North America retracts commissioned ministers as top leader candidate

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The president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's North American Division apologized to the division's Executive Committee for some inadvertent oversteps in policy in the division's quest to allow commissioned ministers - including women - to serve as top leaders of local administrative units of the denomination.

The acknowledgement from division President Dan Jackson came in a January 31 letter following the results of the administration's own policy review of its actions at its Year-End Meetings in 2010 and 2011.

Jackson stated that the division "takes full responsibility for failing to do sufficient research into the constitutional issues that impacted our decisions. In bringing this matter to the floor in 2010 and 2011 we were doing so under the assumption that the North American Division had a constituency separate and distinct from the General Conference. Unfortunately, we were wrong and we sincerely apologize."

The first page of the General Conference Constitution states, "Each division of the General Conference is authorized to carry out responsibilities in the territory assigned to it. ...In order to carry the authority of the General Conference, the actions of division committees shall, of necessity, be in harmony with and complementary to the decisions of the General Conference in Session, and the actions of the General Conference Executive Committee between Sessions."

Still, some church leaders both in North America and at the General Conference say the recent discussion highlights a need for a clearer definition of a division's delegated authority.

Indeed, the General Conference is already moving on the matter. Last month, administration requested a group to review governance documents outlining the General Conference and division relationships, said Lowell Cooper, a vice president of the General Conference. That group will later offer a decision concerning whether additional clarity is needed, Cooper said.

Each of the 13 divisions function as extensions of the General Conference. Divisions do not have their own constituencies, constitutions or bylaws. However, within division territories, unions - which are comprised of conferences - each have their own constituencies.

In an interview, Jackson said the North American Division would continue to promote equality of men and women in leadership positions. He said ordination is "a separate issue" and would not be
addressed at this time.

"We have no intention of dropping the consensus of the North American church that we need to empower our women of God who are called to be pastors and leaders," Jackson said. "We will not move away from this, but we will not cross policy again."

The Adventist Church currently allows only ordained ministers to serve as conference presidents. In 2005, the world church voted for this distinction to also apply to the denomination's president.

The "commissioned" ministers credential was authorized by the General Conference Executive Committee in 1987. In 1994, the Executive Committee delineated positions that could receive such credentials - typically treasurers, principals, directors, university presidents, hospital CEOs, and others not on an ordination track. That move also granted the title to associate pastoral care givers, including women.

General Conference policy and model constitutions for unions and conferences state that a president shall be an "ordained" minister of experience. The North American Division's change of its own policy in 2010 was intended to expand this statement to read "ordained/commissioned."

In his letter, Jackson stated that 107 of the division's roughly 4,000 ministers are women. He also stated his support for women commissioned ministers, citing the division's women clergy conference in Berrien Springs, Michigan, April 23 to 26.

The North American Division includes Bermuda, Canada, the French possession of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, the United States, and the Pacific islands comprising the denomination's Guam-Micronesia Mission.
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Inter-American Division > Communication Department

Libna Stevens
Feb 15, 2012

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February 15, 2012 - Port-au-Prince, Haiti...Libna Stevens/IAD

Two years after a devastating earthquake claimed 300,000 lives, top Seventh-day Adventist leaders visited the island nation earlier this month to offer encouragement and to monitor the rebuilding progress there. More than 500 Seventh-day Adventists died and dozens of churches and schools were destroyed.

Adventist World Church President Ted N. C. Wilson was among the church leaders visiting Haiti. Accompanied by his wife Nancy and Inter-American Division (IAD) administrators, Pastor Wilson was welcomed by Pastor Theart Saint Pierre, president of the church in Haiti. Pastor Wilson made a brief statement to more than two dozen TV, radio, and print reporters during a special press conference at the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince.

Pastor Wilson said his visit was one to spend quality time with members, visit institutions and encourage members and the people of Haiti that "the basis of our Adventist message is the Word of God."

His three-day visit to the country included a trip to Cap-Haitien in the north, where the Adventist message entered the island nation in 1905. Pastor Wilson and church leaders were met by its three mayors, the press and hundreds of church leaders, pathfinders and church members.

Mayors Wilbrode Beon, Jean Cherefant and Roosevelt Francois welcomed church leaders on behalf of the 211,000 citizens of the Cap-Haitien and gave the Adventist president a key to the city. Mayor Beon praised the work of the Adventist Church in Cap-Haitien and the committed support of the young people and church members in cleaning and beautifying the city.

It was the first visit to Cap-Haitien ever made by an Adventist world church president.

