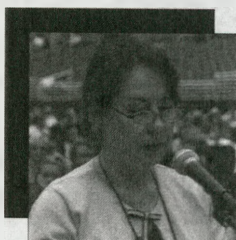


Discussed: shepherd's heart, exclusion of women from church leadership, strategic values, lack of community involvement, too many boarding academies and colleges

Who Said What: Speeches Heard at the General Conference Session

Compiled by Alexander Carpenter

On the consideration of Item 302, to add: "The General Conference President shall be an ordained minister of experience." Before the Fifty-eighth General Conference Session, there was no rule that General Conference presidents be ordained.



LISA BEARDSLEY: I wholeheartedly agree that the General Conference president should have experience in ministry and that the General Conference president must have a shepherd's heart for the worldwide church. The General Conference president must also be visionary, a capable administrator of a multinational global organization, a compelling communicator, and a role model in integrity, humility, faith, and practice.

In recent years, however, ministerial ordination has been more specifically focused on those with a traditional pastoral experience and training. The proposed amendment overlooks the fact that pastoral experience can come from a variety of contexts, such as hospital or military chaplaincy, the ministry of education, the ministry of healing, literature evangelism, and media ministry, to name some of these contexts.

It also overlooks that church endorsement is also demonstrated through church creden-

tials other than ordination. The amendment presents no evidence that it is biblically based or informed by the writings of Ellen White; in fact, it seems to disregard Joel's description of the latter rain on the remnant church with a liberal and indiscriminating outpouring of God's Spirit on his people, young and old, male and female.

The amendment disregards the transforming power of Christ that equips all for ministry by erasing the oppressive distinctions of class, race, and gender that Paul describes in Galatians 3:28. This amendment would disqualify some otherwise qualified candidates who have demonstrated spiritual leadership in chaplaincy, Adventist education, the ministry of healing, or other contexts. This amendment might even disqualify some scholars with earned doctorates in biblical studies or biblical languages teaching in a seminary that prepares ministers.

This amendment would disqualify some university college presidents who faithfully nurture the collegiate flock and demonstrate spiri-

tual leadership and administrative skill. This amendment would also categorically disqualify all women in ministry.

I would prefer to continue to allow the Nominating Committee to consider the totality of a presidential candidate's qualifications and giftedness by God.

The spiritual needs of the worldwide church vary, and each president has brought his own unique experience to those needs. This amendment would constrain a full deliberation by the Nominating Committee. For these reasons, I move to refer this back to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to consider a revision to read, "The General Conference president shall be an ordained or credentialed employee of experience."

Thank you.



LAWRENCE T. GERATY: I rise to speak against this proposal because it seems to me that it makes a mockery of the two resolutions we voted over the weekend: the resolutions on the Holy Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It

seems to me that one will look in vain in those sources for authorization to exclude women from leadership positions in the church.

This morning, we had an excellent paper on leadership from Angel Rodríguez. On pages 55 and 56 of "Profiling Adventist Leadership," he talked about the importance of inclusion in several matters, including gender.

We all recognize that it is unlikely that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will elect a female president, but why vote a policy that from the beginning excludes more than half of our membership? This is telling God that even if he calls another Ellen White our church will not recognize her leadership.

Remember that in Christ there is no male or female, so why should it not be the same in this church that we love? I appeal to the delegates to reject this exclusionary policy. Let us stand for the inclusion that has been advocated in our leadership sessions. Let us not tie God's hands to bring into leadership those whom he will.

Thank you.

GUILLERMO MAGANA: I also agree with Dr. Geraty and speak in opposition of the amendment. I am going to come at it from the youth perspective. I attend Andrews University, and we have a fine seminary there.

There are a lot of students that would be great once they become ordained; however, there are also other students who are not in the seminary but are in other differ-

ent majors, and they would make fine General Conference presidents down the road if they would choose to do so.

I think this is just narrowing down the scope of those that would wish to pursue this or what persons God has in his plan. It would be like saying, in the political arena, that one has to be a lawyer in order to run for president of the United States.

So I speak in opposition of the motion.



ALVIN KIBBLE: Mr. Chairman, I stood earlier to express my approval and my affirmation of the strategic plan that had been presented before the assembly... Within that plan were three

strategic values that we also voted and approved of, those being that we value growth, that we value quality of life, and that we value unity.

Previously when I stood, it was for the purpose of asking how we were going to translate those key values throughout the world Church and within the divisions that make up the world body. Unless or until we have clear intentional targets, those values simply become wonderful sentiments.

Mr. Chairman, it is noticeable that right after approving that wonderful strategic plan and those core values we would propose to take an action that would strongly strike at the inclusion of all genders in the selection of the leadership of our world church. It is for this reason that I would appeal that we reconsider the former action in recognition of the value of unity, and that we continue to pursue clearly a definition of what that value means in our operation and practice.



PATRICIA MUTCH: Mr. Chairman, It's my understanding from the presentation of this item that the rationale that caused the committee to present it to us is that it needed to be aligned with other parts of

the constitution or bylaws that restrict leadership in other levels of the church organization to ordained ministers.

