

the Adventist Woman

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Annual Council Discusses Ordination - Again

Meeting in Annual Council session in Washington, D.C., during October, 1984, the General Conference delegates considered the role of women in gospel ministry in response to a request from the Columbia Union Conference. Earlier the Executive Committee of the Potomac Conference had voted by large majority to ask the Annual Council to allow women who had ministerial training, were serving as associate pastors, and who had been ordained as local elders, to baptize those whom they had led into a decision for Christ. Already the three women

pastors in the Potomac Conference have performed baptisms.

The Annual Council decided that the question of ordaining women pastors should be re-examined. To study the matter further, a commission of about 40 members, representing all the world divisions, will meet in March, 1985, to agree on a course of action to be recommended to the Spring Meeting. That recommendation will be taken up at the Summer, 1985, General Conference Session in New Orleans.

Presidents of several overseas divisions

have been reported as saying that they do not view the issue as one that can be clearly settled on theological grounds. It is said that these leaders desire to have the whole church involved in deciding whether women should be ordained, even if in some areas of the world such a practice may be impossible because of cultural conditions.

In order to inform our readers about the background and events leading to the current status of the ordination of women in the SDA Church both as local elders and as pastors, this issue of *The Adventist Woman* attempts

to provide historical data and recent information as gleaned from various Council reports. In addition we offer a few glimpses into "behind-the-scenes" activities at Annual Council as they pertain to the issue of the role of women in the Adventist Church.

We Heard It at Annual Council



G.C. Vice-president C.E. Bradford

"... I do crave the sympathy and understanding of the World Church. I'm appealing to the World Church to attempt to understand the dynamics of what is going on here in North America... We have required women to meet all the requirements and they have done so and they have been serving alongside men who have been their classmates. Consider how these dear women feel as they work with their peers who have been ordained... Where there are two or three, two are taken and the one is left... Consider that by your actions of the last ten years you have brought this to pass. A conference president following the action of 1973 and 1976 takes on a person... and then there seems to be a rule that prevents the full exercise of ministry." (C. E. Bradford, Vice-president for North America)

"I'm thankful for the committee system and I want you to know that we practice the system fully in Potomac... Our committee voted to permit baptism only after intense counsel. I've never to this day heard question one about the five men—all discussion has been about the three women... This is not a Potomac problem. This is a problem that affects all of us." (Ronald Wisbey, President, Potomac Conference)

"... leadership from the World Church must be represented in major decisions that have international significance." (Bekele Heye, President, East Africa Division)

"I rise to give support for the motion but I am struggling with some assumptions in the recommendation... How much unity is required? Does unity demand unison?... This vote, or any other, should not force others to follow suit." (Dr. Calvin Rock, President, Oakwood College)

"It is important to have a balanced representation from the world field... I am opposed to special interest groups, but not opposed to the ordination of women. Let us move forward..." (W. C. Scragg, President, Australasian Division)

"In Africa we have women in the ministry that may not have degrees from Andrews or any other institution. If we take this action for North America, next year we may have the same request from Africa." (Elder Dennis K. Bassara, President, East Africa Union Mission)

"The decision of 1985 should not be definitive and accepted worldwide... We need to remember that God has times in which... there is no model on which to act. A new occasion teaches new duties... The issue of Jew nor Greek was settled by the church in the first century A.D. It took 1800 years to settle the slavery issue. In the 20th century we need to resolve male nor female. We must not close the doors... Let us not walk backward into the future." (W. Duncan Eva, retired GC Vice-president)

"If the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy says go ahead and add to the long role of what ladies do in the church, then so be it... If it was a mistake to encourage ladies in the ministry, I assume my share of responsibility... It has been a mistake to prolong this... We need to deal with the whole issue now." (Robert Pierson, retired GC President)

"Some in the North American Division feel that the world field has been holding them back and that is not true... Don't be afraid of the world field, be afraid of yourselves. In the last few days I have heard more negative statements from North American leaders on this matter... One of our two representatives will be a lady—already an ordained elder... Let each division move as it wishes, to implement." (Elder G.J. Christo, President, Southern Asia Division)



G.C. President Neal C. Wilson

"I must say to you that most of the documentation we have says that neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy provides for or prohibits ordination. Is it safe to base a decision of this kind on the silence of the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy? The majority of scholars agree that neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy prohibits or provides for ordination [of women]... Perhaps we did go too far in 1976, but can we go back now? We have created some problems for ourselves and we ought to face them. We cannot remain where we are." (Neal C. Wilson, President, General Conference)

We Read It in the Review

Is the evidence for or against baptism by nonlicensed persons overwhelming? Probably not. But there are reports from around the world that things are happening on a limited scale. The following excerpts from the *Adventist Review* seem to indicate that baptisms by laypersons have occurred and continue to do so outside the North American Division. Other reports indicate that women are heavily involved in evangelism around the world field.

