

1 SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION SUMMARY REPORT ON ITS
2 STUDY AND PROPOSAL ON THE ORDINATION
3 OF WOMEN TO THE PASTORAL MINISTRY
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5 The South American Division of the Seventh Day Adventist Church:

- 6 1. Reaffirms that the issue of women's ordination was openly discussed in its Biblical
7 Research Committee (BRC-SAD), through the presentation of academic papers
8 and the analysis of the biblical text and its related theological issues, in order to
9 elaborate this position. The different opinions on the subject had ample opportunity
10 to be expressed;
- 11 2. Reaffirms, on the basis of the biblical teaching, the equality of men and women,
12 and the great relevance of the role of women in the life of the church;
- 13 3. Reaffirms that in its territory, women are active members and leaders in different
14 areas of the life of the local church as well as in the denomination structure;
- 15 4. Recognizes women's valuable contribution to the leadership of the Church and to
16 the fulfillment of the Gospel mission;
- 17 5. Reaffirms its commitment to preserve the unity of the Church, to study, to dialogue
18 and to decide together with the worldwide Church on the best paths to be followed;
- 19 6. Reaffirms its position on the subject of women's ordination and its respect for the
20 opinion of the other Divisions, and that the SAD will support the decision which
21 will be made by the worldwide Church.

22 The Biblical Research Committee of the South American Division (BRC-
23 SAD) met on the 13th and 14th of November 2013 to discuss the papers presented at
24 the TOSC meeting of last July, and to hear three new papers presented by its own
25 theologians. It also took into consideration other pertinent material that was sent for
26 its appreciation by different Adventist scholars or that were publically available in the
27 official site of the General Conference. A consensus was reached by the majority of
28 its members, which was later presented and voted by the Administrative Board of the
29 Division.

30 The basic points of the consensus are:

31
32 **1. According to Genesis 1 and 2, man and woman were created in God's image,**
33 **ontologically equal, but with different roles, this being reiterated throughout all**
34 **the Scriptures.**

35 The first two chapters of the Bible clearly point out to the full equality
36 between man and woman in God's intentional will and creative action. Both man and
37 woman were created at the image and the likeness of God, and received the divine
38 blessing with its injunction to multiply, fill the Earth and rule over it and its creatures
39 (Gen 1:26-28). The woman was an *'ezer k'negdo* ("a helper corresponding to him"), a
40 companion in full standing with man, someone equal to him (Gen 2:18, 20). God
41 created her from a rib taken out of Adam, therefore she was bone of his bones and
42 flesh of his flesh, a true kin to him (Gen 2:21-23). The image of the rib (*tsela'*) taken
43 from the side of man specifically conveys the idea of standing at the side of, a
44 partnership of equal beings (see EGW, PP, 46). The terms *'ish* ("man") and *'ishah*

1 (“woman”) in Gen 2:23 point to the fact that they were only different in gender.
2 Finally, the unity of the couple as a *basar ’echad* (“one flesh”), in Gen 2:24, also
3 speaks of their equality and image of God, for He is *’echad* (“One”, Deut 6:4).

4 Genesis 1 and 2 additionally present a role differentiation between the man
5 and the woman. The distinction in gender (male and female; man and woman)
6 indicates that they were equal but not identical beings. The idea of the differentiation
7 is also expressed by the order and mode of their creation in Genesis 2. It is further
8 articulated by the fact that the specific responsibility to work (*la’avod*) and keep
9 (*lishmor*) the Garden of Eden, as well as the specific prohibition of eating from the
10 tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were given to man, prior to the creation of the
11 woman (Gen 2:15-17). Although these injunctions were inclusive of the woman, the
12 biblical description singles out that Adam was the responsible leader in God’s
13 covenant established with humankind at Creation (Os 6:7). He was the “head” of
14 humankind and its designated leader (the headship principle), a position that would
15 only later be fully occupied by Jesus as the Second Adam (Rom 5:12-21, 1 Cor 11:3;
16 Eph 1:20-23; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:13-20; 2:9-10) – see EGW, PP, 59, 67. The divine
17 injunctions “to work” and “to keep” the Garden of Eden, in Gn 2:15, seem to imply
18 also into a priestly function for both man and woman in the earthly sanctuary of Eden.
19 Most likely, it followed the type of the universal priesthood of every believer (Exod
20 19:5; 1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6), in which Adam was its spiritual leader, a kind of a “high
21 priest” in relation to his fellow priests (his wife and his future children).

