SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

ORDINATION OF WOMEN AS PASTORS: IS IT BIBLICAL?

A Report to TOSC by

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

October, 14 – 16, 2013
(Completed January 31, 2013)

At this point of reporting on ordination of women as pastors in the Adventist Church, the East-Central Africa Division Biblical Research Committee (ECD-BRC) and the action of the East-Central Africa Division Executive Committee (ECD EXCOM) at its year-end business are reported.

Eight of the eleven members of the ECD BRC met again from October 14-16 at the ECD headquarters to continue reviewing issues and views connected with ordination, and specifically, the consideration of views in connection with ordination of women as pastors.

Selected scholars had been asked to expand their search for understanding to find out whether women could be ordained as pastors in the Adventist Church. BRC members were informed about the urgency of the need to resolve the issue of ordination of women as pastors, and that the findings of the serious studies would be reported to the ECD EXCOM at its year-end business meeting as per count-down by the global committee—TOSC. BRC members are also still aware of the higher stakes within ECD territory. Stakes are quite high at ECD region where the Church is growing rapidly numerically and structurally. It is a fact that, on the average, 500 -600 join the Church within ECD territory as baptized
members daily! Structurally, the growth of the Church in ECD takes place at a breath-taking speed filling one with a “sense of immense opportunity and a sense of immense peril” as O’Neill observed in the 20th Century. All of a sudden the Union Mission was known as “Kenya Union Mission” gave birth to two Union Conferences which have already been organized! This is unprecedented. Tanzania Union Mission has also given birth to two Unions—one Union Conference up north and a Union Mission down south. As if this is not enough, two formerly attached territories within ECD have also become full fledged Union Missions. Burundi and North-East Congo Attached Territory (NECAT) have already been organized as Union Missions. Moreover, a number of local mission fields have become conferences. Such phenomenal growth is apt to keep most ordinary members in ECD territory preoccupied with issues of evangelizing and managing growth instead of ordination of women as pastors. Lay people, and not paid pastors, are the ones who doing much of the work of winning and keeping people in the Church. Men, women, and young people are proclaiming the Good News and leading many to Christ.

Never the less, BRC members are aware of the fact that the global Church of God is one, and that whatever affects others elsewhere in the world will impact ECD also in one way or the other. We are also aware that the ECD region is part of the world Church, and may not attain to God mandated maturity in Christ, unless it is rooted and anchored on solid biblical foundations and sound theological platform. BRC members, therefore, are keen to engage in pertinent theological conversations and they take seriously and prayerfully with the rest of the world Church in developing a theology of ordination which will enable the world Church to effectively carry out the mission of the Church which is actually the mission of God.
Our procedures for the October 14-16 BRC meetings followed outlined steps as follows: 1. Does the Bible support or mandate ordination of women as pastors? 2. Examination of what Ellen G. White Said About Ordination; 3. The Truth About Headship/Leadership; 4. Implications of Restoration to Edenic State; 5. Examination of Latest TOSC Consensus Statement. The procedure considered points which the Committee deemed relevant in the ongoing debate as to whether women should be ordained formal as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. **Ordination of Women As Pastors in the Adventist Church**

Presenters of scholarly papers were categorized according to their academic/professional specialization. Old Testament scholar(s) explored Old Testament data ordination as laying on of hands on someone’s head, anointing, fasting, and praying for the person, and the ritual was considered a way of setting apart a person, empowering him and appointing him to office for a special function. Although there was nothing in the Old Testament prescribes or describes ordination of women, the presenter concluded that women may also be ordained as pastors in the Adventist Church. He argued for progressive understanding of revelation and proposed that women be ordained even though the Bible does not prescribe or describe it, because the global cultural landscape has changed in favor of women involvement in any profession including professions within the Church. To the Old Testament scholar, who is part of our Committee, considerations for justice, fairness and equality may no longer be ignored by the contemporary Church this time, and the example of Acts 15 gives us a clue today on how the Adventist Church needs