For example, in the November 22, 1984, issue, Victor Cooper reported on church growth in China. According to that report, in one part of south China, 250 candidates were baptized in one service as the result of one woman's work. Cooper also reported that an Adventist who visited relatives was asked to speak to people at a gathering in the community. He spoke once and was invited to speak again. After the third sermon in one day, he was so hoarse that he invited the people to listen to a cassette. Before he left that place, he had baptized 60 people.

Fred E. Hernandez, communication director for the Inter-American Division, described the Festival of the Laity II held in Jamaica.

Among the delegates were several outstanding laywomen who are active in public evangelism. One of them, Daisy Black, has conducted 11 campaigns and baptized 185 people. Nelly Thomas, from the region of the Davis Indians in Guyana, has conducted three series of meetings in the Akawaio dialect and baptized 20 persons. Another layman from Jamaica told how he and his wife brought 311 new members to the church as the result of their public evangelism.*

To close his report, he wrote: "It was thrilling to listen to these laymen and laywomen tell of their victories in preaching Christ and hear of their plans to do even more." (*Adventist Review*, November 15, 1984)

In an article titled "Why Inter-America Baptizes So Many People," J.R. and Marie Spangler of the General Conference wrote: "there is neither male nor female distinction in the soul-winning program of Inter-America. We were particularly impressed with several young businesswomen who had brought scores of people to Christ." (*ibid.*)

*Items quoted from the *Adventist Review* are used by permission.

Historical Perspectives: How We Got to

The subject of ordination of women is not new to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. More than 100 years ago a resolution proposed at the General Conference session of 1881 provided for ordination of women. The *Review and Herald* of December 20, 1881, reported that at the fifth meeting of that session held at 10 A.M. on December 5, the following recommendation was proposed and discussed:

Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

This was discussed by J.O. Corliss, A.C. Bourdeau, E.R. Jones, D.H. Lamson, W.H. Littlejohn, A.S. Hutchins, D.M. Canright, and J.N. Loughborough. The recommendation was referred to the General Conference Committee.

A Mystery

What happened to this action remains a mystery to this day, since no one has yet found any record that the General Conference Committee ever acted on the resolution. Nor is there record of a negative response from Ellen G. White. Is it possible that she had no counsel to offer on what would seem to be such an important subject?

Apparently Mrs. White was not opposed to women serving in the gospel ministry. Note the following quotations.

There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God. (*Evangelism*, p. 472)

Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work, should not be bound down to mechanical work. (8T, pp. 229, 230)

It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God. (6T, p. 322)

In 1895 Ellen White suggested ordaining women to ministries for which they are qualified.

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. (EGW, *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895)

Women Licensees in the Late Nineteenth Century

During the latter years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century several women were granted ministerial licenses by the denomination. Dr. Caro, a woman dentist in New Zealand who attended to Ellen White's needs, held a ministerial license in the early 1890's. Mrs. White affirmed this woman's position when she wrote:

Sister Caro not only does her business, but she has a ministerial license and bears many burdens of their church at Napier. She speaks to the people, is intelligent and every way capable. She supports her three sons—two in Battle Creek, and one in England who is studying law. (Ms. 22, 1893)

Other women who held ministerial licenses include Mrs. Minnie Sype-Attebery, Mrs. Jes-

sie W. Curtis, and Anna Lo, during the 1930s and 1940s. Mrs. E.B. Lane was a highly acclaimed preacher during the nineteenth century. Ms. Welch of Massachusetts and Mary Walsh also held ministerial licenses. In 1898 the General Conference Committee granted a ministerial license to Mrs. S.M.I. Henry. According to the minutes of the General Conference Committee of March 30, 1898,

The Secretary called up the question of ministerial license to Mrs. S.M.I. Henry. Several remarked that it was their judgment that she should receive a ministerial license, which would be more in keeping with her line of work. A motion prevailed to grant her such recognition from the General Conference.

