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2
3 **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**
4 **EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**
5

6
7 **ORDINATION OF WOMEN AS PASTORS: IS IT BIBLICAL?**
8

9 **A Report to TOSC by**

10 **East-Central Africa Division(ECD) Biblical Research Committee (BRC)**
11

12 **October, 14 – 16, 2013**
13 **(Completed January 31, 2013)**
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17 At this point of reporting on ordination of women as pastors in the Adventist
18 Church, the East-Central Africa Division Biblical Research Committee (ECD-BRC) and the
19 action of the East-Central Africa Division Executive Committee (ECD EXCOM) at its year-
20 end business are reported.

21 Eight of the eleven members of the ECD BRC met again from October 14-16 at the
22 ECD headquarters to continue reviewing issues and views connected with ordination, and
23 specifically, the consideration of views in connection with ordination of women as pastors.
24 Selected scholars had been asked to expand their search for understanding to find out
25 whether women could be ordained as pastors in the Adventist Church. BRC members were
26 informed about the urgency of the need to resolve the issue of ordination of women as
27 pastors, and that the findings of the serious studies would be reported to the ECD EXCOM
28 at its year-end business meeting as per count-down by the global committee—TOSC. BRC
29 members are also still aware of the higher stakes within ECD territory. Stakes are quite
30 high at ECD region where the Church is growing rapidly numerically and structurally. It is
31 a fact that, on the average, 500 -600 join the Church within ECD territory as baptized

32 members daily! Structurally, the growth of the Church in ECD takes place at a breath-
33 taking speed filling one with a “sense of immense opportunity and a sense of immense
34 peril” as O’ Neill observed in the 20th Century. All of a sudden the Union Mission was
35 known as “Kenya Union Mission” gave birth to two Union Conferences which have already
36 been organized! This is unprecedented. Tanzania Union Mission has also given birth to
37 two Unions—one Union Conference up north and a Union Mission down south. As if this is
38 not enough, two formerly attached territories within ECD have also become full fledged
39 Union Missions. Burundi and North-East Congo Attached Territory (NECAT) have already
40 been organized as Union Missions. Moreover, a number of local mission fields have become
41 conferences. Such phenomenal growth is apt to keep most ordinary members in ECD
42 territory preoccupied with issues of evangelizing and managing growth instead of
43 ordination of women as pastors. Lay people, and not paid pastors, are the ones who doing
44 much of the work of winning and keeping people in the Church. Men, women, and young
45 people are proclaiming the Good News and leading many to Christ.

46 Never the less, BRC members are aware of the fact that the global Church of God is
47 one, and that whatever affects others elsewhere in the world will impact ECD also in one
48 way or the other. We are also aware that the ECD region is part of the world Church, and
49 may not attain to God mandated maturity in Christ, unless it is rooted and anchored on
50 solid biblical foundations and sound theological platform. BRC members, therefore, are
51 keen to engage in pertinent theological conversations and they take seriously and
52 prayerfully with the rest of the world Church in developing a theology of ordination which
53 will enable the world Church to effectively carry out the mission of the Church which is
54 actually the mission of God.

55 Our procedures for the October 14-16 BRC meetings followed outlined steps as
56 follows: 1. Does the Bible support or mandate ordination of women as pastors? 2.
57 Examination of what Ellen G. White Said About Ordination; 3. The Truth About
58 Headship/Leadership; 4. Implications of Restoration to Edenic State; 5. Examination of
59 Latest TOSC Consensus Statement. The procedure considered points which the Committee
60 deemed relevant in the ongoing debate as to whether women should be ordained formal as
61 pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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

63 Presenters of scholarly papers were categorized according to their
64 academic/professional specialization. Old Testament scholar¹(s) explored Old Testament
65 data ordination as laying on of hands on someone's head, anointing, fasting, and praying for
66 the person, and the ritual was considered a way of setting apart a person, empowering him
67 and appointing him to office for a special function. Although there was nothing in the Old
68 Testament prescribes or describes ordination of women, the presenter concluded that
69 women may also be ordained as pastors in the Adventist Church. He argued for
70 progressive understanding of revelation and proposed that women be ordained even
71 though the Bible does not prescribe or describe it, because the global cultural landscape
72 has changed in favor of women involvement in any profession including professions within
73 the Church. To the Old Testament scholar, who is part of our Committee, considerations for
74 justice, fairness and equality may no longer be ignored by the contemporary Church this
75 time, and the example of Acts 15 gives us a clue today on how the Adventist Church needs

¹ Paul Wahonya, "A Theology of Ordination: An Old Testament Perspective," A Paper Presented at the Biblical Research Committee, Advent Hill, Nairobi, Kenya. March 20-22, 2013. Paul Wahonya first presented his paper in March, 2013. He continued working on the paper and still had the same conclusions by October when the Committee reconvened.

