charismatic leadership (i.e. apostles and prophets), but ordination did not make the charismatic leader - only the Holy Spirit made the charismatic leader.

“For my purpose in this paper the most important feature of this type of ministry [charismatic leadership of the Apostle and Prophet] is that a person was called to it directly by Christ or his Spirit. It was not an office to which one was elected or humanly appointed. It was a function to which one was divinely called. The church could extend its recognition of that calling, but its reception did not depend upon such recognition and normally preceded it.” [2]

Re the selection of GC presidents, I always laugh when people claim we have a democratic model. It is about as democratic as the selection of the Politburo of the Chinese Government. Lower levels appoint higher levels and so forth, but those at the lowest levels of the Party have virtually no say over who gets appointed to the highest levels.

This method of selection made much sense in the 19th Century, given limitations of communication and transport (i.e. as did the Electrol College for US Presidents). I just wonder if in the 21st Century, it could be possible to have a more egalitarian democratic process of direct election by local churches, without the Communist Party pyramid model?

Nathan Schilt
28 days ago

This is a great overview of the issue and its history, Dr. Patterson! Thank you very much. But I have a question: How can we possibly be the Remnant Church if we are not united in discriminating, on the basis of gender, against those whom God has called to a vocation of full time gospel ministry? (LOL)

TruthWave7
27 days ago
We are not united because there are so many professed SDA these day who want to make us into something like the United Methodists or the Presbyterians, who lay hands on women and homosexuals.

Kevin Riley
27 days ago

Not to mention so many who focus on minor matters and would gladly throw people out for not tithing mint.

Perhaps we should read Ellen White's comment about Jesus returning when the character of Christ is reproduced in his church after reading texts like Exodus 34:6,7 Isaiah 31:3 Hosea 11:8,98 John 13:35 and John 3:16. I suspect the ordination of women is one of our lesser problems as far as God is concerned.

Doctorf
26 days ago

Ooops sorry Truth Wave. Laying on of hands on a woman was already done here at Loma Linda. Dr. Hyveth Williams was the first black female and senior pastor of the Campus Hill Church and yes she was ordained. Chris Oberg wife of one of our faculty at LLU School of Medicine became the first Female Senior Pastor of the LLU Church in 2009. And yes she is ordained. I understand that these ordinations or women pastors may not be recognized by the central GC however it is recognized by the local conference in S. Calif. Both Churches have done well under their leadership.

TruthWave7
25 days ago

Has anything good come out of the SE Conference lately? The SE CA Conference leadership is in rebillion, its wants to do whatever they want, regardless of consensus of the world church.

Elaine Nelson
25 days ago

Do you live in the SE CA conference? How will it detrimentally affect you? Will you stop attending church if there is a female ordained minister? What will be your reactions if WO becomes operative? Will you then be in rebellion against the church?

Elaine Nelson
27 days ago

One can either strive for doing what is right or being the Remnant. If there is conflict, it shouldn't be hard to know what should be done. Did Jesus ever call us to be the Remnant, or do what was right?

All4Him
27 days ago

That's why we as a church need to follow his Word and His example....God is the same yesterday today and tomorrow. The Remnant is what is left after the shifting and shaking and will be the recipients of the true out pouring of the Holy Spirit. Nathan you can LOL all you want but God is not mocked.....
Ok, those who do believe in God will probably all agree, we should follow God's instruction (that is given for us to obey) and follow His example (when the example was provide for us). Those who take this seriously will realize that there are many interpretations of the instruction, what is meant for us, the example, and what is meant for us. Only an arrogant fool assumes they or their small group can be certain they have the correct interpretation. Doing our best at obeying God and fulfilling His expectations requires continual soul searching and humility. This is trait that from all appearances is hard to come by in certain types of thinkers.

All4Him
27 days ago

Thats why we as a church need to follow his Word and His example....God is the same yesterday today and tomorrow. The Remnant is what is left after the shifting and shaking and will be the recipients of the true out pouring of the Holy Spirit. Nathan you can LOL all you want but God is not mocked.....

