

Resolution of ESD Biblical Research Committee on the Women Ordination Issue
Approved by ESD Executive Committee,
November 5-7, 2013

This resolution expresses the position of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Euro-Asia Division on the issue of women ordination. As is known, this issue has become a subject of serious learning and analysis during recent years because of the difference of views found in church environment. This discordance of opinions gives rise to concern, because it can lead to the destruction of the church unity.

Having regard to the importance and urgency of this issue for the global Seventh-day Adventist Church at the present time, basing on the authority of Scripture, affirming our commitment to the values expressed in the Word of God, considering the specific historical and cultural context in which the Church has to serve in ESD territory, and being conscious of our responsibility for keeping the church unity as an important condition for fulfilling the Lord's Great Commission, the ESD Executive Committee has adopted the following resolution on the issue of the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry.

1. The ESD Executive Committee follows the same principles of Bible studies that are expressed in a document adopted by the Church and entitled *Methods of Bible Studies Document*. The document particularly says that "the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages" [MBSD, 2.a.(4)].

2. According to Gen. 1 and 2, a man and a woman were created equal (Gen. 1:27), but different (Gen. 2:18). However, the sexual differences did not imply the superiority of one sex over the other, but enabled a man and a woman to complement each other. The Fall disturbed the original harmony resulting inter alia in the dominant position of a husband and the subordinate position of a wife (Gen. 3:16). Nevertheless, one can repeatedly find in the Bible the examples of women executing leadership roles. In the Old Testament they were Miriam (Ex. 15:20-21), Deborah (Jud. 4-5), Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:13-14, 2 Chron. 34:22-28), and others (Ex. 38:8, 1 Sam. 2:22, 2 Sam. 14:2-20, 20:14-22). But the Scripture does not say anywhere that women leaders were ordained, in contrast to men such as the Levites (Num. 8:10) or Joshua (Num. 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9).

3. The New Testament repeatedly says about the dominant position of a husband and the need for a wife to be subordinate to her husband (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1). However, in the Acts and the Epistles we can find names of women who served as teachers (Priscilla in Acts. 18:26, Rom. 16:3), deaconesses (Phoebe in Rom. 16:1), and perhaps even performed the functions of the apostles (Junia, Rom. 16:7), i.e. the church leaders. However, as it was in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament occasionally mentions the ordination of men to the ministry (seven ministers in Acts 6:6, Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:3, Timothy in 1 Tim. 4:14, presbyters in Acts. 14:23), it keeps silence with regard to women. Furthermore, we do not find in the Bible any indication that the ordination was a required component for electing a man or a woman to ministerial or leadership position. Therefore, it is impossible to assert with confidence that the women involved in church ministry were ordained. Thus we can conclude that although the Scriptures do not contain an explicit prohibition to ordain women to the ministry, there are no recommendations or authorization or moreover a command of the ordination of women, while the ordination of men is stated quite clearly.

4. Stressing the importance and significance of the divine revelation in dealing with such a complex issue, we, however, cannot ignore the peculiarities of the cultural environment in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church performs its ministry in Euro-Asia Division. Building an evangelistic strategy in the regions in which most people are under the influence of such religions as Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism etc., and given the fact that the issue of women's ordination is considered to be quite painful in those religions, the Church must be particularly

1 sensitive to such a delicate subject so as not to increase the already high wall of separation where
2 it is not necessary. In this case, the missiological interests should be also taken into account.

3 5. Account must be also taken of the atmosphere in the church, because it reflects the
4 overall rejection of female ordination in the Euro-Asia Division. Such a reaction does not mean,
5 however, that women may not participate in various areas of the church ministry.

6 6. In articulating its position on the ordination of women, the ESD Executive Committee
7 expresses its concern about preserving the church unity and realizes that the success of the
8 Church's mission in the world will depend in no small measure on this matter. The introduction
9 of the practice of women's ordination in the Euro-Asia Division may create an additional stress
10 within the Church and threaten the church unity. Therefore, when making decision on such a
11 complicated issue we should be mindful of a serious warning of apostle Paul who called the
12 church to unity: "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you were
13 called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love,
14 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). Apostle himself
15 was ready to resign his rights and powers in order to keep the unity and peace and for the
16 purposes of more effective evangelism (1 Cor. 8-10).

17 Thus, basing on the Holy Scriptures and given the absence of any indications to the
18 ordination of women in both Old and New Testament, taking into account the cultural context in
19 which the Church is to fulfill its service in the Euro-Asia Division, and keeping in mind the
20 Church's missiological interests, the ESD Executive Committee discourages the practice of the
21 ordination of women to the pastoral ministry.

22

23