Hundreds packed the Temple Adventiste No. 1--the oldest Adventist Church in Cap-Haitian--to hear Pastor Wilson's message.

"I want you to know that even though you may not be visited much, you are an integral part of the Adventist World Church around the world." He said. "Regardless of the difficulties you may face, your God will stand by your side."

"The world church has been touched by the destructive earthquake which hit the country," he continued. "I'm glad that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been key in helping alleviate the suffering."

Pastor Wilson reminded the congregation of the importance of a spiritual revival, reaching out into the community in preparation for Jesus' Second Coming. He also reaffirmed the importance of the Scriptures.

"Whatever you face, God has the answer," he said. "Remember the problems you face can be made strength in your life so I urge you to stay close to Jesus and others." Pastor Wilson's
message was broadcast to the entire country on the radio as well as the internet.

Church leaders toured the Cap-Haitien Adventist school, the new site of their auditorium and medical clinic.

Later during the one-day visit in the north, more than 3,000 crowded the Gymnasium du Champ de Mars in downtown Cap-Haitien to worship and be part of the historic visit.

"We have longed to see the church in North Haiti, to know and celebrate with you blessings of God," said Pastor Israel Leito, president of the IAD. It was Pastor Leito's second visit to Cap-Haitien.

In the capital of Port-au-Prince, the group visited one of many crushed churches in the capital city. It was there in the Christ-Roi Church where Pastors Leito and Wilson laid the first stone for a new temple, as members gathered to witness the historic event under the one-day temporary structure built by Maranatha Volunteers International.

Christ-Roi Adventist Church symbolizes a number of churches beginning its reconstruction from the ground up in Port-au-Prince, according to Pastor Saint-Pierre. Church leaders are waiting for the government to release new building codes for several churches in the jurisdiction of downtown Port-au-Prince near the National Palace.

Church leaders continued the tour Haiti Adventist University in Diquini, Carrefour, where more than 25,000 displaced persons found refuge for over 18 months.

Ivon Jerome, the mayor of Carrefour, presented Pastor Wilson with the key to the city and praised the work of the Adventist Church and the university during the months and year after the earthquake.

Thousands of students and faculty staff welcomed the Adventist president and team of church leaders on their campus and gathered to hear Pastor Wilson's message during a special chapel session.

The first stone was laid to begin the construction of a new men's dormitory on campus, since the existing one is not safe to inhabit. The two-story dormitory will include 88 rooms and represent a turning point for the increased enrollment at the Adventist university, said its president Jean Josue Pierre.

Pierre thanked Andrews University for the blueprints and contributions to the dormitory project as well as the General Conference for funds from the 13th Sabbath Offering, Maranatha International for rebuilding the wall around the large campus and the more than 30 one-day structures as classrooms, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and the IAD for committed support on campus.

Pastor Wilson also toured the more than 30 one-day structures built by Maranatha Volunteers International on campus and listened to plans for some 100 one-day school structures to begin with contributions from ADRA International.

Wilson and his wife Nancy also visited the Adventist hospital, ADRA-Haiti office, Adventist radio station, churches, conference and union church headquarters office in Delmas, Port-au-Prince.

Pastor Wilson encouraged pastors, administrators and employees to keep serving God in the midst of trials and difficulties. He challenged members to be prepared for the Second Coming and share God's truth of Salvation in their communities.

For the church in Haiti, Pastor Wilson's visit meant a boost among the church membership in the entire country, said Pastor Theart Saint Pierre.

"We have been encouraged, we have felt the love and the care from the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world and are thankful to belong to such a wonderful family," said Pastor Saint Pierre. "Our church in Haiti continues to praise God for His goodness, and continues to sharing the hope of salvation."
The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Haiti has nearly 273,000 church members and 480 organized churches, and operates a hospital, university, radio station and dozens of primary and secondary schools. With the help of Maranatha International, ADRA, and funds from the 2010 worldwide 13th Sabbath offering, more churches and dozens of school have begun construction.

For more on the progress of the church in Haiti, visit [www.interamerica.org](http://www.interamerica.org)

To view a photo gallery of the recent visit to Haiti, [click here](http://www.interamerica.org/users/index.php?type=news&id=1995&lan...)

![Image](image by Libna Stevens/IAD)

Government officials and local church leaders welcomed top Adventist leaders to Cap-Haitien, Haiti on Jan. 31, 2012. It was the first time that an Adventist world church president visited the northern city in its more than 100 years since the Adventist me