How It All Began
By Russell R Standish

The picture on the right depicts the front cover of our very first edition of The Remnant Herald, issued in October 1992. One hundred and forty-four editions later, Remnant Ministries is commemorating the twentieth anniversary of its establishment and the inauguration of The Remnant Herald by its founding editor and speaker, the late Pastor Russell Standish.

This anniversary edition begins with an account of the extraordinary circumstances that led Pastor Russell Standish to make a transition towards self-supporting work in 1992 (edited excerpts taken from The Remnant Herald, October 2002). Unforeseen by him at the time, the transition marked a defining moment in his life, which led to the most fruitful and productive years of his ministry. His legacy lives on in the work that is being done presently by Remnant Ministries — to uphold the truths of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that were so dear to the heart of Pastor Russell Standish.

Extra: A special report on the continuing controversy surrounding the push for the ordination of female ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is featured in the latter half of this magazine.
The Road to Self-Supporting Work

When I commenced writing books opposed to the teachings of Dr. Desmond Ford and the New Theology, the leaders of the South Pacific Division repeatedly attempted to encourage their counterparts in the Far Eastern Division (where I was serving at the time) to dismiss me. By God’s grace, the Far Eastern Division leadership valued my work for the Lord and refused to heed the initiatives from my home division. Not infrequently, the leaders of the Far Eastern Division shared with me the letters urging my dismissal or other penalties.

In July 1991, I was invited to speak at the first Hartland Institute World Camp Meeting in the Netherlands. Believers from thirty-four nations attended the meetings. I accepted the invitation to come, although I could not attend the entire camp series because of my commitments in South-east Asia.

I took my own vacation time to be present. I was invited to lead out in the ordination service on the second Sabbath, attended by Pastor David Kang from South Korea and Pastor Gabriel Garcia from France. There were fourteen ordained pastors present.

I had been requested to baptize twelve well-prepared candidates. They came from Belgium, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Switzerland. It was a most sacred service.

There was an overwhelming consensus that with the ordinance and baptismal services, that particular Sabbath was indeed a high day for all who came.

But it was my participation in these services which spelled my doom as a denominational worker. I gave each candidate a copy of the vows that they had affirmed, together with a photocopy of my ministerial credentials should they desire to join a local church congregation.

The Secretary of the Netherlands Union Conference wrote a scathing letter to Pastor George Johnson — a wonderful American church administrator — who was then President of the Southeast Asia Union (covering the nations of Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam). At that time, I was the Director of the Adventist Health Services, the Director of the Health and Temperance Department, the Director of Spirit of Prophecy Services and the Associate Director of ADRA Indochina for Medical Projects in that Union.

Pastor Johnson took a benign view of the matter. I pointed out that all credentialed ministers are ordained to the world field, not to a local region. This fact is emphasized three times in the Manual for Ministers. Furthermore, Christ’s commission to preach the gospel to the whole world and to baptize those accepting the truth sets neither political nor ecclesiastical boundaries.

The Netherlands Union Secretary strongly complained that I had not received permission from that Union to perform the baptism in their territory. My response was that Hartland Institute had issued a warm welcome to the Union leaders and the pastors to attend. That letter of invitation only caused the leaders to warn all pastors and members to boycott the Hartland Institute World Camp. In such an atmosphere, it was pointless to seek the Netherlands Union for such permission.

I did not expect that this matter of my ministerial duty would be regarded of such serious import that it would lead to my dismissal. It was only three months later, in Australia, that the die was cast.

Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting During Perth Annual Council

In October 1991, the General Conference Annual Council was held in Perth [pictured], the capital city of the state of Western Australia. Never before had the Annual Council met on Australian soil.

It was a momentous occasion — not because of its implications for me, but because of The Perth Declaration which was issued. The late Pastor O. K. Anderson and many others quickly dubbed it, “The Perth Declaration of War on Self-Supporting Ministries.”

Unbeknownst to me, the General Conference held an ad-hoc committee meeting during the Perth Annual Council to discuss my situation (I was not a delegate to that Council). I was unofficially informed of this meeting by Pastor George Johnson. I believe it was highly improper to take up such a serious matter that concerned my future work for the Lord in my absence. I had no opportunity to present my case.

The ad-hoc committee consisted of the presidents, secretaries, and treasurers of the Far Eastern, South Pacific, and Trans-European divisions.
The then Secretary of the General Conference, Pastor Ralph Thompson [pictured], chaired the deliberations. The thrust of the meeting was a General Conference demand to dismiss me from denominational service. Pastor George Johnson pointed out that, in his opinion, I was much loved in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand (where I had served almost 20 years in medical missionary work) and that he would have extreme difficulty in explaining such a decision to the believers in those nations. Pastor Thompson claimed that I was causing havoc around the world — a case of extreme hyperbole. It was well known in the places where I had served that I had done no such thing, nor did I possess the desire, charisma, or the power to do so elsewhere.

Pastor Johnson, in response to that accusation, asked what the ad-hoc committee intended to do about Avondale College, whose ministerial graduates were producing doctrinal havoc around the world [with their New Theology teachings]. This caused such anger in the heart of the President of the South Pacific Division, Dr. Bryan Ball (who had been President of Avondale College prior to his appointment to the Division post), that he stormed out of the meeting, never to return.

Dr. Jan Paulsen [who assumed the office of General Conference President upon the resignation of Pastor Robert Folkenberg in March 1999] spoke well of me, remarking that he had appreciated my co-operation when I served in the United Kingdom from 1984 to 1986. We had travelled together to Karachi, Pakistan, to undertake an accreditation inspection of the Karachi Adventist Hospital.

Pastor Athol Tolhurst, who served at that time as Secretary of the South Pacific Division, admitted that there were major problems in what was being taught at Avondale College.

