GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS
EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

East-Central Africa Division (ECD) Biblical Research Committee (BRC)

Report Summary Presented to the Delegates of:

ECD Year-End Executive Committee (EXCOM) Meetings on

November 5-7, 2013

Following formal introductions and protocol observances, the Chair and the Secretary of the ECD BRC read the report to the delegates of what the Committee had been studying, the findings of the study, and the preliminary conclusions with recommendations on whether women may be ordained as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Delegates were affirmed for being tasked with the responsibility of making decisions which facilitate the advancement of the redemptive mission of our God within ECD which is growing by leaps and bounds, numerically, (at the average of about 600 baptisms daily), and structurally, (suddenly two Union Conferences from Kenya Union Mission; two Unions—one Conference and another a Mission; two Union Missions, Burundi and North-East Congo from formally attached territories, not to mention new Conferences which have already been organized). There is, indeed, a lot that is happening in ECD which reveals that the mission-driven Church in ECD is overwhelmed by what the Lord of harvest is doing. Much of the work of winning people to Christ and nurturing them, delegates were reminded, is done by lay people, and not paid workers. It is, therefore, understandable if most people in ECD are not fully aware of how the issue ordination of women is a priority of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church this time. However, the
interest and concern about the issue of ordination of women is rising. ECD BRC members, therefore, take seriously the study leading to global Church’s decision whether women may be ordained as pastors or not, knowing that what affects the Church anywhere on the globe impacts the Church globally and everywhere. Procedures for presenting the report to the delegates was as follows:

1. Committee examines reports (in the form of scholarly papers) from scholars and professionals drawn from different disciplines or emphases like studies from the Old Testament, New Testament, Historical/Systematic Theology, Church Ministry and Mission and Writings of Ellen G. White. All is done with a view to finding out whether there is light from Scripture that may give the Church a clue as to whether women ordination is biblical.

2. Committee also examine scholarly papers written by other professionals outside ECD and decide whether the findings have implications on what the Bible says so that the Church may be helped to make Scripturally informed decision concerning the issue of women ordination.

3. The Committee highlighted sticking points which included: a. Biblical Silence (in Old Testament and New Testament) about Ordination of Women, Headship/Leadership Presented in Scripture As a Male Domain e.g. 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34,35; 1 Tim. 2:12; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3 seeming to contradict with Gal. 3:28 and the ample indications in the New Testament that the work of advancing the redemptive mission is gender inclusive.

The silence of Scripture about whether woman may be set apart by
ordination is also significant, and lack of clear prophetic guidance by Ellen White on the issue does not seem to help opponents or proponents of women ordination.

4. The Committee has also examined the emerging strand of thinking which is calling for a return to Edenic State before the Fall whereby the man and the woman were “priests” in the “sanctuary” of Eden. All of this may read plausible, but it is not convincing because some of us do not read exegetical soundness in the arguments.

5. Delegates were also informed about where the process is right now. They were told that after thorough examination of Scripture, the Writings of Ellen White, and the scholarly papers that are for the ordination of women and those that are against, there is still no light as to whether woman may be ordained as pastors. The BRC at ECD feels that it is safer to adhere to what the plain message of Scripture although some members realize there is a need for further studies, especially of those texts which read like women ordination is not permitted in the Bible. The Committee is almost convinced that there are two possibilities: a. Both sides of the debate on women ordination do not really understand the New Testament passages which read like women ordination should not be considered; b. The whole church has not given much thought as to what women may do uniquely and be affirmed for to advance the redemptive ministry and mission of God. So, before there is complete clarity about the authentic Scriptural intent about the issue, the BRC
says: “not yet” to the ordination of women. It was also reported to the delegates that BRC’s and TOSC are working systematically to build a consensus. So far the consensus is growing and there is hope that we shall get to some understanding that will glorify the Lord and bless His people. BRC members and TOSC members are praying a lot. They sometimes table the business agenda and pray. It is specially gratifying to see the process clarifying what ordination is and what it means, according to the Bible. Light is dawning!

6. The main point that ECD BRC recommends is that there be continuation of diligent and prayerful study of selected topics which are connected with ordination, and our Committee has identified some of those topics. Our Committee is convinced that the Church needs to continue to “seek understanding” so that the delegates to GC in St Antonio in 2015 may produce good results by voting intelligently.