

TWELFTH BUSINESS MEETING

Sixtieth General Conference session, July 8, 2015, 1:59 p.m.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. We would like to call the afternoon session to order. And to begin our afternoon session, I would like to request Elder Paul Ratsara from the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division to have our opening prayer. Now, I am not looking at him, but I assume he is on the floor and would be going to microphone 6 to have that opening prayer.

Elder Ratsara, if you are in the house, please make your way to that microphone, and I would like to invite you to open our afternoon session with prayer.

PAUL RATSARA: Let us pray. Let us stand as we pray.

[Prayer.]

[Song.]

MICHAEL RYAN: I think we could together say amen.

You know, I hear these choirs from around the world, and I can't imagine why they left their wings at home. Do you hear me? Beautiful. That's what's going to fill the kingdom.

All right. I know we have had some comment that some of the microphones are not located near some of the divisions, and they are asking the question: Have they been disenfranchised because they were not close enough to get to the microphone?

So we have done a little research on that. And I think that probably one had a legitimate point, in the fact that there used to be a microphone there. We have removed that because there's no scanning device there. But in researching that, we actually have found that, as I look at the list of 16 that's on the screen, three of them are from that division. And as I look at the entire list,

there are 21 from that division. So I do know that there will be voices heard from that division. And that's important, I think, to the body.

We all want to have representation and voices from each of the divisions.

So we're doing our best to see that we have that international input. So I appreciate them raising the point, but that's the direction that we're going to go.

I do have a point of order on microphone 6. I think Kenneth Osborn is the first one. Kenneth Osborn on microphone 6, please.

KENNETH OSBORN: Brother Chairman, I'm wondering if it would be possible to have a block of individuals who will be speaking presented in a way that the rest of us who are standing in line could sit down. Sitting back in this area, there's a very long line. And the tendency of those of us in the line is to be communicating with each other such that you are taken out of the loop as to what is going on in the proceedings. So I'm wondering if we could have a block at a time, and then we know whether to get in line.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. The chair will be advised by that, and I think that's a very good idea. I will call each name, and we will see that they have opportunity to come to the microphone. But we will try to keep a couple names ahead.

Another point of order on microphone 6, Edwin Shimunzhila.

EDWIN SHIMUNZHILA: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This morning we were reminded that we are going to vote secret ballot, but I see on the screen the name is given, and there is yes and no. That's voting already. May we deal with that one, Mr. Chairman?

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you for that. We'll try to take that into consideration. I do know that they will be speaking for or against. But I can tell you that when they get to the voting booth, that's when they will vote yes or no. I appreciate that, and it's a good observation. But in

keeping the balance between those that are favorable and those that are against the motion, I don't know how else to do it other than to have those indicate that they're speaking for or against the motion. Thank you for that.

We are going to get started as quickly as we can. Our intention, of course, is to have as many voices render an opinion on this as we can.

We had the list this morning. We're going to go to that list immediately. And I am going to recognize microphone 3, Bradford Newton from the North American Division.

BRADFORD NEWTON (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, here is what is already the truth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today: Women as pastors are here to stay and are a blessing to the church wherever they serve. Second, our theology of ordination does not specify gender. Third, the GC TOSC concludes that there is no light from the Bible regarding women's ordination that our church agrees upon.

Therefore, to maintain the unity of the church, Mr. Chair, I would ask our delegates to please consider these three letters. And since I try to be a preacher, though I act as a memory aid, Y-E-S. Y is for youth. Our children and grandchildren are listening for us to embrace our mothers, sisters, and daughters as equal partners in the work of servant leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church mission.

“Yes” is for our youth.

E is for evangelism. Seven billion men and women on this planet call out for us to utilize every spiritual gift and every ministerial calling for mission. The Holy Spirit does not distinguish between women and men in the giving of the gifts and the call to ministry. Therefore, we cannot be a faithful church unless we are obedient to the Spirit's work in our midst. “Yes” is for evangelism.

And S is for submission to one another in love. This is the time for us to reach out across the aisles of this General Conference and ask the question “What will assist my brothers and sisters?”

MICHAEL RYAN: Ten seconds.

BRADFORD NEWTON: “Yes” is the path forward, the key to unity, the way to a finished work.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. I appreciate that very much. Thank you.

We will now go to microphone 5, Mario Veloso from the General Conference.

MARIO VELOSO (no): Thank you, Brother Chairman.

I’m already an old guy, so since 1973 I’ve been a member of all the committees that dealt with this issue. I have been listening to all the arguments. There was not much change from the first time. The same texts from the Bible, the same paragraphs from the Spirit of Prophecy, always coming to the conclusion that we are all based on the Scriptures, always saying that we would abide by the Scriptures.

At this point somebody asked me, “What is the strongest argument against ordination of women?”

I said, “At this point I’m not looking for argument; I’m looking for attitudes.”

And I find here in the text that was read. But the best evangelist that we have this morning, this sentence: “From whom the body join and knit together.” This is my concern, to keep the body together.

So my plea to these delegates is to accept the same way of reading the Scriptures, not having two different ways of reading, one the biblical and the other the cultural. We need to stick with the Bible.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I'm going to request again that we do not give applause after the comments. This does not reflect the spirit that we want in this house. I think we need to have respect for those who have a different opinion, and let's just be quiet. Let the Spirit work on people's hearts. Thank you very much. I appreciate the cooperation on that so far.

OK. We're going to again move to microphone 3, Marc Woodson from the North American Division.

MARC WOODSON (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I fear we have placed way too much emphasis on this issue on not ordaining women pastors and have elevated to a level of attesting truth. It is not attesting truth. May I remind my brothers and sisters that this issue is nowhere found in our 28 fundamental beliefs, it is nowhere found in our *Church Manual*, it is nowhere found in *GC Working Policy* or *GC Constitution and Bylaws*. It is not even found in our official church statements. It can't be a moral issue. Great Adventist Christian theologians and Bible students are on both sides of this issue.

We are different on this issue in good conscience.

There was no consensus from the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. That ought to tell us something.

Many have made this an issue of unity, not allowing each division to decide for itself. This is a false sense of unity. It is a false basis for our unity. Our unity should be based on our mission, founded through Christ's Great Commission and the remnant message of the three angels.

What some want is not unity; they want uniformity. But as a world church we are built on unity and diversity. That's why we have 13 divisions. By voting yes, we'll be standing in favor

of refraining from dividing our church over a subject that does not constitute attesting truth. On this matter, let us honor one another by applying the ancient Christian maximum: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much for that comment. We will now move to microphone 4, Doug Batchelor.

DOUG BATCHELOR (no): Mr. Chairman, I'm standing to speak in opposition of the motion.

About 40 years ago I never even heard of Seventh-day Adventists. And I was living up in the mountains in a cave, and I read the Bible and accepted Christ. And then I began to search for what I understood to be the true church. And after carefully studying, I decided the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the church that was the closest to the Bible.

And since then I've been involved in doing evangelism all over the world. Amazing Facts has evangelism training schools for young and old, men and women. Matter of fact, one of our largest classes in Manila this year had more women than men. And we sent them out preaching and teaching, and there were many baptisms, fulfilling Joel 2.

Ordination wasn't necessary.

Now, I think that our church having two different theologies on ordination is going to cause a lot of problems for our evangelists. It's going to be very difficult to explain to people that Seventh-day Adventists have the truth but that church across the street has a different theology than our church because they don't understand. It's going to send a message to other people that we really don't know what we believe. I think it's so important that we come together on this.

And I should add, there are people I love on both sides of this issue, but it's more important to me to really impress Jesus and be faithful to Him.

We're living in very interesting times, with same-sex marriage and transgender bathrooms. Our culture is awash in gender confusion. And I think this is no time for us to get fuzzy about what the differences are between men and women—

MICHAEL RYAN: Fifteen—

DOUG BATCHELOR: —which I think is very clearly defined in the Bible. I do believe it's a biblical issue.

MICHAEL RYAN: Ten seconds.

DOUG BATCHELOR: Thank you.

When we look at the history of what has happened to other churches that went down this road, it devastated their mission. And I think we should consider that.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. The time is up. Thank you very much, Doug. I appreciate those comments. OK. I again would request that we do not applaud. Thank you.

OK. I do have a point of order I need to take on microphone 3, Leezel Deza.

LEEZEL DEZA: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

What is on the table is ordination and not homosexuality. May I request that any comments that would lead to mention or include our LGBTQQ siblings be immediately dismissed. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. The chair will try to be advised by that. And we appreciate that comment. All right. We have another point of order on microphone 1, Luis Tavares, West-Central Africa Division.

LUIS TAVARES: I'd like to make a point of order on this clapping issue. I think it might help the chairman.

I think the chair should stop asking only to avoid it and start explaining why not to do so. Where I came from, we strongly believe that clapping a performance at churches activities would switch the glory from God to the performer. That's not good. And I've seen encouragement given from the stage to give the speaker a hand. I think we should make more use of words like amen and hallelujah. It's OK when your heart is touched by something someone said. It's OK if you scream loudly, "Amen." But when you clap, you're taking the glory from God and giving it to the performer.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. We will be advised by that. I will say this.

[Laughter.]

I was kind of expecting that a little bit, but I want to move just a little bit beyond his comment. When someone makes a speech, I would not only encourage you not to applaud, but I would encourage you not to shout at the top of your lungs "Amen," either. I would encourage you to just remain respectful of the other people whose opinions who may be different. And I think that respect, in this kind of issue, where we have a little contention in the house, I think it's best expressed in silence. So let's just try to abide by that. It's a very, very important point. Thank you for reminding us of that.

All right. We're going to go to those speaking in favor of the motion. Microphone 4, Jeroen Tuinstra from the Inter-European Division.

JEROEN TUINSTRA (yes): Mr. Chairman, dear fellow delegates, I'm the president of a small conference in the heart of Europe, Belgium. You've seen me on a number of issues at this microphone, issues that many of you consider controversial. I'm just trying to keep the church real.

We may not be of this world, but we are still in this world. We may wish to be in heaven tomorrow, but we are standing with our feet in the dirt of the Lord's vineyard showing the love of Christ. I'm just trying to keep the church real.

And reality, in my part of the world, is that God is calling women to the full ministry and leadership. Maria is a young woman born in Colombia who grew up in Belgium and felt the call of God to nurture and pastor the church that she has grown up in. And she is a good pastor, open to her members, guiding them spiritually and being able to identify specifically with the children of the many immigrants from South America who are caught between two cultures. Appreciated by many members, she shows evidence of God's calling.

After one of our pastors' meetings we would discuss with all pastors the issue that is playing in front of us. Standing in the elevator, she cried. She cried because when she listened to the call of God, she never wanted to be part of a controversy in the church. She only wanted to respond to the calling of God in her life. She cried because she had to hear that only because she was born a woman was she less than her male counterparts, that her church saw her as less capable or less called than she would have had she been a man. She cried.

Dear delegates, please recognize that God is calling women to the full ordained ministry in our part of the world. I cannot and do not want to speak on behalf of your region, so I don't know whether God is calling women in your part of the world. But I know, see, and recognize what is happening in Europe.