The meeting broke up without resolution. But if I thought this would be the end of the matter, I was proven to be mistaken. With the surprise election of Pastor Robert Folkenberg [pictured] as General Conference President at the 1990 GC Session, a complete change in atmosphere had swept through the headquarters of the denomination. It could never be said that Pastor Folkenberg was one to baulk at making strong decisions, even when they were not favoured locally.

Another Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting in Singapore

Pastor Robert Folkenberg soon found opportunity to pursue his desire to have my services discontinued. He attended the Far Eastern Division Annual Meetings in Singapore in November 1991. With him were two other General Conference officers: the Associate Secretary and the Associate Treasurer — both of whom were well known to me, for we had been fellow-workers in that Division before their elections to the General Conference.

Learning of Pastor Folkenberg’s presence in Singapore, I sent a message to him, requesting a private meeting. He initially agreed but later cancelled it due to the “pressure of appointments.”

One of those appointments was yet another ad-hoc committee called by Pastor Folkenberg, which was held on November 12 and 13, 1991. I was close by the Division Office where the meeting was held, yet I was not even informed of it, much less invited to attend in order to present the reasons for my ministerial activities.

The meeting was comprised of officers from the Far Eastern Division and the Southeast Asia Union Conference, as well as Pastor Folkenberg and the other two General Conference officers.

I was presented with a series of demands, three of which were significant and the last was impossible for me to comply with. The demands may be fairly summarized as follows:

(1): That I would confine my ministerial and speaking duties outside of my areas of responsibility to those where I had received denominational approval. This would have effectively barred me from speaking at any meetings arranged by faithful self-supporting workers. The commission found in Matthew 28:19, 20 bears no such restriction. The Holy Spirit must be our guide.

I was unprepared to replace the guidance of the Holy Spirit with that of denominational leaders.

(2): I was counseled to follow Matthew 18:15 – 20 when I expressed concern over the public promotion of error by denominational employees. This was a strange request, since the members of the ad-hoc committee which offered this counsel were discussing my perceived misdeeds without any of them (excepting Pastor Johnson) having first discussed their concerns with me. Pastor Johnson, as President of the Southeast Asia Union, although not always in agreement with me, had continuously afforded me the liberty to follow my convictions.

These leaders appeared to be quite unaware that
Matthew 18 is totally inapplicable to circumstances where there is no personal wrong involved, but a deep concern for the public proclamation of error. (Please read the very interesting passage found in Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, pp. 14 – 16, where James and Ellen White faced a similar situation). The text of Scripture which applies to public wrongs is not the one found in the book of Matthew but in 1. Timothy 5:20, which says:

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

(3): This command dealt with my need “to support the church leadership;” to “refrain from supporting those who are promoting private positions which are divisive in nature” and to “avoid criticism that would undermine the confidence of church leaders and members.” Clearly the committee was unaware that those promoting divisions in the church were not faithful self-supporting preachers — to whom they referred by inference — but church leaders, Pastor Folkenberg being prominent among those. He publicly supported the New Theology errors of Pastor Jack Sequira. His own book, We Still Believe (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995), was full of New Theology error. The brethren did not appear to believe that we must primarily support the truth of God alone.

I recognized that my period of denominational service was drawing to a close. That it extended a further nine months was more than I expected. It was a tribute to the reluctance of the leadership of the Far Eastern Division to terminate my services, which they judged in a most positive light.

- My Dismissal

According to denominational policy, the sole right to vote my dismissal rested with the Southeast Asia Union Conference — the organization in which I held my appointments and which had issued my credentials. The only right possessed by the next level of church organization — the Far Eastern Division — was to review that decision and alter it if it was deemed to be too harsh. It had no right to introduce more punitive measures.

Yet, as so often happens, policies are not permitted to stand in the way of administrative determination, especially when the President of the General Conference is insistent.

On the morning of August 17, 1992, twelve members of the Southeast Asia Union Executive Committee met together. Although I was a member of that Committee, I had been requested to absent myself from the deliberations.

Two General Conference officers were present to encourage the Committee to dismiss me. Every effort was made to place my work in the most negative light. I had passed on to the brethren the final drafts of the books, The Road to Rome [pictured] and The Sepulchres are Whited [published in 1992 by Hartland Publications and currently available from Remnant Ministries for A$20 each, plus postage], so that they could not make their decision without first being confronted with the evidence of deep apostasy in our midst and the necessity to warn our people of the dangers.

To the chagrin of the two General Conference men, the Committee members voted (in a secret ballot) 12 - 0 against my dismissal. That should have been the end of the matter, but nothing was permitted to stand in the way of ecclesiastical will-power.

I was grateful for the men who, in that meeting, stood in defence of my sincere work for Christ. They had no reason to do so in my absence unless they were thus convicted.

On the evening of the same day — August 17, 1992 — the Executive Committee of the Far Eastern Division was called together in haste. The full Committee consisted of 56 members: only 18 were in attendance. Of these, there were three newly-appointed members whom I had never met before. The full Committee — consisting of members scattered across the Far Eastern Division — was scheduled to meet one week later; yet such delay was not judged necessary. The vote was taken that night to dismiss me — 11 in favour, 4 opposed, and 3 abstained.

I was informed of the decision the next morning and told that my work in the Southeast Asia Union Conference would be terminated on August 31, 1992. The President of the Far Eastern Division (Dr. Otis Edwards) and the Associate Secretary of the General Conference (Pastor Larry Colburn) visited me, kindly expressing deep sorrow that this decision was, in their view, necessary. They offered to reverse their decision if I met two conditions:

(a): I would only accept speaking appointments if I had prior denominational approval.

(b): I would only publish articles and books which...
had the endorsement of the denominational leaders, and even then only submit them to publishers whom they approved.