There is no record to indicate that any of these women were ever ordained. However, they were obviously held in high esteem by those who issued the ministerial licenses to them, for such licenses were not issued unless the recipient had proven to be capable of spiritual leadership.

A Historical Gap

There seems to be a historical gap between the 1940s and the 1970s where the role of women in the ministry is concerned, though there are references to Bible Workers. After the Great Depression and most certainly after the conclusion of World War II, historical references to the role of women in the ministry all but disappear. The number of women in church administrative positions also declined significantly. Church records and periodicals, with the exception of the *SDA Yearbook*, are silent on the subject until the early 1970s. (See Table.)

In the early 1970s, Loma Linda University Church added Peggy Hempe to its staff as a "parish worker." Mrs. Hempe's responsibilities included visiting new interests, conducting group Bible studies and premarital workshops, counseling divorced persons, and sponsoring activities for singles. Still on the pastoral staff at Loma Linda today, Mrs. Hempe is considered an associate pastor. Dr. Josephine Benton joined the staff of Sligo church in Takoma Park, Maryland, in August, 1973, and was given the title Associate Pastor. Her ministry to Sligo ended in 1979 when she was asked to assume the position of pastor at the Rockville, Maryland, church. In 1982, Dr. Benton resigned from the ministry to begin full-time seminary classwork.

1973 G.C. Committee on Role of Women

A General Conference Committee action of July 19, 1973, established an ad hoc committee on the role of women in the church. Appointed as members of that committee were W.J. Hackett, Chairman; Gordon M. Hyde, Secretary; Marcella Anderson, Josephine Benton, C.E. Bradford, Louise Carcich, Raoul Dederen, Delbert Dick, N.R. Dower, "Louis" Mae Franz, Maybelle Vandermark-Goransson, Madelyn Halde-man, Gerhard Hasel, Frank Holbrook, J.C. Kozel, Malcolm Maxwell, Leona Running, Alice Sharman, Betty Stirling, Ethel Young, Kit Watts, E.E. Zinke, and a young woman from a regional conference.

Annual Council Actions

The ad hoc committee met September 16-29, 1973, at Camp Mohaven in Ohio. A report of that meeting was presented to the 1973 Annual Council session a few weeks later. The Annual Council voted to "receive" the committee's report, and refer it and selected papers the committee had studied (later known as the Mohaven papers) to the North American Division Committee for Administration, which was asked to share its findings and recommendations with the President's Executive Advisory before the 1974 Annual Council.

The 1973 Annual Council agreed with the committee's emphasis on "the priesthood of all believers and the necessity of involving the

total resources of the church for the rapid completion of the gospel commission," and the "primacy of the married woman's role in the home and family." It also agreed "that continued study be given to the theological soundness of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination," and "that in areas receptive to such action, there be continued recognition of the appropriateness of appointing women to pastoral-evangelistic work, and that the appropriate missionary credentials/licenses be granted them."

At the 1974 Annual Council session, that body voted to reaffirm the "priesthood of all believers," "the primacy of the married woman's role in the home and family," but because a survey of world divisions revealed "the time is not ripe nor opportune, therefore, in the interest of the world unity of the church, no move be made in the direction of ordaining women to the gospel ministry." The Council also decided to "request the President's Executive Advisory to arrange for a continuing study of the theological and practical implications of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry."

At the same meeting, it was determined to request the President's Executive Advisory to study further the election of women to local church offices such as elder, which require ordination.

Leadership Roles for Women—1975 Spring Council

The 1975 Spring Council reviewed the role of women in the church once again and voted:

That we agree that potential leadership roles, on all levels of administration not requiring ordination to the gospel ministry, be open to suitable qualified women whose home and family responsibilities make this possible.

That the way be opened for women elected to serve as deaconesses in our churches to be ordained to this office and that the Church Manual Committee be requested to give study to a statement of the qualifications of deaconesses and suggestions in regard to a suitable ordination service.

That the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordination of women to the office of local elder. . .

That we recognize that the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church provides precedents for women to fill roles of leadership. However, on the matter of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry we believe that the world church is not yet ready to move forward. Therefore, until this question becomes clearer we recommend that every endeavor be made to use women in the numerous positions many of them are well qualified to fill.

That we further recognize the considerable contribution that women have made to the church as Bible Instructors and in other soul-winning capacities, and recommend that where Bible Instructors or other women with suitable qualifications and experience are able to fill ministerial roles, they be assigned as assistant pastors, their credentials being missionary license or missionary credential.