Please allow us to confirm the calling of women done by God in our part of the world by ordination. Answering yes to this question allows her to—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Your time is finished now.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: —respond to the calling of God, and I ask us to do the same.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you very much for that.

We would like to move immediately to microphone 1, Elder Biaggi.

GUILLERMO BIAGGI (no): With humbleness I stand in front of the Lord to express my personal convictions and also a little bit in behalf of my dear delegates from the Euro-Asia Division, which finds it very difficult to stand and to speak to all the delegates because of some reason that I won't mention.

I have five reasons to stand for the word no. First, as I read the Holy Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, the Lord is indicating to me what is His will. I have decided not to challenge and not to question our Lord of what He has not revealed or what He has not prohibited.

Second, I consider that it would be better for our church to have one body of ordained pastors in all the world and not to have different bodies of ordained pastors by divisions.

Third, I think we need to learn of the experience of other Christian churches that have decided this question in a positive way and later they have followed with undesirable and unethical decisions.

Fourth, I am convinced that with such important decisions, it would be better for us to retain the power of the decision at the level of the General Conference and not delegate in each division.

And fifth, because of mission reasons. From the place that we have been serving in the past years, I heard and we were told that we are an American sect.

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

GUILLERMO BIAGGI: And we try to convince authorities of the country to respect the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that our church is a traditional church based on the Bible. But by example, the Orthodox Church, the main church in those regions, says that they—

MICHAEL RYAN: Five seconds.

GUILLERMO BIAGGI: —do not ordain women because it's not biblically based. Thank you so much.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much, Elder Biaggi. Very good.

We will now move to microphone 3, Caleb Jara.

CALEB JARA (yes): I stand in favor of the motion, because when I come to the Bible, I see that God holds both men and women to preach the gospel. I read in Joel 2:28 that in these last days He will pour out His Holy Spirit upon all flesh and He will give us the power to preach the everlasting gospel to everybody. The text says, “And your daughters shall prophesy.”

In the New Testament I find that the Holy Spirit gives to both men and women without regard to gender, socioeconomic status, or race. And Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6 say that we already have been made a priesthood of all believers, again without regard to gender.

I stand in favor of the motion because when I study the writings of Sister White, I find that she said in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, page 322: “The Holy Spirit of God . . . prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.” And she repeats the same thing in *Review and Herald*, May 18, 1911.

So the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy do not prohibit us from ordaining women as pastors.

I stand in favor of the motion, because we as a church need—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Your time is finished now. Thank you.

I have a point of order from microphone 5, Clinton Wahlen from the General Conference.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Thank you, Brother Chairman.

I stand to suggest a point of order. The last couple speakers for the position to ask delegates to answer no to the question were interrupted with a warning of how much time was left. And I'm just suggesting it might be good to give the others who would want to answer it yes the same courtesy. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Very good. Thank you. The chair will be advised by that education, and I think it's legitimate. I apologize.

OK. Let's move to microphone 6, Khanyisani Malufu, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

KHANYISANI MALUFU (no): Mr. Chairman, we have no biblical evidence of a woman on whom hands were laid upon in ordination. From the statement of consensus it reads, "Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry." That means when someone is ordained into ministry, they are not only ordained to be gospel ministers in that division only; they are ordained for the world church.

Letting individual divisions decide on this matter will create individualism and regionalism. It is going to divide the church instead of uniting it.

I therefore am requesting that we need to be united as one church and stick to the wonderful counsels from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

We have wonderful examples from the Bible. And I say no to allowing divisions to decide on this issue affecting the world church. Women can still be very useful, and we are going to continue to use them in all other lines without necessarily having to ordain them. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you for your comment. Moving now to—oh. We have a point of order on microphone 2, Larry Boggess, North American Division.

LARRY BOGGESS: Mr. Chairman, please help me understand something here. Correct me if you will. I understand there are individuals who are speaking ahead of those who were in line when we broke for lunch. Now, it seems to me that they ought to be speaking before those who got registered after we did to speak. Is that correct?

MICHAEL RYAN: According to the electronic list in front of me, we take, first of all, a yes opinion and then a no opinion. The yes opinions are listed in order at the time that they register. The no opinions are listed in order of the time that they register.

Well, it's possible that you can have a no vote that has been standing in line longer and you will have someone who came later who is voting yes who will be ahead of them because there's fewer in the yes line. And so this is why it may appear that way, but by the rules that we have adopted, we are alternating between yes and no. And it will be in the order of the yes votes as they have registered, in the order of the no votes as they have registered.

I hope that helps you.

LARRY BOGGESS: So you're taking all the yes votes first and then all of the no votes?

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I'll try it again. I'm probably not being very clear, and I apologize.

We are alternating with a yes person who is supportive of the question; they're going to vote yes. And they will have opportunity to speak. When they are finished, we then go to a name on the list that we know is going to be voting against the question on the floor, so we'll go to a no vote. When that person is finished, we'll alternate back to a yes vote, so that yes and no have equal time on the floor.

But if one line is shorter than the other, you may have someone who came a few minutes later but may get to speak sooner.

So I hope that this is helpful to you.

LARRY BOGGESS: It doesn't really sound correct. But you're the chair. All right?

MICHAEL RYAN: OK.

LARRY BOGGESS: Because somebody who wants to vote no and registers after I did may be getting to speak before I do. Is that correct?

MICHAEL RYAN: We are alternating between yes and no, so it's possible that that can happen, but—

LARRY BOGGESS: It doesn't seem fair to me that those who were in line may not even get to speak at all, but they registered first.

MICHAEL RYAN: But I think that probably what we are trying to avoid is having 30 yes or 30 no votes in a row. And then the other side of the picture is not presented. So we're trying to balance the input between those supportive and those that aren't. I apologize.

OK. Another point of order, microphone 2, Mark Sorensen, North American Division.

MARK SORENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In order for us to fully understand what we are voting on today, a document called The Theology and Practice of Ministerial Ordination was read. In that document it stated that in 1995 the session denied the request—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Come very quickly to your point of order, because so far you're making an introduction.

MARK SORENSEN: My point of order is this: It says in that document, "In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender."

What will happen to this statement as a result of this vote of either yes or no?

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I think that that is a clarification that we will seek. And if I can get that back to you, it's not necessarily immediately germane, because we're not calling the vote. But let me get a clarification from those that want to speak to that, and we will try to get an answer to that even though I feel—

Yes. Go ahead.

MARK SORENSEN: I just wanted some clarification, because that colors my understanding of the setup to our presentation today. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Yes. OK.

All right. And I would request those who were presenting this morning to get together and decide a response to this, because I think that is a fine point that may need some clarification.

All right. We're going to have a point of order on microphone 6. We were doing so well. It seems as though we're having a little difficulty. Please keep your point of order brisk and to the point, because we have people waiting to express their opinions.

This would be from Raul Escalante Guizar, Inter-American Division.

RAUL ESCALANTE GUIZAR [translated]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to suggest that the list that you're choosing from of yes or no, I would like it to call previously the names of those who will have the opportunity to speak, because two minutes is enough time for them to get to the microphone and speak. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Very good. I will try to do that. I am requesting maybe to get a little help with that list. I can see it in front of me, but the way it's here it's a little bit confusing. All right. Let's immediately—where are we at here?

OK. Very good. We're going to go to microphone 5, Elder Lowell Cooper from the General Conference.

LOWELL COOPER (yes): Thank you, Brother Chair. I wish to speak in support of a yes response to the question before us, and I submit the following reasons.

1. A yes response best aligns with our theology of ordination. A no response places our practice in conflict with our theology.

2. A yes response best aligns with Bible teaching regarding spiritual gifts. A no response says to God that we will not permit certain people to fully use the spiritual gifts that He, in His sovereignty, gives to His children without regard to age, race, nationality, culture, position, or gender.

3. A yes response is an expression of permission for the church to act in response to differing circumstances around the world. A no response is an imposition of authority that blocks opportunity to respect and respond to differing circumstances.

4. A yes response indicates that we will trust our brothers and sisters in division committees to be faithful to God in the circumstances where they live. A no response says that we cannot trust our brothers and sisters in division committees to be faithful to God unless that faithfulness is expressed through behaviors that are acceptable to me.

5. A yes response is entirely consistent with an earlier decision of the church to permit but not to require the ordination of women to the role of local church elder. This decision has not resulted in the fracturing of the church. A no response is inconsistent with previous decisions regarding the role of women in leadership.

MICHAEL RYAN: Ten seconds.

LOWELL COOPER: 6. A yes response enables the world church to move forward, to get past the question that has been a diversionary agenda for more than 50 years.

I urge the delegates for an overwhelming yes.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you, Elder Cooper.

All right. Very quickly, please, we will not have an applause. I heard just a little bit. I really appreciate your abiding by this. It's been pretty good, but, as you can see, I'm sticking with that. We're trying to really maintain a certain spirit here.

All right. Now, I'm going to tell you: We're going to take a couple more names, and then we are going to pause for a little prayer session. And just stay on the line. It will not last long. But I really believe that we need to implore that the Spirit is among us as we discuss and make this decision.

All right. We're going to go to a no vote. And let me first say that Colleen Zimbeva is on microphone 6 from the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, but the next person to speak will be James Standish, and the next will be Kevin Nwaigwe from the West-Central Africa Division, so you can be making your way to the microphone. And when we finish with those, then we will have a little break for prayer.

Colleen, please.

COLLEEN ZIMBEVA (no): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank God for the remnant church. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Times may change, but God doesn't change. We are from Eden, and we are going back to Eden. As a very committed lay businesswoman with values and principles, I've been working in the women's ministries department. I'm talking from a lay perspective. We have been

preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and in various other programs. They have been running smoothly with no hindrances.

Second, I would like to thank you for the Revived by His Word program, which actually assisted me on my research of women's ordination. I also looked at the Spirit of Prophecy, which is very silent about it. There is no implicit writings or findings in the Bible. Better be conservative to maintain identity, message, mission, and unity of the worldwide church.

Therefore, basing on my research, my opinion is no to the first motion and no to having divisions deciding.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: Very good. Thank you. I'm sure the body is aware of this, but we have one motion on the floor and not two. But I think we will explain that. All right.

Very good. We will now move to microphone 4, James Standish from the South Pacific Division.

JAMES STANDISH (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, church.

It's great to see this stadium full and particularly the delegate section full. But I have a question. Why wasn't it full when we talked about mission? Why wasn't it full when we talked about the character and nature of God? Why wasn't it full when we talked about youth ministry? This stadium this afternoon is evidence of how distracting this issue is to our church mission.

This is what we know: There are godly, Bible-believing, faithful Seventh-day Adventists who believe women should not be ordained. There are also Bible-believing, faithful, godly Adventists who believe they should. So the question for us is: What should we do when we have a difference of opinion among godly Adventists that is not a fundamental belief and is not a matter of salvation?

We must remember there's no biblical distinction between ordination for pastors and elders. This is a man-made distinction that we're arguing over. Is this the kind of issue we should tear our church apart over?

My perspective, after prayer and study is this: This is not the kind of issue worth splitting our church. It is not the kind of issue in which one church member should impose their views on another. It is not the kind of issue in which uniformity is required for unity. Sometimes we just have to take a step back and let each other live in peace.