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to handle the issue ordination of women as pastors. According to this presenter, when the
Bible is silent on an issue, the Church may go ahead and make a pragmatic decision which
helps the Church to move forward with its God-given mission. Thus, according to our Old
Testament scholar women may be ordained as pastors in the Adventist Church now. To
bolster the point made to go ahead and ordain women as pastors now, the presenter
further argues that, after all, more women are entering universities to enroll in the
seminaries and departments of theology which educate and train people for pastoral
ministry. Another Old Testament scholar whose study revealed significant pertinent points
was not officially a member of the Committee.² Having studied numerous papers prepared
and presented by proponents and opponents of women ordination as pastors, he proposes
a model of ordination for both men and women, which is consistent with very high view of
the biblical position and is apt to enable current opponents and proponent of women
ordination to make progress towards honorable consensus on this issue. Ojwang’s paper
resonates well with legitimate scriptural concerns which need to be addressed as the
Church moves on to advance the redemptive mission of God globally. It is a paper which
also demonstrates keenness of perception that is useful in handling thorny issues which
affect the Church in one way or the other. He argues that the Church may go ahead and
ordain women as pastors, but, in his understanding, women may not be appointed or

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² Gilbert Ojwang, “Ordination: In Search of Consensus,” Gilbert Okuro Ojwang is an African
Old Testament scholar from Kenya who currently serves as professor at Oakwood
University, Huntsville, Alabama, USA. His paper was presented at the “Conference on
Adventism, Society, and Sustainable Development,” which took place at Somerset West,
Cape Town, South Africa on November 28 – December 2, 2013. His views are cited in this
report because they make a lot of sense in the current debate of whether to ordain or not
ordain women as pastors.
elected to authoritative positions of leadership because the Bible forbids that. His views make quite a lot of sense and most of them advance biblically sound arguments.

The Christian Ministries scholar\(^3\) of our Committee disagrees with Old Testament scholars and he asserted that since the Bible does not mandate ordination of women as pastors, it would be wrong to ordain women for pastoral ministry. He argued that after all it’s “God who ordains” as Ellen White asserts.\(^4\) Additional arguments which he advances against ordaining women are that, according God’s order God gave headship to a man “even before sin” entered the world. He also sees order in creation as informing the Church that man is first of the equals who may also lead as “husband of one wife”. What the Christian Ministries scholar posits falls within the mainline conservative approaches which oppose ordination of women as pastors on the bases of clear scriptural message which may be documented.

Our New Testament specialist\(^5\) is also not in favor of women ordination for now. For our New Testament scholar, both “inclusivists” and “exclusivists” on the issue of ordaining women as pastors are wrong. He has observed the silence of the New Testament on the issue of women ordination, calls for caution although there is no clear New Testament that is for or against women ordination. According to him, ordination of women now would still be a premature move for now. The New Testament scholar points out that some Scriptural passage which appear to prohibit women ordination are not understood.

\(^3\) Kasereka, Kavis, Kavinywa Kasereka Kavis also presented a Paper at the ECD BRC which opposes women ordination as indicated. March 20-22, 2013. He still maintained the position by the time the Committee reconvened in October.


He reads inadequate understanding of Pauline passages which seem to prohibit women from participation in church life as leaders. However, he clearly states that the church has to recognize that women are equally gifted by the Spirit to advance the ministry and mission of the Church. On the basis of the absence of prescriptive passages in the New Testament which says women may be ordained or not ordained as pastors, advises caution. The New Testament presenter on the topic of ordination he identifies what he refers to as the German “Haustafeln” passages in the New Testament which have not been adequately studied to establish their real meaning cautions against ordaining women as pastors now before the New Testament message is understood. According to him there is, therefore, a need to continue to study until the Church reaches a better and clear understanding of the “Haustafeln.”