Women as Local Elders

Thus the General Conference acknowledged that women were being ordained as local church elders. (Elder William Quigley and Elder Cree Sandefur, presidents of Potomac and Columbia Union Conferences respectively, had ordained Dr. Josephine Benton as an elder of the Brotherhood Church in Washington, D.C., in 1972, probably the first instance of ordination of a woman as a local church elder.)

Even though much discussion had been generated within the various church councils and committee sessions since 1973, the 1975 General Conference session did not deal with

Summary of search made in *SDA Yearbook* starting with 1904 for names of women listed as "Licentiate" or in the later years as "Licensed Ministers". The search was limited to the United States and Canada except in one case where a listing was noted by chance for China. Starting with 1910 the search was made every fifth year.

1904
New York Conf. Mrs. Lulu Wightman
So. Dakota Conf. Bertha E. Jorgensen
Iowa Conf. Mrs. G.R. Hawkins
Oklahoma Conf. Minnie Sype
Arizona Conf. Mrs. J.E. Bond

1910
General Conference Mrs. H.H. Haskell
Central Union Conf. Mrs. Lulu Wightman
Nebraska Conf. Pearl Field and Mrs. Ura Spring
Iowa Conf. Mrs. G.R. Hawkins and Mrs. Minnie Sype
No. Dakota Conf. Mrs. Bertha Jorgensen

1915
General Conference Mrs. H.H. Haskell
Iowa Conf. Mrs. Minnie Sype

1920
Greater New York Conf. Emme Wells
Missouri Conf. Mrs. E.F. Hawkins
Iowa Conf. Mrs. Minnie Sype
No. Dakota Conf. Mina Panasuk
No. California Conf. Mrs. Ella H. Osborne

1925
Illinois Conf. Mrs. E. Flo Hawkins
Western Washington Conf. Mrs. Minnie Sype
No. California Conf. Mrs. Ella H. Osborne
East China Union Mission Mrs. B. Miller

1930
Oregon Conf. Pearl Stafford
No. California Conf. Mrs. Ella H. Osborne
So. California Conf. Carol Bond
No. Texas Conf. Mrs. Beulah Langdon and Mrs. H. Eder

1935
none listed

1940
So. Union Conf. Honorary
Licentiate Mrs. M. Sype—Attebery

1945
East Penn. Conf. Mrs. Jessie Curtis
So. Union Conf. Honorary
Licentiate Mrs. M. Sype—Attebery

1950
East Penn. Conf. Mrs. Jessie W. Curtis

1955
East Penn. Conf. Mrs. Jessie W. Curtis
No. Pacific Union Conf.
Honorary Mrs. Minnie S. Crippin

1960
Central Union Conf.
Honorary Mrs. W.H. Andersen
Potomac Conf. Mrs. Edna J. Cardey and Mary Saxton
Pacific Union Conf. Mary E. Walsh
Georgia-Cumberland Mrs. Marye Burdick and Mrs. Lucia H. Lee
Kentucky-Tenn. Conf. Mrs. Freda Ford
Mrs. Emma Phillips
Mrs. J.W. Wilhelm

1965
Central Union Conf.
Honorary Mrs. W.H. Anderson
Potomac Mrs. Edna J. Cardey
Mrs. Lois Mays
Mrs. Julia Ross

Pacific Union Conf. Mary E. Walsh

1970
Columbia Union
Honorary Mrs. Edna J. Cardey and Mrs. Jessie Curtis
Potomac Conf. Mrs. Lois Mays
Kentucky-Tenn. Conf. Mrs. Harry Weckham and Mrs. Phil Neal

1975
Ontario Conf. Clare Yauchzie
Central Union
Honorary Mrs. W.H. Anderson
Potomac Mrs. Josephine Benton
Pacific Union Conf. Mary E. Walsh

Where We Are

the issues of ordination of women either as pastors or officers in the local church setting. When J.A. McMillan, a delegate-at-large suggested that "... we should, at least, in the light of a definite statement from the Spirit of Prophecy recognize that women who are called to be deaconesses" should be ordained as such, W.J. Hackett responded:

We've had special committees studying it and we are continuing to study it. . . . The church has not yet come to a conclusion on this item, but we are glad for the feedback that we are getting from this world session so that we can proceed with our study in the light of the consensus that may arise here at this meeting.