I therefore humbly and respectfully appeal to my fellow delegates, even the ones who weren't here much during the week, to vote yes, and brothers and sisters, let's get back to the mission of our church.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you very much. I am confident that you were speaking positively about those who were not here, because we're not talking negatively.

All right. We're going to just—please, those that are in line, just remain in line. But we are going to pause for a moment of prayer. And after that prayer time, I will come to the point of order on microphone 1. But I will not recognize that at this moment, as we've already entered into the announcement that we are going to take a moment for prayer.

What I'd like you to do is, again, turn to the person next to you, and both of you offer short prayers, just offer short prayers. At the end of that short prayer, I would like—as it comes quiet, I would like to request Elder Harald Wollan to come to the microphone and to just offer a short prayer that closes our prayer time. So let's just turn to the person next to you, and let's have it be reverently quiet as we enter into this communication with Heaven.

[Prayer.]

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you very much. The quietness of prayer.

We have a point of order. Alex Otti, microphone 1.

ALEX OTTI: Thank you, Brother Chairman.

I'd just like to call your attention to your earlier instruction that you were going to be calling yes, no, and then people who had questions on points of interest. We've been here now for about an hour. Some who registered before the break have not been called. So I just call your attention to that. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. And that's appreciated. It is a good comment.

I'm looking at the list. There are many, many, many, many people with yes votes and there are many, many, many people with no votes, and there are a few with I's, so I'm trying to kind of intersperse that. The chairman has been advised. Thank you. We'll try to address that as quickly as possible.

Another point of order. Microphone 3, Carlos Moreta, North American Division. I'm not seeing him.

CARLOS MORETA [translated]: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

I am observing that certain people are commenting, and they're making a call to their own positions. It's been said that we should not applaud to avoid motivating anyone. But there are some delegates trying to recruit other delegates in support of their position who are here today. May this be prohibited and may the delegate present his personal opinion without trying to recruit brothers. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you. I appreciate that.

I think Elder Wilson, in his opening comments, also made reference to this, that through your prayerful study of the Bible, your considerations of what might be best for the world

church, you should think independently and make that expression. So thank you for that reminder to the group. We'll try to keep that in mind.

All right. We're going to go to a person speaking against the question. Microphone 2, Kevin Nwaigwe from the West-Central Africa Division.

KEVIN NWAIGWE (no): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to continue from the observation that the hall is unusually full today. And a question could be: Is this matter of so much interest that everybody wanted to be present? Is it of so much interest that if not properly handled, it could affect every part of the world church? And that is a question I want to keep in perspective.

Mr. Chairman, the question before us is: Do we allow divisions to make decisions as it concerns women's ordination? I recall at the 2010 General Conference session a study committee was set up to find the position of the church. And the report we have from that committee today indicates that there are three positions. In other words, the church has not seen their way clear on the position as it relates to women's ordination.

If we go back to the current experience, it means that the church is still open to further studies. If we make a decision today either way and we go in a new direction in the future, how shall we defend ourselves? I foresee a situation in which I'm asked by a brother of mine, "Does your church support women's ordination?" I say, "Yes, because I'm from division A." And he says no, because he's from division B. Are we still in one mission? I foresee a situation in which, as I travel around the world—

MICHAEL RYAN: Ten seconds.

KEVIN NWAIGWE: —I move my membership from division A to division B, and I need to learn anew the fundamental beliefs of the church. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL RYAN: Very good. Thank you very much. We appreciate those comments. We're moving now to microphone 3, Roger Robertsen. He is from the General Conference.

ROGER ROBERTSEN (yes): When I first became a Seventh-day Adventist many, many years ago, I couldn't imagine that a church of God would be struggling with an issue like this. We're running into rough waters, and this is on an issue that is not based on our fundamental beliefs, it's not part of the pillars of faith that the early pioneers lifted up and preached. It's something that's coming to us from some different areas of the world.

My problem is that I want to follow the Lord. I need to follow Him the way I find Him presented in the Bible. Will you allow me to do it? In the church of God we must have that sort of freedom when it comes to beliefs that are not rooted and grounded in our fundamentals. If not, it certainly is not democracy; it's something else.

When Paul and the other apostles ran into problems, they had different ways of solving these issues. Remember Paul and Barnabas? At one point they had to separate because they disagreed so much. How did they handle that disunity? Well, my Bible says when that Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

MICHAEL RYAN: Twenty seconds.

ROGER ROBERTSEN: And so this is what I am asking: Please allow us to go in the direction we feel we need to, because we think it's based on the Word of God. And we should all pray for each other, even when we have to go detours, because we're preaching the same gospel message.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. The time is up.

ROGER ROBERTSEN: That which has been entrusted to us.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. We appreciate that.

Point of order on microphone 2, Yulian Tinoco, North American Division.

YULIAN TINOCO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say my point of view about women's ordination—

MICHAEL RYAN: No. I'm sorry. That is not a point of order. You need to state clearly what the point of order is, but that opinion on women's ordination is not one. If you want to give an opinion on women's ordination, you will need to get in line. Thank you very much. I'm sorry.

We will go to microphone 2, Jay Gallimore, North American Division.

The next names to be at the microphone are Roscoe Howard, David Poloche, Marvin Wray, and Louis Torres.

JAY GALLIMORE (no): I ask the delegates to vote no, not because our sisters are inferior. God loves His daughters as much as He loves His sons. We believe and need our sisters involved in ministry. We love to see them exercising their gifts in all kinds of gospel work. But vote no because God created a divine order of function at Creation with special roles for both. Sin did not change the fact of childbirth, agriculture, or Adam's headship role. Sin injected pain into all three.

It is to that divine order that the apostle Paul appealed when he reserved the office of the elder for a man. He was directing the church into the same order established at Creation, the sanctuary, and Jesus' 12 apostles.

The gifts of the Spirit, of which pastoring is one, are given to everyone, including children. Children may have the gift of the spiritual nurture, as well as men and women, but the office of overseeing the church and the family was reserved for men.

Voting no will be the best route to restore and preserve the unity of the church. As a church, we are not held together by diversity, as much as we enjoy it, nor culture, as much as we

like it. We are held together by the Bible. Allowing everyone to do their own thing on something as crucial as the ordaining of our ministers is to court division and pluralism.

Yes, some may leave, sadly, but let it not be because we compromised the teachings of God's Word. Some will say this is not a biblical issue, but it is. Some will say it's not part of the 28 fundamental beliefs. Neither is the mark of the beast.

I plead with the world church to stand firm on this issue. Vote no.

MICHAEL RYAN: Five seconds.

JAY GALLIMORE: A large portion of North America will bless you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. We appreciate that.

I have a point of order on microphone 4, Karin Bonnet from the Inter-European Division.

KARIN BONNET: Hello, Mr. Chairman.

Please correct me if this is not a point of order. I have it on my heart what will happen when the results of our votes are announced. I would, with my whole heart, request that we have no applauding, no shouts. Rather, when the results are given, I would like the whole congregation to pray and to be silent. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: I am very, very hopeful that every person in this auditorium heard that speech. I am hopeful. You could hear the tears in her voice. And it is a plea to the delegates and to those who are observers to this activity today to have respect and to understand that those who may sit on the other side of the opinion aisle are brothers and sisters. We will have a season of prayer at the end of this vote, and we have that definitely planned. Thank you for that announcement.

And again, the importance of respecting, not applauding. And giving signs of triumph creates feelings that we don't want. Thank you for that point. I appreciate that very much.

We have another point of order on microphone 2, Pedro Pozos.

PEDRO POZOS: Not too long ago we were asked to establish only our personal opinions. And the previous speaker called at least four times for a no vote to all the delegates. Let's establish only personal opinions.

MICHAEL RYAN: And just so you can know in the future, the chair recognizes we have two minutes. There's going to be a little leeway. I don't believe that we can choke people and monitor every little motive. Certainly they can encourage people to vote as they vote. But what I am watching very carefully is that we do not become critical of someone else's opinion. And I'll just leave it there.

But thank you for that. I'll try to pay attention to that.

We'll go to microphone 2, Roscoe Howard, North American Division.

ROSCOE HOWARD (yes): Yes, Mr. Chairman.

What a blessing it is to address this global delegation of multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural Seventh-day Adventists. We all see the world through different cultural lenses that inform how we think and act and live each day. In fact, we bring meaning to the page even when we study the Scriptures. Culture is so pervasive that we cannot get away from it. So to people trying to say, "Let's not talk about culture": culture invades everything.

And as this church gets larger, we will be dealing with more and more difficult issues in a multimillion-membership church.

I was once—and I give you my own testimony—a right-wing, ultraconservative Seventh-day Adventist, Bible-quoting, Ellen G. White-quoting member going around crucifying every woman who was in ministry.

I had a literal hermeneutic that I used, and I've heard these arguments throughout today. Until I had an epiphany and I was studying one day, and God gave me a text. And He said, "Rosco, have you considered your hermeneutic on this text?" And I'll read it to you. Ephesians 6:5: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ" (ESV).

For 200 years preachers and slave owners in this country used this text to enslave Africans in this country, a misappropriation and a misunderstanding—

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

ROSCOE HOWARD: —of the biblical text. And God told me "Rosco, you might want to change your hermeneutic."

Someone has asked, why do we keep bringing this up? You remember the woman in Scripture who begged Christ over and over.

MICHAEL RYAN: Five seconds.

ROSCOE HOWARD: She said, "Even the dogs get crumbs from the master's table."

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. Thank you for that comment. All right. Very good.

We will go to microphone 6, David Poloche, Inter-American Division.

DAVID POLOCHE (no) [translated]: In the story of the judges, there was a time when there were no judges and everyone did as they pleased. This is not going to happen in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have been united thus far until today. For more than 30 years specialists have sought Scripture to support women's ordination, and the church has been united in not adopting women's ordination. We haven't found a new manuscript of the Bible that says differently. And two years' study for our theologians have proved the same as we believe today.

We need to be united. There can't be divisions that accept one thing and other divisions that accept another thing. That is not unity.

So I firmly advocate that we don't accept this proposal, that we don't accept this motion.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you very much. We've had that opinion. I'm going to move to microphone 3, Marvin Wray.

Before you start the time and before he begins his comments, I would request that we have someone bring speakers that can announce in several languages, certainly the four or five principal languages. Because I feel that there are people who are observers today that are not receiving translation. And when we have made the appeal that there is no applause, that we really want to have the spirit in the house, I really think maybe the applause is being done in innocence. I have received that feedback. And because no one has said this in their language.

So I would make the request. I don't know just who would need to coordinate that, but maybe someone—Myron, Elder Karnik—who would get those languages and we can have that announcement. Because I think we will have a very good spirit. I want to retain that, but it needs to be known among the observers as well as the delegates on the floor.

All right. We're going to go to microphone 3, Marvin Wray, North American Division.

MARVIN WRAY (yes): Thank you. I have enjoyed watching through the years the growth of the various world divisions. I've been privileged to serve as a missionary in what was the Far Eastern Division for six years. I served as a pastor for 42 years. This issue before us is a very volatile topic. It's been related to women's ordination, and while it is more directly about allowing divisions the opportunity to apply methods, not theology, that will enhance the furthering of the gospel within their territories.

