Dear Lexie,

Women in Ministry--An Immense Stride Forward

Delegates from around the world met at the General Conference office in Silver Spring just over a week ago to discuss and decide on a number of issues, including the ordination of women as pastors. Following several hours of debate, a decision was made to recommend to the General Conference Session, which convenes in June/July next year that each of the thirteen divisions of the church around the world be authorized to ordain women to ministry in their territory, if so desired.

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What is a Missional Church?

What is a missional church? And what is the "Missional Church: A Biblical Response to Mission in Western Culture" concentration in the Andrews Doctor of Ministry program?
A missional church is a local body of disciples who focus on a missionary understanding of God. God is missional; He enters the experience of His creation. Jesus is sent into the world to redeem. And missional churches today move in the every-day world as the presence of Jesus, incarnate in the world.

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Sligo Prays for Eastern Middle School

Situated approximately 1/2 mile east of Colesville Road, Eastern Middle School (EMS) serves approximately 875 Montgomery County students today. The administration and staff oversee a broad program of services including fine arts, math, science, special education, world studies, technology, counseling, reading and physical education.

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Delegates from around the world met at the General Conference office in Silver Spring just over a week ago to discuss and decide on a number of issues, including the ordination of women as pastors. Following several hours of debate, a decision was made to recommend to the General Conference Session, which convenes in June/July next year that each of the thirteen divisions of the church around the world be authorized to ordain women to ministry in their territory, if so desired. This has to be seen as an immense stride forward in our church’s recognition of the priesthood of all believers.

Despite the fact that my early Adventist experience has been of the conservative variety, the matter of women in ministry has never been a cross that I thought I needed to die on. In fact, I have personally been an advocate of the recognition by the church of the giftedness of women for gospel ministry. I imagine that this largely has had to do with the impact of spiritual female leaders in the church on my own life and my willingness to accept that Jesus has broken down the wall of partition between male and female and has rendered us all priests in His church.

It is interesting that we are still having a debate today on women in ministry because over one hundred and thirty years ago the church voted that women should be ordained to gospel ministry. The delegates at the 1881 General conference Session “Resolved that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of Christian ministry” (The Review and Herald, December 20, 1881, page 392). However, no further action was taken. It appears that the officers of the General Conference at the time did not favor the ordination of women and consequently failed to act on the resolution that was passed at the General Conference Session, despite the fact that it has been said time and time again that the General Conference in session is the highest authority in the church.

One of the many things that I value about Sligo Church is its understanding of the all-embracing quality of the gospel, its acceptance of people based on their kinship with God and not on their status, wealth, gender, race or appearance. While I cannot claim to know the mind of God, I have learnt from the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus that God uses whomever He pleases to use in accomplishing His purpose.

I wish to use this means to give a big ‘shout out’ to all the women in the Sligo Church community who provide leadership and who are just as committed as I am in extending God’s kingdom on earth. The debate on the role of women in ministry might rumble on in our church for several more years. In the meantime there are thousands of women in the Sligo community and in other parts of the world whose service to the church is making a positive difference and is of no less value than the service of men. When all is said and done, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.” God is using women as much as He is using men to proclaim the gospel to the four corners of the earth, in preparation for the coming of Jesus.
What is a missional church?

Scott Lawrence

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And what is the “Missional Church: A Biblical Response to Mission in Western Culture” concentration in the Andrews Doctor of Ministry program?

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Christians agree that the church has a mission, and that we exist for mission. Missional churches, however, differ in their position and relationship with the world. Just as Jesus was incarnate within the world, a missional church exists in the world. Such a church is a body of disciples who do not see their primary purpose as attracting people to a place they gather for religious practices. Rather, they live and serve within the world.

For a disciple of Christ, there is a practical perspective to the concept of the missional church. Many more traditional congregations reach out to the world around them and attract people into the church. They make disciples through various outreach programs, and grow. That fulfills mission and gives glory to God. But as western cultures become increasingly secular, the activity of attracting people into the church through programming or evangelistic events has become more challenging. The western secular world is now largely a cross-cultural missionary context that has become suspicious of religious institutions or identities. In that world the mission to make disciples by attracting people into existing churches has become less effective. We need missional disciples and congregations.

Missional church is, however, more than a practical solution to the challenge of mission. The challenge provides an invitation for the church to be a biblically faithful presence of disciples of Christ in the world. Such a congregation engages the world the same way Jesus does, by being among people rather than reaching out from a religious place to attract them. A missional church cannot be content with church-based programming or congregational worship. Yes, they will gather for prayer, worship, study, and fellowship. They may gather in homes, public places, or in buildings. The gathering is primarily important for spirituality and identification; thus place, style, or liturgy becomes less important.

Being missional applies to the whole life of every believer. Every disciple lives out the mission of God in their work, their leisure, their relationships, their neighborhood; missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture.

What is the “Missional Church: A Biblical Response to Mission in Western Culture” concentration in the Andrews Doctor of Ministry program? Pastors and other church leaders who are endeavoring with a cohort of colleagues to faithfully serve God by advancing their understanding and leadership of missional disciples and missional churches.

(by Skip Bell, DMin)
Sligo Prays for Eastern Middle School

Scott Lawrence

Situated approximately 1/2 mile east of Colesville Road, Eastern Middle School (EMS) serves approximately 875 Montgomery County students today. The administration and staff oversee a broad program of services including fine arts, math, science, special education, world studies, technology, counseling, reading and physical education.

Eastern Middle School strives to be a place where every child can learn and succeed, where the pursuit of excellence is fundamental and unending, and where there is fair treatment, honesty, openness, integrity, and respect. They believe that a high quality school strives to be responsive and accountable to the students and families.

What you may not know is that this school has three teachers on staff who are Seventh-day Adventists. Two EMS students, Jenna and Lexi Stewartson, are also SDA and attend the junior and earliteen classes, here at Sligo. Jenna just returned this week from a school-sponsored outdoor education class held in the Maryland mountains, and Lexi was recently honored to be one of two speakers for the Divine Worship service for Pathfinder Day at an area church.

As you pray for staff and students and parents, during the last few days of National School Safety Week, ask God to send His angels to guide, guard, protect and keep each one safe.

(by Chris Daley & Dawn Reynolds)