



Sheryll Prinz-McMillan, pastor of the Victoria Church

From Sligo To La Sierra

Documents, reports on the ordination of six women to the gospel ministry in the Adventist church.

by *Skye Bartlett*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has now witnessed the ordination of six women to the gospel ministry. Six weeks after Sligo Church initiated ordaining women to gospel ministry, three more women were ordained, December 2, in Southeastern California. Two days later, on December 4, the 1,700-plus member Walla Walla College Church, following the convening of several discussion groups, and the recommendation of its church board, (51-3), in a church business meeting, adopted 124 to 38, a resolution requesting that "the Upper Columbia Conference approve Leslie Bumgardner for ordination to the gospel ministry," and that "the decision be made no later than February 27, 1996." If the results are favorable, the resolution asks that Bumgardner's name "be passed to the North Pacific Union Conference by March 6."

Meanwhile, the Columbia Union officers offered the three women ordained at Sligo—Kendra Haloviak, Norma Osborn, and Penny Shell—printed cards with the wording, "congratulations on your ordination,"

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along with the leather-covered, portable communion sets given to all men ordained in the Columbia Union.

The Southeastern California Conference has been considering ordination of women for years. This year, on July 7, one day after the General Conference Session voted down ordination of women, the board of the 2,300-member La Sierra University Church voted to take the issue to a church business session. Two weeks later, on July 15, the church business session voted, 108 to 5, to request the Southeastern California Conference and Pacific Union approve by November 1 the ordination of women to gospel ministry. Paralleling the earlier close vote of the Potomac Conference, the Southeastern California Conference, on September 21, voted narrowly, 14 to 12, against passing on to the Pacific Union the recommendation of the La Sierra University Church.

Consequently, on November 11, the La Sierra University Church convened a church business meeting. Following the recommendation of its church board (adopted 20 to 7), the business meeting voted 275 to 75

to proceed with the ordination of Halcyon Wilson and Madelynn Haldeman to gospel ministry (see report, pp. 54-57). November 26, a business meeting of the 200-member Victoria Church, following the unanimous recommendation of its church board, also approved, 27 to 3, the ordination of their pastor, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan.

On November 28, the president's council of the Pacific Union, which includes the presidents of the conferences and the two institutions of higher learning in the Pacific Union, after intense discussion, voted by the narrowest of margins—5 to 4, and with several abstentions—to reaffirm its earlier (August 30) action opposing "unilateral" ordination of women.

Media coverage of ordination of women within the Adventist Church has been extensive. Three national newspapers have now printed stories: The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Another, the *Washington Times*, ran an account on its front page. Two regional newspapers in Southeastern California, the *San Bernadino Sun*, and the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, also published front-page stories.

Washington Post: Women Act In Devotion, Defiance

by *Debbi Wilgoren*

They were daughters of their religion, raised on its teachings and dedicated to spreading the Gospel of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in hospital, churches and classrooms.

But their ministry was harnessed with a caveat.

Because they are women, Penny Shell, Norma Osborn and Kendra Haloviak could not be ordained.

So they became revolutionaries.

In a hug-filled but unsanctioned ceremony on a crisp day in September, they knelt inside Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park while clergyman laid hands on their heads and recited the prayer of ordination.

A printed program called the event an "Ordination to the Gospel Ministry," and it was identical to the ritual by which men become ministers in the 8 million-member, 135-year-old Christian denomination—except that it had not been approved by the church hierarchy.

The impact it will have remains unclear.

World leaders of the church, which in July rejected a request to allow women to become ministers, accuse those who claim that the event was an ordination of trying to embarrass the denomination. Their position is that the Bible does not allow women to hold "spiritual leadership" of either families or the church.

Debbi Wilgoren is a staff writer for the Washington Post. This article first appeared under the title, "Three Women's Act of Devotion and Defiance," November 4, 1995, in the Washington Post, and is reprinted with permission.

Seventh-day Adventist women can be ordained as elders in their local churches. They also can preach and, increasingly, officiate at religious ceremonies. But only ordained ministers can found congregations, ordain other ministers and preside over the church hierarchy.

The ceremony has not changed the work the three women do. Shell, 55, remains chaplain at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital; Osborn, 49, is still an associate pastor at Sligo; and Haloviak, 28, is on academic leave from the Adventist-run Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, where she is an assistant professor.