No right-minded Seventh-day Adventist could accept such conditions. Nine months previously, I had written a letter to the ad-hoc committee that met in Singapore (which included Pastor Folkenberg) concerning the expectation that I only accept appointments which the organization sanctioned. After citing three examples where denominational approval had been sought, but it had been denied for no better reason than that the proposed messages did not accord with the liberal thrust tearing our church to pieces, I wrote plainly:

"Please do not offer advice (to me) to follow certain procedures, if that advice simply ensures the silencing of the voice of witness."

- Reaction to my Dismissal

When news of my sacking spread throughout the five nations where I had served the Lord in denominational employment (Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the United Kingdom), many people had made copies of their letters of protest and petitions and sent them to me, which overwhelmed me — I was very touched.

In the week between the dates of my dismissal and my termination, Pastor Robert Folkenberg returned to Singapore. Loving friends of mine pressed for an interview with him, which was granted. Perhaps Pastor Folkenberg thought he could persuade them of the correctness of the decision to dismiss me from denominational employment. Of course, I was not present, nor did I in any way instigate the meeting. A full report was conveyed to me by those who attended.

Pastor Folkenberg implausibly told those present that the decision had nothing to do with the General Conference, but was solely the act of the Far Eastern Division (now divided into the North Asia Pacific and South Asia Pacific divisions). At every meeting leading up to my dismissal, General Conference personnel were present. Pastor Joseph David suffered that remark poorly. He stood to his feet and pointing his finger at the shocked General Conference President, exclaimed, "We place total responsibility for this gross injustice upon your shoulders!" The President was unaccustomed to such forthright remarks from a church pastor. But my friends at the meeting would rather lose their denominational employment and future sustentation than to remain silent and thus offer tacit support for that which they considered to be improper actions.

Brother David Wu, whose funeral I conducted less than two years after my dismissal, waited for his moment to speak. The cue came when Pastor Folkenberg told the group, "You don't know what Russell is like as he travels around the world." Rising to his feet, David Wu asked, "Are you telling me that I don't know what Russell is like? I've lived next door to him for three years! How many years have you lived next to him? I've listened to dozens of his sermons and Bible studies. How many have you listened to? And are you trying to tell me that I don't know what Russell is like?" It is likely that this meeting proved to be a steep learning curve for the then General Conference President. It is possible that he made a two-word mental note: NEVER AGAIN!

Here were men who told me that they would happily lose their employment with the denomination and their reputations rather than to silence their concerns over that which they judged to be an injustice. What courage! What love! What friends!

- Commencement of Remnant Ministries (and The Remnant Herald)

I had vowed on Sabbath morning, December 6, 1980 — the day of my ordination to the gospel ministry — that, in His power, I would serve the Lord faithfully until I died or He returns. God's believers in Australia were just as supportive of my ministry as had been those to whom I had ministered in South-East Asia and the United Kingdom. I was offered so many speaking appointments that my medical profession — the work that I had loved so much — became a matter of history and now full-time service for God became my life.

On Sabbath, September 4, 1992, my labour for God in self-supporting work was launched.

Two self-supporting ministries (The Anchor and Advent Lay Members' Action — the latter being the oldest continuing self-supporting ministry in Australia) selflessly shared their combined mailing lists with me. Only thus could the first edition of The Remnant Herald have been produced and circulated back in October 1992.

By the end of 1992, I had spoken across Australia in Windsor, Sydney, Cairns, Ararat, Melbourne, Albury, Brisbane, Lismore, Cooffs Harbour, Newcastle, Maryborough (Queensland), and Mackay. I had also spoken in New Zealand, America and England. Remnant Ministries commenced on the fast track. In the following years, I had not spared myself in the cause of God, averaging over 96 air flights per year. But every day in the cause of God has been a joy. Our Lord and His flock are worth our all!
In Defence of the Truth
By Elvis Placer

Conflicting Concepts of Righteousness by Faith

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church
Australasian Division

A. John Clifford
Russel R. Standish

In April 1976, the name of Dr. Russell Standish became well known in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly within the Australasian Division (now the South Pacific Division), following the publication of a book which he co-authored with the late Dr. John Clifford [whose obituary will appear in the next edition of our paper], Conflicting Concepts of Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church — Australasian Division [pictured]. The book was released about six weeks after official meetings were held between sixteen “Concerned Brethren” (which included Drs. Russell Standish and John Clifford) and representatives of the Australasian Division Biblical Research Institute (which included Dr. Desmond Ford) to discuss the erroneous teachings that were strongly advocated by Dr. Ford at Avondale College. This volume was the first of Dr. Russell Standish’s written works that addressed the specious errors of the New Theology and its visible fruits of apostasy.

Having witnessed the devastating consequences that followed the acceptance of evangelical Augustinianism within the Seventh-day Adventist Church — which created a terrible crisis of faith amongst the laity and ministry — pastors Colin and Russell Standish wrote many books and articles that clearly contrasted the soul-destroying characteristics of the counterfeit gospel with the biblical truths of salvation. At great cost to their personal reputations and on-going employment with the denomination, both men were undeterred in fulfilling their ministerial oath to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering” (2. Timothy 4:2), recognizing that the eternal destiny of souls was at stake.

A fervent desire to uphold and vindicate the everlasting gospel and witness the attendant ingathering of souls who are justified by faith and sanctified through obedience to the truth was what motivated Pastor Russell Standish to continue his work for the Lord in a self-supporting capacity after his unlawful dismissal from denominational service. So far from marking the close of his ministry, his sacking led to the opening of a new door whereby his services for the Master were more in demand than ever before. Through the pages of The Remnant Herald and in all his speaking engagements around the world, he continued to preach the Advent message and faithfully warn God’s people of the devices and strategies of the enemy until his death in May 2008.

Remnant Ministries is committed to continue the work that had been done by Pastor Standish — to encourage God’s people to stand upon the fundamental truths of our faith that have withstood test and trial, to warn the church of the deceptive sophistries of the enemy (like the New Theology), and to appeal for a revival and reformation that can lead us individually to be prepared for heaven.