22 **2. A preeminence of male spiritual leadership is evident in the Old and New**
23 **Testaments, both in the family as well as in the congregation.**

24 Besides the covenantal headship of Adam in Genesis 2, his preeminence in
25 spiritual leadership is also seen in his distinct accountability to God for breaking His
26 commandment (Gen 3:10-12, 17-19), and by the fact that the ground was cursed
27 because (*ba’avur*) of him (Gn 3:17). Adam held an authoritative position that brought
28 consequences over humankind and the rest of creation. His preeminence is also found
29 in the second part of God’s judgment upon the woman (Gen 3:16b). This complex
30 verse must be understood in its parallel with Song 7:11[English 7:10] and Gen 4:7. In
31 its parallelism with Song of Songs, Gen 3:16b seems to speak of God’s redemptive
32 provision to assure in the new context of sin the original one flesh unity between man
33 and woman. The woman’s yearning desire (*l’shuqah*) would be for her husband and
34 he would rule over (*mashal*) her in a godly servant-like manner (as pointed out by
35 Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors? Old Testament Consideration,”
36 17-20). On the other hand, in its parallelism with Gen 4:7, this judgment seems to
37 speak about the kind of leadership of the father in the family, and of the firstborn son
38 as his successor. In this case, the word *chatta’t* (“sin”) in Gen 4:7 is taken as a
39 reference to a sin offering animal (see Lev 4:3, 14, 20, 24-25; etc.), and the word
40 *l’shuqah* to the “will” of Abel and his relationship with Cain.

41 The spiritual leadership of Adam was later renewed with Noah (Gen 6:18-20;
42 9:1-17), Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:4-6; 17:2-8; 22:16-18), the nation of Israel (Exod
43 4:22-23; 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; 28:9-10, 13), and with David and his promised descendent

1 (2 Sam 7:19; Ps 2:6-12; 18:43; 72:8-11). In the New Testament it reached its full
2 fulfillment in Jesus as the Second Adam and the promised seed (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor
3 11:3; Gal 3:16; Eph 1:20-23; 5:23; Col 1:13-20; 2:9-10).

4 Male spiritual leadership in the family is evidenced by the role of the father as
5 the head and priest of his family (Gen 8:20; 12:8; 35:1-7; Job 1:5) and by the right of
6 the firstborn to succeed him (Gen 25:31-34; 27:37; 48:13-20). In the wider context of
7 the community and the nation, it is seen in the Levitical priesthood (Exod 28:1-29:37;
8 Lev 8:1-9:24); in the role of the elders of the people (Exod 24:1-11; Deut 19:11-12;
9 21:1-9; 22:13-19); of the judges (Exod 18:21-26; Deut 16:18; 19:17-18); of the
10 officials/police (Deut 16:18; 29:9 [English 29:10]; 31:28); and of the king (Deut
11 17:14-20; 1 Sam 8-10; 2 Sam 7). In the prophetic ministry in Israel, males usually
12 predominate from Moses to Malachi (Exod 3-4; Deut 18:15-22; Mal 1:1), but it is
13 noteworthy that a number of women participated in this kind of spiritual leadership
14 (as did Miriam, Exod 15:20-21; Deborah, Judg 4:4-5; and Huldah, 2 Kings 22:14).

15 In the New Testament, the preeminence of male spiritual leadership is seen in
16 the role of the husband at home (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Cor 11:3), in the
17 leadership of the apostles, the elders and the deacons in the Church (Acts 6:1-6;
18 14:23; 15:6, 22; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20; 4:11; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), and in the
19 ministry of the prophets, the pastors-teachers, and the evangelists (Acts 13:1; 21:8; 1
20 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). There are some references to women participating in the
21 spiritual ministry of God's people as prophets and as deaconess (Luke 2:36-38; Acts
22 21:9; Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:11).