Furthermore, our historical and systematic theologians are opposed to women ordination but accept women ministry. One of them is not really opposed to women ordination, but proposes a new approach to the theology and practice of ordination which will facilitate a biblical theology of ordination that is stripped of the ancient Roman Society’s cultural trappings that fuel hierarchical understanding of ordination. Another historical systematic theologian is completely opposed to women ordination and identifies some secular feminist pressures that are tempting the Church to cave in and accommodate alien unbiblical notions which may ultimately blunt the advance of God’s redemptive mission to the fallen world. He also argues that priests were males and that the

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emphasis on the “first born male” is informative on this same issue. According to him women may do everything in Church, but “headship” is prerogative of men as the Bible says and that it is not safe to depart from what the Bible clearly states.

All the scholars of our BRC except one Old Testament one believe that the demand for women ordination as pastors is informed by feminist movement or outside pressures which must be rejected because the stakes are quite high as to whether the Adventist Church adheres strictly to *sola scriptura* principle or curves in to contemporary cultural pressures which are not necessarily biblically undergirded. Thus, according to the findings of the scholars in our committee so far, there is no biblical warrant for ordaining women into pastoral ministry. There are a number of New Testament passages whose messages are given in context of worship. Quite a number of them are Pauline: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:34, 35; Ephesians 5:23,24; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Peter 3:1-3. Although the basic meaning of passages referred to is not clear because Bible scholars differ here and there, the ECD BRC members opt to go by the obvious meaning of passages. After examination of pertinent Bible passages, most of the Bible students do not find any basis for ordaining women. So far the obvious answer to the question whether ordination of women to pastoral ministry is biblical is “no” or “wait till we get more light.” It has now emerged that the opponents of ordination of women as pastors are many and opposition to the move to ordain women is quite strong. On the other hand, the proponents for the ordination of women are also significant in number and their position is quite strong too.

2. Ellen G. White’s Position on Ordination

The ECD BRC also considered examining Ellen G. White’s position on the issue of ordination and ordination of women in particular. Committee members felt like it was
necessary to find out how a person of her standing viewed ordination. Ellen White ministered to the Church for more than 70 years and during the times when “ordination” as a term was freely used as an act of setting apart a person for ministry. She comments about Moses, the founder of the holy nation of Israel, as a leader of the people of God and that he was ordained. Moses also, in turn, ordained elders who assisted him in leading the people of God.\(^8\) She also observes that Jesus also called and ordained His disciples. The early apostolic Church practiced ordination and Ellen White comments approvingly of the practice.\(^9\) It is quite significant to note that Ellen White ministered during the time when the concept of ordination was misunderstood and she commented disapprovingly about the sacramental view of ordination as recorded later in her writings.\(^10\) She condemned the view of ordination as “infusion” of graces, virtues or powers to an ordained person.\(^11\) It is also revealing that Ellen White also comments on ordination both as informal and formal rite. God ordains without the public laying on of hands by human beings but He also endorses the Church’s public setting apart of people for ministry. In fact, she herself, is considered to have been informally ordained.\(^12\) There are more counsels on ordination of deacons, local elders and traveling elders, medical missionaries and others.\(^13\) Another pertinent observation to note is that there is no clarity in Ellen White’s writing about the ordination of women as pastors, although she clearly states that women who are willing to

\(^9\) Ibid., 90.
\(^10\) White, op. cit., 162.
\(^11\) Ibid.
consecrate some of their time doing personal ministry may be set apart. It does appear like there was already a debate about ordination of women during Ellen White’s time and she did not take sides in the debate. With silence from “the Lord’s Messenger” the current debate about ordaining women or not ordaining them does not benefit much from Ellen G. White. Nevertheless, the significant statement about the importance of publicly setting apart people for ministries may serve as pointers to what the Church needs to do. Her silence or uncleanness about issues like the one we have to deal with right now speaks volumes.