Interestingly and wonderfully, North America has now become a minority in membership while still a majority financial supporter. And I would plead for minority understanding and compassion. As you—the global south, perhaps—were being formed and growing, we strove to give you the tools and understanding that you needed within your culture. We at times made concessions to delicate cultural issues that were not in harmony with our beliefs. Would you please allow us the same privilege with issues that are not acceptable within your culture?

We ordain women as elders, granting them all of the privileges of male elders. Even the TOSC committee could not come to consensus, except to say that divisions should be allowed to choose for their own territory. I would with other divisions recognize the differences in culture that do not diminish our unity and vote yes on this question.

I would further plead with the General Conference, if this should not pass, to recognize the need for variance.

MICHAEL RYAN: Twenty seconds.

MARVIN WRAY: If, as Dr. Stele has suggested, this is to be the decision to settle and cease debate, then, please, we must allow for variance by division. To do otherwise will be both divisive and destructive. A yes vote will impose nothing on anyone; a no vote will place a restraint on us that will impact our youth—

MICHAEL RYAN: Your time is finished.

MARVIN WRAY: —as well as those of us not so young.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. All right. I'm going to recognize microphone 3, Louis Torres, North American Division.

But while Elder Torres is coming to the microphone, I want to respond in a positive way to the request that Elder Wilson made. And I would request Elder Paulsen, Jan Paulsen, former

president of the world church, all of us here know him, to make his way to the microphone. And I'm going to reserve him the right to make a comment immediately after Elder Torres. All right?

Microphone 3, Elder Torres.

LOUIS TORRES (no): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my field, Micronesia, we are not in support of ordaining women. I surveyed my pastors, and none of my pastors support it. I know other conferences in the North American Division that do not support it, which tells me, then, that we are divided even in the North American Division.

Now, my field has grown the past five years, with over 2,000 baptisms. We have trained men and women to preach. None of the women that have preached have requested ordination. The Spirit of God has used them, which doesn't mean that you have to be ordained in order to win souls or that that stops women from being able to do evangelism.

I thank God for the women and the men who are preaching. All my women's ministries directors do not support women's ordination. I've met with them, and none of the women in my field support it.

In reference to spiritual gifts, it is God who decides who gets the spiritual gifts. And just because you prophesy doesn't mean you need to be ordained.

The silence in the Bible is not an argument for women's ordination. It is an argument that Sundaykeepers use to keep Sunday. If we use an argument of silence, then we have to say that it's OK to keep Sunday. There are many other things that the Bible doesn't say you have to do, but it means that you shouldn't do it because God doesn't.

MICHAEL RYAN: Twenty seconds.

LOUIS TORRES: I am very encouraged to see that we're discussing this. And I just want to, again, emphasize that this issue has caused division, and once it's settled, I hope it will end division. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much, Elder Torres.

All right. The chair will recognize a point of order on microphone 1, Bitrus Nabasu, West-Central Africa Division.

BITRUS NABASU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with keen interest to the presentation of Marvin Wray, and I felt my brother was rather intimidating the other union divisions.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I'm going to interrupt you here. And I probably didn't make this clear, so it's my fault. But I would really appreciate if all the delegates would not only address the chair but would refrain from mentioning personal names in their dialogue, to make reference to a former speaker or something. But naming names creates something I don't want to have here. So I'm sorry to have interrupted you, and I'll let you continue. I'm anxious to see if it really is a point of order.

BITRUS NABASU: OK. I'm sorry.

I want us to dialogue as brothers and sisters. References to other divisions as major financial contributions is like an intimidation to other divisions. I think everybody that makes a contribution to a church—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I hate to interrupt you, but what you are saying is an opinion. And I would welcome you to get in line, but it is not a point of order. I'm sorry. OK? Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I have a point of order on microphone 5, Sonja Carnegie, Inter-American Division.

SONJA CARNEGIE: I would like to instruct those who are listening to their translation on their radios to use their earphones, because it's very distracting to listen to the translation coming from these radios. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you. That is a very good point of order. And thank you for that suggestion. And I think you heard the announcement, that you should use your earphones, and it is a little bit confusing to listen the other way. So I think that those who need that advice have taken that. Thank you for sharing with us.

OK. All right. Elder Jan Paulsen, the former president, we know him well, we love Elder Paulsen, please, make your statement now, please.

JAN PAULSEN (yes): Mr. Chairman, I stand here at the mike to appeal to my brothers and sisters to vote yes on the motion before us. A no vote will cause rupture and serious damage to our global church.

Let me say this: I have served our church in ministry for 55 years. Most of these years have been in senior leadership roles. I've lived and served the church from Africa, in Europe, and the global church for our world headquarters here in North America. And just for the record, let me say that the Spirit that guided me during the years I provided leadership for the church did not leave me when I left office.

I believe that I know this church, this global church, well. I know what it is that holds us together. I know also many of the tension points when cultures meet that cause difficulties for us. But we as a church can overcome these things.

I'll be clear about it. It has been stressed by several speakers what we are really voting on today. It is not the question of who has won the argument for ordination or not ordination. This is a question of trust.

We have leadership established around the world in every one of the 13 divisions. They work in counsel together. They work also in close counsel with the General Conference leadership. They pray, they search Scripture, they seek the Spirit's guidance, and the Spirit is guiding them. Do we trust them enough, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to know what is good for the church in their particular part of the world?

Let me say to you, my brothers and sisters from Africa: I love Africa: Africa is part of me. Let me ask you, my brothers and sisters: Do you trust your leaders, elected leaders, from Africa to give the best leadership for the life and mission of the church in Africa? If you do, vote yes.

I say to you, my brothers and sisters from South America: Do you trust your elected leaders to provide reliable, good, Spirit-driven, Spirit-inspired leadership to the life and witness of our church in South America? Then vote yes.

The same applies to North America and to Europe. We need to trust each other to get together and to vote yes on this motion.

Voting no will do damage to our church. I am fearful of what will happen if we do not allow the church to go forward on this. So I say to you, please, with compassion in your hearts, please do not let delegates from major segments of our church return to their fields bruised and bleeding and confused and disenfranchised because they are being driven by this community to live a life somehow judged by this community not to be worthy of the responsibility that they have.

It is important, I think, that we empower our delegates, allow them to go back home and to know that they have the right and the empowerment of this body to respond under the Spirit's guidance to God as to how they can best lead the church.

We are struggling in some parts of the world. We are struggling badly to try to hold the church together, to engage young and old, men and women, in the mission and ministry of the church. We need everyone's involvement.

We are bleeding in many ways. We've got to stop this. We are losing so many of our youth and young professionals. They have problems with the moral integrity of the church, and they say, "Why is the church having problems with this matter? The public does not. It's not a problem to the public. Why should it be to the church?"

And as we say, there is no biblical injunction that stops us. We have to fix this one.

Please, brothers and sisters, I believe that it is the will of God that we should enable the church in every part of the world to make the decisions that are best applicable in the part where they live without being a violation of the will of God. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you for that comment, Elder Paulsen. And I would ask the delegates to indulge the chair in allowing just a few seconds beyond three minutes, and I appreciate your indulgence there.

All right. I have several points of order. We will go to those. At microphone 6, Kishford Frank.

KISHFORD FRANK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am by no means an expert in parliamentary procedures, and so you would guide me here, please.

When I heard this morning that—well, let me back up. I love Elder Paulsen very much, just as all our presidents. I love Elder Wilson just the same. But, Mr. Chairman, when I heard this morning that a former president, a past president, would be given a reserved slot to address this house, I was of the opinion that it would be a neutral address.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK.

KISHFORD FRANK: It is—

MICHAEL RYAN: I do not want—

[Applause.]

First of all, I want to encourage the group not to applaud. I am just simply wanting a different spirit in the house. I can listen from here. And I can tell you, when the murmuring increases, so does the tension.

Now, let's, really, I make the appeal to you. I don't know what else to do.

Now, I want to come to the point of order and the fact that you are rendering an opinion here that really is not a point of order other than questioning why a reserved spot is placed. And I think if you'll check the rules of order, the chairman has the right to recognize who he will, and I'm standing on that privilege. And I think that probably you would find that that privilege is also going to be extended to the current president of the world church. And it will be something that the chair is exercising at the tolerance of the group.

But, now, if you have a point of order beyond what I have mentioned, come to it very quickly.

KISHFORD FRANK: Mr. Chairman, it goes against our natural process and can be perceived to be campaigning if you're going to bring the voice of a past president—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK.

KISHFORD FRANK: —to a matter.

MICHAEL RYAN: I have ruled on that. And so I think we're going to move on. And you have heard my ruling on that, and I am going to stand with what I have decided there. I thank you for your opinion. You have the right to raise that. But I think that at the request of the

present world president who makes this request of the chairman, I think it is a small thing to extend that privilege. But I appreciate it. Thank you for the comment.

I'm going to move to another point of order, to microphone 5, Leslie Gillett from the Inter-American Division.

LESLIE GILLETT: I support the person who just spoke, because I believe that this comment then changes the order of what we're doing here, in that who now speaks, a yes or a no? I would like an answer to my question, please.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Again, I'm not ruling that a point of order, so I'm not really planning to address that.

We're going to go to another point of order at microphone 6, Prince Ng'andu, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

PRINCE NG'ANDU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With due respect to the former GC president, is it in order to begin to point out divisions or a continent? Because in this matter we are dealing with the issue at hand, not Africa or the North American Division. Is it right for the president to begin to point out Africa in this matter?

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. The body and the chair will be advised by your comment. Again, I would ask that you not applaud. We will be advised by that comment. The chair interpreted that from his position of experience, to be able to render a qualified opinion.

But I thank you. Certainly you have raised a good point. I think we want to be very cautious in pointing specifically to someone and making comments.

All right. We're going to move. I see we have a few points of order. I hope we can get back to the questions on the agenda, but I will take these, judged carefully if they are points of order, because I am going to be watching that very carefully.

Microphone 5, José Vasquez Diaz, Inter-American Division.

JOSÉ VASQUEZ DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: Your point of order?

JOSÉ VASQUEZ DIAZ: The point of order is about the same. When we started this morning, it was said we have only two minutes. Now there is no account of time in front of us. We need the time. I suppose because it was the president. But all of the people in here need to have the same time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. And I will be advised by that. All right.

We will now take another point of order on microphone 6, Berit Elkjaer, Trans-European Division.

BERIT ELKJAER: Mr. Chairman, may I suggest that if the applause continues, only the delegates be allowed to stay in the room? I've also asked how come that no one from the Trans-European Division has had the possibility to talk.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I will address the first item very quickly. Our meetings, even the Annual Councils, are not secret meetings where observers and guests are left out of the conversation. We open the doors, and people can come in and observe. This has been our practice, and so we try to honor that. And, frankly, I have been very thankful for the respect and the cooperation from the group. And so, I think, beyond that, I will not make comment.

Your second point. OK. Yes. The individuals from the Trans-European Division, hard to answer that. I do know I'm looking at the list here. And if you will wait just a few more speakers, you'll find one. But I think it's, again, a matter of being registered on the yes or the no

votes. And as it comes in line, I will recognize those. I can't control that any more than that. I hope that provides you a little list.

