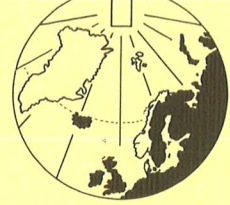


West Nordic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



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March 2, 1989

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Elder Neal C. Wilson, President
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
6840 Eastern Avenue NW,
Washington, DC 20012,
USA

*Annate!
Please make a
copy of this document
ad keep it with the
letter for me - ad
give a copy of the
paper to Geo. Reid
out to
the members
of the
Norwegian
Commission*

Dear Brother Wilson,

Finally, I am sending the paper which you asked me to prepare. The project is long overdue, and I am sorry for that. May be it will reach you too late. Hopefully, you may still let the committee read it before the next session.

This assignment has been rather hard to fulfill due to circumstances that I wrote you about in December. My wife, by the way, is doing fine, something we as a family are very thankful for. The Lord has been good to us.

In addition, I have carried a heavy load of evangelistic responsibilities which has gone on from the middle of January. You see, a year ago I promised pastor Mark Finley to be part of his evangelistic team in Copenhagen 8 weeks from January '89 until last part of March. With three meetings a week together with the administrative tasks, it has been a tough winter.

However, it has been refreshing and Brother Finley's inspiring evangelistic leadership has so far stirred us all who have had a part in the campaign. At March 11, Mark Finley will start the final harvesting part of the campaign, and we believe this will become a joyful experience for the work in Denmark. Between five and six hundred none SDA people have, after several weeks attended the fifteen different seminars or meetings that have been going on. The total number was all the way up in more than two thousand in the beginning weeks. But it has stabilized itself around six hundred the last weeks. The field school which has been conducted among interns from Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Netherlands, and stirring preaching among our downtown churches in Copenhagen have all been to a great blessing.

May God grant us many souls won for His kingdom. Please, remember this very important evangelistic event in the Westnordic Union in your prayers.

If there should be any questions about the paper, please let me know by sending messages by telefax. Even though I most of the time stay in Copenhagen, I will do my uttermost to give you prompt answers.

Sincerely yours,

Rolf H. Kvinge
Rolf H. Kvinge
President

**A REVIEW OF PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
WOMEN IN FULL-TIME MINISTRY**

by

R. H. Kvinge, President West-Nordic Union

INTRODUCTION

Years of study regarding the proposal to ordain women to the ministry have considered many aspects of this rather controversial issue. Exegesis and theological investigation, as well as consideration of historical and cultural factors have all been carried out in order to get as clear a perspective on the question as possible. Papers have been presented pro et contra but the church has not as yet been able to reach a final decision.

Part of the reluctance to go ahead with the proposal may be due to uncertainty when it comes to the practical implications of the matter. Is the role of pastoral leadership well suited for women? How will a move toward ordination of women relate to the ideals for family life held by the Adventist church? Should full-time ministerial work be a possibility for all women, or only the unmarried or those who have no children or whose children are grown? Will Conference policies, when it comes to moving the pastors, giving leave of absence for family-increase, have to be reconsidered if the church takes such a step? If women are not ordained to the ministry, what other meaningful roles can they play in pastoral service? These are some of the many questions that arise.

Much of this paper is based on material that comes out of the experience of other churches. One obvious reason for this is the fact that there is really no Adventist practice to refer to. In the appropriate places I have drawn on both Bible and Spirit of Prophecy materials.

I have drawn extensively on two written reports of research carried out by the Norwegian Women's Theological Society, "**Employment and Working Conditions for Women in Pastoral Ministry**" (1984), and "**Investigation Concerning Pregnancy, Children and Pastoral Ministry**" (1988). In addition I have had interviews with a woman minister in the Lutheran Church of Norway.

Before going on with the discussion a word about my own experience would be in order. I am one of those who believe in women taking part in the Gospel ministry. Having been engaged in public evangelism for years, I have over and over again come to admire the kind of work a woman is able to perform in leading sinners to Christ. To people who are broken and hurting from the strains and stresses of life, the supporting ministry of a woman is a unique and perhaps irreplaceable resource in ministering the healing of the gospel to individuals and families. The church desperately needs this resource in order to fulfill her mission.