Our Committee found it necessary to examine some of the papers which came from TOSC in order to clarify the position of ECD BRC. Some scholarly papers from the TOSCl have advanced arguments in favor of women ordination as pastors and those who are opposed to the move assert their views quite strong terms and each side uses “biblical narratives’ evidence” which make us wonder whether we are still able to read the Bible and get the real message which the Bible is intending to communicate.

4. The Search for Truth about Headship/Leadership in the Church

ECD BRC members have observed that the New Testament passages on Headship and Leadership in the Church are quite complex although “exclusivists” in the women ordination debate appeal to them. Members note that those (exclusivists) who use these texts to oppose women ordination consider these biblical passages as normative in regulating women’s participation in the ministry and mission of the Church. They consider the passages as “extremely clear and needing not to be subjected to the exegesis that waters down their prescription to the modern church.” Our BRC members are convinced

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that even though the paper like the one by Edwin Reynolds is exegetically sound, it still leaves readers feeling less comfortable with this position in that it does not satisfactorily answer questions which are connected with other scriptural passages, even by the same Apostle Paul, which expressly or implicitly endorse women's full participation in the ministry and mission of the Church. Moreover, the position of “exclusivists” either defines leadership narrowly or those who say that women may not take leadership positions in the church have no satisfactory explanation about the role of Ellen G. White. If leadership is defined as “using influence to advance God’s redemptive mission” or “giving direction, developing people, visioning, and strategizing,” then Ellen White, as a woman, was a leader per excellence. It, therefore, reads absurd the assertion that women are not permitted to lead. The Adventist Church stands on the solid foundation of Scripture as the “greater lighter” and as illuminated by the “lesser light” of Ellen G. White’s writings. What then does “headship/leadership” mean if Ellen White as a woman may not be considered a leader? Questions in connection with headship/leadership as male domain came from minority voices of our Committee while the majority appear satisfied by the surface or “clear” meaning of what the Bible says. This, as the New Testament scholar, calls for more study by all those of faith who “seek understanding.”

On the other hand, the Committee has not come across any “inclusivists” argument that is convincing. They argue loudly and firmly that “the Church has unnecessarily delayed to endorse women’s ordination” and that social trends have given a new perspective to human roles. Accordingly, “time has come to stand up and be counted and truly act on what we believe that God is no respecter of persons and that, in Christ, there is
no male or female.” Bwambale quotes from Keren Katoske who contends that the church’s endorsement of women ordination would “not only follow biblical instruction but also maintain credibility before our younger members who are keenly aware of gender issues.” Such assertions exert undue pressure on the Church to act without clear biblically undergirded guidance. The different views on interpreting Scripture, and especially, passages on headship as clearly taught, have left the two sides of the debate camps engaging in what may be considered “dialogue of the deaf” or “selective inattention” whereby human beings tend to hear what they want to hear. Such a situation makes some people vulnerable post-modernity which rejects absolute truth. It is worrying to read papers, even by some eminent scholars, who appear to approach and engage in studying selected passages of Scripture with what is known as “GIGO,” tendency of approaching the biblical text using a particular hermeneutic to scoop out information bent towards a pre-meditated goal.” Specific presentations which appear to fall into this category are papers which call for return to the original “Edenic Model” which actually obligates the Church to ordain women as pastoral and spiritual leaders. ECD BRC members were intrigued by the assertions, and they decided to examine some of those papers.

5. Implications of Call for Restoration to Edenic State

The ECD BRC members examined papers which call for ordination of women on the bases of the Gospel message which seeks to restore or save human beings from the damages of the Fall. The cardinal argument advanced by those who use the motif of restoration to Edenic state is that the Church will be negating what is biblically mandated