A Report to the Church

In an article published in the *Review and Herald*, October 28, 1976, Gordon M. Hyde, then Director of the Biblical Research Institute reported to the church on the subject "The Ordination of Women." Hyde indicated that the Biblical Research Institute had conducted several studies during "the past five years" and that resulting papers had "provided the basis for consideration of the subject at several of the recent Annual and Spring councils. . . ." Hyde reviewed the action of Councils that appeared to accept the ordination of women as deaconesses and local church elders, but continued to withhold ordination to the gospel ministry because "the world field should be united in approving such a step." He further stated:

Some might be in favor of women as ministers as long as they were not ordained. It would seem very hard to explain any kind of Biblical principle for such a view. If God has called a woman, and her ministry is fruitful, why should the church withhold its standard act of recognition? Would it be just because the candidate is a female? . . . If some earnest, godly women indicate that the Lord is calling them to the ministry, surely the church will want to give them respectful and prayerful consideration.

At the 1976 Annual Council, a change in terminology to the North American Division Working Policy appears to have eliminated sex distinction as a barrier to ordination. Whereas the policy had read "Inasmuch as ordination to the ministry is the setting apart of the man to a sacred calling. . .", the term man was changed so that the revision read "Ordination to the ministry is the setting apart of the worker to a sacred calling. . ." (Italics supplied.)

Elder Robert H. Pierson reported at the Spring Session in 1977 that the role of women in the church was "under continuing study" and that a report would be presented at Annual Council later that year. Once again the world field was polled and presented a negative response. Therefore, it was decided that the issue should not be presented at Annual Council and should not be considered again until 1980.

However, at the 1977 Annual Council, it was voted "to adopt the term 'Associates in Pastoral Care' to identify persons who are employed on pastoral staffs but who are not in line for ordination." Such individuals were to receive missionary licenses/credentials.

Elder Pierson made this statement: Any position in the Seventh-day Adventist Church not requiring ordination to the gospel ministry is open to women who are members of the church. . . . For several years this subject has been under review by church leaders and theologians from most lands, both male and female. Currently we find no inspired evidence supporting the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. As a church we must move forward unitedly on such an important matter. Thus far all divisions of the world church, including North America, feel that we are not ready to make this move.

First Women Sponsored to Seminary

A 1979 Annual Council action pertaining to the North American Division made it possible for Bible Instructors and Associates in Pastoral Care to become eligible for "special internship allotments to be distributed by NADCA" in 1980. Thus Southeastern California Conference hired Becky Sue Lacy, and Upper Columbia Conference hired Collette Crowell, both theology graduates of Walla Walla College. Both women were fully sponsored to the SDA Theological Seminary after the usual internship. In addition, Frances Wiegand and Janice Daffern were hired by the Potomac Conference in 1979. In 1982 Marsha Frost and her husband, James, graduated from Andrews University with M.Div. degrees and were called to be associate pastors of the Capital Memorial Church in Washington, D.C. James is currently pastor of the Arlington, Virginia, church while Marsha pastors the Fairfax, Virginia, church. (James was recently ordained, Marsha was not.)

Among the changes to the North American Division Working Policy in 1980 was the provision for several classes of denominational workers to receive Commissioned Minister Credentials/Licenses. The change was made so that these workers could qualify for certain tax benefits already available to licensed and ordained ministers. The rationale was that these individuals were serving in a ministerial or administrative capacity and ought to receive the same benefits. Among those included were associates in pastoral care. (It is important to note that this change in designation was made only in the North American Division and did not apply throughout the world field.)

After what Conference President Ronald Wisbey calls "intense counsel" with certain union and General Conference officers, Potomac Conference Executive Committee took an action early in 1984 permitting eight local church elders to perform the rite of baptism. Three of those granted this privilege were women associates in pastoral care who subsequently conducted baptismal services in their churches. Although little discussion opposing the act resulted in two of the churches, the third church experienced what might be called trauma. At this point the General Conference Officers met with Potomac President Ronald Wisbey and Columbia Union Conference President Wallace Coe to discuss the question of authority for the decision. Both men asserted that the Potomac Conference Executive Committee had carefully studied the *Church Manual* and, after consultation with certain General Conference officers, concluded that they were in a position to move ahead with the decision. General Conference officers indicated that there had been some misunderstanding in



Columbia Union Conference President Wallace Coe

communication and asked Potomac's Executive Committee to rescind its action. When Elder Wisbey met with Potomac's Executive Committee, that group affirmed the action and on May 16 voted to grant ministerial licenses to the three women, all of whom had seminary training and pastoral experience comparable to the internship served by all seminary graduates before ordination. However, the committee action called for a delay in implementation until after the 1984 Annual Council to give the General Conference officers the opportunity to discuss the matter more fully.