Still, they hope this step will lead church leaders to accept women's ordinations, as did the unauthorized ordinations of seven Episcopalian women in the 1970's. The Southern Baptist Convention, in contrast, has expelled congregations that ordained women.

In the meantime, when they speak from the pulpit, the women now are introduced as ministers by those who accept the ordination, just as their male peers are.

Although they have come in for criticism, they also have been deluged with messages of support and questions from Adventists, some of whom say their local churches are considering ordaining women as well. Equally important, Shell and Osborn said, they now have an answer to the question they often hear from children:

"Are you the same as a male pastor, even though you're a woman?"

"Yes."

The Healer

Penny Shell first felt called to minister to the sick 20 years ago, in the hours she spent nursing her parents as they battled terminal cancer.

But the self-described introvert, who was educated in Adventist schools and taught in them for 14 years, didn't have a name for what she felt destined to do—not until 1980, when she met a female Adventist chaplain for the first time.

"I did not even know that was possible," she said during an interview in her small, fluorescent-lit hospital office. "It was like a door opening."

Shell was certified as a chaplain, earned a doctorate in religious education and worked at hospitals in Chicago and Philadelphia before coming to Shady Grove in 1988. She is the first female president of Seventh-day Adventist Healthcare Chaplains, an association of her colleagues throughout North America.

She never married and lives in Silver Spring.

Although she has long supported the ordination of women, Shell said she hesitated when asked to participate in the Sept. 23 ceremony at Sligo.

The idea of the spotlight repulsed her. She wondered whether the controversy would hurt her work, threaten her job, keep her articles from being published in Adventist journals.

But she also felt compelled by the emotional discussion that took place at the 3,200 member church in August, before the congregation voted overwhelmingly in favor of holding the ceremony.

A 14-year-old boy said he'd been raised to fight for equality in the world and didn't understand why his church didn't do the same. A parent pleaded for the church to go ahead on behalf of her teenage

daughter.

"I couldn't not do it," Shell said.

The Teacher

Norma Osborn didn't feel a twitch of envy when her younger brother was ordained an Adventist minister nearly 20 years ago.

The daughter of missionaries and the wife of an official in the mid-Atlantic church hierarchy, Osborn volunteered for years as a religious school teacher at Sligo but never considered the pulpit. In 1987, her minister asked her to fill a new position: associate pastor focusing on children and educational programs.

Osborn, who lives in Silver Spring, with her husband and teenage son and daughter, loved the job. It put her in charge of children's programs on the Sabbath—which Adventists observe on Saturday—and allowed her to work at the church-run elementary school in addition to performing regular pastoral duties.

Although she supported the idea of women's ordination, she said she didn't feel the need to fight for it. Her role had always been that of a peacemaker, she explained, sitting at her desk in front of a picture of a lion embracing a lamb.

But then the questions started getting to her. Teenagers asking didn't she think it was stupid that God would differentiate between women and men who serve him? Grade-school children wondering whether she was a "real" pastor.

Osborn, who is studying at Wesley Theological Seminary, realized she felt somehow less legitimate than the men with whom she shared the pulpit.

At the church's General Conference in July, Osborne could not bear to watch the debate on ordination. She called the "no" vote "disgusting, discouraging." Reluc-

tantly, she considered trying another branch of Christianity.

"I said, 'I'm not going to give up on God. If this church doesn't want me, maybe another church will,'" Osborn recalled.

Since the ceremony at Sligo, Osborn's despair has lifted. Her pastor said she seems energized; she describes it as renewed.

But she said she still believes she needs to be part of a religious organization that can accept her as a minister. "I'm going to give the church a chance," Osborn said. "Some changes need to be made."

The Future

Kendra Haloviak grew up in Beltsville and Greenbelt, attending Adventist schools while her parents worked at the church's world headquarters in Silver Spring.

Her church in Beltsville had an unordained female pastor. At home, conversations around the dinner table sometimes focused on the need for female ministers.

In grade school, Haloviak brought home a long list of all the things she might like to be when she grew up. She doesn't remember what it said, but she never forgot her mother's comment:

"She said, 'You know, Kendra, you could be any one of these things, or anything else you want to be,'"

Haloviak recalled in a phone interview. "And I really believed her."

During high school at Takoma Academy, Haloviak volunteered as the student pastor, organizing weekly chapel services and social service projects.