I would like not only to speak against this item, but also to call into question the wisdom of those other items that this was intended to be aligned with. I believe that God



made the human being in two forms, male and female. And research on the brain as well as evidence from leadership around the world today shows that he gifted both forms of the human species with abilities and wisdom and capacity.

I speak against this motion.

The motion passed.

During a report on the Challenge of Missions



MICHAEL L. RYAN: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had the biblical instruction to take the gospel of Jesus to the world. And as we look around the world, we recognize that it is made up of different cultures, different peoples, different languages, and different customs. But the Bible is clear: we are to be the salt of the earth, and we are called to mingle with people. We are called to know their joys, their cares, their needs, and their fears.

It brings us to a very important question. How does the Church interact with society?

I just want to make a very quick review, if I can, of some of the challenges, some of the cares, some of the huge concerns, of the global family. At least 1.1 billion people live in extreme poverty; there is a strong possibility that that number has greatly increased. The prevalence of hunger can be as high as 30 percent in some regions of the world.

Twelve million American children experience hunger each year. Up to 70 percent of rural areas in some regions of the world lack access to good sanitation. Also, at the end of 2003, AIDS left 15 million children orphans. The illiteracy rate of the world is 18.3 percent.

When we come to a General Conference session, we hear reports, and I praise the Lord for these reports. Great things have been done. This church is one whose membership is growing at a rapid rate, and I praise the Lord for that, but there are certain issues that we need to be honest about. How does the Church score when it comes to interacting with society?

Surveys indicate that less than 20 percent of the Adventist Church is making an impact in their community, or interacting with their community. Among churches in North America, community service and ministry were priorities in only 15 percent of churches.

A healthy church must be active in relating with society, and it must first listen to the needs of the community. It has been called to reach and then respond proactively to meet those needs.

Let us turn to the Bible, and we are very familiar with what I would consider to be a biblical mandate. It says in John, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NKJV).

We can turn also to James, and there it is recorded, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27 NKJV).

Also, in the Gospel of Matthew is a most dynamic and touching parable: "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me'" (Matt. 25:33-36 NKJV).

These are those who are welcomed to the kingdom... Today I think lack of community involvement is a serious problem.

CYNTHIA TUTSCH: I think that the underreported story in the Adventist Church today is Ellen White's involvement in social issues as well as the involvement of early Adventist pioneers in social activism. I think that as we look for ways to be involved with the community in social issues we will better capture the vision of our pioneers and be more able to finish the work.

GUILLERMO MAGANA: I am a student from Andrews University. The Church has done a wonderful job in certain areas, but not so in others.

The speaker spoke about mingling with other people, but we do not mingle very well with those of other faiths. I see many youth who are afraid to mingle with other people who are not in the Church. While we are young we need to make friends other than Adventists, because that's the only way we are going to be able to preach the Word to others.

Finally, I have read that 70 percent of the church members are under the age of thirty, yet there are only thirty-four delegates here who are under the age of thirty.

During a report from the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics:

BERT HALOVIK: As we reflect upon our statistical growth during the past half century, I believe it is the God-given spirit of care for the needy of the world that helps account

for our remarkable growth. We began this half century with 972,000 members in 1954, 50 years ago. And our membership at the end of 2004 was 13,936,932, almost 14 million.

There is a very sobering side to this subject. Although more than 5 million new believers joined our community during the past quinquennium, more than 1.4 million left our community. The bottom line for this quinquennium is that for every 100 accessions, more than 35 others decided to leave. It meant that while 2,765 joined us each day, 821 left.

Our net growth was only 1,641 daily, with a resulting annual growth rate of 4.9 percent, the lowest since the 1960-1964 period.

During a discussion on apostasy:

DANIEL CHAIJ: I have a couple of recommendations specifically addressed to the field that I represent, which is the North American Division. We have heard of the high percentage of our youth that leave the church. I feel that the ministry to our children and youth is just as important as it is to the adults that we try to reach.

Now, the elementary and academy enrollment in our schools in North America has been going down. This is particularly because our parents don't want to send their children to boarding school.

We have, therefore, right now in North America a redundancy of academies and colleges. If we were to sell some of these properties and establish an endowment fund so that more of our children could go to the elementary schools that we have, we would lose less of them later in life.

That has been my observation and my experience. And I think that we would be doing a very important ministry that is just as important to save the children in our families as to save new converts.

I would propose that some serious consideration be made on this subject. I know that it goes against the established historical tradition, but we have too many boarding academies and colleges, and we need more elementary children in our schools.

Thank you.

Alexander Carpenter, who worked on special projects at *Spectrum*, helped represent the magazine at Saint Louis.

"My reason nourishes my faith and my faith my reason."
—Norman Cousins

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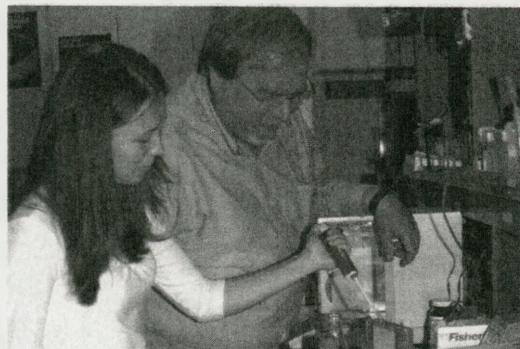
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