From Pastor Colin Standish

The first issue of The Remnant Herald was released in October 1992. In many ways, it has been a wonderful vehicle to disseminate God’s everlasting gospel in the South Pacific and further afield. My brother Russell had a deep desire to proclaim this powerful message to enlighten Seventh-day Adventists and those not of our faith. Another goal that he had was to warn and protect God’s people from Satan’s deceitful heresies that are invented to weaken their faith. I am certain that many have been blessed by these messages and souls will inherit eternity.

Today this voice is still heard though the dedicated editorialship of Elvis Placer. In his role, he reprints some of Russell’s writings which in many ways are more important now than when they were first published, together with numerous other articles that are consistent with the precious truths which Russell loved and preached.

I hope all who read this anniversary issue of The Remnant Herald will be strengthened in the gospel of salvation, and encouraging all to enlist in active service in the army of the Lord.
Remnant Ministries Board Members

Current board members (in order of length of service, with positions in the ministry):

- **Bryan de Pree** since September 1992 - Treasurer/Public Officer
- **Phillip Shipard** since April 2001 - Chairman
- **Glenice Standish** since April 2002 - President/Secretary
- **Elvis Placer** since November 2010 - Speaker/Editor, *The Remnant Herald*
- **Nikolai Millen** since March 2012 - Office Clerk

Former board members (surnames listed in alphabetical order):

- **David Brown** April 1998 - April 1999
- **Ray Chehade** June 2008 - July 2010
- **Jayne de Pree** September 1992 - October 2001
- **Delma Gould** February 1993 - April 2001
- **Kevin Hains** March 1994 - February 1995; April 1999 - April 2004
- **Wallace Hansen** February 1993 - April 1996
- **Lenn Harvey** April 1996 - April 1998
- **Landon Kum Yuen** April 2004 - August 2006
- **Penny La Greca** April 1998 - April 2002
- **Ivanka Millen** May 1995 - April 2002
- **Shirley Ralph** March 1994 - April 1996
- **Harold Reid** February 1993 - April 1996
- **Peter Sehm** May 1997 - April 2002
- **Pr. Colin Standish** June 2008 - April 2011
- **Pr. Russell Standish** September 1992 - May 2008
- **Wanda Standish** September 1992 - March 1994
- **Jurek Szymulski** April 1997 - April 2001
- **Rodney Tempest** September 1992 - May 1994
- **Pr. Thomas Turner** April 2002 - March 2012

Our Heartfelt Thanks

* To our wonderful Saviour...for the precious privilege of granting this ministry a place in His vineyard to labour for the salvation of souls for the past twenty years.

* To all our supporters...for their financial assistance and sacrificial offerings to the ministry over the years, including the period when Highwood was under the administration of Remnant Herald Limited.

* To all our former and current staff and volunteers...for their dedicated services to the ministry, whether it be for a short or a long period. Two of the longest-serving staff members at Remnant Ministries are specially mentioned here for their unceasing and faithful endeavours over many years:
  — Bryan de Pree (commenced September 1992). He has been a board member and the ministry’s treasurer since its very inception. He has diligently kept the ministry’s finances on an even keel, ensuring that they pass all the accounting audits that are done on a regular basis.
  — Nikolai Millen (commenced February 1994). He has been employed as the ministry’s office clerk, busily engaged in sending out Bibles, Spirit of Prophecy books, and truth-filled magazines to many mission fields in Africa, the Oceanic region and further beyond. Orders for books written by pastors Colin and Russell Standish are usually processed by Nikolai Millen.

Additional mention is made of Geoff and Robyn Coyte (Seventh-day Adventist proprietors of Roessler Graphics, in Stanthorpe, Queensland, Australia) for their professionalism in printing *The Remnant Herald* with excellent quality; Lawrence and Olive Pepper — who had been the ministry’s mailing officers for many years, and their successors, Charles and Faye Gaitskell.

* To all our readers...for their continued interest in the articles that have been put into *The Remnant Herald* since it began, and to those people who have made photocopies of various articles/issues to pass on to their fellow church members, friends, and family members.
question within the denomination in 2012 as the Adventist “Arab Spring” — a reference to the political uprisings in the Middle East over the last eighteen months. This appraisal — which was a back-handed way of saying that there was rebellion in the ranks — was made in view of what has transpired since the beginning of this year, as set forth in the following paragraphs:

January 31: The President of the North American Division (NAD), Pastor Don Jackson [pictured], wrote an assessment on the action that was taken by the North American Division Executive Committee (NADCOM) in 2009 and 2010 to change the NAD E-60 Policy to allow “ordained/commissioned ministers” — the word “commissioned” was added to include women who can only become licensed ministers through this way (for now) — to be elected to executive leadership in the NAD.

Though this change was voted affirmatively by the NADCOM three times (in 2009, 2010, and 2011), the General Conference Executive Committee (NADCOM) in 2009 and 2010 to change the NAD E-60 Policy to allow “ordained/commissioned ministers” — the word “commissioned” was added to include women who can only become licensed ministers through this way (for now) — to be elected to executive leadership in the NAD.

Jan

 whilst Pastor Jackson apologized for the unexpected outcome that had resulted from the NAD’s “unintentional” conflict with the General Conference over its E-60 Policy amendment, he was resolutely unapologetic about the ultimate objective that the
North American Division was striving to achieve. He wrote:

“While we, as a Division family, have philosophically supported women in leadership at three successive year-end meetings, the time has now come for us to become practical in our application of philosophy and belief….