She entered Columbia Union College planning to be a surgeon but quickly switched to a career as a theologian. Church-sanctioned ordination of women was inevitable, she said she believed, and she wanted to be ready when it happened.

In the last six years, Haloviak has worked on the pastoral staff at Sligo and an Adventist church in Michigan, taught religion at Columbia Union College and started graduate school. She came home from her doctoral studies in New Testament ethics at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif., to participate in the ordination ceremony.

Accepting women into ministry, she said, fits perfectly into the Adventist tradition of emphasizing the way the world will be when Christ returns to Earth.

"To be Adventist is to be focused on . . . a new world that will be brought forth by God," she said. "If, someday, there's going to be a world where men and women are treated equally, then we should be living that way right now."

Union Presidents' Statement on Women's Ordination

A Statement of Commitment to Women in Gospel Ministry From the North American Division Union Presidents

October 13, 1995

Because we believe that God calls both women and men to the gospel ministry, we were disap-

pointed by the General Conference vote in Utrecht to deny ordination to women. While loyal to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we still firmly believe in the biblical rightness of women's ordination.

We appreciate the leadership role that Elder A. C. McClure, our North American Division president, exhibited at Utrecht as he represented

our division's request that the decision to ordain women be made regionally by the various world divisions. We are pleased that Elder McClure has already taken steps to establish a presidential commission on women in ministry to find ways to validate our commitment to women in ministry.

Therefore, in support of the work of the presidential commission and our desire for full equality of men and women in ministry, we ask that the following steps be taken and pledge our vigorous support.

1. Authorize full equality of practice in ministry: Grant women and men full equality in the practice of ministry by eliminating all policies where ordination is a prerequisite and/or men and women ministers are treated differently, including the authority to:

- A. Hold any church office, including being a conference, union, division or General Conference president;
- B. Ordain local elders and deacons;
- C. Organize and disband churches; and
- D. Perform pastoral functions outside one's own district.

2. Enhance the commissioning service: We encourage enhancing the currently authorized commissioning service as a public affirmation of women set apart for a life of ministry.

3. Increase the role of women in the church: We believe that we must take steps to increase the presence and participation of women in ministry by:

- A. Encouraging conferences to call more women into pastoral ministry.
- B. Recruiting women to greater leadership and officer roles at all levels of the church.

4. Clarify our theology of ordination: We request that the General Conference initiate a study process to clarify our understanding of ordination so that it more fully reflects biblical theology and Adventist mission. We need confidence that our practice of ministry ordination is grounded in the Word of God and not in church history. The dialogue at Utrecht regarding the ordination of women demonstrated the church's need to increase our members' understanding and application of basic biblical hermeneutical principles.

While we support the vote in

Utrecht, we are also committed to the goal of women's ordination. We believe that the same Holy Spirit who calls, leads and blesses women in pastoral ministry is also calling our entire church to increased faithfulness in its affirmation and validation of women in gospel ministry. We ask all our brothers and sisters in the North American Division to actively and prayerfully join that journey. Let us be "a priesthood of all believers" in proclaiming together the good news that Christ is coming soon.

NAD UNION PRESIDENTS

La Sierra Business Meeting: Ordain Halcyon and Madelynn Now

by Warren C. Trenchard

The La Sierra University Church met for a business meeting November 11, 1995, to decide whether to ordain two women to the gospel ministry. Just after the General Conference Session in Utrecht, a previous business meeting, July 7, had voted to request the Southeastern California Conference and Pacific Union to authorize, by November 1, the ordination of qualified women pastors, as had already been approved at the last constituency meeting of the conference. By November 1, both the Pacific Union and Southeastern California Conference had narrowly voted not to proceed.

The business meeting, chaired by Clifford Reeves, a surgeon in Riverside, convened at 5:00 p.m. Some two hours later, the church voted

275 to 73 to proceed to ordain Halcyon Westphal Wilson and Madelynn Jones-Haldeman on December 2, 1995. What follows are highlights of the discussion preceding the vote, taken from notes. (An audiotape was made of the meeting, but not released.)