All right. That's the correct order. OK. All right.

We'll take a point of order on microphone 6, Jorge Peres, Inter-American division.

JORGE PERES [translated]: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, and all of the delegates present. My point of order is to ask that the former president and president do not try to influence the delegates with a yes or a no on this decision.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I'm going to interrupt the speaker. That is not a point of order. And if you want to make a comment for or against, I would suggest that you register under that auspice, not a point of order.

I'm going to go to another point of order at the bottom, microphone 1. Chibuike, Ikegwuonu, West-Central Africa Division.

CHIBUIKE IKEGWUONU: Mr. Chairman, my point of order is we have had enough time to discuss this order, so I'm calling the question that we close discussion so that we can vote. Enough has been taken from this place. We need to give our vote and settle this matter once and for all. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I appreciate your enthusiasm, but the *Rules of Order* do not allow you to make a motion from a point of order, so I will not recognize that. All right. But it was a terrific idea.

[Laughter.]

I think also let's just be reminded that we have come together to discuss this issue, and I hope that we can take the time. There are many people in line. And you have been advised on the position that we're taking if someone were to call the question on the previous motion. So I'll just leave it there.

All right. Let's go to another point of order, microphone 2, Lisa Burrow, North American Division.

LISA BURROW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can sense, as you can, that the tension has risen in the room. And I'm wondering if this would be an appropriate time to pause for prayer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. And I think that is something that is very, very advisable. Obviously we're under a little pressure to have people render opinions, but I think this is something that we must take time for. The chairman is going to take your advice on that.

I would like everybody to pray silently. And we will pause for a period of time.

[Prayer.]

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Very quickly I would like to come to microphone 4, Glenn Townend from the South Pacific Division, supporting the motion.

GLENN TOWNEND (yes): I enjoy being a Seventh-day Adventist, even here, except for the point of orders. The passion—

MICHAEL RYAN: Will you let me second that, or—

GLENN TOWNEND: If you give me some more time.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. We're going to back it up here. Please begin your comment.

GLENN TOWNEND: To be a Seventh-day Adventist is to be a person of passion and conviction. And I've heard the passion and conviction of every speaker, and I love that. Because to stand for the Sabbath, for the state of the dead, and our distinctive doctrines takes that passion and conviction. And we're all united in that. That is what unites us, our belief.

On Sabbath and in the reports I have felt the overwhelming power of God as people explain what they're doing in mission. Tears come to the eyes, my heart just pounds because we're united in mission. It's wonderful.

But I think if the church for the past 40 years has been discussing this issue of the role of women in the church in various ways and we haven't come to a consensus, it's obviously not something that unites us. We don't need to be uniform in everything to be united.

What we need is the Spirit of God to guide us.

I remember the first time I went to the church, and they told me I had to take my shoes off and sit cross-legged. I felt extremely uncomfortable. But we don't dictate how people worship, so I believe that we shouldn't be dictating who leads when we cannot come to a consensus. Unity has not been affected when we've allowed women deacons and elders—

MICHAEL RYAN: All right, the time is spent.

GLENN TOWNEND: —to remain united.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. We go to microphone 1, Samuel Larmie, West-Central Africa Division, not supporting the motion.

SAMUEL LARMIE (no): Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you very much. I have said this somewhere, and I am repeating it here, that a convert that was converted recently in the church said that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not one of the churches, it is the church of God.

And the devil is working against so many churches, trying to move churches from what the Scriptures have said. The devil is against the truth. What we are talking about is not about allowing or disallowing women to minister or to teach or to evangelize. That's not what we're talking about. We're not talking also about prophets. It has nothing to do with that. We are not talking about disallowing people to use their talents. No. It's not about that.

It is about ordination of women into the ministry. And if we want a source to guide us, the Holy Scriptures is the best source we must go to, nowhere else. It's the infallible guide that we can have. Ellen G. White herself never was ordained by the church. Did the church make a mistake? Is that what we are saying today?

When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, He selected 12 disciples. He selected all men. Did he make a mistake? No, He didn't.

We come to Paul, who has been talking about equality. He ordained only men. He never ordained a woman. Paul has given us all these things. And the Bible is clearly disallowing this that we are talking about today.

The church is one church and a global church. Truth is one; it is global.

MICHAEL RYAN: Twenty seconds.

SAMUEL LARMIE: The church must stand where the Bible stands and not elsewhere. If it is good for us to do it, then we must all do it together, not regionally. If it is not good for us to do it, then we must not do it across the world. We want to stay together. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL RYAN: Right. Thank you. I have a point of order on microphone 3, Joshua Shin, Southern Asia-Pacific Division.

JOSHUA SHIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My beloved delegates who are representing 1.8 million world church members, we've been listening to—

MICHAEL RYAN: Hello? Hello? Your comments have to be directed to the chair, not the fellow delegates. Quickly come to your point of order, please.

JOSHUA SHIN: OK, sir. We've been listening to the reasons for yes and the reasons for no. And no matter how much each side emphasizes enough for both sides, somehow all of us foresee the result of this business meeting, which—

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I am sorry to interrupt you, but the chair is ruling that that is not a point of order.

All right. We will move—I'm going to request that—I'm going to have Charles Sandefur, on microphone 4. But I am going to request that Tonye Erekosima and Alex Otti make their way to the microphones. They are making points of inquiry. And I'm going to take two of those back to back, just after Elder Sandefur's comment on microphone 4.

CHARLES SANDEFUR (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Forty-three years ago Josephine Benton became my pastor and my colleague. The next year I was ordained and she wasn't. She had better skills than I had, better gifts than I had, she was more organized than I was, but she waited 40 years to be ordained.

I understand how for many of us here it is a point of conscience that Josephine Benton not be ordained, but that for some of us it's a point of conscience that she be ordained.

How do we deal with differences of conscience in this church? Can we go back to Acts 15, where, in the issue of circumstance, there were differences of conscience?

By the way, at the first Jerusalem Council, there were no rules of procedure; there was no failed electronic voting; they met for one day; and they completed their business. And, astonishingly, the Holy Spirit led them to permit both circumcision and noncircumcision into a complicated unity, rather than an easy consensus. And the people who came with their conscience and voted their conscience were allowed to go home and exercise their conscience.

We can do that here. Let's go back to Acts 15. Let's bring our conscience, vote our conscience. What we need is not your permission; we need your blessing for us to act in ways that will fulfill the mission of our church. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. We will now go to microphone 2, Tonye Erekosima, West-Central Africa Division.

TONYE EREKOSIMA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A small clarification. I have a problem with the motion on the floor here. My question is: Has there been any time the GC made reference to divisions to take actions on any policy issues or what have you? Have there been any time some decisions have been deferred to the various divisions?

I'm afraid we are trying to set a precedent in the light of some contemporary issues that will let divisions begin to make decisions by themselves. So we need to be very careful so that we don't polarize on these issues, because we may begin to have issues that we may not be able to have control over. Divisions will now come up to make decisions, contentious decisions, without regard to the GC.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you for that comment. I know you're making a point of inquiry, and there probably would be people better qualified to respond to that than I am. But I do know that even with the constitution and bylaws, we provide a model constitution and bylaws, and divisions have the flexibility to adopt them. It is true that there are certain points in that constitution that divisions are required to reflect, but there's quite a bit of leeway in it.

I also know that when you look from division to division, there's flexibility in certain financial policies and, as a matter of fact, different offering plans. And these are division decisions. So it's not something that's unusual to have divisions make this decision.

I think the thing we need to keep in mind here is that we have brought this to this body because this issue is owned by the General Conference in session. And certainly this body can define how they want to have this administered or not administered. And that's why we're here today, to address that question. I don't want to give a long answer, because I see people at the microphone, and they did not come to hear me talk.

All right. Let's move to microphone 1, Alex, please, from the General Conference.

ALEX OTTI: Thank you very much, Brother Chairman. Let me start by apologizing to the GC Executive Committee, because I may not have very kind words for them. Look at the proposal and read it: "Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No."

If you listen very well, you also hear what is not being said. And what is not being said is what is most important here: that the leadership has not taken the qualities of leadership into serious consideration. A leader has to be fair, courageous, and bold irrespective of where the pendulum is swinging.

I don't think we have come for a popularity contest here. I expected that if this was going to come, a decision has to be made. There is no decision here. And what I sense is that the GC Executive Committee is outsourcing its function of making a decision to the delegates here. And I don't think it's right. I believe that this proposal should be a consensus. If there's no consensus, they should continue working on it, even if it takes 30 years until we bring a proposal that says, "This is our position."

MICHAEL RYAN: Twenty seconds.

ALEX OTTI: We can vote yes or no, but this is like sitting on the fence and is asking us to take a decision that should have been made by the Executive Committee. I really don't think that a good job on this has been done. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. We'll be advised by that. Microphone 2, Jim Howard, North American Division. Let me just announce the names: Frederick Nyaga, Ann Krisztina—I'm sorry. Bruno Vertallier will be the next speaker after this, then Frederick, then Anna.

JIM HOWARD (no): I would first like to address some of the comments made about Ellen White. Ellen White uses the words "pastor" and "pastoral laborer" to refer to anyone who exercises the spiritual gift of pastoring, nurturing the flock through visitation and personal ministry. She describes pastors' wives and even church members doing pastoral labor.

But when speaking of the office of minister, Ellen White writes, "The primary object of our college was to afford young men an opportunity to study for the ministry and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause" [*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 60]. Young men she specifically identifies for the ministry and those of both sexes for the various branches of the cause.

Testimony Treasures, volume 2, page 239, says: "Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women and walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be men of blameless reputation." Ellen White was making a distinction in both of those places.

Furthermore, the question before us, allowing each division to decide whether or not to ordain women in their region, assumes that there are differences between divisions but that there

is unity within our divisions. It assumes North America believes one thing, West Africa something else, etc.

But this is simply not the case. In the North American Division there is a sharp divide over this issue, and voting yes would be disastrous to our division. Rather than allowing us to focus on mission, it would—

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

JIM HOWARD: —simply pass the battle to divisions, unions, conferences, and local churches. In North America there is a large portion, if not a majority, of church members who are not in favor of ordaining women, even where conference leadership is in favor of doing so. I believe that every church in the North American Division—

MICHAEL RYAN: Your time is finished.

JIM HOWARD: —will be put in an awkward situation if this is passed.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you for that comment. Moving to microphone 3, Elder Bruno Vertallier from the Inter-European Division.

BRUNO VERTALLIER (yes): Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Women, sisters, I love you. God does too. In the three angels' messages—and we speak a lot about those—we are called to give glory and worship the Creator, who has created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water. We love this declaration. We support it. This is good and mandatory. We want to glorify the Creator.

What about the respect of the creatures of the Creator? In society we continue to discriminate to the creatures of the Creator because of religions, of skin color, of strong nationalism, even because of gender. It seems that humankind always finds good reason to

discriminate. We always try to control, dominate a group of people. It happens also in our church.

We continue to discriminate against many of the creatures of the Creator. Do you know that women have been created by God, the Creator? They are precious to God. They are precious to us. Women are creatures of God.

