



# Southeastern Will Ordain Women—Someday

by Gary Chartier

Delegates to the Southeastern California Conference's seventh triennial session sent a confusing message to their constituents and to the church as a whole as they attempted once again to address the question of women's equality in ministry. However, they also mandated constitutional changes that may make this goal impossible to achieve.

The task force report, introduced by the conference's Gender Inclusiveness Task Force, was endorsed by the constituency September 20, 1992. It articulated the conference's unwilling accession to the world church's decision that women not be ordained *for world church service*. It called, however, for "conference leaders to devise a plan by which qualified women ministers . . . [could] be ordained for ministry" within Southeastern. Further, the report's approval committed the conference to ending "further discrimination in . . . [the] conference by uniformly conducting all future ordinations of qualified men and women ministers."

Despite the session's affirmative vote on these recommendations, the delegates later delivered a series of defeats to proposed changes to

Southeastern's charter by the conference constitution committee that would have enabled the conference to move ahead with the objectives mandated by the task force report. Among the committee's recommendations was the adoption of an amendment that read as follows: "It is the desire and intent of the Conference to comply with the working of the North American Division in so far as they are in harmony with this constitution and appropriate to the needs of the Conference." However, the session decided to adopt part of the proposed amendment, while deleting the clause beginning "in so far . . ." Further, the delegates failed to endorse a constitutional amendment that would have empowered the conference executive committee to "approve and authorize all ordinations . . . issued by the Conference."

Proponents of local ordination maintain that agreeing to comply with world church polices and submitting conventional ordination requests to the union for approval need not prevent the conference from ordaining anyone for ministerial service within its own territory. Such local ordination, they observe,

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is all that is required for the implementation of the report.

In light of the session's decisions, some male ministers in Southeastern have discussed the possibility of requesting that their credentials be altered to match those currently issued to women pastors. Others, of course, are likely to resist any loss in their ministerial privileges. In absence of a consensus, some believe the conference would be required to issue two sets of credentials to male ministers—one to those committed to gender parity in ministry, and another to those more comfortable with the status quo. Such a disparity would, of course, render out-of-conference ministerial transfers chaotic. It might also have unforeseen legal implications.

Just what the conference as a whole decides to do about the status of its women ministers will be largely influenced by F. Lynn Mallery, the new Southeastern president. Mallery, a former La Sierra University faculty member who holds two doctorates (one from Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union), is widely supported throughout the conference. But his election at the October 18 session was the culmination of a protracted and somewhat difficult process.

At the constituency's first session, September 20, the nominating committee indicated that its choice for president was Craig Newborn, a Loma Linda Academy religion instructor who had previously served in church leadership roles in the Middle East and Africa. In the first speech following the presentation of the committee's proposal, Pacific Union president Thomas Mostert called attention to Newborn's relative inexperience and asserted that a number of Newborn's former administrative superiors did not sup-

port his nomination as Southeastern's president. Immediately after Mostert's speech, another delegate—employing a parliamentary technique that would be used on several occasions to stifle debate throughout the session—successfully moved that the report be returned to the nominating committee for reconsideration.

Following its extended re-evaluation of the nomination, the nominating committee returned to the session late on the evening of September 20, determined to place Newborn's name in nomination again. Though delayed by procedural wrangling, a vote on the nomination finally took place. Tired by the ongoing debate, the delegates—who still had heard relatively little from Newborn's supporters, and who had in fact rejected a request that the nominating committee describe its reasons for endorsing Newborn—finally voted “No” on Newborn's nomination at approximately nine o'clock that evening.

Discussion had continued for perhaps half an hour on the committee's second-ranked nomination—Pacific Union vice president for administration David Taylor—when it was concluded that a quorum was no longer present and the meeting was adjourned. By the time the session had reconvened a month later, Taylor had withdrawn his name from the candidacy.

At the second session, October 18, nominating committee chair Jay DuNesme asked for—and received—a vote of apology to Craig Newborn from the session for the way in which he had been treated at the September meeting. He then placed Mallery's name in nomination; and, as expected, Mallery received a sizable majority of the votes cast.

Also at the second session, delegates voted early in the day to

exempt Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, and Al McClure, president of the North American Division from the three-minute time limit imposed on other speakers. Several speakers explained their support as a way to make amends for the booing Mostert had received from delegates on September 20, when his speech opposing Newborn's election had exceeded the time limit.

The decisions limiting the effectiveness of the Gender Task Force, coupled with procedural votes affirming the special status of church executives, were typical of a session that seemed unwilling to advance the movement toward lay empowerment and local autonomy begun at earlier Southeastern constituency sessions. Whether the session represents a new trend for Southeastern will not likely become apparent until after President Mallery has identified or forged a consensus on the issues that continue to inspire and divide the members of that conference.

Describing himself as a facilitator, Mallery emphasizes the importance of “consensus-building” and “listening” to his vision of the presidential role, and articulately voices his support for a governance model in which lay members of the conference have “true input” into determining its direction.

Thus, for example, on the much-debated issue of the status of women ministers in Southeastern, Mallery looks to further discussion within the conference's executive committee as a source of guidance. Mallery stresses that this further reflection is necessary as a consequence of, among other things, the potential conflict between the task force report and the constitutional actions taken during the session.

