



Seventh-day Adventist Church
South Pacific Division



Theology of Ordination

Report of the Biblical Research Committee

South Pacific Division

November 2013



1 **The Process:**

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The Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division was tasked with examining the topic of ordination, first to determine what the Adventist theology of ordination actually is. This was not a simple matter, as it had not really been done before. The church had inherited a tradition out of pragmatic necessities during its infancy, but never really founded the practice of ordaining ministers on biblical teachings per se. At it’s meeting in August 2011 the BRC chose a number of scholars from this division to explore the topic and report back. In the two meetings of 2012, papers were read and a report sent to the General Conference’s Biblical Research Institute. This process continued into 2013, with the discussions focussing more on the ordination of women, and a number of conclusions drawn up that are presented in this paper.

The members of the Biblical Research Committee in the South Pacific are: Barry Oliver (chair), David Tasker (secretary), Lawrence Tanabose, Jerry Matthews, Leigh Rice, Daniel Reynaud, David Thiele, Neil Watts, Wendy Jackson, Ray Roennfeldt, Ross Cole, Bradley Kemp, Jorge Munoz, Robert McIver, Drene Somasundram, and Branimir Schubert.

20 **OBSERVATIONS FOR THE THEOLOGY OF**
21 **ORDINATION STUDY COMMITTEE**

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1. The foundation principle for the resolution of questions regarding ordination is the use of the correct hermeneutic.
2. The discussion is driven by our understanding of the nature of the church, its role and its function.
3. An Adventist theology of ordination will be based on scriptural principles.
4. Where Scripture is silent on current issues, a theology of ordination must be based on the principles of Scripture, taking adequate account of what Scripture says as applied in its local or issue-specific contexts.
5. The words translated “ordain” have a very wide usage.
6. While the roots of many NT practices can be traced to the OT there is discontinuity between them. There is no practical connection for example, between priests, Levites, elders, and deacons.
7. Ordination is a practice driven by mission and practical needs – informed by biblical studies and theology.
8. The Bible does not command ordination; however it does encourage the church to develop modes of maintaining order in the exercise of its mission. These modes may go beyond biblical practice but must be consistent with it.
9. Ordination is not to be considered a sacrament. Biblical evidence supports the symbolism of the laying on of hands when appointing individuals for a task, but there is no firm evidence for the transfer of grace or virtue in this context. Consequently, we must reject attributing sacramental value to ordination.

- 1 10. The theology of ordination informs and is informed by the practical
2 implementation of our ecclesiology, i.e. the global and local nature
3 of the church, which, expressed in its various forms, facilitates
4 mission.
5 11. The significance of ordination is influenced by culture. In some
6 parts of the world, culture bestows inordinate status upon a
7 minister at ordination.
8 12. EGW considers that ordination contains an experiential element
9 that has its basis in a call from God. Although some women may not
10 be concerned about non-ordination, for others it creates great
11 angst because of their sense of their divine call, which the church
12 does not seem to recognize.
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14 **Conclusions:**

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16 1. The Biblical Research Committee of the South Pacific Division does
17 not see any scriptural principle which would be an impediment to
18 women being ordained.
19 2. The calling of the Holy Spirit needs to be recognized for both men
20 and women. There is a sense of injustice that needs to be
21 addressed.
22 3. The mission of the church is a primary determinant of praxis, both
23 in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and in its
24 climax as the Holy Spirit is poured out on both men and women
25 during the latter rain.
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27 **Papers Presented to Date:**

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29 “The Language of Ordination in Scripture,” Ross Cole PhD, Avondale College of
30 Higher Education.

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32 “A Biblical Theology of Ordination,” Kyle de Waal PhD, Avondale College of
33 Higher Education.

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35 “The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History,” Darius
36 Jankiewicz PhD, Andrews University.

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38 “Should Ordination be Considered a Sacrament in the Seventh-day Adventist
39 Church? An Evaluation in the light of Biblical Data,” Wendy Jackson PhD (Cand.),
40 Avondale College of Higher Education.

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42 “‘The Lord Has Ordained Me’: Ellen White’s Perspective,” John Skrzypaszek, Ellen
43 G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education.

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45 “The Ordination of Women: A Biblical-Theological Introduction,” David Thiele
46 PhD, Pacific Adventist University.
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