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

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.

94 elected to authoritative positions of leadership because the Bible forbids that. His views
95 make quite a lot of sense and most of them advance biblically sound arguments.

96 The Christian Ministries scholar³ of our Committee disagrees with Old Testament
97 scholars and he asserted that since the Bible does not mandate ordination of women as
98 pastors, it would be wrong to ordain women for pastoral ministry. He argued that after all
99 it's "God who ordains" as Ellen White asserts.⁴ Additional arguments which he advances
100 against ordaining women are that, according God's order God gave headship to a man
101 "even before sin" entered the world. He also sees order in creation as informing the Church
102 that man is first of the equals who may also lead as "husband of one wife". What the
103 Christian Ministries scholar posits falls within the mainline conservative approaches which
104 oppose ordination of women as pastors on the bases of clear scriptural message which may
105 be documented.

106 Our New Testament specialist⁵ is also not in favor of women ordination for now.
107 For our New Testament scholar, both "inclusivists" and "exclusivists" on the issue of
108 ordaining women as pastors are wrong. He has observed the silence of the New Testament
109 on the issue of women ordination, calls for caution although there is no clear New
110 Testament that is for or against women ordination. According to him, ordination of women
111 now would still be a premature move for now. The New Testamentler points out that
112 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 time the Committee reconvened in October.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1939), 355.

⁵ Simon Bwambale, "Where Is the Ordination of Women in the New Testament?: A Review of Views and Recommendations", A Paper Presented at the Biblical Research Committee, Advent Hill, Nairobi, Kenya. October 14-16, 2013.

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

124 Furthermore, our historical and systematic theologians are opposed to women
125 ordination but accept women ministry. One of them is not really opposed to women
126 ordination, but proposes a new approach to the theology and practice of ordination which
127 will facilitate a biblical theology of ordination that is stripped of the ancient Roman
128 Society’s cultural trappings that fuel hierarchical understanding of ordination.⁶ Another
129 historical systematic theologian⁷ is completely opposed to women ordination and identifies
130 some secular feminist pressures that are tempting the Church to curve in and
131 accommodate alien unbiblical notions which may ultimately blunt the advance of God’s
132 redemptive mission to the fallen world. He also argues that priests were males and that the

⁶ Georghe Razmerita, A Presentation at the Biblical Research Committee, Advent Hill, Nairobi, Kenya. March 20 – 22, 2013.

⁷ Lameck Miyayo, “Ordination: A Theological Symbol for Male Ecclesiastical Authority,” A Paper Presented at ECD Biblical Research Committee, Advent Hill, Nairobi, Kenya. March 20 -22, 2013. Miyayo was still of the same position when the Committee reconvened in October 2013.

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

136 All the scholars of our BRC except one Old Testament one believe that the demand
137 for women ordination as pastors is informed by feminist movement or outside pressures
138 which must be rejected because the stakes are quite high as to whether the Adventist
139 Church adheres strictly to *sola scriptura* principle or curves in to contemporary cultural
140 pressures which are not necessarily biblically undergirded. Thus, according to the findings
141 of the scholars in our committee so far, there is no biblical warrant for ordaining women
142 into pastoral ministry. There are a number of New Testament passages whose messages
143 are given in context of worship. Quite a number of them are Pauline: 1 Corinthians 11:3-
144 16; 14:34, 35; Ephesians 5:23,24; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Peter 3:1-3. Although the basic
145 meaning of passages referred to is not clear because Bible scholars differ here and there,
146 the ECD BRC members opt to go by the obvious meaning of passages. After examination of
147 pertinent Bible passages, most of the Bible students do not find any basis for ordaining
148 women. So far the obvious answer to the question whether ordination of women to
149 pastoral ministry is biblical is “no” or “wait till we get more light.” It has now emerged that
150 the opponents of ordination of women as pastors are many and opposition to the move to
151 ordain women is quite strong. On the other hand, the proponents for the ordination of
152 women are also significant in number and their position is quite strong too.

