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5 RECOMMENDED, To accept the following report of Role of Women in the
6 Church Committee which met in Washington, DC March 26 to 28, 1985:
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10 ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH COMMITTEE
11 March 26-29, 1985
12 Takoma Park Church Center, Washington, DC
13

14
15 Morning Session
16 March 26, 9:00 a.m.
17

18
19 PRESENT: Neal C Wilson (Ch), George W Reid (Sec), Joan Baldwin,
20 Warren S Banfield, Nancy Bassham, Lowell L Bock,
21 Charles E Bradford, George W Brown, Lance L Butler,
22 Robert H Carter, Gerald J Christo, W T Clark,
23 Charlotte Conway, Shirani D'Alwis, Raoul F Dederen,
24 Jackson Doggette Sr, Dorothy Eddlemon, Joseph Espinosa,
25 Arthur J Ferch, J H Figueroa, Marsha Frost,
26
27 Gerhard F Hasel, Bekele Heye, Charles B Hirsch, Betty
28 Holbrook, Hedy Jemison, William G Johnsson,
29 R J Kloosterhuis, Rolf Kvinge, Rosalee Haffner Lee,
30 W Richard Leshner, Ruben Lessa, Alf Lohne, Earnest E Lutz Jr,
31 Max Martinez, Delores Maupin, A C McClure, E J Murray,
32 J Musvosvi, Aulikki Nahkola, Beatrice Neall, Joseph Ola,
33 Enoch Oliviera, V Norskov Olsen, Jan Paulsen,
34
35 E A Roberts, Angel Rodriguez, Torhild Rom, W R L Scragg,
36 A C Segovia, Delores Slikkers, J Robert Spangler,
37 G Ralph Thompson, Mario Veloso, S Wakabi, Kit Watts,
38 Francis W Wernick, John Wilmott, Ronald M Wisbey, Joao
39 Wolff, Kenneth H Wood, Henry Wright, Jean Zurcher.
40

41
42 Neal C Wilson, Chairman, welcomed the representatives from every
43 division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the study of the
44 ordination of women to the gospel ministry, as authorized by the General
45 Conference Committee (GCC 85-12). He appealed to the delegates, while
46 considering this emotionally charged assignment, to reach Heavenward for
47 the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be careful how they
48 address one another, to remain calm, respectful, prayerful, humble and
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51 Cont
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3 serious as the subject is frankly and openly discussed.

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5 Although there are a large number of delegates from North America,
6 it is recognized that the present issue developed in North America.
7 Diametrically opposed opinions are represented in this group but the
8 committee must be together before an action is taken. The final
9 decision on the subject will be made by the 54th General Conference
10 Session where over 2,200 delegates will represent the worldwide
11 membership.

12
13 Following announcements by George W Reid, Secretary, the Chairman
14 outlined the following daily program:

15
16 8:30 - 11:45 Morning Session
17 1:30 - 5:30 Afternoon Session

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19 (Evening sessions will be held if necessary.)

20
21 The Chairman called upon each division president to introduce the
22 delegates from his division and to tell what means have been used to
23 secure opinions regarding the ordination of women from laymen and church
24 members in their territories.

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26
27 R E C E S S

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30 DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

31
32 The Chairman introduced V Norskov Olsen, Retired President of Loma
33 Linda University, who gave the devotional message.

34
35 V N Olsen spoke on the control factors in decision making under the
36 following main subjects: The order of creation, historical evaluation
37 (political, social and economic pressures which impact on Christianity),
38 the Christian evaluation of the Church, first the kingdom of God, the
39 totality of the Biblical message of evaluating truth--the danger of
40 fragmented theology, ecclesiology, the heart, soul, mind and spirit of
41 the Church as the body of Christ. (The text of the address is
42 attached.)

43
44 The decision-making process in the Church is contrary to that of
45 the world. When a decision is reached through the right process the
46 results will be love, joy and peace.

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48 Neal C Wilson, Chairman
49 George W Reid, Secretary
50 Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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4 Afternoon Session
5 March 26, 1:30 p.m.
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7 PRAYER: Shirani D'Alwis and Henry Wright
8

9 Questionnaires were distributed to the delegates for the purpose of
10 determining the opinion of the group at this time and to assist in
11 identifying areas of priority (copy attached).
12

13 The Chairman listed the following major assertions to be examined
14 in study regarding the ordination of women to the gospel ministry:
15

16 1. Equality in creation. Equality was lost as a result of the
17 fall leading to subordination, submission and headship, but only in
18 domestic relationships in the home, having little if anything to do with
19 the larger relationships within the Church. Through Christ's redemptive
20 act on the cross, He restored the original equality which He had in mind
21 for men and women. Paul confirms this equality in creation in Galatians
22 3:28 as well as restoration of equality in redemption.
23

24 2. Divine ordering. The redemption won at the cross has nothing
25 to do with the concept of headship and subordination. There is a
26 continuing difference in role and function. Galatians 3:28 has nothing
27 to do with dissolution of the original divine ordering.
28

29 3. The majority of Paul's statements aside from Galatians 3:28,
30 (e.g. Romans 10:12, 1 Cor 11:, Col 3:11) concerning relationships
31 between men and women are basically culturally conditioned. What
32 latitude should be given because of this? Does culture change our
33 interpretation of Scripture? Ultimately this could destroy us as a
34 world church.
35