After the adoption of procedural rules—such as a two-minute limit to each speech—Senior Pastor Dan Smith read correspondence he had received from several denominational leaders. Lynn Mallery, president of the Southeastern California Conference, and the other conference officers, urged La Sierra to wait until after the conference constituency meeting had taken place in the fall of 1996. Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, and the other union officers, advised La Sierra to conduct, instead of an ordination, a commissioning service for women in ministry. Donald Jacobson, an assistant to the president of the North Ameri-

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can Division, on behalf of Alfred C. McClure, suggested that La Sierra not proceed with ordination, pointing out that there would be a division-wide conference on biblical hermeneutics in 1997.

LEE WILSON, professor of chemistry at La Sierra University and husband of Halcyon Wilson, one of the potential ordinands, asked for information about an event that had occurred at the Columbia Union Conference headquarters involving the three women who had been ordained at Sligo Church. The senior pastor invited LAWRENCE GERATY, president of La Sierra University, to speak to the matter. Geraty stated that the Columbia Union Conference had recently invited the three women to the union office. In a little ceremony, those who could attend (one is in California for doctoral studies) were presented with a card congratulating them on their recent ordination and with a leather-cased communion set—the same gift usually presented within the Columbia Union to men following their ordination.

The chair invited STEVE BLUE, the head elder of the La Sierra University Church, to read the recommendation of the church board to the business session. Following a series of reasons citing the Bible, Adventist fundamental beliefs, and history for its recommendation, the church board concluded, "We move that the La Sierra University church affirm and ordain to gospel ministry in a special service on Sabbath, December 2, 1995, at 4:00 p.m., Pastor Halcyon Wilson and Professor Madelynn Jones-Haldeman."

DONNA ENGBERTSON, a children's mental health advocate, stated that the General Conference should not be seen as a papal-type entity. Instead, all members are priests before God.

Geraty said that a Pacific Union Conference official had told him

that some would not speak at the church business meeting with views contrary to the senior pastor or the president of the university. Geraty urged members to speak freely, without fear of reprisals. He noted that he did not speak officially for the university on the matter, though of course he had his own view.

GARY CHARTIER, managing editor of *Adventist Heritage*, said that the local congregation did not need to understand itself as going against the local conference and the union, but that each was following its own non-discrimination policies.

TO CARL HANSON, a computer consultant, going ahead sounded like rebellion. If we went ahead, he asked, how could we turn to young people and urge them not to rebel against the church?

RICHARD RICE, professor of theology at La Sierra University, offered four reasons to support the motion of the church board: (1) equality in Christ; (2) the spirit is leading women to ministry, and we must follow the Spirit; (3) the call to witness to students that ministry is open to women; (4) it is time to ordain women now.

EDWARD HENRY, an English teacher at Riverside Community College, stated that a call to ordination must have biblical authority. The congregation must opt for the will of God as reflected in Scripture, and should show respect for the vote of the world church.

ED KARLOW, professor of physics at La Sierra University, thanked the church board for preparing balanced, biblically based resource materials. He called for the church to follow the lead of the Spirit, and discussed the literary context of Ellen White's so-called "voice of God" statement.

HONESTO PASCUAL, a physician, originally from the Philippines, read part of an argument against the ordination of women given at the General Conference Session in

Utrecht, stating that divisions outside North America would not recognize it. He then countered the argument by using an analogy of licensure of physicians. Medical licenses are granted in one country, even if that license is not recognized in other countries.

After a female theology student at La Sierra University urged the church to affirm now its youth, including women in ministry, and a man, who introduced himself as a Jewish Adventist, reflected on how Jesus affirmed women, DALE ANDERSON, a deacon who works for a courier company, reminded the business meeting that always going through channels has a way of delaying matters. To wait would simply mean more delays. La Sierra needed to show the world field that it means business. An example from the New Testament was acceptance of the Gentiles.

ROGER TATUM, a professor of chemistry at La Sierra University, said that he had come to celebrate the church in action; to vote for the church of the future, not the past. He urged a positive vote, arguing that local church action should not be understood as confrontation of other levels.

LOTFY ABU-ASSAL, a businessman born in Cairo, Egypt, indicated that in his mother tongue *Adventist* means *advance*. He said that his son, a physician, had told him, when asked by his father, that the brains of men and women are essentially the same. He urged La Sierra to not wait to ordain women, proceeding to speak of women who are effective in ministry.

MARJORIE VON POHLE, a citizen's advocate at the Riverside city government, reported that she had come to the business meeting with an open mind. Listening to the discussion, it occurred to her that God had given visions to two unwilling men before finding a woman

who agreed to share the visions. She had decided to vote "yes."