Church Policy at Issue

On August 16, General Conference officers met with the Potomac Executive Committee. After much discussion, and an indica-

Glossary of Terms Pertaining to Credentials

Ordained Minister: Issued to a pastor who has completed an internship of three to five years.

Licensed Minister: Issued to a pastor who is serving an internship and is to be ordained.

Credentialed Commissioned Minister: Issued to an administrator, associate in pastoral care, Bible Worker, or other worker who is not to be ordained, but who has served for a period equivalent to an internship; includes some hospital chaplains and administrators.

Licensed Commissioned Minister: Same as Credentialed but issued to a worker who has not yet completed service equivalent to an internship.

Credentialed Missionary: Issued to educators, secretaries, support staff, and nonelected personnel who have served for a period equivalent to an internship.

Licensed Missionary: Same as Credentialed Missionary but issued to a worker who has not yet completed service equivalent to an internship.

Credentialed Literature Evangelist: Issued to a literature evangelist who has served for a period equivalent to an internship.

Licensed Literature Evangelist: Issued to a literature evangelist who has not yet completed service equivalent to an internship.



Columbia Union delegates J. Fowler, W. Coe, G. Woodruff study the issues.

tion by General Conference personnel that the real issue was not ordination of women, but rather the authority of the local conference to establish church policy, Potomac Conference President Ronald Wisbey volunteered on behalf of the committee to table the May action providing for ministerial licenses to be issued to the three women pastors. General Conference officers agreed to consider a three-point recommendation (later presented in writing through the Columbia Union Conference president) that asked for the following:

1. Women with theological and seminary training who are employed by a conference as associate in pastoral care and are ordained as local church elders should be permitted to baptize.

2. The policy determining requirements for ministerial licenses should be amended to make it possible for qualified women to receive such licenses.

3. The General Conference should renew its study on the issue of ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

General Conference officers in a subsequent session came to the conclusion that resolving the issue of ordination of women to the ministry would in turn resolve a number of related issues. They therefore decided to proceed with discussion of the issue at the October Annual Council.

Approximately 4½ hours were given to the discussion over a two-day period during the Annual Council session. Elder Neal C. Wilson presented verbally and in writing a summary of action leading to the present-day situation.

The delegates reaffirmed the 1975 Spring Meeting action concerning the ordination of women as local church elders and voted to "advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders." Guidelines were suggested and emphasis was placed on unity within the local church making such a decision.

When discussion turned to the request of the Potomac and Columbia Union Conferences, a recommendation which came from the General Conference Officers was presented. That recommendation was later voted by the delegates without change and called for each division to give study to the issue, then appoint at least two delegates to a special commission to be coordinated by the Biblical Research Institute early in 1985. Out of that meeting will come a report to the 1985 Spring Meeting where recommendations will be prepared for referral to the 1985 General Conference Session at New Orleans. The Biblical Research Institute will be responsible for providing to all General Conference delegates a "balanced summary of the available theological positions" for study before the session begins.

During the discussion, Elder Wilson assured the delegates that the papers prepared for the "Role of Women" Commission that met in 1973 would be available to all delegates to the General Conference session and further stated "We are prepared to make available the documents to anyone who wants them."

As of this writing, the Biblical Research Institute is moving forward with plans for the commission, which is scheduled to meet in Washington, D.C., on March 26. Any queries about the Mohaven papers or the commission meeting should be directed to Dr. George Reid, Director, Biblical Research Institute; General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; 6840 Eastern Avenue, NW; Washington, D.C. 20012.

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Mission Statement

“So God made man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them.”

Genesis 1:27

In God's sight each individual has the potential to make a valuable contribution to our world. It is the purpose of this group of Adventist women to help the individuals in our church reflect more fully the image of God in their relationships to each other in the home, the church, the work setting and in the community.

Through the means of this publication which focuses on the development, discoveries, interests and potential of Christian woman, our goals are:

1) To encourage communication, support and wider understanding among Adventist women in diverse situations.

2) To acquaint the church community at large with Adventist women's potential and achievements.