36 4. The 1973 Symposium papers seem to conclude that there is no
37 endorsement and no prohibition in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy
38 regarding the ordination of women, and we confront, therefore, the
39 argument of silence. It is possible to abuse this argument. Very
40 little study of this question has been done since 1973 and those studies
41 left in the minds of many a clear impression that nothing substantive
42 stood in the way of ordaining women. Now, however, the other side of
43 the question is brought to our attention.
44

45 5. Extension of the degree of importance and interpretation we
46 give to the phrase "priesthood of believers."
47

48 6. Church decisions made during the last ten or twelve years. It
49 was felt the time had come to open the way for the ordination of women
50 as local church elders. The next logical step would be the ordination
51 of women to the gospel ministry. We cannot leave things as they are.
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3 We are in an untenable position.

4
5 7. Hermeneutics. There is confused interpretation of the same
6 texts of Scripture.

7
8 The remainder of the afternoon session was devoted to speeches from
9 the floor which are summarized below:

10
11 1. Equality in creation. There is no disagreement regarding the
12 equality of men and women. There is equality before God but a
13 difference in role and function. The relationships of the members of
14 the Godhead constitute a model. The thought was expressed that there
15 was no difference in function between men and women in Eden before the
16 fall. Whenever we raise barriers of any kind in the Church (general
17 areas) we are denying the gospel.

18
19 2. The pastoral call. The question of the source of the call to
20 the gospel ministry was presented. If this is the prerogative of the
21 Holy Spirit, how does the Church respond? Should it not allow the
22 Spirit to be the prime Mover? Is ordination in the Church today an
23 ecclesiastical decision? The Church is not obligated to recognize a
24 person's call to the gospel ministry.

25
26 3. Theology of ordination. The importance of developing a
27 theology of ordination was stressed. Once this could be established
28 there would be a standard by which to evaluate individual candidates.
29 It was pointed out that ordination sometimes has been conferred as a
30 reward for service or because of position. Some can serve just as
31 effectively if they are not ordained.

32
33 4. Divine ordering. Several speakers maintained that the concept
34 of headship and subordination is valid only in the context of the home,
35 therefore does not extend to the Church.

36
37 5. Statements of the Apostle Paul. Galatians 3:28, Romans 10:12,
38 1 Cor 12: Col 3: and other texts are to be understood in a cultural
39 context; however, this should not be applied too loosely.

40
41 6. Service of women. The role of the woman in the home is
42 actually of greatest importance if she is preparing her children for
43 eternity. The Bible cites examples of women in leadership roles but it
44 never mentions that they were ordained to the priesthood or that they
45 were ordained to be deaconesses. The position of a woman being in a
46 higher position than a man because of her role in child guidance was
47 presented and no objection was made to this idea. An appeal was made to
48 open leadership roles to women so they could obtain experience in
49 ministry and become candidates for higher positions. Has lack of
50 ordination become an unwritten barrier in the Church? There should be
51 teamwork in the ministry, a partnership in which not all need to be

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3 ordained (e.g. man and wife). There should be a complementary
4 relationship.

5

6 7. Statements of the Apostle Paul. When he states women should
7 not teach, is this the same manner of teaching that is done today?

8

9 8. The prophetic ministry. Does it take more commitment to be a
10 prophetess or an ordained minister? God chooses one and man the
11 other. It was suggested that more study be given to the prophetic model
12 in the Christian Church. Christ is our High Priest.

13

14 9. Ordination of women as local elders. It was pointed out that
15 the next logical step is the ordination of women to the gospel ministry,
16 but this was never promised to women as associates in pastoral care. It
17 is true, however, that an ordained minister serves a world church and a
18 local elder serves only the local church, and there are also other
19 restrictions to the service of the local elder. The latitude given in
20 the Annual Council action regarding the ordination of women as local
21 elders should not become license encouraging congregationalism.
22 Speakers decried any type of campaigning for ordination by ordained
23 women elders.

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Neal C Wilson, Chairman
George W Reid, Secretary
Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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Morning Session
March 27, 8:30 a.m.

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34 PRESENT K J Mittleider and J W Wilson in addition to those listed
35 at the beginning of the meeting.

36

37 DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

38

39 Marsha Frost, Pastor of the Fairfax church (Virginia), presented
40 devotional thoughts on "the other dimension", unseen angels. Her text
41 was Ephesians 6:10-13--". . . Put on the whole armour of God, that ye
42 may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not
43 against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,
44 against the rulers of the darkness of this world. . . ."

45

46 When Peter relied on self to overcome evil, he was defeated, but he
47 learned the reality of the other dimension (1 Peter 5:6-11) and realized
48 God was the Source of strength. The servant of the prophet Elisha had
49 his eyes opened to see the protecting angels around his master. When we
50 request the help of the other dimension as we share Jesus Christ, our

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3 needs will be graciously supplied.

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5 Torhild Rom and Rolf Kvinge offered prayer.

6

7 Neal C Wilson commented on the results of the questionnaire which
8 was distributed and the valuable insights he gained from the
9 responses. He observed that women have the same differences of opinion
10 as men. He also mentioned that a substantial number indicated they were
11 cautious in expressing their opinions lest their motives be misjudged.
12 The questionnaire revealed areas of indecision and he expressed the hope
13 that a decision would not be called for too soon. He outlined his plan
14 to call for Division reports and to have group interaction.