153 **2. Ellen G. White’s Position on Ordination**

154 The ECD BRC also considered examining Ellen G. White’s position on the issue of
155 ordination and ordination of women in particular. Committee members felt like it was

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

⁸ Ellen G. White, “The Call of Moses, *Signs of the Times*, 26 February, 1880. *Acts of the Apostles*, 94.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ White, *op. cit.*, 162.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Ellen G. “Words to Our Workers,” *Review and Herald*, 21 April, 1903. “Christ’s Commission,” *Review and Herald*, 26 April, 1896. “An Appeal to Our Churches throughout the United States,” *Review and Herald*, 18 May, 1911.

¹³ George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 58, 108. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5: 297; 21: 13.

174 consecrate some of their time doing personal ministry may be set apart.¹⁴ It does appear
175 like there was already a debate about ordination of women during Ellen White's time and
176 she did not take sides in the debate. With silence from "the Lord's Messenger" the current
177 debate about ordaining women or not ordaining them does not benefit much from Ellen G.
178 White. Nevertheless, the significant statement about the importance of publicly setting
179 apart people for ministries may serve as pointers to what the Church needs to do. Her
180 silence or unclarity about issues like the one we have to deal with right now speaks
181 volumes.

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

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

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

¹⁴ Ellen White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Review and Herald*, 9 July, 1895.

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

213 On the other hand, the Committee has not come across any "inclusivists'" argument
214 that is convincing. They argue loudly and firmly that "the Church has unnecessarily
215 delayed to endorse women's ordination" and that social trends have given a new
216 perspective to human roles. Accordingly, "time has come to stand up and be counted and
217 truly act on what we believe that God is no respecter of persons and that, in Christ, there is

218 no male or female.”¹⁵ Bwambale quotes from Keren Katoske who contends that the
219 church’s endorsement of women ordination would “not only follow biblical instruction but
220 also maintain credibility before our younger members who are keenly aware of gender
221 issues.”¹⁶ Such assertions exert undue pressure on the Church to act without clear
222 biblically undergirded guidance. The different views on interpreting Scripture, and
223 especially, passages on headship as clearly taught, have left the two sides of the debate
224 camps engaging in what may be considered “dialogue of the deaf” or “selective inattention”
225 whereby human beings tend to hear what they want to hear. Such a situation makes some
226 people vulnerable post-modernity which rejects absolute truth. It is worrying to read
227 papers, even by some eminent scholars, who appear to approach and engage in studying
228 selected passages of Scripture with what is known as “GIGO,” tendency of approaching the
229 biblical text using a particular hermeneutic to scoop out information bent towards a pre-
230 meditated goal.”¹⁷ Specific presentations which appear to fall into this category are papers
231 which call for return to the original “Edenic Model” which actually obligates the Church to
232 ordain women as pastoral and spiritual leaders. ECD BRC members were intrigued by the
233 assertions, and they decided to examine some of those papers.

234 **5. Implications of Call for Restoration to Edenic State**

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

¹⁵ Quoted in Bwambale Paper.

¹⁶ Bwambale

¹⁷ Bwambale, 4.

239 to proclaim and apply the message which liberates human beings from the curse in Genesis
240 3:16 and restore them to the pre-Fall state found in Genesis 1 and 2. Papers like the ones
241 by Richard Davidson¹⁸ and Jiri Moskala¹⁹warrant comments from ECD BRC members, some
242 of whom initially dismissed the arguments in favor of women ordination as stemming from
243 employing biblical texts “eisegetically.” One has to carefully analyze the rationale of the
244 argument that these eminent professors are saying in order to make sense of what they are
245 trying to communicate. What these Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
246 professors are saying is significant because their views may be considered as views of
247 those who are at the center of what the global Seventh-day Adventist Church considers to
248 be the teaching school of the global Church. Both of these presentation, especially the one
249 by Davidson, are detailed and packed with information which leads to the conclusion that
250 the Church would actually be more consistent with biblical message if it ordains women as
251 spiritual leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Unfortunately, the arguments
252 advanced, though logical still leave some of us as African Christian professionals
253 unconvinced if not confused. For example, the assertion that “Adam and Eve were both
254 priests serving in the first original sanctuary of Eden” is misleading by failing to build a
255 conceptual bridge that makes it easy for the simple Adventist Christian to plug into the
256 Seventh-day Adventist Theological System as we understand it so far. Furthermore, the
257 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.