A female academy student spoke up, declaring that a vote to ordain these women would show conformity to God's will, but EARL ADAMS, a retired designer in the defense industry, reminded the young woman and the meeting that Jesus had not been ordained. Adams pointed out that one does not need to be ordained to serve. After observing that the Levitical system reserved the priesthood for men, he stated that God never changes.

ROMAINE SAUNDERS, a retired engineer for Rockwell International, declared that he had read nine versions of the Bible and had found nothing about ordaining women or, for that matter, men. As far as he was concerned, women could be ordained, but it would be a mistake to go against the vote of the General Conference Session.

A male university student stated that he supported the ordination of women, but he and some friends believed that respecting church authority was taught in Scripture, while ordination of women is not, and so he believed that the local church must be patient and wait for the wider church to catch up.

DONALD J. VAUGHN, a professor of music at La Sierra University and the

organist of the university church, predicted that eventually women would be ordained in the Adventist Church. What we need, he said, is courageous church leadership to lead and say, "Folk, let's get on with it."

KEN SUTTER, the architect of La Sierra University, felt that the La Sierra University Church was out in front because of having experienced female leadership. He specifically mentioned Pastor Wilson.

After a La Sierra Academy student had also urged La Sierra to move forward and ordain these women, VALERIE HALLIWELL SMITH, a member of the La Sierra University staff, and the granddaughter of one of Adventism's most revered missionaries in South America, told how her grandfather went ahead, against the repeated objections of the General Conference, and started his pioneering ministry, sailing up and down the Amazon River in launches. She passionately declared that the overwhelmingly positive results of his ministry on the Amazon was an example of how there are times when people must take the necessary first steps. For her, this was such a time.

JEANNA SUTTER, a La Sierra University college student, agreed, saying that she had always been told that from her generation would come the leaders of tomorrow. For that to

happen, the church must ordain women.

A DENY SCHMIDT, dean of the college of arts and sciences at La Sierra University, stated that while we do feel the conflict with the wider church, this is a matter of doing what is right. She felt that God had used the women recommended for ordination, and that the La Sierra church must affirm them now.

CHUCK DART, director of recruitment for La Sierra University, indicated that he personally favored the ordination of women, but he had a problem going against church policy. STEVE DAILY, the La Sierra University chaplain, responded. The fruits of an event were important. In his view, the fruits of the ordination of women at Sligo church had been positive. In any case, he did not see such an ordination as an act of disloyalty, especially since the General Conference was not appropriately representative.

REUBEN SUTTER, an upper-class religion major/pre-medical student, and the fourth member of his family to speak in favor of ordination of women, asked those at the meeting to see themselves as the family of God, and to focus on that as their real purpose on earth.

KATHLEEN DUNN, associate librarian of California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, declared that this was not a Catholic church, and that no organization can speak for God. For her, the General Conference Session was not representative. Furthermore, the Adventist Church is not united now, nor will it ever be. In her view, North America, where the Adventist Church originated, must lead on this issue.

RUBEN ESCALANTE, chaplain of La Sierra Academy, was the last speaker. He had never doubted that women are equal to men, he said, but he had opposed following a particular direction without personal struggle and consideration.

Lawrence Geraty delivers the charge to Halcyon Westphal Wilson and Madelyn Jones-Haldeman.



Consequently, he had, as a seminary student, stood alone in a congregation, declaring himself opposed to ordination of women as elders. Later, as a member of a multipastor church staff, he had not signed off on documents favoring the ordination of women in ministry. He had been resistant to moving simply because everyone was in favor of doing it.

Now he felt enough time had

LA Times: Loyal, Committed

by John Dart

Three women will be ordained today as pastors in Loma Linda, going against the wishes of officials of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose world convention in July voted against granting full ministerial status to women.

The separate ceremonies in Loma Linda and Riverside Adventist churches will be the second round of ordinations unauthorized by church officials since three women were ordained to the full ministry Sept. 23 in the large Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Md.

"We are loyal and committed to the Adventist Church, but we feel we must live by our conscience on this one matter," said Senior Pastor Dan Smith of La Sierra University Church in Riverside.

The North American Division of the denomination had backed a proposal to permit women's ordination on a division-by-division basis, but on July delegates to the world convention in Utrecht, the Netherlands, rejected that resolution by a more than 2-to-1 margin.