If we want to become consistent and glorify the Creator, we must recognize women and respect them in their full dimension as human being and creatures—

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

BRUNO VERTALLIER: —of the Creator and stop discriminating in any way. Let us be in the Asia church the champions in glorifying the Creator and respecting women as creature of the Creator and stop discriminating. If you understand that, you will know how to vote. Let us glorify the Creator in respecting His creatures.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. The time is finished.

BRUNO VERTALLIER: Women, we love you.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

OK. Very good. Nice. All right. We will move to microphone 3, speaking against the motion, Frederick Nyaga.

FREDERICK NYAGA (no): Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This issue of women's ordination has not come today. It has always been there. And in all the other past General Conference sessions, it was not approved, not because anyone was against women's ordination, but because the church wanted to maintain unity. And I stand here to ask:

Does it mean now that we don't need unity? I believe that if there was ever a time the church needed unity, it is today.

If we want to vote that every division does as it wishes, it will be just a question of time and the unions and local conferences will also start saying, "Can we be allowed to do the things that we want?" Eventually there will be the local churches. And I ask myself, Where will the unity of the church be?

We are not against women being ordained. We are not against women doing the work of the church. We are only saying, if we are going to say no, let us say no as a church. Let us have one stand.

There are many things that we do not do, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because of the impact they are going to have either to the individual or to the church. And I believe this is one of them.

If we are going to say yes, what impact are we going to have?

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

FREDERICK NYAGA: This issue is not a question of life and death. And therefore I would we rather say no to maintain that unity that we have been having. The church has continued to today without women's ordination, and it will continue growing. God bless you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. OK. I'm going to ask Anna Krisztina Zarkane Teremy on microphone 6 to please come there. And while you are coming, I am going to exercise the chair's prerogative to recognize Elder Ted Wilson after the next speaker.

MICHAEL RYAN: You've got another issue on the phone right now? OK. All right. I will wait just a little bit of time. I think he's on the telephone, so I may just wait another couple speakers here.

All right. Microphone 6.

ANNA KRISZTINA ZARKANE TEREYMY (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate how the Adventist thinking is reflected in the Sabbath school, as in lesson 6 of the quarterly *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*. A quote from that lesson: “In the time of Jesus, as in some cultures today, women were deemed of little worth. . . . Against such a backdrop . . . Jesus brought the good news that women are” “children of God of equal worth with men in the sight of God” (May 2).

The message today for women of all nations remains the same: We are all men and women one in Christ Jesus.

This is what we studied in 215 countries in Sabbath school, which is supposed to unite our church. However, could it be that in this respect some of us are like those Christians who read “Sabbath” but understand “Sunday.” From the same lesson, a quote from Ellen White, *Evangelism*, page 464: “The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis, and He will work through them. . . . The Savior will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men.”

One hundred years ago the church in Hungary, where I am from, was established—

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

ANNA KRISZTINA ZARKANE TEREYMY: —but many of the men were taken in World War I. At that time women stood up to carry on the work, becoming role models for later generations.

God gave the fruit of the Holy Spirit to those women, and also blessings. So what would Jesus do?

MICHAEL RYAN: Your time is up. Thank you very much. We appreciate that comment. All right. Very good. I think I still see activity over here, so let's go to microphone 4, Natasha Nebblett, speaking against the motion.

NATASHA NEBBLETT (no): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to speak on behalf of thousands whose voices are not being heard in my division. Thousands of NAD members do not agree with women's ordination. The initiative to bring it to the front has served not to unify but to polarize our division.

As the president of GYC, which is the largest annual youth and young-adult conference in the Adventist Church, I hear from those within the NAD who feel their voices have not been heard or at least not been acknowledged. There are those in this division who believe that we should be considerate of the world church and what regional beliefs will mean for our unity, rather than feeling that the world church needs to be considerate of us.

And if the division has not acknowledged all of the convictions within their own division, how can we anticipate that they will appreciate and consider the convictions of the world church on other issues when we have once set a precedent that each locality can decide for itself?

I am a young woman, a young adult, an ethnic minority, and a leader of one of largest youth movements in Adventism. And God has already called me to work for Him, and that is all the calling that I need. Not all young people, not all young women, and not all North Americans want our church to be divided for the sake of somebody putting their hands on us.

And while people recognize my work as president of the Young Adult Conference, they should give more recognition when I become a wife next February and a mother after that, since the Spirit of Prophecy says that that position is higher than the ministry and the desk and the king on his throne.

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

NATASHA NEBBLETT: We should focus on giving that the dignity and honor that it deserves. I say no to the question and no to dividing the church.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Very good. Please, I would ask you not to applaud. We are not building that in. I recognize that much of this is coming from the observers. And I still would welcome an organization to have an effort to provide in translation that we are not seeking applause, because we don't want that spirit in the house.

All right. Very good. Cheryl Doss. We'll go to microphone 4. She speaks in favor of the motion.

CHERYL DOSS (yes): The church has followed a very careful process in coming to this day. As we have heard for two years, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, a committee officially convened by the General Conference, met to study the issue of ordination. The duly appointed members from around the world, including many of our church's best biblical scholars, studied the Bible together, discussed and prayed and listened to each other. At the end of that process, two thirds of that committee agreed that the church should allow the practice of ordination to vary in different parts of the body. To have two thirds of those committee members, a majority, after much study, agree on the direction for the church to take on such a difficult issue seems to me to be a strong indication of the church's leading, the Spirit's leading.

The Bible says that just as a body requires different parts, the unity of the church requires differences. The church's responsibility is to empower all the parts of the body for mission, not to reduce the body to sameness.

Our theology of ordination document clearly states that ordination in the Adventist Church is functional, not sacramental. If one part of the body will function better if women are ordained, then that is what they should do.

All parts do not have to function in the same way, nor do they need to be exactly alike in ordination practices—

MICHAEL RYAN: 20 seconds.

CHERYL DOSS: —to function well together.

We put shoes only on our feet, not on our hands. We put food in our mouths, not in our ears. To fulfill our mission, we need to allow divisions to make decisions that will empower their mission and help their part of the body function well.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. We appreciate that comment. All right.

We will go to microphone 6, Pedro Mendez, Inter-American Division.

PEDRO MENDEZ (no) [translated]: Good evening. I'd like to embrace the opportunity to see how this congregation is interested in this point. We've been reviewing the reports of the different divisions, the progress that has been seen in each of them, and we have seen men and women working together, and we have seen the church grow.

Viewing those present—and I know that in other countries there is expectation—I'm embarrassed to see that before, with such a beautiful program of revival and reformation, we have not seen a suspense and expectation as this, as if this were a point of life or death.

Look back into Bible history and take David's conquest. The enemy placed in his heart the desire to count the people, and his victories went to the ground.

I believe women's ordination at this moment is a distracting and divisive influence. This church needs to keep united, as it has been for the progress of its mission.

The church should not depend on the pressure of its surroundings to make the right decision.

MICHAEL RYAN: Five seconds.

PEDRO MENDEZ [translated]: I believe we should take a no position.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. The time is finished. We thank you for that. The time is finished. And we appreciate that comment.

All right. Very good. We are going to go to microphone 3, Ricardo Graham, North American Division.

RICARDO GRAHAM (yes): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to support a yes on the motion, because this motion allows for accommodation on a local basis, which has a long history in the denomination.

Examples include but are not limited to the following: 1. Regional conferences were originally created because the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States of America yielded to the prevailing racial code of segregation and would not accept black Americans as full equals in the mission of the church. They have proved a great blessing in every level of the organization.

2. There has been accommodation to polygamy in membership within the church, as spelled out in the *Working Policy, C70*, which reads, "Wives of a polygamist who have entered into the marriage in their heathen state and who, upon accepting Christianity, are still not permitted to leave their husbands because of tribal custom, may, upon approval of the local and

union committees, become baptized members of the church.” This has been a blessing to the growth of the church.

There has been an accommodation in doctrines. It was voted in 2005 at St. Louis, Missouri. General Conference delegates arrived with 27 fundamental beliefs. We left with 28. A new belief, number 11, Growing in Christ, was added in response to the requests of Adventists in developing nations for a statement of spiritual warfare, yielding the current 28. This was an accommodation to the needs of members who believed this would enhance their mission and ministry.

There are many parts of the world that believe in acknowledging the giftedness of God upon all people, and recognizing that officially would be a boon to their mission and their ministry—

MICHAEL RYAN: Fifteen seconds.

RICARDO GRAHAM: —in the local area where they serve and function.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I urge a yes vote.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you for that comment. I see your cards waving in the air. And I know that you are receiving a drink out of the fire hydrant, and the translators probably could not keep pace with that pace. But when we place speakers under time constraints, they are eager to make certain points, and so they tend to speak faster. I will encourage the speakers to slow down a little bit if they possibly can.

I have a point of order—well, let me just see. I have got so many cards waving here.

Israel Leito, are you at microphone 6?

ISRAEL LEITO: Yes, Elder. It is urgent.

MICHAEL RYAN: Yes, please.

ISRAEL LEITO: There is no translation for the Spanish sector.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. I will advise those who are responsible for translation that this is something we do not want. We want our delegates to be informed. Please, we'll do our very best to correct that. I don't know what else to do from the chair, but I do see people beginning to move to check on that. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

I regret, Elder Graham, that your comments were not fully translated across the floor, but I think it's where it's at.

All right. I think we'll take the point of order at microphone 5. Josney Rodriguez, Inter-American Division.

JOSNEY RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Brother Chairman. My point was said.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much.

JOSNEY RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much. You went about it in a proper manner. OK.

I'm going to exercise my privilege as the chairman to recognize whom I wish, and this is a request that we have had. I know that in my other exception we went about three minutes, maybe just a shade over that. And I just would ask Elder Ted Wilson to try to keep that in perspective.

Elder Wilson, please, microphone 1.

TED N. C. WILSON: Brother Chair, if you could put up two minutes, I'd appreciate it.

With all humility and with respect, I speak to my brothers and sisters. Most of you know already where I stand on this issue, and I humbly submit that my views are rather well known and, I believe, very biblically based, plainly said. But I will not refer to them after this.

I don't want anyone to misunderstand. I have heard the angst and the emotional deep feeling by so many. I think we all hold these views rather strongly. But let me give you a very strong pastoral appeal.

I believe we need to stay together as a church in making a united decision, not separately. We have had a fair and open process. Our real challenge for the future, Brother Chair, is to maintain a sweet spirit. After the vote is when we really will be tested, whichever way it goes. I want us to focus upon the mission and upon evangelism and not continue agitation on either side for this issue. The mission of the church is so precious to all of us. We have been entrusted with the proclamation of the three angels' messages, and today we read in Revelation 18 the fourth angel.

My dear Brother Chair and the rest, I will be praying that we stay together.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. All right. We are going to take microphone 5, Leslie Gillett, Inter-American Division.

LESLIE GILLETT (no): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I must not support this motion, because when I read the Bible, I realize that at the foundation of what we believe as Seventh-day Adventists is the instruction that comes from God to His people. When I look at the sanctuary message, God told Moses that His people was to make for Him a sanctuary and He was to follow the pattern that was seen in heaven.

It is clear to me, then, that what Moses did was what God showed him. When I look at the ministry of Jesus and of Paul, and, in fact, when I look throughout Scripture, I do not see Scripture disagreeing with itself. It is, therefore, clear to me that if it was God's will, we would have had a clear "Thus saith the Lord" on this matter.