“The North American Division and its Unions and Conferences (as local circumstances permit) must become more intentional in the development of pathways to ministry for female pastors. We must also develop intentional methods of mentoring women who can take on executive leadership positions within our conferences.” (Website of the Adventist News Network: North America Retracts “Commissioned” Ministers as Top Leader Candidates, February 14, 2012 [letter tagged to the article as an attachment])

(Notice that word, “intentional”— which is synonymous with terms like “deliberate,” “planned,” “premeditated,” “calculated,” “purposeful.” Doesn’t its use suggest an agenda which the North American Division now seeks to pursue more aggressively — not just to ordain women as ministers but to bring them into conference/union/division leadership?)

The release of Pastor Jackson’ written assessment seemed to precipitate more startling developments in the church with great haste over the next seven months (unless otherwise specified, the documentation for the following information is derived from the website of NAD News Points — the news service of the North American Division: A Report on the Women’s Ordination Discussion Across North America, May 30, 2012):

March 8: The Executive Committee of the Mid-American Union Conference “voted to support the ordination of women in the Mid-American Union,” according to a news report released by the Union Conference communication director, Martin Weber. (Website of Adventist Today: Mid-America Union Conference Votes to Support Ordination of Women, March 9, 2012)

(Interesting note: Martin Weber was the author of Adventist Hot Potatoes and More Adventist Hot Potatoes — books that belittled faithful self-supporting ministries, undermined our lifestyle and health standards, and projected a New Theology viewpoint on righteousness by faith and the nature Christ).

March 15: The Executive Committee of the Pacific Union Conference voted to reaffirm its strong commitment to the ordination of women.

March 20: The Executive Committee of the Columbia Union Conference voted “to establish an ad-hoc Committee to study the issue of women to the ministry and recommend to the Columbia Union Executive Committee how we can be intentional in affirming women in ministry.

“In addition, we vote to affirm our previous action requesting the North American Division to grant us permission to ordain women in ministry.”

March 22: The Executive Committee of the Southeastern Californian Conference voted to issue only one credential — “ordained” — to all its pastors, irrespective of gender.

March 29: The Executive Committee of the Southern Union Conference stated that though it would not take any action contrary to the elected policy of the General Conference, it will be “actively supporting, encouraging, and empowering women in all areas of ministry, including pastoral, evangelistic, conference and union leadership….

April 23: The North German Union Conference Constituency Session voted to amend its constitution to end “gender discrimination” in the ordination of ministers. The margin was 160 in favour, 47 opposed — a success ratio of almost 4 to 1. Forty people rose to speak during the session meeting — not one of them spoke against the ordination of women to the ministry. (Website of the Euro-Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: North German Union Constitution Session Votes to Ordain Women, May 9, 2012)

May 9: The Executive Committee of the Pacific Union Conference voted to hold a special constituency meeting on August 19 to authorize ordination of ministers “without regard to gender.”

May 10: The Executive Committee of the Atlantic Union Conference voted that whilst it will not take action against elected General Conference policy on this issue, the Union is “committed to supporting, empowering and celebrating women in ministry.”

May 17: The Executive Committee of the Colum-
Women’s Ordination….continued from previous page

Bcia Union Conference voted to hold a special constituency meeting on July 29 “for the purpose of authorizing ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender.”

May 17: The Executive Committee of the North Pacific Union Conference voted “to appoint an ad-hoc committee to create specific recommendations on how to fully integrate committed and called Adventist women into all levels of church leadership within the North Pacific Union Conference territory.”

June 29: The General Conference appeals for a unified approach towards the examination of this subject (in harmony with the process that was established at the last Annual Council), expressing grave concern over “independent actions” taken by various union conferences that are “contrary to the decisions taken by the global body of the church in 1990 and 1995.” (Website of the Adventist News Network: On Ordination Questions, Adventist Leadership Appeals for Orderly Process, June 29, 2012)

July 29: Voting by secret ballot was conducted at the special constituency meeting of the Columbia Union Conference [pictured] to authorize the ordination of ministers within its territorial borders “without regard to gender” — 209 (80%) in favour, 51 opposed, 9 abstentions, and 2 unmarked papers — a success ratio of just over 4 to 1. (Website of Adventist Today: Columbia Union Conference Constituency Votes to Authorize Ordination of Women Pastors, July 29, 2012)

Shortly after the vote was taken, the General Conference issued a press release through the church’s paper, stating that the action of the Columbia Union Conference posed a “danger…to the functional unity of [its] own region and to the wider denomination…. [the] delegates have allowed for a principle of unilateralism and autonomy throughout their territory that can only be disruptive to the harmonious functioning of the Columbia Union Conference, as well as to that Union’s relationship with the world church…. [it] represents a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church…. ” (Website of Adventist Review: An Appeal for Oneness in Christ, July 29, 2012)

August 9: The General Conference released a document with a series of questions and answers that touched upon decision-making in the church, declaring that:

“…the unions are not authorized to move forward unilaterally with ordination without regard to gender. If the church were to accept such a premise, there would be varying standards of ordination and criteria for ministry. Such a path would not likely end there. It would open the door to varying standards for baptism, church membership, etc. The issue here is not women’s ordination per se; it is which level of church organization has the constitutionally-given authority to determine what qualifies a person for ordination. This can only be done by the General Conference in Session, or the General Conference Executive Committee, which acts between General Conference Sessions.” (Website of the Adventist News Network: Questions and Answers Regarding Current Issues of Unity Facing the Church, August 9, 2012)

August 19: Voting by secret ballot was conducted at the special constituency meeting of the Pacific Union Conference for two motions:

(a): to amend the constitution and by-laws of the Pacific Union Conference that would allow its working policies to differ with those from the General Conference (giving it the option to ignore General Conference policy on a host of issues besides women’s ordination). The vote fell 1% short of the required two-thirds (66%) majority for the motion to pass — 65% in favour, 35% opposed.

