A Response from the General Conference to Recent Actions in North America

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

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

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a fellowship of believers bound together by a common commitment to Christ, the truths of the Bible, a worldwide church organization and a mission to the world. Each of these elements is vitally important in preserving the unity of the church and keeping it from fracturing. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not organized as a collection of independent units. Although each Conference/Mission, Union and the General Conference (which includes the divisions) have their own constituencies, they are also united by common commitments, mutual trust and agreed upon policies. The Church, the body of Christ, is inter-related. Actions that affect one part of the body affect the whole. The Apostle Paul stated it succinctly in these words, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”(1 Corinthians 12:12)
Working Policy, which is the recording of our agreements as to how we will work together to do the Lord’s work and mission, serves as one of the practical unifying agents that the Holy Spirit uses to bind the church together. Policy is not inflexible. It can be changed but it reflects the understanding of the collective group, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When personal convictions are placed ahead of the collective policy decisions of the worldwide church, troubling precedents are set. God works in an orderly way and wishes His church to exemplify this sanctified behavior through the power of the Holy Spirit. Humility and submission to God for the good of the church body as outlined in the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy are fundamental Biblical principles for the benefit of the church.

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

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

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

—The General Conference Executive Officers