Kimberlee Green
27 days ago

Don't know if Nathan was exactly laughing at but you are assuming that "God is not mocked" when he does.

It appears the assumption of many anti-WO commenters that you must persuade by an avalanche of bible text and EGW quotes (most of which if not all of them) we are already know and are aware of. It does get tedious after a while and I don't think that it convinces anyone...maybe that's why Nathan was LOL?

But if all this is simply an exercise to get your own unique perspective into the conversation then go for it. Just know that this is just what it is..."talking points".

Doctorf
26 days ago

I need to correct myself for my post above. Chris Oberg was the Senior pastor of the Calimes SDA church and became Senior Pastor of "University Church" at La Sierra University. But, none the less the Pacific Union Conference has ordained female pastors.

Edwin A. Schwisow
27 days ago

If only those with obedient children can serve as ordained ministers, what of a ministerial couple with no prospect of conceiving children, or whose children have passed away? Do we at that point withdraw credentials, even as the Holy Spirit (presumably) withdraws His blessing? An over-literalization of Paul's advisory comments can cause tremendous havoc among gifted, dedicated ministers of both genders—and in fact can border on the childish. Far better to look at the underlying principles—that dedicated pastors should demonstrate a gift for ministry to children (their own and others); steadfastness in marriage; a good reputation in the community; credibility among the saints; fruits of the Spirit amply demonstrated. Clearly this is the primary message Paul is sharing. In many countries of the world, children stand and deliver as preachers, winning countless souls to the Adventist faith. I do not ordinarily advocate for child labor, but where the Spirit is manifest, who are we to gainsay God?

Stephen Ferguson
27 days ago
To follow All4Him's reasoning - yes we do. More likely though, we need to withdraw the credentials of any minister whose children rebel because one of the criteria for eldership. If every minister who had a child left the church was disqualified, I bet there wouldn't be a whole lot of ordained ministers left.

You will also notice that All4Him and others never did answer how celibate Paul or young Timothy satisfied these requirements for eldership, if they are supposedly meant to apply strictly to ordained clergy.

All4Him
27 days ago

Stephen lets say a pastor named, Elder Steprooster, had three children two were prime examples of Christiandom and one had a foot off the wagon, yet when he was ordained as a Elder all three were saints. Shall we make you the judge and jury of Elder Steprooster?

Were the 11 MEN choosen/called by Jesus unqualified also (Judas called himself)..... The reason behind this was to have MEN that lead there families correctly lead the Church. This is not my reasoning but Gods plan/role of order.

Kevin Riley
27 days ago

That still doesn't answer how Paul or Timothy could be pastors. If what we see demonstrated doesn't line up with what we believe the 'commands' are, perhaps we have misunderstood them.

Elaine Nelson
26 days ago

It's quite astonishing that when some folks speak, they are so cocksure that they are speaking directly for God--must have a special extra-terrestrial microwave line that no others have.

Stephen Ferguson
26 days ago

Agree. It is interesting that people against WO make absolutist claims that it is against the clear word of scripture. However, when pressed, they can't explain how Paul or Timothy could have satisfied this biblical criteria.

Faced with this problem, they suddenly drop 'thus saith the Lord' and take the extroidinary step of making an argument from tradition, saying that because Jesus chose men as apostles, only men can be apostles. That is a Papal argument, and they become servants of the Pope in making it. I make that point because these same people are also extremely anti-Papal, which is of course the great irony.

Finally, when they make this argument from tradition, it isn't clear why they hone in on one tradition - gender - and not other traditions? Why don't all our current day clergy have to be Jews, as the apostles were? Why don't they have to be circumcized? Most importantly, the Papacy would argue that clergy can only gain their authority via the notion of Apostlic Sucession, which obviously the SDA Church does not have!
Elaine, we must be missing something! I am suspicious that God went on vacation and left those people in charge! I only hope He comes back soon, otherwise we are in big trouble!!