15

16 Following is a summary of the discussion of the morning session.
17 Although the speakers frequently addressed topics previously discussed,
18 these additional points surfaced:

19

20 Equality in creation. There is no relationship between ordination
21 and the issue of equality and subordination.

22

23 The pastoral call. The Holy Spirit moves not only on the heart of
24 the person but also through the ministry of the Church in affirming and
25 recognizing the call. The Church functions as an instructor.

26

27 Theology of ordination. Ordination merely recognizes the call of
28 God for a person to perform ministry. It is not something sacramental
29 but is a very simple concept. Is it greater to be a minister or to be
30 ordained?

31

32 Divine ordering. The supremacy of man over woman was established
33 prior to the fall. Men are to be protectors, providers and supporters
34 of women and when this is done according to God's plan, women will feel
35 so cherished they will not look to the feminist movement or other
36 liberation movements for recognition. This point needs additional
37 study.

38

39 Service of women. From the Biblical record we find that there was
40 wide participation of women in the work of the Church.

41

42 The prophetic ministry. The priesthood was supported by the tithe
43 but not the prophetic system. The Adventist ministry is related to the
44 priesthood more than a prophetic system.

45

46 Hermeneutics. There are practices in the Church for which we have
47 no specific text but we follow certain principles. Can we declare that
48 certain passages of the Bible are culturally determined and others are
49 not?

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3 Ordination of women as local elders. No one has the right to
4 exercise his views or rights to the detriment of the Body of Christ.
5 The ordination of women local elders has been implemented in some
6 overseas fields with good results. There has been no campaigning for
7 office and those appointed are finding ready acceptance.

8

9 Ordination of women to the gospel ministry. Caution was advised,
10 especially in divisions outside North America. In some of these
11 countries an ordained woman possibly could be accepted if she came from
12 some other culture/country, but an ordained woman must not be forced on
13 another country. Timing is important.

14

15 There must be clear Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy proof of the
16 propriety of ordaining women to the ministry. There is no Biblical
17 record of ordaining women even though many were involved in gospel
18 ministry. We must not move ahead of God. More women than men reject
19 the idea of women as ordained ministers, especially in nonurban areas.
20 It was argued that single parents and women with non-Adventist husbands
21 need the security of a male head in the Church.

22

23 In any decision about the ordination of women to the gospel
24 ministry there must be a strong majority. God never outpaces His people
25 and we should not impose ordination on fields not ready for it. The
26 health of the Body of Christ must be taken into consideration. Keeping
27 the world Church together is a major challenge.

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Afternoon Session
March 27, 1:30 p.m.

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32

33 PRESENT: Calvin B Rock in addition to those already listed.

34

35 PRAYER: A C McClure

36

37 Following is a summary of the discussion of the afternoon session.
38 New points of discussion included:

39

40 The pastoral call. It is wrong if the Holy Spirit calls a woman
41 to be a gospel minister and we refuse ordination because she is not a
42 man. It is the Spirit who calls and who gives gifts. Culture is
43 changing.

44

45 Theology of ordination. In some cultures ordination is a very
46 important service, believed to bestow special virtue, power or grace
47 otherwise unobtainable. There is need for further study of this item.
48 We need to educate church members regarding the nature of ordination.
49 We tend to carry over the priesthood of the Old Testament into New
50 Testament practice, but since Jesus is our High Priest, ordination to

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3 the ministry is of a more simple nature. A minister is to be a servant
4 prepared for his ministry, not predestined. Ordination is not merely an
5 administrative issue but a theological one. Shall we develop a theology
6 of ordination after 130 years? Not unless we are going to introduce new
7 elements in midstream.
8

9 Divine ordering. The creation model provides for the father to be
10 the head of the home. Christ ordained male leadership; so did Paul.
11 More study is needed on this. Does headship subsequent to the fall
12 imply that women cannot be ordained? There is need for tolerance and
13 the realization that even though we are different we are still brethren
14 and sisters.
15

16 Regarding statements of the Apostle Paul, would Paul violate his
17 own mandate?
18

19 Service of women. At the 1975 General Conference Session
20 recognition was given to 12-15 outstanding women for outstanding service
21 to the Church. We are not using the women of the church to their
22 fullest potential. They can be excellent personal workers and team
23 members. We need to open larger doors for women to serve in positions
24 that do not require ordination. We cannot be blind to half the human
25 race.
26

27 Women need not feel inferior because they are not ordained. There
28 is a role for every woman in the Church. "The development of all our
29 powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men." (COL
30 329).
31

32 Speakers expressed regret over the decline of the Bible Instructor
33 work in the Church. Women should be in positions of leadership if they
34 are the best qualified persons that can be found. We should not have a
35 caste system. Women's role has been supplemental. The vital work of
36 the Bible Instructor has been neglected.
37

38 Although there is a need for more Bible Instructors, how can they
39 be placed if we presently actually have an excess of ministers of the
40 gospel who have not been called? Women have been discouraged from
41 entering the Bible Instructor work because they do not feel there is a
42 demand for their services. Financial provision has been made for their
43 training but very few have taken advantage of it. Budgets are needed
44 for employment of Bible Instructors and this will require a reordering
45 of priorities. Few successful evangelists would think of starting a
46 campaign without a good group of Bible Instructors. Young women know it
47 is a wonderful work but it has little standing. We should have a wage
48 parity system.
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Women who work full- or part-time as partners with their minister husbands should be paid, in harmony with the instruction of the Spirit of Prophecy. An Adventist "affirmative action" needs to be instituted. Women should be on the church staffs. Conferences and institutions should be encouraged to hire qualified women. Many doors now are open to women in evangelism and personal ministries. There needs to be opportunity for upward mobility. Women should be in positions of leadership if they are the best qualified persons that can be found. To this point women's role has been supplemental.