23

24 **3. The spiritual gifts and God's call are for everyone, men and women, so that**
25 **they may be instruments of the Holy Spirit for the edifying of the body of Christ**
26 **and the fulfillment of mission.**

27 The Bible is clear that God calls everyone, men and women, to participate in
28 His mission of redemption, in the edifying of His community of faith, and in the
29 blessing of the world. He shows no favoritism (Deut 10:17-18; Acts 10:34-35; Gal
30 2:16; 3:28) and bestows His Holy Spirit to every human being who accepts His call,
31 conceding spiritual gifts that enable man and woman to do the work. God also unites
32 them in one body of faith in order that they may become His effective instruments in
33 the fulfillment of His will and mission (Joel 3:1-2 [English 2:28-29]; Acts 1:13-14;
34 2:1-4, 16-18; 10:24, 27-28, 34-35, 44-47; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 12-26, 27-31).

35 The universality of God's call and the unity of committed believers are present
36 in the Bible since its very beginning with Adam and Eve. It is also evident in the call
37 to Abraham and God's covenant with him, for Sarah was equally involved too (Gen
38 12:5, 11-20; 13:1; 16:1-9; 17:16-17). Other examples are the "call" of Rebekah in its
39 striking parallelism with call of Abraham (Gen 24:60 vs. Gen 12:1; 22:17); of
40 Miriam, Moses and Aaron (Exod 15:20-21; Mic 6:4); of Deborah and Barak (Judges
41 4-5); of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3-4); of Esther and Mordecai (Esther 4-9). The New
42 Testament presents the examples of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25); of Mary
43 and Joseph (Mat 1:18-2:23; Luke 1:26-56); of Martha, Mary and Lazarus (Luke

1 10:38-42; John 11:1-46); of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 16:14-15); of Paul and a
2 number of women and men who collaborate with him (Roman 16:1-15; Col 4:7-17).

3 Male preeminence in spiritual leadership in God's people never meant the
4 exclusion of women from a number of important ministries in the life of Israel and the
5 Church, and neither from the effective preaching of the Gospel to a world in need of
6 salvation. God always gave to men and women the spiritual gifts necessary to fulfill
7 the mission.

8
9 **4. There is no clear biblical base to ordain women to the pastoral ministry.**

10 The New Testament plainly presents the qualifications required for someone
11 to become a bishop/presbyter/pastor (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). According to these
12 texts, the pastoral ministry seems to belong to a distinctive area of male spiritual
13 leadership in the Church. Faithfulness to biblical teaching predicates the need to
14 follow this orientation. There is no clear biblical base, therefore, to ordain women to
15 the pastoral ministry.

16 On the other side, however, it is also very clear in the New Testament that the
17 pastoral ministry was only one of the different Gospel ministries that existed in the
18 First Century Church. Ephesians 4:11-12, for example, speaks of apostles, prophets,
19 evangelists, and pastors-teachers. 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 also gives a number of
20 different ministries (apostles, prophets, teachers, working of miracles, gifts of healing,
21 helps, governments, diversities of tongues), and it ranks them in relation to each other.
22 The New Testament also mentions the ministry of the deaconate (Acts 6:1-7; Phil 1:1;
23 1 Tim 3:8-13). From Paul's ranking in 1 Corinthians 12, it is evident that the ministry
24 of the pastor-teacher was an important one in the Early Church, but not the only one,
25 and neither the most important one. Among these different ministries, most likely, the
26 prophetic ministry and the deaconate involved women as well as men (Acts 11:27;
27 13:1; 15:32; 21:8-9, 10; Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:11).

28 Since the New Testament testifies to a plurality of Gospel ministries, and this
29 fact indicates that ministry was not reduced to the pastoral ministry only; and since
30 women seem to have participated in more than one of these ministries, including the
31 prophetic ministry that was one of the highest rank at the time; it would be wise that
32 the Church should investigate the possibility of broadening its understanding of
33 ministry in order to incorporate other forms of Gospel ministries that would include
34 men and women alike with the full recognition of their relevance for the Church
35 through ordination, as well as through adequate financial payment and recognition of
36 their invested authority.

37
38 **CONCLUSION:**

39 According to these considerations, the South American Division proposes:

- 40 1. That women should not be ordained to the pastoral ministry;
- 41 2. That the Church should further investigate the possibility of the ordination of
42 men and women to ministries other than the pastoral ministry.

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