Edwin A. Schwisow
26 days ago

On the question of Paul and Timothy as pastors, I would suggest that as in every flexible system of operation (where results are more important than the process) the apostle and his protegé felt entitled to follow a different course, because of the needs for their ministry in a special way, for the edification of the saints. Or maybe the two were making lifestyle statements for "celibate liberation," suppose?

Stephen Ferguson
26 days ago

If so then the whole argument against WO collapses.

George Tichy
25 days ago

If so, then the SDA's anti-WO is actually nothing else than mere discrimination against women.

I have said it for a long time, and it's becoming more and more evident that this is exactly the case. It's just the males' (some of them) desperate and paranoid need to retain control, a true fight against women - in the name of God, in the name of spirituality.

Doctorf
26 days ago

While we sit here and debate the finer points of scripture to justify discrimination against women pastors there have been two ordained female pasors here in S. Calif. Hyveth Williams (Campus Hill Church) and Chris Oberg, former Senior Pastor of the Calimesa Church and now Senior Pastor of the University Church at La Sierra University. The ordination was sanctioned by Pacific Union Conference. Can't we leave the anachronisic views of discrimination against women in the SDA church behind? After all it is the 21st century.

George Tichy
25 days ago

Yes, it is the 21st century. But for some people the stone age mentality is more attracting, more rewarding. Especially when they can retain power and control in church, keeping women under the lid. It's in part a males' deficiency of self esteem.

Jean Corbeau
24 days ago

I never could figure out how Hyveth Williams got into such a high position. Her theology is off the wall sometimes.

Kevin Riley
24 days ago
Look closely and you will find the same of most people in high position. That may have always been true. It hasn't stopped God using such people.

Elaine Nelson  
26 days ago

"Can't we leave the anachronistic views of discrimination against women in the SDA church behind? After all it is the 21st century."

It only becomes difficult when there are those who are fighting to drag the church back to the 19th century. I guess that's the evidence of "Primitive Godliness" that used to be upheld.

Stephen Ferguson  
26 days ago

Actually, it is to drag us back I believe far back than that to the rise of the Papacy in the Early Christian Church. In the 19th Century, the SDA Church was arguably just as if not more egalitarian on the issue of WO. As reported several times on AToday and elsewhere, there were several paid female ministers and the Church did vote to endorse WO at the end of the 19th Cent. To again quote Prof. Johnston:

“The apostles and prophets had been replaced by the bishops, the gifts of the Spirit by elected officers” [12]

Interestingly, the story of the office of deaconess gives a good illustration. In 1833, Lutheran Pastor Theodor Fliedner of Kaiserswerth, Germany, revived the deaconess movement – forgotten for over a thousand years. Despite deaconess being a biblical office, the Council of Orange in 441 revoked female ordination. To put this in perspective, the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church only reinstituted the female deaconate in 2004.

We need to continue the spirit of reformation, which our pioneers started, but which we must continue. We need to fight against forces of stagnation, which rely on arguments of Papal tradition, becoming unwilling servants of the Pope in their opposition to recognising the raddical egalitarian message of the Gospel.

TruthWave7  
24 days ago

@Stephen: The Reformation was to bring back God's professed followers to plain truths of the Bible, and to conform to cultural or societal pressures of equal rights or discrimination issues that the world has attempted to inject into the church. The clear example and teachings of Jesus explode your politically correct view of the WO issue. Do you believe that what Jesus did in laying hands on men only as being God's will? Jesus said that He did only what was His Father's will. John 5:30 "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

George Tichy  
25 days ago

Elaine,  
This is just the miracle of "going forward to the past!"
This administration is very good at this. They may soon be declaring that the "Shut Door" doctrine is actually valid...

Well, if "back to the future" was possible... then why not "forward to the past"?

Elaine Nelson
24 days ago

TruthWave:

Did you really mean this:

"The Reformation was to bring back God's professed followers to plain truths of the Bible, and to conform to cultural or societal pressures of equal rights or discrimination issues that the world has attempted to inject into the church"?