John Dart is religion editor of the Los Angeles Times. This report is reprinted, with permission, from the December 2, 1995, edition of the Los Angeles Times.

been spent wrestling with the issue. It was time, he said, to make a bold statement consistent with our self-perception as "repairers of the breach."

When the ballots of the secret vote were counted, the La Sierra University Church business meeting had voted 275 to 75 to ordain Halcyon Westphal Wilson and Madelynn Jones-Haldeman to the gospel ministry December 2.

The denomination, shaped since the mid-19th century by the writings of Adventist prophet Ellen White, is known today for its emphasis on hospitals, health care and vegetarianism as well as for staunch advocacy of church-state separation, stemming largely from its observance of the Saturday Sabbath as a day of rest.

Seminary-educated Adventist women have served as pastors—baptizing, marrying and burying church members—but they have not been granted the same spiritual authority as male pastors.

Those scheduled to be ordained today are:

- Sheryll Prinz-McMillan, who is

pastor of Loma Linda Victoria Church, where the ceremony will take place during the regular 11 a.m. service.

- Madelynn Jones-Haldeman, associate professor of New Testament at Adventist-run La Sierra University in Riverside, and Halcyon Wilson, an associate pastor at La Sierra University Church, where their ordination rites will take place.

Officiating at the 4 p.m. service at the campus church will be Pastor Smith; Lawrence Geraty, president of La Sierra University, and John Jones, dean of the school of religion at the university.

Officers of the Riverside-based Southeastern Conference for Adventists declined to comment on the planned ordinations.

"We don't claim to provide an ordination that will be validated at this time by the rest of the church but we want to give these two women the full affirmation of our congregation and recognize their full equality here," Smith said.

"There are people who will see this as rebellion," said a participant in the planned ceremonies who did not wish to be identified.

"Nevertheless, the congregations will issue ordination certificates, and if the rest of the church wants to recognize them, so be it."

La Sierra Ordination Service: A Litany for Congregation and Voices

by Charles Teel, Jr.

Beginnings to Beginnings: Responding Faithfully to the Spirit of God

In the beginning, the Spirit of God brooded over the formless void.

And God created the heavens and the earth.

And God made man and woman

from the dust of the ground to steward creation and to replenish the earth and to create community.

And God saw everything that had been made.

And it was good.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God spoke from the burning

bush,
calling Moses to shout to those who
enslave: "Let my people go!"
and inspiring Miriam to dance and
sing: "The people have triumphed
gloriously!"
And it was good.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God
hovered over the Virgin Mary.
And Mary pondered these things in
her heart.
And Mary sang her song of the
mighty brought low and the lowly
handmaidens exalted.
And Mary gave birth to the Christ,
Who challenged temple priests and
flouted scribal laws,
Who invited all to the great ban-
quet from which none need be
turned away,
Who ministered to Samaritan
women, Galilean fishermen, and
Syrian guards, and
Who could not be defeated by
death.
And it was good.

In the beginning, the Spirit of
God appeared in tongues of
fire.
And those who believed gathered
in one place and were of one
accord.
And they held all things in com-
mon.
And daughters and sons proph-
esied, while old women and men
dreamed dreams.
And the Spirit added daily to those
who would turn the world up-
side down.
And it was good.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God
shone on the Damascus Road.
And persecutors stopped kicking
against the pricks.
And a new vision of church was
born,
And unorthodox relationships were
forged.
And a church council was called.

And the faithful said: "Who are we
to go against the workings of the
Spirit?"
And Gentiles were baptized.
And it was good.

In the beginning, the Spirit of
God descended on New England.
And the faithful issued an inclusive
call: "Behold, the Bridegroom
cometh."
And they encountered great disap-
pointments and mathematical
formulas
and heavenly sanctuaries and
shut doors and remnant defini-
tions.
And gifts enumerated by the
prophet Joel were bestowed on
women and men
who vowed to take the good news
to every nation, kindred, tongue,
and people.
And it was good.

La Sierra and Victoria Ordinations: They Came From Far and Near

by Roy Branson

Participating in the ordination to
gospel ministry, December 2,
of three women in two services,
were ordained ministers from
across the North American Divi-
sion, including pastors from dif-
ferent conferences within the Pa-
cific Union, members of religion
departments of six North Ameri-
can Adventist colleges and univer-
sities, two presidents of Adventist
schools of higher education (Larry
Geraty and Charles Scriven), and
the president of the Arizona Con-
ference, Henry Bauman.