# Global Village Gets National Attention

*Global Village '92, a "teach-in, live-in, work-in" sponsored by ADRA International and the Stahl Center at La Sierra University, welcomed more than 20,000 visitors to the La Sierra University campus for tours of a dozen life-size habitats from four continents. The idea was birthed high in the Andes mountains 18 months ago as Stahl Center director Charles Teel, Jr., led a half-dozen La Sierra students on an ADRA project that called for them to construct a school on one of Lake Titicaca's "floating islands."*

*Millions also read or viewed images of the event in the print and electronic media. Several local newspapers and magazines gave the village generous coverage. CNN offered national and international exposure, with a dozen other television entities following suit, including the "Today" show on NBC. In addition, two representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development were on hand to evaluate Global Village '92 as a model for development education programs at home and abroad. Plans to replicate Global Village at other locations around the country and the world are already afoot; ADRA Chief Executive Officer Ralph Watts dreams, in particular, of the day when the habitats will grace the Capitol mall in Washington, D.C. Following is the L. A. Times account of this national media event.*

—The Editors

by Stephanie O'Neill

As the large truck pulled onto the one-acre lawn at La Sierra University, Terri Whittaker's eyes grew wide with anticipation.

Heaped high in the back of the truck were her treasures: a filthy mattress, a tattered vinyl chair and, the crowning glory, a brown couch, its insides bursting through a four-inch gash and its right arm broken and dangling to one side.

"We've also got a really gaudy striped couch," she told a visitor proudly.

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*Stephanie O'Neill, a free-lance writer in Los Angeles, is a frequent contributor to the Los Angeles Times, where this piece first appeared. It is reprinted with the permission of the author and the Times.*

For the past several weeks, Whittaker, a Hollywood art director, her colleagues and dozens of volunteers have been scavenging through Riverside, gathering a large haul of roadside and back yard refuse that includes tires, siding of an old barn and even an old donkey cart.

The eclectic stash was collected as building materials and decorations for "Global Village '92," an unusual exhibit of re-creations of nine low-income and Third World "houses" on the La Sierra University campus.

The purpose of "Global Village '92," its organizers say, is to increase awareness among elementary school pupils and university students, as well as the public, of the impoverished living conditions in the less-

developed areas of the world.

"The original concept was to bring Third World conditions to the university students, to set up a couple of habitats and have students live in them," said Alberto Valenzuela, director of communications for Washington-based Adventist Development and Relief Agency [ADRA], which is sponsoring the exhibit.

"Then we thought, why not make it bigger, make the university students the hosts and let's invite the community."

Since Thursday, college students wearing appropriate ethnic costumes have guided hundreds of fifth- and sixth-grade students through the village maze. The public is welcomed after 3 p.m. weekdays and on the weekend through next Sunday.

Visitors are encouraged to walk inside the dwellings, which include a floating totora reed house, common to the Uru people of Lake Titicaca in Peru; a South American urban favela, which is a small shack found mostly on vacant land outside cities that's built from just about anything, including cardboard, abandoned signs, pieces of plastic and broken-down furniture; a full-size Southeast Asian stilt house and a scaled-down model of an urban American tenement.

Charles Teel, professor of religion at La Sierra, came up with the global village idea two summers ago, while building a floating school with some of his students in Peru.

"The students come back changed and [looking at] the world through different eyes," he said. "And we hope to mirror that here."

Whittaker said she eagerly took on the job a year ago and has found it quite challenging—especially the actual building, which began last month.

"It's been an adventure finding materials," she said with a laugh. "In some of it, we've taken a bit of creative license and had to improvise on the materials because we're

not in the native environment."

For instance, she said, the totora reed house left the team at a loss as to where they could find reeds until someone suggested contacting a Los Angeles broom factory. They ended up buying 150 pounds of "hurl"—the cornstalk portion of the broom, which proved a good substitute.

And instead of using mud, sticks and livestock dung to build the Masai kraal—a compound of low-lying huts common to Central Africa—Whittaker opted for more resilient materials—chicken wire for the inside of the five-foot-high circular structure, which she coated with a special spray-on Styrofoam painted a realistic, muddy brown.

"It won't smell the same," she said, "but that's probably to our advantage."

Casey Bahr, producer of the exhibit, said the road-finds provided some of the best materials.

"It was amazing what we found," he said. "We saw some corrugated tin that was ideal for the tenement house. Then a group of students were out on a hike and they found some shake siding from an old barn that had fallen down and that was exactly what we needed for the favela."

And a group of Pathfinders, a youth group affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist church, got per-

mission from county officials to cut bamboo from a county grove, which was ideal for the Asian stilt house.

Bahr said the project cost about \$35,000, which included buying the materials that couldn't be dredged up, hiring a construction crew and paying Whittaker's art team for designing and developing the dwellings.

Among the greatest design challenges was the last-minute modification of the tenement.

Originally, the 14-foot-high structure was intended to allow the more than 6,000

school-age children expected to visit the village to get inside by climbing up a fire escape and into an open window.

"But fire codes wouldn't allow that," Bahr said. "So we adapted the idea and created an alley where you can walk down and look inside the room we've created in the tenement."

Old fencing, garbage cans, a broken-down car and spray-painted graffiti provided an urban feel, while live goats, pigs and chickens help set the ambience for the rural habitats.

The village also includes an old Ford station wagon depicting the lifestyle of a homeless family forced to live in a car, an African refugee camp and a beached Southeast Asian refugee boat. To give the boat an aged, rickety appearance, Whittaker coated it with eight layers of paint and one layer of glue, then blasted it with a heat gun, which created a sun-dried, cracked feel.

Whittaker said actual construction and decoration of the habitat took about 20 days, with help from a professional construction company and students. Many of these same students are maximizing the experience by spending a night in the dwellings, eating only the same quantity of rice and beans as would the indigenous people.

"This lets us role-play the people," said Christopher Cao, 20, a Global Village tour guide and journalism major.

"You come away thinking, 'My goodness, and I think I have problems.'"

John Anthony, 24, a tour guide and pastoral ministries major at La Sierra, said he was shocked to see the small living quarters of the tenement house he helped assemble.

"Something so small, it would be hard for just one person to live in—a whole family would be very difficult," he said. "I just hope all this helps bring a new train of thought and a new, better humanity."