The way it is written infers that the Reformation was both to conform Bible truths and to cultural or societal pressures. If that is your meaning, you have made a remarkable 180 degree change and I congratulate for finally seeing the light.

George Tichy
24 days ago

Elaine, I think we both should drink a little bit of what he was having when he/she wrote this... LOL

Edwin A. Schwisow
24 days ago

We need to understand that among some conservative Christians, there is ALSO the very strong sense that if women are allowed to teach men (especially young men, perhaps their own sons) that these men will "turn out" to be less manly, God forbid homosexual.

I do believe that intermixed with the women's ordination issue is a strain of thought that suggests that there is an actual or implicit conspiracy to emasculate Christian men and tilt the church toward the feminist/gay agenda.

Those fully invested in these thoughts hold that women's ordination is a kingpin that when removed will slide the church into becoming a haven for masculinized women and effeminate men. There are many such homespun theories that undergird the opposition to women's ordination—many of them long-ago prejudices from a very patriarchal era when women were women, and men were, ah, superior.....

Stephen Ferguson
24 days ago

Thanks Edwin, you could be right. No doubt there was probably a time when white Christians thought (even if they didn't say) that if other races were allowed positions of power and leadership in the Church it may somehow infect the rest of white society, leading to such things as miscegenation. No doubt it was that sort of racism that dominated the Early Jewish Church in its battle against Paul over the Gentile, not realizing the egalitarian power of the Gospel where there is no Jew or Greek, free or slave, male or female.

Kevin Riley
There is a long tradition in European thought that women are, in a sense, incomplete men, and if boys are not taught and trained properly they will not become men, but something more resembling women. It goes back a long way. The Gnostic gospels sometimes speak of Mary Magdalene becoming, or being made, a man. I think we may someday be forced to acknowledge that there is still a strong belief in both the superiority of one gender, one social class, and one race over all others. One mark of that superiority is not to see it, in fact to be blind to any instance of it.

Stephen Ferguson
24 days ago

There is also a line in the movie Gi-Jane that also sums up the link between discrimination of race and gender. But as always, Kevin, your sociological and historical examples say it best.

Joe Erwin
23 days ago

Is God asking adventists to "grow up" and quit blaming everything on Eve?

Elaine Nelson
23 days ago

Truthfully, this patriarchal and separation model began when God told the Israelites to separate from all other surrounding peoples and that they were his "Chosen People." The Bible placed man as the head and women were inferior and subordinate with little ability to make their own decisions of marriage and children--which were owned by the man in case of divorce.

For those who wish to return to the biblical model, would they be content with this original plan, given by God? Or, is the NT their model that male and female are equal? This was a revolutionary idea, still not uniformly adopted.

Kevin Riley
23 days ago

Patriarchalism and separation had a long history before the call to Abraham. I believe the trajectory of the Bible is away from that to the NT position that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female'. Even then, there was accommodation to the reality of lived life, but still it was there as an ideal to strive towards. To insist we stay only at the point the NT reached seems to be contrary to belief in 'progressive revelation' and 'present truth'.

Timo Onjukka
23 days ago

Columbian Union Conference apparently just voted... in favor of ordination.

George Tichy
23 days ago

Yes Timo, they did!
Hopefully the GC will take 80% as being significant. Hopefully they will take it as the voice of the church - despite their efforts to undermine the voting process. Hopefully they will start listening to the church's voice now. Hopefully...

Kevin Riley
23 days ago

I guess the GC needs now to either find a way of rescinding that vote, or find a way of living with different practices in different parts of the world. As an organisation that has appeared pretty much committed to uniformity for the last few decades, the first response is what we should expect. This is one time when I would like to see my expectations disappointed and the GC to graciously accept the decision - and the ones from other Unions that will inevitably follow. I am still disappointed that Australia, which led the way in ordaining deaconesses, and has wholeheartedly embraced women elders and pastors, did not get to lead with ordaining pastors.