In a simple 11 a.m. worship ser-
vice, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan was
ordained in the 200-member
Victoria Seventh-day Adventist
Church she pastors, just outside
Loma Linda. In the afternoon,

Roy Branson is the editor of Spectrum.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God
lit the flames of the seven candle-
sticks.
And the faithful were called to envi-
sion and enact that divine realm
where the tree of life bears fruit for
the healing of the nations,
where the lion lies down with the
lamb,
where there is no oppression or
exclusion,
where there is no temple or mosque
or church—because God is there.
And it was good.

In all beginnings, the faithful hear
the Spirit and the bride say,
"Come!"
And all those who would minister
and be ministered to say, "Come!"
And all who thirst come and drink
of the water of life freely.
And it is good.
Amen.

Madelynn Jones-Haldeman and
Halcyon Westphal Wilson were or-
dained in the La Sierra University
church. In a majestic service, 1,500
people participated in responsive
readings and joined in anthems led
by a combined choir and brass
orchestra of 100 amateur and pro-
fessional musicians from both La
Sierra and Loma Linda universities.

The services, like the churches,
were quite different. It is true that
both included the standard parts of
an ordination service, both placed
on the platform, behind the partici-
pants, the banners depicting the
seven churches of Revelation, de-
signed by Rosemary Peterson and
created by Barbara Djordjovic of
Sligo Church; both included visi-
tors who had attended the Sligo
ordination service, including the
three women who had been or-

dained September 23—Elders Kendra Haloviak, Norma Osborn, and Penny Shell. But the differences in the services reflected the different nature of the churches, suggesting that if they have experienced the pastoring of women, congregations of widely differing sorts will proceed with services ordaining women to the gospel ministry.

The Victoria church is not connected to any denominational institution. The service brought so many visitors that people stood against the walls, included an auto-harp solo by one of the members, accompanied by an electric organ, and a soprano solo accompanied by recorded music. The congregation, comprised primarily of workers in surrounding light industries, had studied the issue of ordination of women in seminars. Its church board then unanimously recommended proceeding with ordination of its pastor, and on November 26 the church business meeting voted 27 to three to ordain their pastor, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan.

Sabbath morning, Prinz-McMillan was presented for ordination by a former pastor at the church, Raymond Blackburn. Jerry Davis, the chief of chaplain services at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, and former chair of the regional Adventist elementary school board that includes the Victoria Church, preached the sermon. He praised the Victoria congregation for “assuming moral leadership in this community,” and said that the idea of the feminine in ministry is not new: “It is in scripture and its name is grace . . . amazing grace.” Fritz Guy, a professor of theology at La Sierra University, offered the ordination prayer, and Ginger Hanks-Harwood, a visiting professor of religion at Walla Walla College, gave the charge to service.

The 4 p.m. ordination service at

La Sierra University began with children carrying in flowers donated in support of the ordination service by individuals across the North American Division, and from every continent but Antarctica. (\$5,000 was left over for La Sierra’s scholarship fund for women in ministry.)

The processional of participants was led by members of the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference, who carried the Sligo banners representing the seven churches of Revelation, and planted them behind seven low pillars mounted by candles. All the while, the congregation, the choir, the brass and timpani, were joining in a full-bodied “O Come All Ye Faithful.”

The litany, written by Charles Teel, Jr., professor of ethics at La Sierra University, celebrated the Spirit, in its work of beginnings, from Genesis, when “the Spirit of God brooded over the formless void,” to Revelation, where “the Spirit of God lit the flames of the seven candlesticks,” where “the tree of life bears fruit for the healing of the nations,” where “there is no oppression or exclusion,” where “all those who would minister and be ministered to say, ‘come!’” Throughout the litany to its conclusion, 1,500 people responded: “And it was good.” A teenage woman, Amanda Escalante, recited Mary’s psalm in Luke, the *Magnificat*, including the words, “Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is God’s name.”

Dan Smith, pastor of the La Sierra University church, explained that God calls individuals to ministry in private, they accept the call in private, but then the body of Christ needs to affirm that call in public—including the call to women to be ordained to gospel ministry. “This senior pastor,” he said, “is deter-

mined to live in equality with pastors in my staff,” to which the congregation responded with a standing ovation.