Ordination of women as local elders. It is not necessarily true that what is done in one part of the world works against the good of another part. Reluctantly, the 1975 Spring Meeting initiated the idea that under carefully controlled situations we could proceed with the ordination of women as local church elders. The world field had reservations regarding this which were revealed when the matter of ordaining of women church elders was presented. Is there a first class and a second class ordination? Some speakers felt that the action of the 1975 Spring Meeting was hurried and that a subject of such importance should have been presented to an Annual Council. Others maintained that the Lord has been leading in the last 10 or 12 years and if we should turn back, it would be denying His leadership.

Ordination of deaconesses. At the 1975 Spring Meeting it was suggested that deaconesses be ordained and that provision for this be included in the Church Manual. Perhaps only deaconesses in full-time work should be ordained. The subject needs to be restudied.

Ordination of women to the gospel ministry. The young SDA Church was in favor of ordination and E G White must have been aware of such a subcommittee action taken in 1881. The Church will never take the "argument of silence" as conclusive in the matter of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

In other churches some calls have been blocked because the candidate was an ordained woman minister. The ordination of women has brought conflict into other churches, but we have difficulty learning from the experience of others. This matter must be settled without schism. Especially for the sake of the youth, we must know the direction we are taking in this issue.

Ordination is a sacred rite for the world Church and must be accepted everywhere. The Church must remain loyal to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The Church in Africa has not been given sufficient background on this issue to make any decision at present, and it will

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3 demand clear Biblical support. Although in some rural areas women
4 perform the work of the Church, doing everything except baptising and
5 marrying people, the issue of ordination has not arisen.

6

7 The decision on whether or not women should be ordained is tied to
8 whether or not it is a theological issue. From the Biblical perspective
9 there is no essential difference in function between the local church
10 elder and the ordained minister of the gospel. Women have been in
11 leadership positions and have served as evangelists, why can they not be
12 ordained now? Masculinity and ministry are not the same. The ministry
13 is a work of educating and nourishing and we need both fathers and
14 mothers in the Church.

15

16 Ministers receive their authority from the Word, not because they
17 are men. The Spirit of Prophecy teaches that because the medical and
18 evangelistic work should be kept together, if a doctor is a true medical
19 missionary, he is ordained. Should this not also be true of women as
20 physicians? The Church should not be behind the world in recognizing
21 women; however we are not justified in following practices simply because
22 others do them. The Church soon would become accustomed to ordained
23 women ministers.

24

25 Ordination would not make a worker more effective. When young
26 women were encouraged to enter the seminary and take ministerial
27 training we anticipated they would be taken on as members of a pastoral
28 staff. We were not sure of the term, "Associates in Pastoral Care."
29 Women serve in high civil posts (prime minister, etc) and are not
30 ordained.

31

32 We should not yield to cultural pressures and should be careful how
33 we permit ourselves to be manipulated. The issue of women's ordination
34 stems from certain cultural pressures of our society.

35

36 Primacy of the home. This concept was supported. The point was
37 advanced that while women are engaged in Church ministry, the home may
38 fall apart. A woman's sensitivity makes her most suitable for work in
39 the home.

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41 Neal C Wilson, Chairman
42 George W Reid, Secretary
43 Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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Evening Session
March 27, 7:00 p.m.

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Cont
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3 PRAYER: Calvin B Rock

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5 Following is a summary of the discussion of the evening session.

6
7 The pastoral call. Do we really believe God is among us? To what
8 am I called? We must be sure God is calling us to the ministry, and
9 then take it seriously. The ministry of Jesus and of E G White tell us
10 something of the way the Holy Spirit leads.

11
12 Theology of ordination. God's action and man's response. God
13 calls but the Church ordains. God's intervention is the first question
14 to be considered when contemplating ordination. If we do not ordain
15 women it appears that we believe God called (they are given pastoral
16 duties) but we will not confirm the call.

17
18 Statements of the Apostle Paul. It is not a question of ordination
19 but whether women should have any public role in the Church.

20
21 Ordination of women to the gospel ministry. Jesus did not ordain
22 women, but if we had lived in His day, would we have accepted His
23 involvement with women? If we do not confirm the gifts God has given,
24 those gifts will die. All hands will be needed, working together, to
25 finish the work. When Peter visited Cornelius he realized he should not
26 resist God. (Acts 10:45) It was the evidence of God's action that
27 convinced Peter, not theological argument. Having provided for pastoral
28 ministry by women we have set out on the road to ordination for them.
29 We can know when a woman is ready for ordination by applying the same
30 criteria as we do in judging men--their work. They must be employed,
31 brought into the system. They are becoming better educated and
32 capable. Our course of action with the IRS and those holding
33 ministerial licenses has precipitated this issue and that matter should
34 be restudied.