George Tichy
23 days ago

If the GC finds a way to rescind today's vote, it will be an overt attack on 80% of the representation of churches. I don't think the GC will do such a crazy thing. But, again, who knows? It seems that they would use any card to perpetuate discrimination against women.

Kevin Riley
23 days ago

My understanding is that they would need to convene a Union session to rescind the vote. This action goes beyond a leader or two getting offside and having to be replaced. This is a (another) Union voting against GC wishes. It is very much a new ballgame, and one that I am sure the GC has fervently wished to avoid. With now two Unions having voted to ordain women, and more likely to do so, it is probably impossible to undo without great damage being done in North America, Europe and Australia. But I am sure that the GC is also aware of the damage that will be done to the credibility and authority of the GC in Africa especially if they do nothing.

Edwin A. Schwisow
22 days ago

Generally speaking the most accomplished natural politicians in the denomination find their way at some point to union offices—after all, the primary purpose of the unions is to help keep the church (especially in its far geographical regions) "united," by adapting the worldwide program of Adventism and its proclamation to localized situations. That takes skill and the blessing of God's grace in word and action.

It is evident by the lopsided nature of Sunday's vote that the local constituency of the Columbia Union territory seriously believes that co-equality of pastors regardless of gender is exceedingly high on the priority list of needs for the gospel to progress more effectively in one of the otherwise most "difficult" areas for Adventism in the world—the American Eastern Seaboard and surrounding areas. Had the union officials not allowed the Constituency Session to proceed, or had they contrived to subvert discussion and voting in some way, they would have been abdicating their role and would have fostered the very condition Brother Wilson most fears—
schism at the appearance of kingly power exercised toward their territory by church leaders. I fail to find any convincing evidence that this vote is the product of a powerplay by Adventist feminists. It appears to be an overwhelmingly solid expression of the will of a wide cross-section of respected delegates who are serious about sharing the gospel more effectively in this difficult and highly urbanized area.

I live on the West Coast, and it is very difficult to recommend my church to intelligent Portlanders, so long as I must answer "no" to the question, "Does your church offer equal opportunity, by gender and race, to all members?" If we wish to follow Brother Wilson's lead and bring the gospel to our cities, we are going to have to adapt to a few Roman customs (as it were) in ministering to the Roman people. Aside from the need for women pastors in cities where a vast percentage of the women are single or divorced, these cities have more or less zero tolerance (among thought leaders) for a religious organization that claims that one gender is inherently predestined by birth for superior status in the congregation of saints. Certainly in situations where local conditions require it, God can and will reward the decision of earnest Columbia Union members to break from tradition and seek intelligent, new ways to expedite the proclamation and discipling of the people, especially in resistant areas. And may that which happened in the Columbia Union also occur here, in the land of the great Columbia River. Let us pray that this vote will be framed positively, not as a power play, but for what it is—a desire to more effectively reach our coastal cities with the gospel. The Pacific Union apparently shares these sentiments—we'll know for sure in a few weeks.

Stephen Ferguson
22 days ago

"Generally speaking the most accomplished natural politicians in the denomination find their way at some point to union offices—after all, the primary purpose of the unions is to help keep the church (especially in its far geographical regions) "united," by adapting the worldwide program of Adventism and its proclamation to localized situations. That takes skill and the blessing of God's grace in word and action."

And how well is Pres Wilson doing in maintaining Church unity on his watch. In fairness to him, I can see that he could have made a strong case for a no vote in the name of unity (even though Germany had already given a yes vote). But now that the rabbit is already out of the hat, what will Pres Wilson do to maintain unity and prevent schism.

You might all disagree, but I think the smart thing would be to play this down, and affirm that it has no practical application to the Developing World. No one is saying for WO should be pushed in the Developing World. I would also recommend that this issue has absolutely nothing to do with homosexuality (which appears to be some sort of irrational fear but many opponents of WO).