(b): to authorize the ordination of ministers within its territorial borders “without regard to gender” — 79% in favour, 21% opposed. (Website of Spectrum: Pacific Union Constituents Vote to Ordain Without Regard to Gender, August 19, 2012)

August 22: The Executive Committee of the Northern Californian Conference voted (61% in favour) to recommend to “the Pacific Union Conference candidates for ordination without regard to gender.” (Website of the Northern Californian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: NCC Executive Committee Action — August 22, 2012)

All of these developments will be reviewed by the General Conference Executive Committee in October to determine its response to the growing crisis.

Remnant Herald No. 144, Sep/Oct 2012
Following the majority vote taken at the Columbia Union Conference Constituency Session on July 29 (despite the calls for restraint and unity that were personally conveyed at that meeting by General Conference President Ted Wilson [pictured]), an astute observer offered his appraisal of the unfolding situation, which is worth quoting in full:

“(1): The fight over female ordination was lost, in principle, when the church allowed females to be ordained as elders. The scriptural principle of male headship in the church (which is the main reason not to ordain women) was totally eviscerated by this compromise. The fight over female ordination was lost, as a political matter, when women were hired as pastors to do jobs indistinguishable from those done by men, and given a ceremonial confirmation (commissioning) indistinguishable from that given to men. These compromises rendered the refusal to ordain women politically indefensible.

“(2): The calls for unity, issued by the division heads at the General Conference some weeks ago and by Elder Ted Wilson personally at [the Columbia Union Conference special constituency meeting], were unavailing. The world church must articulate a scriptural reason, a doctrinal principle, for opposing female ordination. The mere fact that divisions representing 85% of world membership do not want to ordain women will not suffice to prevent the divisions representing the 15% from doing so. For Adventists in North America, Europe, and Australia/New Zealand, the fact that Adventists in Chad or Zambia are not ready to ordain women is not a good reason why we shouldn’t do it. This argument has been made and has failed. Principle must be met with principle, and ‘unity’ is not a principle. If unity were an overriding principle, then we would all still be Roman Catholics. Basing faith and practice upon the Bible is more important than unity for unity’s sake. If there is a principled basis for opposing female ordination, the church must articulate it.

“(3): The church has been studying this issue for forty years. The idea that the church needs yet another study to understand Bible truth is risible, and was, in fact, ridiculed at the Columbia Union Conference constituency meeting (Potomac Conference President William Miller stated, ‘One of our favourite pastimes as a denomination is to commission another study’). Elder Ted Wilson knows how the Seventh-day Adventist Church works at the highest levels, and he has concluded that another study will be helpful (perhaps as a parliamentary manoeuvre to prepare the issue for a church-wide vote at San Antonio [in 2015]). But there is no need for another study to see that there obviously is a doctrine of male headship in Scripture. Biblically, this is not a close question, but a closed question. We instinctively defend Sabbath-keeping, but the New Testament authority for keeping the Sabbath is insignificant in comparison to New Testament authority for patriarchy — for male headship in the home and in the church.

“(4): Although the doctrine of male headship is clear in Scripture, it is an issue that divides liberals and conservatives. Liberals wish to ignore the doctrine, whereas conservatives would uphold it. Studies by panels of ‘experts’ and ‘theologians’ merely reveal who is liberal and who is conservative. Liberals will always conclude that the verses pointing to patriarchy and male headship in the church are culturally conditioned and hence may safely be ignored. Conservatives will always conclude that it is not safe to brush these passages aside, if only because we will soon be brushing aside every verse in conflict with today’s culture (most immediately with respect to homosexuality). Ultimately, the question is whether this is a liberal or a conservative church. I had assumed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a conservative church, but, in light of this lopsided vote, the best that can be said is that the Adventist Church in North America is conservative on many issues, but has blind spots on important biblical issues, such as human sexuality and sex roles.

“(5): If the church is going to reverse the vote of the Columbia Union constituency (and the upcoming vote of the Pacific Union constituency), the only way forward is to draft a fundamental belief regarding male headship in the church and bring it up for a vote at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio. Only if there is an actual, bona fide, doctrine of male headship, which is violated by female ordination, can the church in North America and the developed world be brought to heel. It isn’t too late to win this struggle, but it is too late if Elder Ted Wilson and other conservative church leaders believe that appeals to unity, or appeals to wait for yet another study, can stop the momentum behind female ordination. I know that Elder Ted Wilson wants to uphold Bible truth, and liberal machinations during the Paulsen tenure (1999 - 2010) have left him in a weak position. But we cannot wait two more years to start making the biblical case for male headship in the church. We have to start promoting this doctrine now, while many Adventists are still open-minded on the issue. Most of those who are still willing to accept a doctrine of male headship in the church are now in other parts of the world, not in North America, but we had better start supporting them with Scriptural arguments now, not in two years.” (Website of ADvindicate: Thoughts on the Columbia Union Vote, August 1, 2012. Comments by David C. Read)

Three matters stand out in reference to the information provided in the above quotation:

(a): The notion that a new fundamental belief stating the biblical teaching of male headship in the
church (which would preclude the practice of ordaining women as elders and ministers) is the only way that the momentum on women's ordination can be stopped in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This highlights the serious dilemma of the Holy Scriptures not being taken and accepted on its own divine authority but needs to be propped up by a man-made Statement of Beliefs in order to have any weight with many decision-makers in the church. As the late Pastor Russell Standish rightly pointed out in one of his books on the 28 Fundamentals (from which extracts were quoted in the opening article of the last edition of The Remnant Herald, "Statement of Beliefs Under Review"), a set of uninspired and changeable Fundamental Beliefs can never produce unity in the church (especially if it is used as a political instrument to quell conflicts over issues such as women's ordination, gay/lesbian rights, etc.).