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15 Quoted in Bwambale Paper.
16 Bwambale
17 Bwambale, 4.
to proclaim and apply the message which liberates human beings from the curse in Genesis 3:16 and restore them to the pre-Fall state found in Genesis 1 and 2. Papers like the ones by Richard Davidson\(^{18}\) and Jiri Moskala\(^{19}\) warrant comments from ECD BRC members, some of whom initially dismissed the arguments in favor of women ordination as stemming from employing biblical texts “eisegetically.” One has to carefully analyze the rationale of the argument that these eminent professors are saying in order to make sense of what they are trying to communicate. What these Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary professors are saying is significant because their views may be considered as views of those who are at the center of what the global Seventh-day Adventist Church considers to be the teaching school of the global Church. Both of these presentation, especially the one by Davidson, are detailed and packed with information which leads to the conclusion that the Church would actually be more consistent with biblical message if it ordains women as spiritual leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Unfortunately, the arguments advanced, though logical still leave some of us as African Christian professionals unconvinced if not confused. For example, the assertion that “Adam and Eve were both priests serving in the first original sanctuary of Eden” is misleading by failing to build a conceptual bridge that makes it easy for the simple Adventist Christian to plug into the Seventh-day Adventist Theological System as we understand it so far. Furthermore, the appeal to the biblical narratives like Song of Songs which express or imply elevated views

\(^{18}\) Richard M Davidson, “Should Women Be Ordained As Pastors? Old Testament Considerations” This Paper was prepared and presented to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee meeting at Baltimore, Maryland, USA. July 22-24, 2013.  
\(^{19}\) Jiri Moskala, “Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation-Fall—ReCreation Hermeneutic (Biblical-Theological Reflections on Basic Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics Applied to the Ordination of Women). The paper with this long title was also presented at the same venue where Richard Davidson presented.
concerning male and female gender relations is not convincing to us as Africans. We do
have and use the language that exalts women to a queenly status (In my Zulu tradition I
address my wife as “queen of the home” but this does not mean that Zulus/Ndebeles are
models of egalitarian marriage relationship). My people, as I understand them, are far from
the biblical ideal of the marriage and gender relationships which are in the sacred Book, the
Bible. The power and status accorded to the woman who is the paternal aunt in the
African traditional family is apt to mislead scholars to conclude that women wield a lot of
power among some African clans like mine. King Tshaka of the Zulus is on record as one
who valued his mother so much that when she died, he commanded the burial of her body
together 15 virgins who were buried alive with Tshaka’s mother corpse! That is why
arguments which are undergirded by cultural expressions and practices which are not
necessarily intended to promote Christian ideals are weak and unconvincing to some of us
whose culture is closer to that which we read in the Bible.

All of this and more appears to fit in the category of arguments in favor of women
ordination which come from the approach to studying the Bible with a particular
hermeneutic that selectively “scoops out information that is bent towards a pre-meditated
goal” as was pointed out above in this report. This is not helpful. The argument that we as
the Remnant must move from the Fall to the redeemed status, as was the case in Eden
before sin, is quite cogent. However, such good arguments need to be buttressed by
adequate information which explains why Jesus, Paul, Peter and others including Ellen
White did not immediately and practically illustrate what is implied by highlighting such
insights. Even in the apocalyptic Book of Revelation the imagery of elders who are ever
before God and the apostles after whom the twelve gate in heaven are named were males.
6. ECD-EXCOM ACTION

The process of study and examination of results of all the studying connected with ordination of women as pastors were reported to the ECD-EXCOM in November when delegates were gathered to conduct year-end business for the region. It was reported that according to the available data resulting from the studies made so far, by the BRC and the examination of selected papers written by scholars from other regions of the world Church, ECD BRC still sees no light in ordaining women as pastors under the current praxis of understanding and practicing ordination. Our Committee decision is not conclusive and members are open and are urging further studies until the Church is convinced that ordaining under current modalities is biblical. By presenting the report this way, the Committee is suggesting that there may be other models of setting people apart for special services which may not be referred to as “ordination,” but equally communicating full recognition as servant of God to the person who is being set apart even if that person is a woman. For this to happen there has to be a change in the Church’s modalities of affirming and endorsing those who are set apart or appointed for service. Thus, the Committee is implying that “ordination” now carries unhealthy nuances which need undoing in order to facilitate servant leadership for the Adventist Church. The cardinal recommendation by the ECD BRC to the ECD and the General Conference is: “NO, NOT YET” under the modalities of ordination as they are currently, but some different modalities need to be urgently developed and implemented in the Church’s praxis so that no servant of God is relegated to unhealthy emotional economy which makes genuine servants of Christ feel unappreciated and unvalued by the Church. The Committee members make this recommendation after thorough study and agonizing prayerfully before our Wonderful Savior. The clear message
from texts which are used by opponents of women ordination cannot be explained away as some scholars try to so. We also find equally clear messages in the same Bible which show that all members of God’s Church must participate in advancing the redemptive mission of God. So, what do we make of this? There may be related issues which block our understanding, but for now we resort to erring on the side of striving to adhere to what the good Book says without closed minds.