Time will tell if Pres Wilson helps keep the World Church together, or in his 'Judaizer' stubbornness help be an agent for schism in the name of his own theologically 'pure' views.

All4Him
21 days ago

"what will Pres Wilson do to maintain unity and prevent schism.....Time will tell if Pres Wilson helps keep the World Church together, or in his 'Judaizer' stubbornness help be an agent for schism in the name of his own theologically 'pure' views."

True unity builds on core truths and if a schism takes place it just may be the start to the shifting and shaking
that is prophesied to take place. And must take place before the latter rain. Consensus does not create truth...

Did Christ create unity between the world and the church?

Stephen Ferguson
14 days ago

"True unity builds on core truths..."

Exactly right, true unity is built on ensuring consensus for 'core' issues. However, true unity is also built on ensuring diversity on 'non-core' issues. You see this in the Early Church. Paul tried to build unity on the core truth of Christ, and tried to encourage diversity between Gentiles and Jews on the issue of circumcision.

Poor Paul had to battle the conservative Judaizers on the one hand, and the ultra-liberal proto-Gnostics on the other hand. I see much the same within the SDA Church, and as reflected by the range of opinions on this site.

All4Him
14 days ago

Stephen it is not consensus but "thus saith the Lord" that matters.

Stephen Ferguson
14 days ago

All4Him, there are a whole range of issues people could say the same for, including vegetarianism, dress reform, union membership, military service, worship styles (e.g. drums and electric guitars in Church) etc etc. I disagree with you on this issue, and on other issues, but I see it as a disagreement over a 'non-core' issue. As I noted, Paul had strong disagreements with other portions over the Church over other issues he also considered 'non-core', such as meat offered to idols.

However, I also regularly disagree with people on this site over what I would consider 'core' issues. That might include the existence of God, or the seventh-day Sabbath.

Although we can strongly disagree over the issue of WO, and let's even assume you are correct and I am wrong, I don't believe WO is a 'core' issue. By that I don't see it as an essential part of the Gospel message as understood by the SDA Church as described in our 28 Fundamentals. I don't think it is an issue that should be a test for membership or expulsion from our Church Family.

I would like to think we could remain brothers despite our disagreement over these non-core issues, whilst be united in proclamation of our view of the Gospel, as outlined in the 28 Fundamentals. If you disagree, I would be happy to hear what you think are 'core' and 'non-core' issues of the Gospel and Church?

The only Adventists I know of, and I know them well, who have no distinction between core and non-core issues are the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Church. They do make vegetarianism, dress reform, union membership, military service, worship style a test of membership. I hope you don't share their views?

Elaine Nelson
21 days ago

If a schism is inevitable, neither Wilson or an angel can prevent this if the time has come. He could be fighting against God's will if he refuses to accept that God's will is not always Ted's will.
I don't think schism is inevitable or even likely. Schisms are actually hard to organise. I believe our corporate structure, with layers of governance and church ownership of property, would make schism extremely difficult.

As noted elsewhere, Pres Wilson at the CUC noted he is a member of a local Church, which is a member of the CUC - so how would he go about ‘punishing’ a Union he was a member of? I assume this is quite different from the aristocratic powers of Bishops in say Anglicanism, who appear to have much more individualistic power over their diocees. It would appear much easier for them for individual diocees to break away from each other.

There is nothing in the FBs prohibiting women's ordination so how can it be a core issue?

How many times must it be repeated that there was no strict uniformity in the very earliest church? The apostles made one of the first decisions that threatened the very existence of the church: should the gentiles be forced to be circumcised, and thus observe all the Jewish law?

This was the wisest decision ever made. Had they decided that all new gentile Christians must first be circumcised, there would only be a Jewish sect movement and Christianity would have died out by the end of the first century. This needs to be remembered: uniformity when forced by drawing a line in the sand, will inevitably lead to schism, just as it would have with the early church. Be careful what you wish for. There is a law of unintended consequences on decisions that are not very carefully given thought and possible projections into the future. In less than 20 years, this discussion will seem antiquated just as prohibitions against bicycles and wigs and feathers once were.

