175-85GN  ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH - COMMITTEE REPORT

RECOMMENDED, To accept the following report of Role of Women in the Church Committee which met in Washington, DC March 26 to 28, 1985:

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH COMMITTEE
March 26-29, 1985
Takoma Park Church Center, Washington, DC

Morning Session
March 26, 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT:


Neal C Wilson, Chairman, welcomed the representatives from every division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the study of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, as authorized by the General Conference Committee (GCC 85-12). He appealed to the delegates, while considering this emotionally charged assignment, to reach Heavenward for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be careful how they address one another, to remain calm, respectful, prayerful, humble and

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serious as the subject is frankly and openly discussed.

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

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

8:30 - 11:45       Morning Session
1:30 - 5:30        Afternoon Session

(Evening sessions will be held if necessary.)

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

RECESS

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

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

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

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

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

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Afternoon Session
March 26, 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER: Shirani D'Alwis and Henry Wright

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

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

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

    Torhild Rom and Rolf Kvinge offered prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

    Hermeneutics. There are practices in the Church for which we have
no specific text but we follow certain principles. Can we declare that
certain passages of the Bible are culturally determined and others are
not?
Ordination of women as local elders. No one has the right to 
exercise his views or rights to the detriment of the Body of Christ. 
The ordination of women local elders has been implemented in some 
overseas fields with good results. There has been no campaigning for 
office and those appointed are finding ready acceptance.

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

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

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

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

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

PRAYER: A C McClure

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

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

Theology of ordination. In some cultures ordination is a very 
important service, believed to bestow special virtue, power or grace 
otherwise unobtainable. There is need for further study of this item. 
We need to educate church members regarding the nature of ordination. 
We tend to carry over the priesthood of the Old Testament into New 
Testament practice, but since Jesus is our High Priest, ordination to
the ministry is of a more simple nature. A minister is to be a servant prepared for his ministry, not predestined. Ordination is not merely an administrative issue but a theological one. Shall we develop a theology of ordination after 130 years? Not unless we are going to introduce new elements in midstream.

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

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

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

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

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

Although there is a need for more Bible Instructors, how can they be placed if we presently actually have an excess of ministers of the gospel who have not been called? Women have been discouraged from entering the Bible Instructor work because they do not feel there is a demand for their services. Financial provision has been made for their training but very few have taken advantage of it. Budgets are needed for employment of Bible Instructors and this will require a reordering of priorities. Few successful evangelists would think of starting a campaign without a good group of Bible Instructors. Young women know it is a wonderful work but it has little standing. We should have a wage parity system.
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...
demand clear Biblical support. Although in some rural areas women
perform the work of the Church, doing everything except baptising and
marrying people, the issue of ordination has not arisen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evening Session
March 27, 7:00 p.m.
PRAYER: Calvin B Rock

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIVISION REPORTS

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

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

The Division did not embark upon a comprehensive survey but took Cont

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

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

Euro-Africa Division--Jean Zurcher, Secretary

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

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

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

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

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

Australasian Division--W R L Soragg, President

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

Consensus: The ordination of women to the gospel ministry is not acceptable in the South Pacific islands. In Australia and New Zealand, some inquiries suggest that half the ordained ministers favor ordination
of women. Other private surveys, however, reported that about 95% of the ministers did not support the concept. In general, church leaders in Australasia are cooperative, but if the General Conference votes for ordination, the Division would need to proceed at its own pace.

Far Eastern Division--W T Clark, President

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

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

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

Morning Session
March 28, 8:30 a.m.

Neal C Wilson, Chairman, gave a brief report on the One Thousand Days of Reaping for the fourth quarter of 1984. The total of 118,267 is the largest ever recorded and is 10,543 more than that of any quarter in the history of the Church. On every day of 1984, an average of 1,087 people were baptized. If baptisms in the first two quarters of 1985 equal those of the same period last year, the goal of one million souls won during the One Thousand Days of Reaping will be surpassed.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

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.
DIVISION REPORTS

Southern Asia Division--G J Christo, President

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

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

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

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

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

Northern European Division--Jan Paulsen, President

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

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

Eastern Africa Division--Bekele Heye, President

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

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

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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.

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—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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

North American Division—C E Bradford, President

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Afternoon Session
March 28, 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER: K J Mittleider

Following is a summary of the discussion during the afternoon session.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

R E C E S S

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. a. I do not support the ordination of women to the gospel ministry 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I support ordination of women and believe we should approve it now 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I support ordination of women but do not believe it would be wise to press the matter now 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. a. I support the selection and ordination of women as local church elders 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I do not support the ordination of women as local church elders and feel we should reverse our decision 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

Evening Session

PRAYER: G Ralph Thompson

Additional discussion followed and is summarized below:

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

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

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

The discussion of terms and documentation for ministerial workers continued. The proposal was made that men holding a commissioned minister's license, upon successful completion of a period of internship may be ordained to the gospel ministry, while women of like circumstances could receive the commissioned minister's credential. Women would move from the missionary or ministerial license to the

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commissioned minister's credential. This credential would confirm her
in the work she is doing on the local church level regarding those
functions that do not require ordination. The functions of the
commissioned minister exceed those of the licensed minister.

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

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

175-85GNa  ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

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

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

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

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

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

175-85GNb WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH WORK

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RECOMMENDED, To give special emphasis to the work of Bible instructors, both women and men, and to urge that conference and field administrators restore this ministerial category to importance and accord it proper recognition in the work of the Church.

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

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

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

175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW-85SM

175-85GNC ORDINATION PRACTICES REFORM

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

175-85GN/ONUP85SM to NCW-85SM+NADCOM

175-85GND MINISTERIAL LICENSES/MISSIONARY LICENSES/COMMISSIONED MINISTERS LICENSES--NAD TO STUDY

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

RECOMMENDED, To request the North American Division Committee to clarify the functions of ministerial workers who hold the ministerial licenses, including how those relate to women who serve as pastors, and to request that a complete proposal on procedure be submitted by the 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
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