35
36 Primacy of the home. This is more important than the ordination of
37 women.

38
39
40 DIVISION REPORTS

41
42 The chairman called for reports from those representing divisions
43 outside North America in respect to whether women should be ordained.
44 Following is a summary of the reports as presented by the divisions.

45
46 Inter-American Division--George W Brown, President.

47
48 The Division did not embark upon a comprehensive survey but took
49

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51 Cont
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3 spot surveys. There are differences in culture and language between the
4 English-, French- and Spanish-speaking fields which are reflected in the
5 attitude toward the ordination of women.

6
7 Consensus: The church in the Inter-American Division is not now
8 ready to move in the direction of the ordination of women, even though
9 the talents of women are recognized, appreciated and they are employed
10 on all levels.

11
12 Euro-Africa Division--Jean Zurcher, Secretary

13
14 There was insufficient time to study the matter carefully because
15 of the wide difference in languages and cultural variety.

16
17 Consensus: Of the 17 unions, 6 tend to favor, but not without
18 serious reservations. Seven were opposed. Not all reports are in. Out
19 of a membership of 260,000, unions representing approximately 56,000
20 approve the ordination of women. For many, the ordination of women is
21 perceived as a social issue influenced by the feminist movement. They
22 also feel it would be difficult to apply the same work standards to
23 women that are applied to men. In some areas ordained women pastors
24 will not be accepted by many members.

25
26 South American Division--Joao Wolff, President (Presented by
27 Mario Veloso)

28
29 In the South American Division it was necessary to give information
30 regarding the question of the ordination of women before most of the
31 members could give an intelligent opinion. Spot polls were taken.

32
33 Consensus: Negative. Of workers polled, 85% voted against the
34 ordination of women and 15% favored. Most women oppose ordination even
35 though there are women employed by the Church, one serving as a district
36 pastor in charge of four churches.

37
38 Australasian Division--W R L Scragg, President

39
40 Because of great cultural differences, the division was divided
41 between the South Pacific Islands and Australia and New Zealand. In
42 Australia and New Zealand a group of 19 met to discuss the matter (7 of
43 them women) and various papers were presented. A survey was also
44 conducted among the laymen.

45
46 Consensus: The ordination of women to the gospel ministry is not
47 acceptable in the South Pacific islands. In Australia and New Zealand,
48 some inquiries suggest that half the ordained ministers favor ordination

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3 of women. Other private surveys, however, reported that about 95% of
4 the ministers did not support the concept. In general, church leaders
5 in Australasia are cooperative, but if the General Conference votes for
6 ordination, the Division would need to proceed at its own pace.

7

8 Far Eastern Division--W T Clark, President

9

10 In the Far East there was not time to send out questionnaires
11 because of the variety of cultures and languages; but from meetings with
12 the union presidents, a fairly accurate picture emerges.

13

14 Consensus: There is no widespread strong support for ordination,
15 neither is there overwhelming rejection. There has been very little
16 agitation of the subject and where there has been some discussion there
17 has been a lack of clear understanding of the issues.

18

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Neal C Wilson, Chairman

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George W Reid, Secretary

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Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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Morning Session

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March 28, 8:30 a.m.

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DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

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John Wilmott, Secretary of the Ministerial Association, Southern
Asia Division, presented the message, taking Ecclesiastes 11:1 as his
text:

"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many
days."

John Wilmott related a number of experiences of conversions
resulting from humble, often unlikely beginnings. He appealed to the
world Church for planning to reach "the firmament of chosen ones"
(Prophets and Kings, p 189) in lands such as India.

Shirley Burton and Jackson Doggette offered prayer.

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DIVISION REPORTS

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7 Southern Asia Division--G J Christo, President

8

9 No Division-wide poll was taken but a study group of ten met to
10 discuss the subject.

11

12 Consensus: The Southern Asia Division would accept the decision of
13 the world Church made at the General Conference Session in regard to the
14 full and equal participation of women in ministry.

15

16 Africa-Indian Ocean Division--R J Kloosterhuis, President

17

18 No Division-wide survey was made but some sampling was done.

19

20 Consensus: With the exception of one area, the Division is not in
21 favor of the ordination of women. As a whole, the Division would not be
22 disposed to approve the ordination of women.

23

24 Northern European Division--Jan Paulsen, President

25

26 The issue was taken to the Division winter meeting and the unions
27 were requested to make a survey.

28

29 Consensus: The Division would be better served if this step were
30 not taken at this time. Of the six unions, one was strongly opposed.
31 The five western unions felt it might pose no great problem to ordain
32 women but three held to considerable reservations and felt that there
33 would need to be some education to accustom members to the idea.

34

35 Eastern Africa Division--Bekele Heye, President

36

37 No Division-wide vote was called for on this issue although
38 inquiries were made of the unions.

39

40 Consensus: The Division is against the ordination of women
41 although some small segments of the territory are in favor. The Lord
42 has not commanded it, who are we to introduce it?