3) To assist Adventist women in achieving fulfillment in their interpersonal relationships, personal development and relationships to God.

4) To help Adventist women to maximize their options, whatever their age and situation, that they may reflect more fully the image of God.

Backstage at Annual Council

The highlights of the Annual Council Session for 1984 have been recorded elsewhere. But let's take a look at what happened behind the scenes.

SCENE I

This scenario probably began at the Women of Mission Conference held at Andrews University in July, when the AAW in business session passed a resolution calling on the General Conference to establish a pilot program that would provide for a five-year period during which those women now serving as Associates in Pastoral Care would be licensed and therefore eligible to perform all the rites of the church, including baptism and marriage ceremonies.

Very soon after that resolution appeared in print, a group of anonymous women began meeting to discuss how they might present “The Other Side.” They gleaned materials from the files of the Biblical Research Institute and elsewhere and prepared an alternate view.

Once their paper was ready, they secured names of delegates to the Annual Council and distributed copies to each person (except Elder Ronald Wisbey of the Potomac conference, who learned of the paper when a colleague called to discuss it with him.) The paper begins:

Currently much pressure is being brought to bear once again upon leadership for the recognition of the equality of women which is perceived by a small minority as not being fully acknowledged in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Association of Adventist Women (started under the aegis of the Association of the Adventist Forums), the Potomac Conference, and the Loma Linda University Church have all joined forces to “push” leadership forward toward the ultimate goal of the ordination of women but doing so by degrees because of considerable opposition following the launching of their current campaign

The majority of the women in the Church are fulfilled and silent over the role of women issue. We basically trust the Lord to guide leadership in the proper way without pressure from us in an organized manner as we feel no need of an organization to promote our cause. However, the pressures have become so great and persistent that the Lord has prompted the majority to speak up.

This paper, entitled “Equally Different—The Other Side,” then presumes to show cause why women in ministry should be content to maintain the status quo—or less. Quoting to some extent from the Spirit of Prophecy, Bernard Ramm of the American Baptist Seminary of the West, Stuart Barton Babage of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Elisabeth Elliot (an author and missionary to Ecuador), the paper also leans heavily on a single Adventist scholar, Arnold V. Wallenkampf. (It is interesting to note that not one scholar from the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary is quoted.) The following quotation is from the Wallenkampf paper:

On December 5, 1881, a resolution was brought before the General Conference, meeting at Battle Creek. It read: “RESOLVED, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill the position, may, with perfect propriety be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.—RH 12-20-1811 The resolution was then referred to the General Conference Committee for implementation. There it apparently died.

If it had been the divine plan that women be ordained to the ministry, then it seems that EGW might possibly have had a vision confirming this resolution and seen to it that it bore fruition. She did this with other proposals that had been brought before the church from time to time. This was not done with the proposal that women be ordained to the ministry.

The paper then offers

One final perspective. Some believe that the secondary role of women is confined to the marriage relationship. However, because of the close correlation between the household of man and the household of God, we feel it is inconsistent with God's divine plan for a Christian woman to fill her secondary role to her husband and then assume a primary role to the men in her congregation.

In their closing statement or appeal, the writers state that the women associates in pastoral care

are trying to force the hand of administration because they have taken the course and met all the prescribed requirements, claiming it isn't fair. Administration was fair with them but are they being fair with administration? We feel very sensitive about that which is sacred being negotiated in the caustic spirit of social activism. . . .

We have real concern about proceeding step-by-step in pilot areas. We urge the avoidance of a foot-in-the-door approach that attempts to commit us to the ultimate goal of ordination. . . .

Therefore it is our plea that no action be taken to alter the present policies regarding this issue until another very thorough study can be made of all the facets of the issue, prayerfully seeking God's guidance by His Holy Spirit on the role of women. . . .

We feel the ordination of women is not only divisive but is also unBiblical according to God's divine ordering of all things in His universe.

The paper is signed:

THIS COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN PRODUCED AND FINANCED BY COMMITTED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST WOMEN FROM THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AND BERRIEN SPRINGS AREAS REPRESENTING THE MAJORITY OF SDA WOMEN IN NORTH AMERICA

SCENE II

Shortly after the Annual Council session began, delegates found in their mailboxes a plain white envelope from an unknown source which contained a brief response to “The Other Side.” Several quotes from that response are presented here for the reader's consideration.

