This Week: World Church Committee Votes Ordination Consensus Statement; He’s Alive Television Goes World Wide; and more!

World Church Committee Makes Progress on Ordination Issue
Delegates for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee wrapped up three days of meetings this week with progress on the ordination issue. By a vote of 86 to 8 they approved a consensus statement on the theology of ordination which states, in part: “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry.” The statement goes on to say that ordination does not convey “special qualities to the persons ordained.” One of the next tasks for the committee is to seek consensus on the topic of ordaining women to gospel ministry. They will reconvene in January 2014 to evaluate papers on the topic and reports from each of the 13 world divisions who are also studying the issue. The committee is charged with creating material and recommendations that will eventually be brought to the 2015 General Conference Session. Read more from the Adventist News Network including the full statement and additional evaluation from the Adventist Review.

He’s Alive Television Goes World Wide
He’s Alive Television (KHBA UHF Channel 39) is now on Roku, an Internet streaming service that puts the power and flexibility of the Internet directly onto any home television. He’s Alive Television, which originates from Spokane, Wash., and operates four channels for the local viewing audience, is now traveling to every corner of North America and beyond through a compact device about the size of a hockey puck that costs a one time fee of $50 to $100. He’s Alive offers regional content along with its main program feed from the Hope Channel. Find more information at KHBAtv.com

This week’s enewsletter is sponsored by Positive Life Radio!
Adventist Health News Notes

Adventist Medical Center (AMC) in Portland, Ore., has opened a new clinical space at the Women’s Center in Happy Valley, Ore. The AMC Aspire Orthopedic Institute has received The Joint Commission certification for joint replacement of hips and knees. Tillamook Regional Medical Center has opened a new medical plaza where 16 physicians representing cardiology, family practice, general surgery, internal medicine, orthopedic surgery and podiatry have offices in the 20,509 square foot building. The new medical plaza also houses an urgent care center, medical imaging, laboratory and JobCare occupational health. Walla Walla General Hospital is celebrating a recent face lift with a new welcoming lobby, renovated cafeteria, meeting space and gift shop.

Papal Rumor Untrue

A rumor has been circulating recently that Pope Francis has a brother who is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That rumor is untrue. In a widely-distributed YouTube video, Hugo Gambetta makes claims that the pope's brother is an Adventist. However, church leaders from South America who are familiar with the situation, have confirmed that Gambetta is a former Adventist minister, and the claims he makes are untrue.

Looking Ahead

July

27: Pray for Togo
23–27: Alaska Camp Meeting
23–27: Northeast Washington Camp Meeting
24–28: Montana Youth Conference
31–Aug. 3: Walla Walla Camp Meeting

August

Many people say "You can't out-give God." But words are cheap and it’s not always easy to see what that means. This month’s GLEANER focus is on Planned Giving and how, through careful planning, a gift now cannot only benefit you throughout your lifetime, but can bless the church as
July 25: World Church Committee Votes Ordination Consensus Statement

well. Read more about those who have given in the August GLEANER!

Forward to Friend

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Study committee votes consensus statement on ‘Theology of Ordination’

By a vote of 86 to 8 – a ratio of almost 11 to 1 – delegates at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) agreed today to approve a consensus statement on an Adventist theology of ordination. The action was an early endorsement of the goal of TOSC leaders to move unitedly through the challenging issues surrounding the church’s discussion of ordination.

According to the statement, “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry.” Biblical examples of ordained persons include elders/supervising elders and deacons, the document says, as well as “elders who were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations.”

Explaining the role of an ordained person, the statement continues: “In the act of ordination the church confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed. These may include representing the church; proclaiming the gospel; administering the Lord’s Supper and baptism; planting and organizing churches; guiding and nurturing members; opposing false teachings; and providing general service to the congregation.”

Unlike the beliefs of some other Christian faiths, however, Seventh-day Adventist ordination “neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community.”

The statement concludes by noting “the ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve.”

The approval of the document came on the second day of the second 2013 gathering of TOSC members, who met at a private, non-church conference center near the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. Delegates included church pastors, lay members, scholars and officers from throughout the Seventh-day Adventist global community, with Artur Stele, a general vice president of the world church and director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, as chairman. Geoffrey Mbwana, another general vice president, is vice chair.

“This is the first time the church has taken a serious study to develop a theology of ordination,” Mbwana said shortly after the vote. “It’s critical that before we discuss any issue of ordination, we actually understand a theology of ordination. Today, I think a milestone is beginning to happen: that a consensus statement has been accepted to be recommended to the General Conference, the Annual Council and then to the [GC] Session to be adopted as a statement of a theology of ordination.”