On the other hand, I am also one of those who is reluctant to give support to the proposal to ordain women to the ministry. Formerly, while serving as a

conference president, I have employed women in pastoral work with the possibility that they might be on the road to ordination as pastors. During that time I had been searching for Biblical backing for such ordination. I must confess that as of today I have not found sufficiently clear evidence from the Scriptures and therefore I do not feel free to support such a move. At the same time I have prayed God for wisdom and an open mind and heart to act according to His will.

My prayer is that the church we love and work for may move forward unitedly also in this area and that we may avoid the kind of schism that so many other churches have experienced because of this issue.

THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

Before looking at the practical implications of women in gospel ministry it would seem useful to briefly review some important aspects of the Biblical concept of ministry.

The root concept of both Hebrew and Greek terms for ministry has to do with "being of service" to someone.¹ It can be spoken of as a service to God, "to glorify God and love him forever",² or it may be used with the reference to service to man and his need of salvation. Too often the work of ministering has been looked upon as applying only to the ordained ministry, but on the basis of the practices of the early church and with current ascendancy of the "theology of the laity", Christian ministry is now being viewed, more correctly, as the calling of the entire church.³ The varied ministries are almost limitless. According to the New Testament it addresses itself to persons in all kinds of life-situations like crises, poverty, sickness, rejections, despair, bereavement, bewilderment. It is an integral part of all that the church does.

A Ministry of Leadership.

While it is true that the entire church engages in ministry, it is equally true that some people are called and set apart for a specific ministry, to be ministers of ministers. A most important passage for understanding this specialized ministry is Eph 4:7-16. Paul's apostolic mission, described by the phrase, "the grace given me,"⁴ falls in this category. The gift of the Spirit here creates a responsibility and then extends a calling for its exercise.

Under the guidance of the Lord's Spirit, the early church began to select leaders to meet its needs. These tended to be either itinerant, charismatic ministries in which perennial evangelism was exercised, or the more local ex

¹ Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Christian Education (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 231.

² Franklin M. Segler, A Theology of Church and Ministry (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), p. 23.

³ Edward F. Murphy, Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission (South Pasadena, CA: Mandate Press, 1975), p. 1978.

⁴ Rom 15:15.

officio ministry of leadership shared by ministers (pastors) and deacons⁵ (Matt 4:19; Acts 13:2,3; 15:6,22) The functions of these leadership roles seem to have been under two "offices" and Paul designated them as "bishop" or "overseer" and "deacon" as presented in 1 Tim 3:1-3. There may, however, be evidence that the early churches had a plurality of roles (John 11:54; 2 Cor 6:4; 8:7; 11:15).

The Function of Leadership Ministry

The essential nature of the leadership ministry is also that of service (diakonia).⁶ It was a leadership based upon the "power" to render service and never on "lordship". This specialized ministry can only realize itself in service,⁷ and as Thomas M. Lindsay states, the chief service which it provides is that of setting an example in loving service⁸ (See 2 Cor 6:3-10).

The setting of an example seems to be a vital element in the leadership ministry. Paul states: "We put no stumbling-block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited" (2 Cor 6:3 NIV). When Segler comments on this example and the influence of this ministry he says: "In one sense it grows out of the pastor's character and spiritual discernment and is so recognized by the church. It is the kind of authority which Paul implied as he said: 'For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel, I urge you, then, be imitators of me'" (1 Cor 4:15,16).⁹

Jesus not only taught, but also demonstrated the leadership ministry in what often is called the Servant Motif. One is represented by the word "to send", the other by the word to "serve". He describes himself as being "sent" upon the mission of the Father (Matt 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luk 9:48;). In turn, Jesus sent forth the twelve (Matt 10:5,10; Luk 9:2) and the seventy (Luk 10:1).

He also points to Himself as the One who serves. The first apostles were given practical lessons in this. They observed Him heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, restore sight to the blind, exorcise demons, and raise the dead. They heard Him teach on the hillside and preach in the synagogue. He taught the disciples the rule "whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:27-28, RSV).

Jesus at this point taught the very essence of true ministry, in which service is presented as a love-gift.¹⁰ A correct understanding of this verse

⁵ Segler, p. 61.

⁶ John Knox, Ministry in Historical Perspective, quoted in Segler, Theology of Church and Ministry (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), p. 1-124.

⁷ Arnold Bittlinger, Gifts and Ministries (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), p. 72.

⁸ The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (New York: George H. Doran Company, N.d.), p. 151.

⁹ Segler, p.73.

¹⁰ J.R. Claypool, "Theology of Ministry," Southwestern Journal of Theology 15 (Spring 1973):7.