Agree 100% well said

Disagree 110% People still use the "it's just a Jewish law" excuse to change the Sabbath to Sunday......

FYI:

The Sabbath has never been changed to Sunday. Ask any Jew today, which day is the Sabbath. They should know, it was given to them and no others; that is, if you believe what is written when the Commandments were given.
Elaine you can bet as America "turns back to God" Sunday and the fourth commandment will become chums.... By the way you bring up Ellen White and bicycles like she didn't believe they were any good. I found where she quotes bicycles doing the work of the Lord.... A lot different then a "craze".....

"They worked to the last minute, and when they heard the whistle of the train at Barro Station, to the north of Elmshaven, D. E. Robinson, one of the secretaries, jumped on a bicycle with testimonies in his pocket. He raced the train almost two miles to the crossing and then to the station to drop the letters in the mail car. Days later they arrived at their destination just at the hour they were needed. Everyone understood that God’s hand was in the work.

Anonymous
Prayer Vigil, Discussions on Sabbath Look to Historic Session in the West

Submitted: Aug 18, 2012
By AT News Team

A prayer vigil had participants in many places across the country, some starting on Friday night at sundown, as the Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination prepared for what may be an historic constituency meeting today (Sunday, August 19) at a hotel in the Los Angeles area. Several churches in California had gatherings of delegates and interested members on Sabbath afternoon to discuss the issues.

Perhaps the largest gathering had more than a thousand people at the Loma Linda University Church for a two-hour discussion of women's ordination and related issues. The Southeastern California Conference has long been a leader on this topic, formally studying the issue beginning in 1989. In 2000 the conference instituted equality in ministry through its "commissioned-ordained" designation of both male and female ministers, and in March of this year it issued Ordained Minister Credentials to replace the commissioned-ordained credentials for all its ministers.

The conference organized the meeting to provide information to the delegates it is sending to the constituency session and to any interested member. It featured several speakers, all passionately in favor of extending ordination to women serving in pastoral ministry. One attendee asked why there were no anti-women's ordination speakers present, with no good answer given. In fact, the meeting was not so much academic discussion as a pro-ordination rally. For example, Chris Oberg, senior pastor of the La Sierra University Church, along with Redlands Church senior pastor Zachary Thorp, moderated the meeting, and she got the first applause when she said, "In our conference your pastors are being treated with equality!"

Brad Newton, executive secretary of the Pacific Union Conference, provided an overview of the issue and, in later comments, declared how he will be voting. He addressed the issue of "harmony," given that the Pacific Union constitution speaks of the union conference acting in harmony with the General Conference (GC). Harmony means a blending of various voices—not unison, said Newton.

Bert Haloviak, former director of the GC archives, shared a historical perspective. In the 1890s Ellen White addressed whether God more directly led church leaders at Battle Creek where the GC office was at the time or in Australia, with her giving a non-hierarchical answer. He portrayed Ellen White as calling for equality of male and female "public laborers" who should generally be paid from tithe funds. More recently, in the later part of the last century, the Internal Revenue Service threatened to disallow ministerial standing to Licensed Ministers if they did not perform full ministerial functions, and Haloviak cited how rapid, unilateral actions were taken by leaders to thwart IRS threats.

John Brunt, senior pastor of the Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace, spoke as a Biblical scholar. Many of the texts that are often applied to ordination are taken out of context and are irrelevant to the issue. In fact, ordination as such is not specifically mandated in the Bible, and this is true of many other necessary practices. Regardless, the Gospel is clear on one highly relevant matter: God is "no respecter of persons." There is no "male or female, but all are one in Christ." Brunt ended by appealing for delegates to the constituency meeting to vote for "fundamental fairness" in gospel ministry.