It was revealing to see the response of the EXCOM members to the report presented. Apparently the Church of God in ECD which, previously, signaled disinterest in the issue of ordination of women has become awakened to the issues in the ongoing debate. Most of the responses revealed that the church at large at the grassroots level is not adequately informed about the ordination issues and there is so much disinformation which underlines the need for further studies, as the Committee recommends, and sharing information down to the grassroots levels as well. This point is put across with a strong sentiment to see a theologically intelligent and responsible Church. It will be counter-productive for the Remnant Church’s delegates at St Antonio General Conference Session to cast their vote for or against women ordination if they do not have adequate information.

It became interesting and clear that many ECD EXCOM members were fired to discuss the issue of women ordination, and there was not enough time to listen to all points of view.

The ECD EXCOM voted to record the report that was presented, and again, signaling a need to continue studying the issue. ECD BRC members have identified six cluster of areas of study which need enough examination as the people of God continue to “seek understanding” of that which affects the health of the Body of Christ.
After all is said and done there must be decisions to be implemented in the Church and the mission field where the Church operates. So, the last section of this report combines specific recommendations in connection with the way forward for the Church and the essential considerations as conversations on women ordination continue.

7. Selected Considerations and Recommendations for the Church’s Way Forward

Studies connected with ordination of women have been going on for many years now. Unfortunately, many times those who are tasked to pursue studies with hopes to come up with clues to developing solutions, end up not listening to one another and thus hindering progress to lasting solutions. It may be better to consider the following six topics to be studies as recommendations are made to the Church this time.

A. Ecclesiology, Ministry, Mission and Spirituality to Be Studied for Understanding Ordination

ECD BRC members have observed that studies on ordination may not be divorced from studies in Christian spirituality, ecclesiology, ministry and mission. Ordination must be linked to what the individual Christian needs to be and become, what the church needs to be and become, and what those who serve the church ought to be and become. Servant leaders of the church need adequate conceptualization of what is involved in ministry and mission of the church. Hence, a need to study ecclesiology and ministry together with the study of ordination, is mandatory.

B. Justice and Fairness Issues Need Not Be Studied Together with Ordination

In these times when sensitivities to injustice and dysfunctional policies have grown, there is a need to intentionally adhere to what the Bible says instead of reacting to societal trends outside the Bible. This consideration arises out of what has been
observed to be hindering ongoing objective discussions. For example, it is counter-
productive to label the conservative wing of the debate as insensitive to justice and
fairness. Most people on both sides of the debate are good people who believe in
justice and fairness for all and equality between men and women. So, the debate
about whether women should be ordained or not is not supposed to be confused
with demands for justice, equality and other moral issues as is the case in the
contemporary societal arena.