Agreeing on a theology of ordination is preparatory to the TOSC’s other task, discussing the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. The subject has been debated among Seventh-day Adventists for years, with the worldwide General Conference Sessions of 1990 and 1995 declining to permit such ordinations. The TOSC is charged with producing material for discussion and making recommendations that will be acted upon at the church’s July 2015 world session, due to be held in San Antonio, Texas.

According to Bill Knott, Adventist Review editor and a member of the TOSC, “If the church can reach consensus on a common theology of ordination, it offers hope that it may also find a solution that honors the strongly held convictions on both sides of this issue.”

Committee meetings continue through Wednesday, July 24.
TOSC to AAS-EOM+ADCOM+GCDO13AC+13AC+15GCS

130-13GS CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION

RECOMMENDED, To adopt the document, “Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination,” which reads as follows:

In a world alienated from God, the Church is composed of those whom God has reconciled to Himself and to each other. Through the saving work of Christ they are united to Him by faith through baptism (Eph 4:4-6), thus becoming a royal priesthood whose mission is to “proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9, NKJV). Believers are given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20), called and enabled through the power of the Spirit and the gifts He bestows on them to carry out the Gospel Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

While all believers are called to use their spiritual gifts for ministry, the Scriptures identify certain specific leadership positions that were accompanied by the Church’s public endorsement for persons who meet the biblical qualifications (Num 11:16-17; Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 14:23; 1 Tim 3:1-12; Titus 1:5-9). Several such endorsements are shown to involve “the laying on of hands.” English versions of the Scriptures use the word ordain to translate many different Greek and Hebrew words having the basic idea of select or appoint that describe the placement of these persons in their respective offices. Over the course of Christian history the term ordination has acquired meanings beyond what these words originally implied. Against such a backdrop, Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry.

Aside from the unique role of the apostles, the New Testament identifies the following categories of ordained leaders: the elder/supervising elder (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim 3:2-7; 4:14; 2 Tim 4:1-5; 1 Pet 5:1) and the deacon (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-10). While most elders and deacons ministered in local settings, some elders were itinerant and supervised greater territory with multiple congregations, which may reflect the ministry of individuals such as Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:3-4; Titus 1:5).

In the act of ordination, the Church confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed (Acts 6:1-3; 13:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:15). These may include representing the Church; proclaiming the gospel; administering the Lord’s Supper and baptism; planting and organizing churches; guiding and nurturing members; opposing false teachings; and providing general service to the congregation (cf. Acts 6:3; 20:28-29; 1 Tim 3:2, 4-5; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2; 4:5; Titus 1:5, 9). While ordination contributes to Church order, it neither conveys special qualities to the persons ordained nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community. The biblical examples of ordination include the giving of a charge, the laying on of hands, fasting and prayer, and committing those set apart to the grace of God (Deut 3:28; Acts 6:6; 14:26; 15:40).

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Ordained individuals dedicate their talents to the Lord and to His Church for a lifetime of service. The foundational model of ordination is Jesus appointing the twelve apostles (Matt 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16), and the ultimate model of Christian ministry is the life and work of our Lord, who came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:25-27; John 13:1-17).
Adventist Review : 21 CN: Multiple Viewpoints Aired on Women’s Ordination Question

Multiple Viewpoints Aired on
Women’s Ordination Question
Theology of Ordination Study Committee hears from range of scholars (Posted July 25, 2013)

Consensus Statement voted on 'Theology of Ordination'

BY MARK A. KELLNER, News Editor, reporting from Linthicum Heights, Maryland

Members of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee rounded out three days of meetings with presentations from a variety of viewpoints on questions related to women’s ordination, a controversial question for the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide.

Those who support the ordination of women and those opposed to the practice were given equal time and opportunity in the July 21-24 event to marshal biblical evidence supporting their positions, as well as statements from Ellen G. White, whom Adventists believe exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

“We are now at the point that [the] two groups have presented the hermeneutical issues, the principles. They have illustrated it, and they have given all the facts, all the findings, they have found for both positions,” said TOSC chairman Artur Stele, a general vice president of the world church and director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute. “They (the presentations) are in printed form (and) we have heard them. We hope that in a few days they will be available online for everyone who would like to study and research,” he added. The papers will be posted on a Seventh-day Adventist Church website, officials indicated.

MEETING LEADERS: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists vice presidents Geoffrey Mbwana, left, and Artur Stele, chaired the Theology of Ordination Study Committee meetings in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, July 22-24. [Photo: Ansel Oliver/Adventist News Network]

Stele added that “the next step, based on what was presented, [is] to try to see if we can find a common ground, whether we really can come up with one position” on the ordination issue. If that can’t be done, he said, “then we would have to prepare two different reports, and concentrate on what solutions we would suggest.”