Gerald Winslow, vice president for mission and culture at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, addressed the question of the relationship of ethics and policy. Integrity must triumph when ethics and policy differ. He cited Ellen White who called for following conscience when truth is at stake. Happily at the constituency meeting, delegates need not vote for principled integrity over church policy, as the church has no policy against the ordination of women to gospel ministry, said Winslow. He told the delegates that they stand at the crossroads of history and can vote for "fundamental fairness" in gospel ministry.

Mark Carr, professor of religion and ethics at Loma Linda University, spoke on concepts of unity and uniformity. He
distinguished spiritual unity in the body of Christ as separate from structural uniformity. But more important than the content of the decision about ordaining women is the importance of maintaining a character of integrity.

After the presentations the crowd was permitted to ask questions and during this time a number of points were made, including:

--Around the world the Adventist faith is characterized by diverse practices on wedding bands, worship styles, Sabbath observance and a number of other things. Our unity is found in Christ, not uniform practices.

--For over 40 years church scholars have studied the ordination of women, and it is time to do the right thing in the Pacific Union Conference.

--Some Adventists have not learned from denominational history, as some members left the early church because the name "Seventh-day Adventist" is not "Biblical." James White's position was that policies should bear rational scrutiny and not be banned by Scripture. Haloviak curiously opined that he survived working at the GC for 35 years by "living in the 19th century."

--The women's ordination question is a non-issue with younger Adventists, and the church will lose further credibility if the Pacific Union constituency votes against equality.

--The gospel is incompatible with discrimination against women, but the Asian culture is traditionally hierarchical and sexist, said a Korean pastor. He encouraged American church members to take the "first step" and if it's the right direction, the Holy Spirit will lead.

Gerald Penick, conference president, introduced the meeting and it opened and closed with prayer. The large audience, only a fraction of whom were delegates, only occasionally expressed itself through polite applause. The size of the audience in response to the limited announcements of the meeting spoke loudly.

Share your thoughts about this article:

1 comment

Edwin A. Schwisow
2 days ago

As a lifelong Adventist nearing the onset of my seventh decade, I have often heard the view expressed among Adventists to the interior of the nation and north of California that "those Southern Californians" always have "problems." If not driving extremely fancy cars, women wearing gaudy and un-Ellenish glittery goo-gaws affixed to and around skin or fabric, and churches actually serving flavored refreshments after church!, it's always something. The presentiment is expressed among self-proclaimed conservative Adventists that in line with the Loma Linda weather, Southern Californian Adventists are being primed for an eternity in the heat! (Yes, Loma Linda is in southeastern California, but up here in Oregon, we fudge a bit and call everyone "Southern Californians" below Bakersfield.

To some, the recent rally at the Loma Linda Church will solidify the idea that women's ordination is somehow the product of a "liberal onslaught" against traditional Adventism. But this is far too simplistic a deduction.

It wasn't until I was a bit older, in my teens, that I began to cut through the opprobrium hurled so regularly at Southern California, and recognized that though "different" in many ways, without Loma Linda and its faithful tithe payers and movers and shakers, thousands of medical and dental school graduates, scores of missionaries and even mercenaries, questioners and book-writers, ethicists and theologians, Adventism might not have survived to where we are today. Culturally Loma Linda Adventism is very tolerant, allowing churches of vast range to coexist without hurling invective publically—it is also very culturally tolerant, unlike some areas of Adventism. Loma Linda absorbs a lot of "heat" but seems able to shake it off and carry on. And, yes, there are many conservatives in that region, some of whom are very supportive of the ordination of women, for very conservative reasons. Some have tried to make the women's ordination discussion a "them-and-us" proposition, and nothing I can write here will change that. But it's very interesting to me that the more I study the issue, the more nuanced I perceive the reasoning to be. That we have been studying this issue for decades makes it inevitable that the range of opinions, and reasons for those opinions, will be vast indeed, well worth at least one quaint and curious volume of contemporary lore. I look forward to a thoughtful, insightful, and edifying meeting this afternoon and AT's role in providing a contemporary history of the proceedings.

Anonymous

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