I believe, however, that if we study the prophecies and we look at what's happening in the world, we would realize why this issue is coming up at this time, and therefore as a church we should stand firm on the Word of God, and we should say no.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you for that comment. The chair will remind you that we are going to call the vote as it was on the agenda, approved by this body, at 4:30. So I'm just reminding you, you can look at the clock and you can see that we have room for a few more speakers, and that's going to be about it.

We go to microphone 6, Eric Gudmundsson, Trans-European Division. I'm sorry. A point of order on microphone 6, David Ripley, Northern Asia-Pacific Division.

DAVID RIPLEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. My point of order is that we're just about to the end of this, and there are some divisions that have not been allowed to talk at all. And in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division more than half of its people leading churches are women. And I think you need to hear from the Northern Asia-Pacific Division.

MICHAEL RYAN: I think that's a good idea, but it is not a point of order. I regret that. And, again, the chair is working with the system that has been established. And what has been established is that I take the names in priority as they come. And I think we've heard most of the divisions. As a matter of fact, I think maybe all but the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. And I regret that, but that's where the chair is. We must follow the procedure that we have established. Thank you for that.

All right. Let's see, a second point of order, on microphone 5, Brother Brink, General Conference.

PENELOPE BRINK: Mr. Chairman, it is Sister Brink. You might consider that although this topic is about women's ordination, it appears to me—and you would need to check—that

many more men have spoken than women. I know we're trying to be fair. And perhaps you could just consider this. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you. We will—again, that's something beyond my control. I wish it were different, but I do know that we gave people the opportunity to come to the microphone. OK. Thank you for that point of order.

Microphone 3, Carlos Moreta, North American Division.

CARLOS MORETA [translated]: Is it possible, Mr. Chairman, that we could understand what a point of order means? Perhaps the parliamentarian sitting next to you can aid us with this. I've noticed that you have set aside some points of order. And my understanding is that a point of order is anything to clarify when things are not moving along correctly—for example, the colleague who mentioned that the Northern Asia-Pacific Division was not given an opportunity. I understand that's a point of order because it's not going well there. And when it was said that we should not make appeals or politick the delegates who are here, with all respect, the former president spoke in that way. And you ordered the debate to stop, and you stopped that delegate because this was not a point of order.

Please. I don't understand. When people applaud, you say, "Do not applaud." But when people are making appeals and politicking the delegates, you say nothing. Please, may the parliamentarian sitting at your side help us with this. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. We will certainly get an explanation from the parliamentarian, and he will tell us the guidelines for a point of order.

TODD MC FARLAND: Thank you, Brother Chairman. For those of you who have your *Rules of Order* with you, I would encourage you to turn on page 6, 2(c).

As was pointed out by one other individual, what we call “point of order” by tradition is really, in our rules, a question of privilege. But for purposes of our organization, we treat them the same. They list three categories: organization of the session or meeting, comfort of the delegates or members, and conduct of the delegate members or of others present.

We just talked briefly about those. The conduct, that point of order that people are clapping, that is appropriate, because it goes to the conduct of the delegate members or others present. Comfort of the delegates or members would also include things like translation, so that’s an appropriate interrupt. Also if you felt the room was too cold or too warm. Fortunately at the beginning of the meeting people didn’t make that, because I know it was awfully cold.

And last, when it says organization of the session or meeting, that has to do with issues of organization, including the rulings of the chair and so forth and whether the rules are being followed.

So those are the three areas. Simply asking to clarify some confusion is not typically a point of order. I hope that’s clear, Brother Chair.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Thank you for that. And I know that to ask other people to support your opinion is something that is very commonly heard on the floor. I think the rule that we have set is that we are not wanting people to speak personally about someone else. I think that’s—

OK, we’re going to take some more points of order here. But you should know that after we entertain these, we will end debate. That’s about five minutes from now.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Microphone 2, George King, North American Division.

GEORGE KING: Mr. Chairman, we listened for the entire morning to the officers of the General Conference without interruptions. That has given this august body just a half hour before

lunch and this session. My point of order is that we have waited a long time to say something on this issue, and I would like to suggest that more time be given to this body before the vote is taken.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. This is not a point of order, and I'm ruling it that way.

Let's go to microphone 6, Boyce Mkhize, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

BOYCE MKHIZE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My point of order relates to the motion that is before the table. And it essentially says that the motion that is before the table, if voted, whichever way, is likely to undermine the policy framework of the church in the sense that if you look at page 30 of the *Church Manual*—

MICHAEL RYAN: I'm sorry—

BOYCE MKHIZE: It is clear—

MICHAEL RYAN: —this is not a point of order. I regret to say that, but it is just not a point of order. OK.

We will go to microphone 5, Armando Miranda.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I consider that the previous person who spoke in regard to the point of order, it was really a point of order, and you denied that. This morning we took a lot of time to introduce the issue, almost the whole morning. A few delegates had the opportunity to speak. And it seemed to me that it's a good point of order to extend the time or somebody else can to make the motion to extend the time, because this is a very important issue that we need to have come to an end.

MICHAEL RYAN: Well, first of all, to extend the time would not be a motion that could be made at the end of a point of order. You cannot make a motion and raise a point of order at the same time. And so, you know, we, at the beginning, voted the agenda and a sequence. And

part of that vote was that we would spend the day on this item and that we would call the vote at 4:30, which it's just about one minute from that time. And this was the wish of the body.

To begin to change orders of the day, I don't think we have any indication that has been put in place. And that would also require a two-thirds vote to change the orders of the day. So, I'm sorry, but to rule that we're going to extend it—certainly when you have 2,500 delegates who have already said they wanted the vote called at 4:30, I think we have to abide by that time. And I do have a few other points of order, but I can tell you, if you are waiting to make a comment, you probably should be seated, because we are going to quickly organize to call this vote.

Now, I will take the points of order. Microphone 3, Raymond Hartwell, North American Division,.

RAYMOND HARTWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a point of order. According to the parliamentarian, page 6, number 2(c), questions of privilege refer to organization of session or meeting.

Mr. Chairman, there have been people standing at the microphones since this morning who have not had a chance to speak. And so as a point of order for the organization of session or meeting, I ask that up to two more hours be granted on this topic without any further points of order except for fire or the death of the chair. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

MICHAEL RYAN: It's very kind of you to take such an interest in the chair.

[Laughter.]

I am going to ask for a clarification again from the parliamentarian on the very points that you pointed to on points of order, questions of privilege.

TODD MC FARLAND: Brother Chair, I hope you are doing well, because I know that if something does happen, I am not moving over one chair to the left.

I would point out to the brother that the motion to limit the extent of debate is a subsidiary motion. It is ranked five. The only motions that rank higher than it are previous motion, table, question of privilege, adjourn, recess, or fix time for further meeting.

So, no, asking for a different time is not a point of order.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Very good. We will go to microphone 3, Caleb Jara, North American Division.

CALEB JARA: Mr. Chair, I move to table this item until tomorrow at 12:00.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. That's nondebatable, and that will require a two-thirds vote to carry that. And so I think we will probably take that vote by—oh. Wait a minute. I forgot about that. Yeah. No. I'm sorry. I'm getting counsel here that, again, you cannot make a motion from a point of order. And it's a subsidiary motion.

These are the rules that we operate by. So obviously if I grant that motion or accept it, then I will have many points of order that are quite legitimate. So I apologize, but that motion cannot be accepted.

We will go to the point of order on microphone 6, Berit Elkjaer, Trans-European Division.

BERIT ELKJAER: I have a really important point of order. If it's going to be a no today, it will be necessary for us, as Danes, to go home and break Danish law if we so follow the General Conference.

MICHAEL RYAN: I apologize again. That's not a point of order, so I think we have cleared these up. I think that's the point. No, we're not going to take any more. I'm finished.

OK. I think what we're going to do now is honor what the delegates have voted, to call this vote at 4:30. It's a very important time.

But again I would like to have the delegates pause for a moment of prayer. We're starting into the voting process where the world church is going to make a decision. And I would again invite you to find someone next to you, and we are going to take just two or three minutes to ask the Lord to again bring a sweet spirit over this house and that we would have the guidance of Heaven as we make a decision, a very important decision on this issue. So let's just pause and find someone to pray with.

[Prayer.]

All right. I'm going to ask those of you who left your badges at the recording stations, check to see if you have your badge, because you're going to need that in the voting process. And I would ask you to go back and pick that badge up and to have that with you. So you may want to go back to the place you registered, to pick that badge up.

All right. Very good. I do have a last point of order before we enter into the voting process. Microphone 3, Gene Heinrich, North American Division. And that will be the last of the debate. We'll close debate.

ALVIN KIBBLE: Mr. Chair, I'd like to rise for an inquiry. Alvin Kibble, North American Division.

MICHAEL RYAN: I'm sorry. I'm not recognizing you, Brother Kibble. We are recognizing Gene Heinrich, NAD.

GENE HEINRICH: Mr. Chair, I'd like to humbly make an authentic point of order. I stand to be corrected. Are we are following *Robert's Rules of Order* or the *General Conference Rules of Order*? I would first need an answer to that question.

MICHAEL RYAN: We are following the *General Conference Rules of Order* that have been voted by this body.

GENE HEINRICH: Is there not a provision in those that for contentious matters, *Robert's Rules of Order* would supersede them?

MICHAEL RYAN: I'm receiving counsel from the parliamentarian that there is not.

All right. Very good. With that, we will proceed to a description of the voting process. I think most of us are familiar with our undersecretary, Myron Iseminger. And they have worked through a very careful process. And Elder Iseminger, I would ask that you would describe that for us.

MYRON ISEMINGER: As we indicated this morning, voting will be conducted by secret ballot. And in order to accomplish this in an organized way, we will have ushers to dismiss each delegation by row to line up or queue in a single-file line near one of 14 scanning stations. The delegates sitting outside the delegate seating area, we ask you to wait until all of the delegates in the seating area have been dismissed, and then you can also line up at the stations.

Badges will be scanned after you arrive at the station and verified by a General Conference auditor. When you receive their positive verification, the auditor will give each delegate a secret ballot.

The delegate will then move to one of the side aisles of the stadium and walk forward to the ballot box at the front of the stage.

I believe we have a graphic now on camera that I know is too small to see very clearly. But the idea is that the center rows will move toward the back of the stadium and the scanning stations there and the outside aisles will move toward the front and the ballot boxes.

You can mark your ballot while you're walking to the front, or you may stop at a table. We have several tables, at least on the left side and other places, where you can mark your ballot on the table, in secret, if you would like. If you have a pen, please bring it with you; otherwise, there are a few pens available at the scanning stations.

The ballot itself looks like what is up on the screen. It's very simple. The top portion is "yes" in five languages. And if you choose to vote in favor of this motion, you will put a mark in the circle beside "yes" on the upper portion. If you are against the motion, you will mark a checkmark in the circle on the lower portion of the secret ballot. Please be very clear. If we are unable to determine your wish, then we cannot count your ballot.