He concluded, “We have seen a good spirit, which was a big blessing. Both groups, although having different views, have really demonstrated respect for each other, and it was a very friendly atmosphere, a very open atmosphere.”

Among the papers presented during the July TOSC meetings there was a historical summary of women’s ordination “in Seventh-day
Adventist policy and practice” presented by church archivist David Trim. A total of 17 papers were presented during the three days.

In a paper on hermeneutical principles, Jiří Moskala, newly-appointed dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, told delegates there is no statement in the Bible commanding: “Ordain women to ministry!” Nor, he noted, is there one urging: “Do not ordain women to ministry!”

Moskala concluded: “There is no theological hindrance” to ordaining women. “On the contrary, the biblical-theological analysis points in that ultimate direction, because the Spirit of God tears down all barriers between different groups of people in the church, and gives freely His spiritual gifts to all, including women, in order to accomplish the mission God calls all of us to accomplish.”

Taking a contrary viewpoint, Gerard Damsteegt, an associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, cited the Wesleyan-Methodist antecedents of Adventism, as well as early church fathers and Protestant reformers, to oppose women’s ordination: “If we look as the Adventist pioneers on women’s involvement in the mission of the church,” he said, “we notice that their position is very similar to that of Wesley and Methodism. These pioneers strongly encouraged female participation, excepting in the headship offices of elders and ministers.”

Adventist pastor Stephen Bohr, also arguing against women’s ordination, said that Ellen G. White’s role involved her being “set apart by God to be a prophet, not an elder/overseer. To say that because Ellen White was a prophet she had the right to be an elder or pastor would be like saying that because I am an elder, I have the right to be a prophet! The conclusion simply does not follow the premise!”

Richard Davidson, seminary professor of Old Testament at Andrews, focused the committee’s attention on the Biblical passage at the heart of the debate: “In the modern discussion over whether women should be ordained as pastors the foundational passage for both those who affirm and those who oppose women’s ordination is Genesis 1-3.” Davidson pointed to the roles given Adam and Eve at creation: “. . . According to Genesis 1:27-28, both the man and woman are equally blessed. Both are to share alike in the responsibility of procreation, to ‘fill the earth.’ Both are to subdue the earth. Both are given the same co-managerial dominion over God’s non-human creation.”

Illustrating their very different reading of the same Biblical text, Paul S. Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division and Daniel K. Bediako of Valley View University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution in Ghana, asserted “God created man and woman as equals and with role differentiation. In the church, men are to lead.” They maintained that if women’s ordination is permitted, either globally or on a regional basis, the church’s influence and theological unity would be diminished. “A decision to ordain women as pastors can be made only outside the bounds of Scripture,” they concluded.

Additional presentations contrasted Biblical concepts of authority with models built on “elitism” and “hierarchy,” and explored the views held by Adventist co-founder Ellen White on the appropriateness of women serving in various ministry roles.

Urging the committee to disavow models of male authority and headship that he maintains grew up in post-apostolic Christianity, Darius Jankiewicz, chair of the seminary’s Theology and Christian Philosophy department, maintained that “if anything apart from commitment to
Christ and His church, spiritual gifting, and maturity determine fitness for various functions in the church, then, whether we intend it or not, we create an elitist community.”

Edwin Reynolds, a New Testament scholar at Southern Adventist University, underlined a very different view of how authority should function in the church. “Spiritual headship and teaching authority seems to be vested in the roles of apostle and elder in the NT (New Testament),” his presentation noted. “These roles would not seem to be appropriate for women to seek under the principle of submission to male headship.” Teresa Reeve, New Testament professor at the Berrien Springs, Mich. seminary, and one of several female presenters, reached an opposite conclusion: “The New Testament practice of ordination as the formal appointment and endorsement of an individual for a ministry task or role gives no impediment to the ordination of suitably qualified women to serve as pastors.” Denis Fortin, a church historian, offered a detailed summary of Ellen White’s perspective on women serving in ministry: “Ellen White understood ordination as an ordinance at the service of the church to commission people in various kinds of ministry and responsibilities, and to ask God’s blessing on their ministry. There is no indication in her writings that the rite of ordination should be limited only to men or that it should be used to establish some kind of church hierarchy. She emphatically encouraged the involvement of women in all forms of ministry.” General Conference president Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, an ex officio member of the committee, commended the event’s cordiality: “The Holy Spirit provided a setting during the committee for a respectful and courteous atmosphere in which to study what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have to say on the subject,” he told Adventist Review, asking members to “please pray for all those involved as they seek to follow God's guidance.”

TOSC members will reconvene in January 2014 for a five-day session to evaluate the papers presented and to chart the path ahead for the study process. The committee will also receive reports from each of the church’s 13 division Biblical Research Committees that are concurrently studying the issues at a regional level.