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R E C E S S

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Neal C Wilson, Chairman, read the results of the questionnaire

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which was filled in at the beginning of the meeting. A majority of about two thirds should be required on any point to sustain the issue. On this basis, the Chairman reviewed the results.

Response

- 1. Do you consider the question of ordaining women to the gospel ministry a theological issue? Yes
- 2. Do you feel there is a Biblical basis for ordaining women? No
- 3. (Question was not clear)
- 4. Do you see the issue as an outgrowth of the contemporary feminist movement? Yes
- 5. Do you believe that carefully selected and trained women should be appointed to participate in pastoral responsibilities? Yes
- 6. Do you feel that an ordained status would significantly enhance a woman's ministry? Divided
- 7. Would it be reasonable to expect ordained women to perform all the duties required of ordained men--such as holding public evangelistic crusades, visiting jails, building and painting churches, supervising multi-church districts, etc? Yes
- 8. Would you approve the appointment of a woman by the conference committee as the sole pastor of your church? Divided
- 9. In your opinion is the principle of universal ordination for the world church vital to the unity of the church? Yes
- 10. Should the opinion of the world church be a determining factor in our decision on ordination? Yes
- 11. Is the argument based on Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy "silence" sufficient ground on which to discard the church's long held practice regarding ordination? No

2

3 12. In your opinion does Genesis 1-3 establish
4 a concept of "divine ordering" as a pre-fall phenomenon? Divided

5

6 13. Is the Biblical injunction of "subordination"
7 of a woman to man to apply only in their domestic
8 relationships? Divided

9

10 14. Is it possible to be in a "subordinate"
11 relationship without being inferior? Yes

12

13 15. Should a change in cultural environment be used
14 to justify abandonment of Biblical and historic
15 practice? No

16

17 16. Do you favor the concept that the priesthood
18 of all believers qualifies every believer to exercise
19 ecclesiastical functions such as baptism? No

20

21 17. Do you feel that Galatians 3:28 opens the way
22 for the ordination of women? No

23

24 18. Are you cautious in expressing your opinions
25 publicly on this topic lest your motives be subject to
26 misinterpretation? Yes

27

28 19. In your judgment has the church erred in its
29 approval of ordaining women as local church elders? No

30

31 20. At the present time are you inclined toward
32 approval of ordaining women to the gospel ministry? No (50%)
33 Yes (35%)

34

35

36 North American Division--C E Bradford, President

37

38 A printed report of the results of a survey conducted in North
39 America by the Biblical Research Institute was distributed. A copy is
40 attached.

41

42 C E Bradford urged that the Church move toward the full
43 participation of women in ministry.

44

45 We must guard against sacramentarianism and sacerdotalism in our
46 church. Ordination in the New Testament was not a "high church"
47 ceremony imparting virtue and grace to the ordained. The minister is
48 servant to God's servants. We need, therefore, a new emphasis on

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3 ministry as service and on the church as a servant witnessing
4 community. In the kingdom of God there are no lords and masters, only
5 servants to each other. (Matt 20:25, Heb 8:10-12)
6

7 We must also consider the work of the Holy Spirit and ask
8 ourselves, does the scriptural text preclude the Spirit's initiative to
9 choose whomsoever He will? (John 16:12, Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:17-21)
10

11 And finally we must consider God's purpose in and through the
12 Church--His new creation, His new order with new persons, all priests
13 and witnesses before Him, a pilgrim community moving toward the ideal
14 state when church and kingdom will merge. (1 Peter 2:5, 16; Eph 2:15;
15 Eph 2:19-22; Eph 3:10-12)
16

17 Neal C Wilson, Chairman
18 George W Reid, Secretary
19 Martha Horn, Recording Secretary
20

21
22 Afternoon Session
23 March 28, 1:30 p.m.
24

25 PRAYER: K J Mittleider
26

27 Following is a summary of the discussion during the afternoon
28 session.
29

30 Equality in creation. This equality should be carried over to the
31 wage scale.
32

33 Divine ordering. Genesis 3:15 states that the woman's desire
34 should be to her husband. Harmony was preserved through submission.
35 Some young ministers (men) find it hard to work with young women in a
36 joint pastoral relationship.
37

38 Service of women. Bible Instructor work is not only for women but
39 also for men. There is need for planning work for women in the Church
40 at all levels. Ordination should not be a necessary prerequisite for
41 appointment to conference committees. Job descriptions for women should
42 be clear.
43

44 Ordination of women as local elders. We should move forward at a
45 slow pace, but study about the nature of ordination should proceed at an
46 accelerated pace.
47

48 Ordination of women to the gospel ministry. Even though this
49
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51 Cont
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3 problem may seem limited to a small area, it is really a world issue.
4 Neither the Potomac Conference nor the Columbia Union has requested
5 ordination of its women pastors. It is a matter of allowing women who
6 have the same training and background as men to function in identical
7 ways. Those who desire this do not wish it because they are part of the
8 feminist movement.

9

10 We need to prolong the status quo. Giving advantage in
11 remuneration to a man simply because he is ordained but not to a woman
12 is indefensible. It is unfortunate that the Church cannot be depended
13 upon for affirmation of a woman called to ministry. She finds herself
14 in an awkward position not to be able to baptize or marry. The
15 disciples of Jesus were not selected from the priestly class. The
16 emphasis is on the selection made by the Holy Spirit.