John Jones, dean of the School of Religion at La Sierra University, offered the ordination prayer, with the ordinands surrounded by ordained ministers from churches in the Southeastern California Conference, by the pastor of the Pacific Union College Church, who flew down with a group in a private plane after his Sabbath morning service, by a delegation from the Arizona Conference led by their conference president, by other ministers from across the United States and Canada, by the four women who had already been ordained at the Sligo and Victoria churches, and by members of the congregation who found room to gather around the ordinands at the front of the church.

Larry Geraty, president of La Sierra University, gave the charge: He compared Wilson and Jones-Haldeman to Rosa Parks. “You have ministered in the back of the Adventist bus, looking forward to this day when the church would recognize your calling as equal.”

Both Halcyon Westphal Wilson and Madelynn Jones-Haldeman responded. The congregation, the choir, the organ, the brass, and the timpani then joined in a mighty sound of praise, “Go forth, Go forth with Christ, who called you to this day.” Fritz Guy, who was heavily involved in both the ordination services on December 2, gave the benediction.

It was literally hours after the service and a reception that followed before the La Sierra congregation, and visitors who had traveled from across the North American Division—including some who had also attended not only the Victoria, but also the Sligo ordination services—finished visiting and celebrating.

Hear, You Who Have Ears, What the Spirit Says to the Churches

by Charles Teel, Jr.

Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!

The Sabbath dawn breaks over California orange groves as liturgical banners are hung.

- Banners created to celebrate the ordination of the Sligo three sisters to the gospel ministry
- Banners now hung in anticipation of the ordination of three sisters on another coast
- Banners boasting tumultuous colors and depicting centuries of struggles between Remnants and Babylons

The little church in the wildwood is filled with saints

- Saints who do not punch time clocks on this day
- Saints who bring simple gifts of song accompanied by cassette and to the beat of four/four time
- Saints who boast eight decades lived life and play stringed instruments from the Virginia hills

The saints gather with guests from far and near to ordain their pastor

- A pastor greatly loved on the basis of a vocation well served
- A pastor greatly passed over by church leaders on the basis of a Y chromosome
- A pastor great with child at this Christmas season

The preacher reminds sister Sheryll that things work together for good to all who respond to God's callings

- Callings which invite us "to be

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faithful to Christ in doing justly and loving mercy and walking humbly"

- Callings which invite us "to quicken and enliven the life of an institutional church in need of renewal"
- Callings which invite us "to set a moral tone for how the church can indeed be church in this time"

The hands are laid on

- Hands are laid on by parents and children served
- Hands are laid on by the Sligo Three
- Hands are laid on by scores of friends and those who are colleagues in ministry

And it was good!

The same Sabbath sun signals vespers time as a majestic processional is fronted by the colorful banners

- Banners bob and weave amidst a sea of flowers shared in solidarity by sisters and brothers from afar
- Banners find their resting place behind seven sculpted candlesticks
- Banners glow as candles are lighted and as a multitude awaits in heightened anticipation

The church on the university campus is filled with saints

- Saints whose classrooms and libraries and laboratories stand silent on this day
- Saints who pour themselves into anthems of praise as organ peals and brass sounds and choirs proclaim
- Saints who soar in celebrating possibilities for renewal in the

community of faith that they so love

The saints gather to ordain two sisters who have pastored and taught for decades

- A pastor nearing retirement who was birthed in a long line of pastors and missionaries
- A professor nearing retirement who has trained hundreds of ministers—many present on this day
- A tested team which has savored the sweet win no less than the bitter herbs of ministry

The officials attest to the calling to ministry as witnessed in the lives of sisters Hallie and Madelynn

- Callings which demand "that we remembers the bold witness of Rosa Parks forty years ago today"
- Callings which demand "that no one be relegated to the back of the ecclesiastical bus"
- Callings which demand "that church leaders affirm gifts as poured out to daughters and sons alike"

The hands are laid on

- Hands are laid on not on an elevated and pulpited platform dominated by patriarchs in dark suits
- Hands are laid on at the level of congregation and pew as gifts are affirmed by the people of God
- Hands are laid on because "who are we to go against the clear leadings of the Spirit?"

And it was good!

And while church leaders restate, again

And while committees study, still
And while delegations debate, further

Remnant congregations enact, now

And it is good!

Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!