258 concerning male and female gender relations is not convincing to us as Africans. We do
259 have and use the language that exalts women to a queenly status (In my Zulu tradition I
260 address my wife as “queen of the home” but this does not mean that Zulus/Ndebeles are
261 models of egalitarian marriage relationship). My people, as I understand them, are far from
262 the biblical ideal of the marriage and gender relationships which are in the sacred Book, the
263 Bible. The power and status accorded to the woman who is the paternal aunt in the
264 African traditional family is apt to mislead scholars to conclude that women wield a lot of
265 power among some African clans like mine. King Tshaka of the Zulus is on record as one
266 who valued his mother so much that when she died, he commanded the burial of her body
267 together 15 virgins who were buried alive with Tshaka’s mother corpse! That is why
268 arguments which are undergirded by cultural expressions and practices which are not
269 necessarily intended to promote Christian ideals are weak and unconvincing to some of us
270 whose culture is closer to that which we read in the Bible.

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

281 **6. ECD- EXCOM ACTION**

282 The process of study and examination of results of all the studying connected with
283 ordination of women as pastors were reported to the ECD –EXCOM in November when
284 delegates were gathered to conduct year-end business for the region. It was reported that
285 according to the available data resulting from the studies made so far, by the BRC and the
286 examination of selected papers written by scholars from other regions of the world
287 Church, ECD BRC still sees no light in ordaining women as pastors under the current praxis
288 of understanding and practicing ordination. Our Committee decision is not conclusive and
289 members are open and are urging further studies until the Church is convinced that
290 ordaining under current modalities is biblical. By presenting the report this way, the
291 Committee is suggesting that there may be other models of setting people apart for special
292 services which may not be referred to as “ordination,” but equally communicating full
293 recognition as servant of God to the person who is being set apart even if that person is a
294 woman. For this to happen there has to be a change in the Church’s modalities of affirming
295 and endorsing those who are set apart or appointed for service. Thus, the Committee is
296 implying that “ordination” now carries unhealthy nuances which need undoing in order to
297 facilitate servant leadership for the Adventist Church. The cardinal recommendation by the
298 ECD BRC to the ECD and the General Conference is: **“NO, NOT YET”** under the modalities of
299 ordination as they are currently, but some different modalities need to be urgently
300 developed and implemented in the Church’s praxis so that no servant of God is relegated to
301 unhealthy emotional economy which makes genuine servants of Christ feel unappreciated
302 and unvalued by the Church. The Committee members make this recommendation after
303 thorough study and agonizing prayerfully before our Wonderful Savior. The clear message

304 from texts which are used by opponents of women ordination cannot be explained away as
305 some scholars try to so. We also find equally clear messages in the same Bible which show
306 that all members of God's Church must participate in advancing the redemptive mission of
307 God. So, what do we make of this? There may be related issues which block our
308 understanding, but for now we resort to erring on the side of striving to adhere to what the
309 good Book says without closed minds.

310 It was revealing to see the response of the EXCOM members to the report presented.
311 Apparently the Church of God in ECD which, previously, signaled disinterest in the issue of
312 ordination of women has become awakened to the issues in the ongoing debate. Most of the
313 responses revealed that the church at large at the grassroots level is not adequately
314 informed about the ordination issues and there is so much disinformation which
315 underlines the need for further studies, as the Committee recommends, and sharing
316 information down to the grassroots levels as well. This point is put across with a strong
317 sentiment to see a theologically intelligent and responsible Church. It will be counter-
318 productive for the Remnant Church's delegates at St Antonio General Conference Session to
319 cast their vote for or against women ordination if they do not have adequate information.
320 It became interesting and clear that many ECD EXCOM members were fired to discuss the
321 issue of women ordination, and there was not enough time to listen to all points of view.
322 The ECD EXCOM voted to record the report that was presented, and again, signaling a need
323 to continue studying the issue. ECD BRC members have identified six cluster of areas of
324 study which need enough examination as the people of God continue to "seek
325 understanding" of that which affects the health of the Body of Christ.

326 After all is said and done there must be decisions to be implemented in the Church and the
327 mission field where the Church operates. So, the last section of this report combines
328 specific recommendations in connection with the way forward for the Church and the
329 essential considerations as conversations on women ordination continue.