The claim to represent a majority of Adventist women may or may not be true. No survey or other data is advanced to support the claim. Furthermore, even if it is true, this does not in itself decide the issue.

The strong reliance on Arnold Wallenkampf's paper was necessary because almost all of the church's Bible scholars, including such conservative voices as Gerhard Hasel and R. Dederen, come (*sic*) different conclusions.

Contrary to Wallenkampf, we are not arguing for the “complete equality” of men and women. Much of what he presents is simply his assertion that the Scriptures do or do not mean such and such. Distinctions between men and women are certainly recognized in Scripture and nature. This does not

A Statement of Belief by the Association of Adventist Women

We endorse the proposal that Seventh-day Adventist women who believe themselves to be called to the gospel ministry receive the same opportunities as men for education, pastoral development, testing of their gift, and validation by ordination to the clergy.

We found our position on the following bases:

1. In God's sight, all persons are His children on an equal basis (Galatians 3:28) and thus have equal access to the Spirit's gifts, though He may bestow these in various ways among either men or women.

2. The Scriptures teach that since Calvary, access to God is directly open to all believers; thus, distinct titles and roles are to be bestowed in harmony with the evident gifts of the spirit, and do not represent privileged status of any social class or race or sex. Given adequate preparation for roles, any person whose gift is demonstrated should have equal access to the recognitions required to validate that gift for service.

3. Consideration by an individual for marriage and parenthood should be prayerful and extensive. Not all are called to marital and parental responsibilities, and singleness should have support and understanding within the body of Christ, since it is both scriptural and productive of unique services not possible to others.

4. Among those men and women who choose marriage and parenthood, these responsibilities should take precedence over all other responsibilities to mankind, including employment and church service. We endorse the affirmation of the primacy of the responsibilities of the married woman with children to maternal activities in the home framework, recognizing that quality of time spent with children cannot substitute completely for significant amounts of time for parenting. Such parenting responsibilities are particularly crucial in the early childhood years. Women in ministry who have such responsibilities should be models of motherhood just as men in ministry should be models of fatherhood.

5. Encouragement and support for families should be provided by the church through ministry including those persons whose marital and parental roles may have been ill-considered, bereaved by untimely death, handicapped by debilitating physical or emotional illness, or otherwise injured or destroyed by the consequences of sin. Such support will require unique skills available in particular strength through the ministry of women to women, youth, and children.

6. Heeding the call of Christ to all His followers to witness to the gospel, oppor-

mean that women are not being chosen by the Holy Spirit to receive the spiritual gift of ministry.

[The] “feeling” that it is inconsistent for woman to fill a secondary role to her husband in the home and a “primary” role to men in her congregation is just that—a feeling. Others feel differently.

Those who write this document do not see these women as honestly engaged in the gospel ministry. They see them as simply pushing their own professional (and unfeminine) interests. Those who wish to affirm these women in ministry see some of them, at least, as having received a genuine call to ministry, having been gifted with the spiritual gift of ministry, and being denied recognition simply and only because they are women.

The Association of Adventist women neither endorses nor supports these papers and denies responsibility for or affiliation with either of them. This organization does not participate in anonymous ventures. Furthermore, the Association has verified that none of the women pastors in North America had anything to do with the production or distribution of either paper.

tunities for evangelistic outreach which uniquely require the involvement of women ministers should be promoted. Such opportunities include ministry to hospitalized women, women who are chemically dependent, women serving in the Armed Forces, and women whose homes and lives are broken by divorce, separation, grief, rape, incest, and abuse. Such women cannot be adequately ministered to by men, and are blocked from receiving the gospel from Seventh-day Adventists if only men may be ordained.

7. Cultural variation in the international church must affect how the policy of openness to women's ministry is implemented. However, in cultures which are receptive, women should be encouraged to prepare for the ministry if they believe they are so called, and employed as ministers as feasible. In cultures where matriarchal authority is the norm, any ministry which excludes women is offensive and counter-productive to the witness of the church.

Recognizing that the Spirit moves upon the heart as He wills, and that His gifts are for the edifying of the body of Christ in all its multiple parts, we affirm an openness and ready obedience to the expression of the Spirit through the decisions of the corporate body.

We affirm our commitment to obey the exhortation of Paul, in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as opportunity offers, let us work for the good of all, especially members of the household of faith.” (NEB)

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

The Association of Adventist Women is a national organization that sponsors local chapters. Its newsletter, *The Adventist Woman*, is published six times per year.

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