(b): Calls for restraint on the question of women's ordination under the plea of maintaining unity in the church have largely fallen upon deaf ears in the liberal establishment. Appeals for unity based upon denominational policy, statements of belief, and administrative practices have never yielded the desired result, even though the leadership's view of unity is uncompromising:

“With [our] kind of organization, there is no room for independent action on the part of an individual church member, the church, or the Conference. When a person is accepted into the membership of the church, he surrenders his independence.” Australasian Record, October 3, 1977 (commentary by Pastor Keith S. Parmenter, then President of the Australasian Division [now South Pacific Division])

In a televised interview that was broadcast on 3ABN and Hope Channel on August 8, 2012 [picted], General Conference President Ted Wilson spoke on the theme of church unity with obvious reference to the ordination of women ministers (although he declined to address the contentious issue). He acknowledged that the agitation over women's ordination was causing "considerable dis-
the leading of the Holy Spirit undergirded the mission of the early Christian church. History has shown that, as often than not, unity that is secured upon any other basis has resulted in unity of compromise, expediency, and apostasy. The consequences of this "unity" have been unmistakably evident with increasing fragmentation, dissension, and rebellion seen in the ranks of the membership (as has been witnessed in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church over the last several decades, due in no small part to the wide acceptance and vigorous promotion of the New Theology). Recognition of the biblical teaching of male leadership in the home and in the church by upholding the Scriptures as the denomination's final arbiter of faith and practice is the only way that the issue of women's ordination can be quelled into silence.

“We are to unify, but not on a platform of error.” Special Testimonies, Series B, Number 2, p. 47

“Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by their right name. He does not gloss over wrongdoing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis.” Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 175 (Manuscript 10, 1905)

(c): The point was well made that the fight over female ordination was lost (in principle) when women were allowed to be ordained as elders. In his role as editor of Ministry, Pastor J. R. Spangler acknowledged this in 1985 when he wrote:

“...[A]t the 1975 Spring Meeting, action was taken that opened the way for ordination of deaconesses and of women as local elders. Thus the concept of women being ordained has been approved by the church. The only question left is whether to ordain women for the gospel ministry. Perhaps an important question to be settled...is whether this is a policy decision rather than a theological one. If it is defined as a policy decision, then the world church in session may find it easier to make a decision.” Ministry, March 1985

The decision to allow the ordination of female elders at the 1975 Spring Meeting (and reaffirmed at the 1984 Annual Council) had vastly strengthened the cause for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, with theologians in the church now strenuously advocating that this debate is merely a policy matter, an administrative question, a cultural issue, rather than a theological dispute. Two examples of this line of reasoning from union conference presidents are given as follows:

“Since we announced plans to hold a special constituency meeting [on] July 29, I’ve discovered that many members, pastors and leaders support our request to authorize ordination of women clergy. They realize that although we continue to debate the issue theologically, it’s largely cultural.” Visitor, July 2012

This revelation is most interesting in light of an e-mail the Editor received some months ago from a man in Botswana who shared an incident that occurred in a church from his district:

“Just last Sabbath, the local pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church threatened local members that those not supporting women ordination as elders will be disfellowshipped. This sounded strange to me.

“I just wonder where this church is going. I have more to share but for now I end here. As a matter of fact, I have been an Adventist for over twenty-five years.”

One wonders if this is merely an isolated incident of ecclesiastical intimidation or if it is systematic of a trend that has been exhibited in many parts of the world where church members are coerced to come into line with actions that are liberal-orientated, New Theology-inspired, and contrary to the directions...
given in Scripture (such as pertaining to the qualities that should be seen in the shepherd of God’s flock — “the husband of one wife....” Titus 1:9; 1.Timothy 3:2). A spirit of defiance, pressure, and rebellion has been generated by policy decisions that are motivated by compromise, expediency, and worldly conformity — such a spirit was seen at the 1990 Annual Council, when feminists placarded the meeting hall with signs demanding that women be ordained to the gospel ministry (witnessed by Pastor Colin Standish, reported in The Remnant Herald, November – December 2009: “Ordination of Women: The Issue That Will Not Die”).

A number of well-known and influential people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who are deeply concerned about the developing crisis over women’s ordination, have exerted their influence to try to prevent prominent liberals within the organizational structure from pursuing their radical agenda throughout the entire world field. A couple of websites have been created to inform Seventh-day Adventists of continuing developments, theological arguments, and policy issues surrounding the push for the ordination of women to the ministry.

Pastor Doug Batchelor [pictured], President/ Speaker of Amazing Facts, sent a message on an internet chat site which read as follows:

“Dear [...]. The Adventist church, of which I’m a member, is facing some of the same social tensions as other denominations in choosing biblical truth over cultural pressures. I think it is important to stay informed on the issues so I’m sending this interesting website to you for your consideration: www.christorculture.com.

“If you agree with the contents you may want to sign the petition [http://christorculture.com/petition] and send it on to others that might be impacted by these issues. I did. Blessings, Pastor Doug.”

(Website of Yahoo Groups: Mike’s Bible Study Class, July 13, 2012)

The petition that Pastor Batchelor invited his Seventh-day Adventist contacts to sign reads:

“As loyal members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while affirming gifts for ministry given to all members regardless of gender, we the undersigned believe the Scriptures support the limitation of ordination to well-qualified men as Seventh-day Adventist pastors. We call upon Adventist leaders everywhere to preserve the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist church by supporting the actions of the General Conference in determining this issue.” (Website of Christ or Culture: Sign the Petition)

Several people who were listed as endorsing the petition and the views set forth on the website of “Christ or Culture” included Pastor Doug Batchelor, Pastor Stephen Bohr [pictured], Pastor Kenneth Cox, Dr. Agatha Thrash, Dwight Hall (founder of Remnant Publications, U.S.A.)

Another website that has been set up to canvass the issues surrounding women’s ordination (and other church matters) is www.ADvindicate.com. Ten writers (including the Director for Communication and Adult Sabbath School in the Michigan Conference), two female editors, and a technical advisor are listed as the principal contributors to this particular website.