330 **7. Selected Considerations and Recommendations for the Church's Way Forward**

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

336 **A. Ecclesiology, Ministry, Mission and Spirituality to Be Studied for**

337 **Understanding Ordination**

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

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

346 In these times when sensitivities to injustice and dysfunctional policies have grown,
347 there is a need to intentionally adhere to what the Bible says instead of reacting to
348 societal trends outside the Bible. This consideration arises out of what has been

349 observed to be hindering ongoing objective discussions. For example, it is counter-
350 productive to label the conservative wing of the debate as insensitive to justice and
351 fairness. Most people on both sides of the debate are good people who believe in
352 justice and fairness for all and equality between men and women. So, the debate
353 about whether women should be ordained or not is not supposed to be confused
354 with demands for justice, equality and other moral issues as is the case in the
355 contemporary societal arena.

356 **C. The Need to Use Approaches That Are Culturally Sensitive**

357 Some of the measures which are meant to rectify anomalies in the church have been
358 implemented without adequate preparation of the people who are affected by the
359 change. It will be crucially important to inform the church at the grass root levels
360 about policy changes which seek to address anomalies. Up to now, the Adventist
361 Church has not done well in connection with changes that brought about the
362 department of women ministries. Those who have been around as long as I have
363 been are aware of numerous fall outs which have been realized as a result of
364 introduction of women ministries department in the church. I happen to know of a
365 good number of churches in Malawi which withdrew from the Adventist Sisterhood
366 of Churches because of the introduction women ministries department. There are
367 Adventist churches I know that are refusing to allow women to preach from the
368 pulpit, and it has been difficult or impossible to convince the elders of such churches
369 that it is okay for a woman to preach from the pulpit. Ongoing conversations in
370 connection with women ordination are already sparking comments like “we told
371 you that this will go very far to undermine the authority of the Bible.” So, whatever

372 we do even through this committee must not be allowed to close the minds and
373 hearts of the people of God from receiving and processing the truth that sets free. It
374 is also counter-productive to push the people to the precipice or crisis of authority.
375 When the General Conference introduced the Department of Women Ministry there
376 were no clear guidelines about implementation processes of the decision. There
377 are still some anomalies even at some of the Division levels. Women who are
378 appointed or elected to positions of leadership in the administrative unit of the
379 Church have been found to be living contrary to some of the family values which the
380 church advocates. The woman who is Women Ministries Director at a regional
381 office may find herself separated from her husband who is an accomplished
382 professional practicing far away from his wife who is a director of an important
383 department of the Church. The whole family suffers inconveniences because her
384 husband may not move to the same vicinity where his wife operates on a daily basis.
385 Some of our Committee members and other concerned observers make specific
386 recommendations about the way forward in connection with ordination of women.
387 All things must be considered. How practical is it for a young woman married adult
388 to be a senior pastor of a church during child bearing years? How does a married
389 woman with demands of family well-being do the work of a departmental director
390 at any level itinerate around the globe leaving children behind? All these questions
391 have to be considered as we make policies which regulate the ministry and mission
392 of the Church. We cannot afford to be a church that is not proactive in favor of the
393 family. Sadly, there is already enough misery that is piling up in marriages and
394 families because of “careers” and “calls” outside the family. The good Lord may not

395 be impressed by advancement to pinnacles of impressive careers at the expense of
396 marriages and families. If Jesus were to teach on family values today He might ask
397 the question: “what shall it profit a man/woman to gain the highest professional
398 grandeur in his/her career, but lose his/her own spouse/child?” Such questions and
399 statements which come out as preachy, are not made to argue against ordination of
400 women as pastors, but to alert the Church about the need for proactive family
401 policies even for women who may be called to minister in spheres that militate
402 against her high calling as a spouse and mother.

403 **D. Focus on Building Consensus**

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

413 **E. Consideration of Redefinition of Ordination.**

414 There may be a need to redefine “ordination” so that the concept is stripped of the
415 original Latin “ordo” (meaning “order”, “class” or “rank,” If possible, a new term
416 may have to be found. Furthermore, the traditional African worldview which sees
417 ordination as a male “spiritual rite of passage.” Help is needed to communicate the

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

425 **F. Issues of Equality in Relation to Leadership**

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