17

18 The Mohaven recommendations were not followed up as they should
19 have been. None should be given the promise that Seminary training
20 involves ordination. There is no plan to ordain women merely so they
21 can serve as chaplains. When people join the Church they leave many
22 harmful habits and customs. Can we not ask them to accept the
23 ordination of women in an effort to change their culture? That would be
24 very difficult. It was suggested that this Commission meet again after
25 two years to discuss and evaluate the progress made.

26

27 Primacy of the home. E G White makes the statement that mothers
28 who work in the church should leave their children with a capable
29 person.

30

31

32

33 Upon conclusion of the discussion reported above, Neal C Wilson
34 outlined his thoughts on the issue as follows:

35

36 1. From 1973-75, his position was more favorable toward ordaining
37 women than it is today. He put a great deal of faith in the reports
38 from the Camp Mohaven meeting but did not study them carefully. But our
39 liberty should never be a stumbling block for others. He has become
40 much less certain and increasingly apprehensive regarding where such
41 changes as ordaining women will carry us. Even though he is not
42 basically opposed, he does not feel there is a good case for the
43 ordination of women.

44

45 2. The experience of other churches would indicate the need for
46 caution. Ordination is something on which the world Church must stand
47 together. He then read the following excerpts from the Spirit of
48 Prophecy:

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4 "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible,
5 and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of
6 all reforms. . . . Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should
7 demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." (GC 595)

8
9 ". . . Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were
10 rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into
11 the worship of the Church of England. It was claimed that these things
12 were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in
13 Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they
14 were not intrinsically evil. Their observance tended to narrow the gulf
15 which separated the reformed churches from Rome, . . .

16
17 "To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed
18 conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The
19 fact that these customs 'tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome
20 and the Reformation'. . . was in their view a conclusive argument
21 against retaining them. . . . They reasoned that God has in His word
22 established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not
23 at liberty to add to these or detract from them. The very beginning of
24 the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by
25 that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden,
26 and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined." (GC 289-90)

27
28 3. There is a possibility of unintentionally neutralizing the
29 Scriptures by stating that certain passages are culturally conditioned.

30
31 4. In making as big a change as recommending the ordination of
32 women, the burden of proof must be on the arguments proposed in support
33 of the change, otherwise it is our responsibility to protect what we
34 have. Proof must be convincing, overwhelming and beyond reasonable
35 doubt.

36
37 5. This issue (ordination of women to the gospel ministry) must
38 be settled by a General Conference Session. It would appear that if the
39 matter were presented now, it would not be acceptable to the Church as a
40 whole.

41
42 6. We need to be honest and not mislead people. If we have no
43 intention of moving toward the ordination of women we should say so.

44
45 7. If past actions are to be considered a mistake, should the
46 Church return to its former position? The steps taken by the Potomac
47 Conference may have been a matter of mistaken judgment in the desire to
48 rally all available resources and talents for the work of God. But they

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51 Cont
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3 have not been taken in rebellion, but with wide counsel. Taking all the
4 factors we have discussed into consideration, probably we should
5 maintain our present position with some modifications.

6

7 a. Treat the young men and the young women who have the same
8 training and have been called to pastoral responsibilities in the same
9 way by providing opportunities to perform. If we move ahead we will
10 give affirmation to women who (a) feel they have been called to fulfill
11 the pastoral role, and (b) experience recognition of their service in
12 the call of a conference, even though they may never be ordained.

13

14 b. Make an earnest appeal to the world Church to do
15 something for women in ministry, giving them opportunities to work in
16 departments, administration, business and management areas, and revive
17 the work of Bible Instructors.

18

19 c. Develop a partnership ministry of ministers and their
20 wives.

21

22 d. Reform ordination practices so ordination will not be
23 just a status symbol.

24

25

26 R E C E S S

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28

29 A questionnaire was distributed and marked by Commission members
30 with the following results:

31

32

Response

33

34 1. a. I do not support the ordination of women
35 to the gospel ministry 27

36

37 b. I support ordination of women and believe
38 we should approve it now 8

39

40 c. I support ordination of women but do not
41 believe it would be wise to press the matter now 26

42

43 2. a. I support the selection and ordination of
44 women as local church elders 38

45

46 b. I do not support the ordination of women
47 as local church elders and feel we should reverse
48 our decision 12

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4 c. I do not support the ordination of women as
5 local church elders, but since it has been approved I
6 believe we should not reverse our decision

9

7
8
9 There was extensive discussion of the role and function of the
10 designations licensed minister, the ordained local elder, the
11 commissioned minister and those titled "Associates in Pastoral Care."
12 The Associates in Pastoral Care feel they should have the privilege of
13 baptizing those they have prepared for this rite.

14
15 Neal C Wilson, Chairman
16 George W Reid, Secretary
17 Martha Horn, Recording Secretary
18
19

20 Evening Session

21
22 PRAYER: G Ralph Thompson
23

24 Additional discussion followed and is summarized below:
25

26 Service of women. Bible Instructors must be sure there is a place
27 for them or they will not enter that profession. Wages must be paid
28 according to the work done, and each type of worker must be listed on
29 the wage scale. A new awareness and respect for women is needed in the
30 Church.