It should not be forgotten that pastors Colin and Russell Standish have long expressed their concerns over women’s ordination, with Colin having been involved in discussions over this issue with the leaders of the church at union, division, and General Conference levels during the 1975 Spring Meeting in Takoma Park, Washington, D. C. (see his articles in The Remnant Herald, November – December 2009 and January – February 2010 editions). Both men have rightly predicted that should the vote for women’s ordination pass at a General Conference session, the next issue that
will be agitated by the liberals is the recognition and promotion of gay/lesbian ministers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The destiny and functionality of the denomination as a single unit hangs in the balance as the controversy over ministerial ordination for women continues. It is freely acknowledged that this issue “has the potential to threaten the unity of the church” (Record, June 30, 2012. Australian Union Conference president Chester Stanley). People on both sides of the controversy have accused the opposing faction of endangering the unity of the denomination. Only recently, in an open letter to Pastor Ted Wilson, Leonna G. Running (now aged 96, who is Professor-Emerita of Biblical Languages at Andrews University — Pastor Wilson’s Hebrew teacher from his seminary days) wrote:

“In Western societies we can no longer tolerate the Church’s gender discrimination. Such prejudices as that and racism should be overcome at conversion if the converts could be taught by people who have overcome them, themselves. The Holy Spirit is now saying to the Adventist Church in North America, Europe and Australia to stop dilly-dallying and proceed to ordain the called, trained, effective women pastors and stop this unchristian discrimination. Otherwise we will lose the whole next generation and the Latter Rain cannot come…. The Western Churches that are ready to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading will show the way to the other countries’ Churches; they will not split the Church — but if you try to stop what the Holy Spirit is leading to be accomplished, you will split the Church!...As I told you months ago, I pray every day that God will help you be a shepherd and not a dictator, I hope that prayer will be answered.” (Website of Spectrum: An Open Letter to Ted Wilson from your Hebrew Teacher, August 22, 2012)

The underlying, divisive element in this contentious issue has been all too evident for a great many years — the undermining of the plain teachings of Scripture and the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy. This is clearly not the work of the Holy Spirit. Sister White wrote:

“Where there has been a departure from the right path, it is difficult to return. Barriers have been removed, safeguards broken down. One step in the wrong direction prepares the way for another.” Testimonies for the Church, volume 4, p. 78

The barriers and safeguards protecting the selection of consecrated men to the gospel ministry were gradually dismantled through a series of compromises that opened the way for unbiblical considerations to have greater weight in the deliberations of the church than what Inspiration had enunciated. Medical apostasy (abandonment of the sanitarium approach towards healing the sick in favour of unnecessary drug therapies in a hospital environment — accredited by the government), educational apostasy (acceptance of government accreditation for the denomination’s institutions of learning; the training of many Adventist teachers in secular/Catholic/Protestant universities, whose philosophy on education is fundamentally different to that of the Spirit of Prophecy; the promotion of competitive sports), and theological apostasy (repudiation of biblical Adventism with the acceptance of the “sin-and-live” theology of evangelical Protestantism, brought into the church decades ago through such men as Edward Heppenstall, Desmond Ford, Robert Brinsmead), had paved the way for ministerial apostasy — clerical attitudes, beliefs, practices, and decisions that are merely a by-product of the previous apostasies that had taken place in the preceeding years. Today we are “reaping the whirlwind” from the “creeping compromises” that had been allowed to develop in the church — first in the Western nations and then the rest of the world — with only a few faithful men and women who have offered resistance by

“sighing and crying for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.....they had reproved, counselled, and entreated....which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings.....” Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 210

The present crisis over women’s ordination calls for no less a response from people whose hearts are actuated by a genuine love for souls, implanted by the Holy Spirit to reach “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” with a call for revival and reformation whilst probation’s hour still lingers a little while longer.

To Be Continued: Further Updates; Addressing the Arguments in Favour of Women’s Ordination.

Speaking Appointments
Elvis Placer — Editor, The Remnant Herald

September: Vanuatu
October/November: The Philippines
This touching photo of Pastor Russell Standish’s gravesite was taken recently by the Editor at Lilydale Memorial Park in Melbourne, Australia. Standing beside the headstone for a few moments in quiet reflection, the Editor’s mind went back to the day when he first saw Dr. Russell Standish as a teenager in the Divine Service at the Lilydale Seventh-day Adventist Church, Melbourne, in August 1984. Though the Editor cannot now remember the sermon, he knows full well that he had listened to a man who stood unflinchingly for the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The Editor also recalled that as a boy in his mid-teens, he had circulated many tapes of a sermon that Russell Standish had preached in August 1985 at the now defunct Greensborough Seventh-day Adventist Church, Melbourne, which was entitled, “The Ministry of Reproof.”

Particularly within the last five years of Pastor Standish’s life, the Editor was able meet with him on numerous occasions in Melbourne and invite him frequently to preach a sermon, conduct the communion service, and at one time dedicate the Editor’s infant daughter to the Lord — which were all performed at the Bayswater Seventh-day Advent Fellowship. The Editor’s recollection of those incidents is mingled with great affection for the man whom he was privileged to call a friend and a brother in the Lord.

Wherever the Editor has been in his speaking circuits around Australia and New Zealand since he joined Remnant Ministries in December 2009, people have unfailingly approached him to tell of their reflections and reminiscences of Pastor Standish. The photograph of his headstone bespeaks of a mighty but humble servant of God now resting in peace, awaiting the glorious dawn of the blessed resurrection. The words of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Revelation 14:13, speaks of the “works [which] follow” those that have died in the Lord, who are accounted as “blessed.” The legacy of Pastor Standish’s ministry, like those of other stalwarts of the faith that have gone beforehand to their graves, will continue to exert its influence through his books, articles, and audio/visual recordings to help prepare a people to meet their Lord in perfect righteousness.