C. The Need to Use Approaches That Are Culturally Sensitive

Some of the measures which are meant to rectify anomalies in the church have been
implemented without adequate preparation of the people who are affected by the
change. It will be crucially important to inform the church at the grass root levels
about policy changes which seek to address anomalies. Up to now, the Adventist
Church has not done well in connection with changes that brought about the
department of women ministries. Those who have been around as long as I have
been are aware of numerous fall outs which have been realized as a result of
introduction of women ministries department in the church. I happen to know of a
good number of churches in Malawi which withdrew from the Adventist Sisterhood
of Churches because of the introduction women ministries department. There are
Adventist churches I know that are refusing to allow women to preach from the
pulpit, and it has been difficult or impossible to convince the elders of such churches
that it is okay for a woman to preach from the pulpit. Ongoing conversations in
connection with women ordination are already sparking comments like “we told
you that this will go very far to undermine the authority of the Bible.” So, whatever
we do even through this committee must not be allowed to close the minds and hearts of the people of God from receiving and processing the truth that sets free. It is also counter-productive to push the people to the precipice or crisis of authority.

When the General Conference introduced the Department of Women Ministry there were no clear guidelines about implementation processes of the decision. There are still some anomalies even at some of the Division levels. Women who are appointed or elected to positions of leadership in the administrative unit of the Church have been found to be living contrary to some of the family values which the church advocates. The woman who is Women Ministries Director at a regional office may find herself separated from her husband who is an accomplished professional practicing far away from his wife who is a director of and important department of the Church. The whole family suffers inconveniences because her husband may not move to the same vicinity where his wife operates on a daily basis.

Some of our Committee members and other concerned observers make specific recommendations about the way forward in connection with ordination of women. All things must be considered. How practical is it for a young woman married adult to be a senior pastor of a church during child bearing years? How does a married woman with demands of family well-being do the work of a departmental director at any level itinerate around the globe leaving children behind? All these questions have to be considered as we make policies which regulate the ministry and mission of the Church. We cannot afford to be a church that is not proactive in favor of the family. Sadly, there is already enough misery that is piling up in marriages and families because of “careers” and “calls” outside the family. The good Lord may not
be impressed by advancement to pinnacles of impressive careers at the expense of marriages and families. If Jesus were to teach on family values today He might ask the question: “what shall it profit a man/woman to gain the highest professional grandeur in his/her career, but lose his/her own spouse/child?” Such questions and statements which come out as preachy, are not made to argue against ordination of women as pastors, but to alert the Church about the need for proactive family policies even for women who may be called to minister in spheres that militate against her high calling as a spouse and mother.

D. Focus on Building Consensus

The current Consensus Statement on ordination which was developed by the TOSC is very useful in clarifying the real church’s position. It is useful and helpful to state what ordination is and what it is not. Otherwise, it is difficult to eliminate notions of hierarchy and patriarchy on issues of ordination when some polices and practices are perceived to be reinforcing these notions. For example, the church may have to remove policy provisions on salaries and remuneration which is linked to “ordination to the gospel ministry.” Thus, the church may also remove notions that ordination is a concept and practice that is intended to perpetuate male domination even in the Church.

E. Consideration of Redefinition of Ordination.

There may be a need to redefine “ordination” so that the concept is stripped of the original Latin “ordo” (meaning “order”, “class” or “rank.” If possible, a new term may have to be found. Furthermore, the traditional African worldview which sees ordination as a male “spiritual rite of passage.” Help is needed to communicate the
message that the traditional understanding that male/female roles are not fixed.

There are more people and non-Christians who view ordination of a woman as attempting to defeminize her, and, therefore, unthinkable. The God of Israel did not bypass cultural norms when He communicated important messages. The Church today may do itself disservice by the sheer act of ordaining women the same way it conducts the ritual when male ordinands are set apart. Creativity is called for to help people move forward comfortably with God's agenda.

F. Issues of Equality in Relation to Leadership

Unfortunately, there are those who link ordination with justice, fairness, and equality. ECD BRC members note with concern that issues of equality and submission are not understood by many people. When God gives an assignment to a person of particular gender He is not communicating equality or inequality between the person who is assigned and another who is not assigned. It should not have occurred to any one that when God set apart certain people for special services then that person who has been set apart consider himself/herself as superior or better, and, therefore endowed with additional magical powers.