31
32 Ordination of women to the gospel ministry. The issue is broader
33 than this; it is the role of women in the Church on all levels,
34 beginning with the local field and reaching to the officer group of the
35 General Conference. If we intend to ordain women sometime in the
36 future, they must be engaged in soul-winning work now in order to
37 provide role models.

38
39 Other speakers contended that all elements of our doctrine and
40 practice will be scrutinized. How can we support the ordination of
41 women when there is no Biblical basis?
42

43 The discussion of terms and documentation for ministerial workers
44 continued. The proposal was made that men holding a commissioned
45 minister's license, upon successful completion of a period of internship
46 may be ordained to the gospel ministry, while women of like
47 circumstances could receive the commissioned minister's credential.
48 Women would move from the missionary or ministerial license to the
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51 Cont
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3 commissioned minister's credential. This credential would confirm her
4 in the work she is doing on the local church level regarding those
5 functions that do not require ordination. The functions of the
6 commissioned minister exceed those of the licensed minister.

7

8 The point also was made that it would be unfortunate if a woman
9 ministerial worker were allowed to perform all ministerial tasks, yet
10 not be ordained. The prevailing opinion among the speakers held that
11 the authority to baptize should be given only to ordained ministers and
12 the matter should be held there. It appears that only North America has
13 chosen to extend the privilege to baptize to unordained ministers within
14 their local congregations.

15

16

17 175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW-85SM+85GCS

18

19 175-85GNa ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

20

21 In light of a three-day study and discussion of topics such as equality
22 in creation, divine ordering, examples of ordination in Scripture,
23 consequences of the Pauline statements regarding women, the nature of
24 the pastoral call, the priesthood of believers, the implications of
25 cultural conditioning in interpreting the Scriptures, the ordination of
26 women as local church elders, the primacy of the home, and the ordination
27 of women to the gospel ministry it was,

28

29 RECOMMENDED, 1. To take no definitive action at this time regarding the
30 ordination of women to the gospel ministry

31

32 2. To maintain the Church's present position on this matter

33

34 3. To prepare further Biblical and other studies on the question
35 of ordaining women by assigning specific topics to scholars and
36 theologians for research

37

38 4. To assign discussion of the documents growing out of such
39 research to a special representative committee which will be scheduled to
40 meet early in 1988, its findings and report to be presented to the 1988
41 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee and eventually to the
42 1989 Annual Council at which time the entire issue will be reviewed.

43

44

45 175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW 85SM

46

47 175-85GNb WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH WORK

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3 RECOMMENDED, *Ad 2* To give special emphasis to the work of Bible
4 Instructors, both women and men, and to urge that conference and field
5 administrators restore this ministerial category to importance and
6 accord it proper recognition in the work of the Church.

7
8 1. ~~2~~ To urge that an "affirmative action" plan for the involvement
9 of women in the work of the Church be a priority with church leadership,
10 and to request leaders to use their executive influence to open to women
11 all aspects of ministry in the Church which do not require ordination.

12
13 3. To recognize the desirability of a pastor and his wife working
14 together and the spiritual strength which will result through such team
15 ministry and to urge that further study of this concept be made
16 including the development of a financial plan and training program that
17 would support this objective wherever possible.

18
19 4. To recognize that a great need exists to educate our people
20 regarding the major roles that women may fulfill in the Lord's work
21 without ordination, and to request that specific plans to meet this need
22 be developed and presented to the 1985 Annual Council.

23
24
25 175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW-85SM

26 *Ministerial*
27 175-85GNc ^{Ministerial} ORDINATION PRACTICES REFORM

28
29 RECOMMENDED, To institute a reformation in the church's ordination
30 practices for the purpose of limiting ordination only to those
31 performing direct pastoral, evangelistic, ecclesiastical, and other
32 clearly ministerial duties.

33
34
35 175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW-85SM+NADCOM

36
37 175-85Gnd MINISTERIAL LICENSES/MISSIONARY LICENSES/
38 COMMISSIONED MINISTERS LICENSES-NAD TO STUDY *Accidental*

39
40 In view of the discussion regarding the functions assigned to
41 ministerial workers in the North American Division, it was

42
43 RECOMMENDED, To request the North American Division Committee to
44 clarify the functions of ministerial workers who hold the ministerial
45 licenses, including how those relate to women who serve as pastors, and
46 to request that a complete proposal on procedure be submitted by the
47 North American Division to the 1985 Annual Council for consideration.

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CLOSING

Neal C Wilson read Deuteronomy 31: 1-8 calling particular attention to the following:

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee: he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

"May the Lord be with each of you. . . . Let us do the Lord's bidding and prepare a people for His soon coming," were the closing words of the Chairman.

C E Bradford offered prayer.

Neal C Wilson, Chairman
George W Reid, Secretary
Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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4 CLOSING

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6 Neal C Wilson read Deuteronomy 31: 1-8 calling particular attention
7 to the following:

8

9 "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them:
10 for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee: he will not fail
11 thee, nor forsake thee."

12

13 "May the Lord be with each of you. . . . Let us do the Lord's
14 bidding and prepare a people for His soon coming," were the closing
15 words of the Chairman.

16

17 C E Bradford offered prayer.

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Neal C Wilson, Chairman
George W Reid, Secretary
Martha Horn, Recording Secretary

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