Delegates, after you have voted, you may fold the ballot to keep it confidential. And then when you arrive at the voting boxes, there is a slot in the top that you can insert your ballot into that sealed container. They are clear containers. You can see that they are empty right now.

The General Conference associate secretaries will then count the ballots only after all delegates have voted. Once you have inserted the ballot, you may return to your seat. The auditors from the General Conference will also be available at the tables to observe and verify the count.

During this time we ask that you maintain an atmosphere of reflection and order. Please honor the dismissal by rows by the ushers. And we pray that during this time you will reflect and pray carefully through this process.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Elder Iseminger, do not go far away, because we may have to have clarification on this process.

All right. You have to scan your badge. I'm sorry. And I may not recognize it, because debate has finished.

All right. I'm not seeing anything here. I would need to see the basis of which you are . . .

MYRON ISEMINGER: Mr. Chair.

MICHAEL RYAN: Yes.

MYRON ISEMINGER: The ushers will begin from the front of each section. And I believe that they are prepared to come forward at this time or whenever you're ready for them.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. I am not seeing anything on the screen. They may have been setting up for the other system.

All right. Maybe while we're waiting, Rosa, could you repeat and read the motion for us?
OK.

All right. Maybe while you're getting that put together, I'll take the point of order.

Please, Microphone 2, Ramiro Cano, North American Division.

RAMIRO CANO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sorry to bring this up. But the parliamentarian said that there was no provision in the *General Conference Rules of Order* for the General Conference to suspend the *Rules of Order*. But on page 10 in the upper right-hand corner, it says, "Under special circumstances, and for the purpose of facilitating the business of the church, these rules of order may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates or members."

I just wanted to bring that to your attention, sir.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I didn't hear the parliamentarian say that, but I will give him a chance to speak for himself.

TODD MC FARLAND: I do not recall saying that. I can check the transcript. But, no. There is a provision to suspend the rules; however, no one made such a motion.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you.

All right. Rosa, let's have a rereading of the motion. Is it on the screen? Can we have it up on the screen and read that motion again so that we are absolutely clear?

ROSA BANKS: OK. I'm just going to read. It says, "Voted to allow or not allow division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No."

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you. And I'm just wondering, Dr. Ng, secretary of the General Conference, if we could just have a reminder of what it means to vote yes and what it means to vote no. I want to make sure this is absolutely clear in the minds of the delegates. Because, obviously, this is a very important item, and I want to make sure that we have that clarification. So if you could just give us a little reminder of what it means, if we vote yes or vote no. Microphone 1.

G. T. NG: If the majority of the church votes yes, that means divisions will be authorized to make decisions on the issues of women's ordination within their territory.

If the vote is no, divisions are not authorized to decide on the issue of women's ordination in their territory, and therefore current policy stands.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. Thank you. I think we can have the ushers to begin to come forward, and we're going to dismiss row by row.

Now, I want us to seek your indulgence here because this is going to take awhile. We wish that we had had an electronic system to call this vote, but that system did not function, and so we have had to go to a paper ballot. But in the system that we have put together, we feel that it

will be a secret ballot and confidential, one that will let you vote without the review of your peers.

And so I think this is where we're at.

Now, the deacons to come forward. OK.

All right. I have been advised from those who are sending us electronic notes up here that the scanning device no longer scans badges from the perspective of the point of order; they are switching that to record the badge numbers and then to hand out the ballots.

So I am seeing some people at the microphones, at least one. And if you have a point of order on the voting system, on the system that was described by Elder Iseminger, then I would invite you to make your way to microphone 1 or microphone 2. If it is a point of order. If it's not a point of order, we have closed the debate on the floor. So, Elder Wahlen, is this a point of order?

CLINTON WAHLEN: Yes.

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. I would recognize you. I suppose that since the scanning device is down, I'm going to request someone from Secretariat to look at the badge and confirm that we really have a delegate at the microphone. And if I could just have one person at microphone 1 and one person at microphone 2, that way we will make sure that we have some.

Now, again, I want to be very, very clear. The points of order are related to the voting system, and they are not to continue the debate, because we will not hear that.

OK. Elder Wahlen.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Brother Chair, my point of order is simply to request that the entire question be read, not just the last portion.

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. All right. I think that's a fair request. Now, I suppose you are meaning not the three pages? You're meaning where it says, "Whereas," and then what follows? OK. I will request the secretary to read that again.

ROSA BANKS: OK. In reading it off the screen, the question that has been moved already is: "After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and after your careful consideration of what is best for the church and the fulfillment of its mission, is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No?"

MICHAEL RYAN: OK. Very good. I'm glad that you pointed that out, so—

All right. Very good. I think we can begin the process of having the ushers dismiss. I think the process is clear. We will do this orderly, one row at a time, and we will then proceed to have the badge scanned, at which point you will receive a ballot. You can place your vote and then place it in the box, and at that point they will be collected.

Now, I want to make mention of the fact that we have the auditors of the General Conference involved in this process, in the counting and the supervision. Why, they have been entrusted with a very, very important responsibility that requires the utmost integrity. And so they will be the ones who are largely supervising this process.

So do not hesitate. Begin immediately, ushers. Let's begin the process.

[Voting.][4:57–5:22]

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. I would like to invite the delegates to be seated so that we can conclude the business of the day.

And a second item. I would request that all delegates who have not registered your card and you intend to vote, please do so immediately, because, as I see the last few people coming through line, I will announce there are just a few minutes, maybe one or two minutes, until I will declare that voting has ended.

No. Not yet, not yet, not yet. I'm saying, if you have not voted—and I see the last people coming through here, so you'll have an opportunity to come through. But when I see that it's pretty well ended, then I will declare that the voting will end in a few minutes. And I expect that probably no one will come, because most will already have finished. But I'm just letting you know, if you have not voted, please immediately proceed. Do not worry. We will not close the voting as long as there's one person who claims that they have not registered. We will not close the voting until every person has had a chance to vote. But then when it looks as though all have completed, then I will declare that in 60 seconds, unless you declare, we will close the voting, so please vote now.

[Voting.] [5:23–5:29]

Let me announce again, if you are a delegate and you are planning to vote on this question, I encourage you to proceed immediately to the scanning station, receive your ballot, and cast the ballot. I'm not making any announcement on closing the voting because I still see we have plenty of people in line here. But I am just saying that I know there are some delegates who are seated in the back of the auditorium, and I ask that you come forward and immediately attend to casting your vote, if that is your intention.

[Voting.]

If you have cast your vote, I would encourage you to take your seat immediately. We are receiving some counsel from those who are concerned about the regulations for fire, and of

course we do not want to have the aisles blocked. And also I think that if you are seated, it lets the chair determine how many people we have left that are still processing.

I will assure you that if there is even one person who claims that they intend to vote that has not had the privilege, we will wait until that vote is counted.

[Voting.]

All right. I am wanting to hear from this section here, where we have a lot of people standing in line or standing. Are there people here who have not had an opportunity to vote? All right. I would like to have the music turned down, if I could. Could I encourage the music to please cease? I think that the conductor . . .

All right. I'm being advised that we have about two or three more minutes probably to process the remainder.

If I could ask those who are not finished with the process, just raise your hand and wave it for me so that I can see.

OK. Right here. OK. All right. I think the ones in the back are complete. We're finished. Is that correct?

Now, all right. If I could encourage those who are controlling the timer, I would like for you to put two minutes on the clock.

Now, do not start the timer yet. I want to give one last opportunity for any person who is a delegate to raise their hand and indicate that they want to vote and have not had opportunity.

I'm going to just pause in case there's someone coming from the back or something. We do not want to miss even one vote. Any person in the auditorium who is a delegate that has not voted and desires to vote, please indicate now.

All right. I'm not seeing anyone. I would ask those running the counter to begin the two-minute countdown, when I will declare the end of voting. Please start the clock.

[Countdown.]

All right. I officially declare the end of voting. Now, at this moment we are going to begin the counting process. As I previously announced, we have auditors who are going to largely be involved in this, and they will be spending, as you know, some time. Now, it's going to take a little time. These ballots have to be unfolded and counted, and they have a certain way that they're organized, and they're going about that.

And there is Paul Douglas, who is the director of auditing for the world church. He is the individual that I will take the official tally from.

And so I will not be listening to anyone else, and we'll respect his assignment and position in delivering that vote.

While they are counting, you know, since we have a large crowd here, the treasurers have wondered if we could take up an offering.

[Laughter.]

That's not true. It's not true. Dr. Prestol did not ask me to say that. But it's almost irresistible, isn't it?

But, you know, when we have a gathering of this size, it's very common for us to sing some good old Adventist hymns. And while they are counting, I have requested that we just sing a few songs together, and we'll just sit here until the count is complete. And so, please, why don't we lead us into that song service. And I know you don't have hymnals, but we're going to choose songs that I'm sure you know.

[Singing of songs.]

MICHAEL RYAN: For those that may be a little concerned about the beginning of the evening program, I have information that tells me that we are going to delay the beginning of that program 30 minutes. So the music will begin at 7:00, and the program will begin at 7:30. So just know that we're allowing a little more time for those who need to go other places and eat.

I enjoy the singing. Thank you. It sounds beautiful. I may get inspired enough to take that offering, but let's sing a little more.

[Singing of songs.]

I forgot to mention that the concessions will also open 30 minutes later, stay open 30 minutes later also, so just to let you know.

[Singing of songs.]

MICHAEL RYAN: All right. We have the ballot totals in. And just before I read the totals and the decision on the question, I want to remind the body that I responded to someone who said, "Are we going to close this session with prayer?" And I said, "Yes, absolutely we are. I just think it's the most important time that we spend together."

And so immediately upon reading this and my declaring the motion, we are going to take a little time to turn to the person next to you and just pray together. I don't know what will be on your heart, but I do know that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will keep this church focused on mission.

The ballots. There were a total of 2,363 ballots cast. 2,363. And that includes those that abstained. There were 5 votes that abstained.

Those that voted "yes" on the question, there were 977 delegates. Those that voted "no" on the question were 1,381.

[Applause.]

Please. We've had a good day, but that begins ruining what I consider to be a very good day. Let's have no applause. We came here to do business, talk together, listen to each other, ask the Holy Spirit to be here. There's nothing triumphal about this. There are not winners and losers. We've come to take care of church business. So I will repeat the totals again, and then I would ask that you turn to the person next to you and just pray. Let's pray together.

All right, again. 2,363 total ballots that were cast. Those that voted "yes," 977; those that voted "no," 1,381.

That should bring reverence to this house and respect for every person that's here. And so, right now, I would ask that you would just turn to the person next to you, and let's spend a moment in prayer.

[Prayer time.]

MICHAEL RYAN: At this time Elder Wilson, the president of the world church, will make a concluding comment.

TED N. C. WILSON: Brothers and sisters, I want to thank, first of all, the Montemorelos University and orchestra and their choir, as well as Ken Logan on the organ, and Vernon Rogers and Roger Castillo for leading us in singing. I think it was a beautiful way in which each of us could participate in that period of time.

I want to thank the chair and others who have helped the secretary and others, but most of all I want to thank you. Thank you for the careful and prayerful manner in which you have conducted yourselves and addressed the subject today. I'm sorry that we did not have more time for those who wished to speak, but we have studied this item for decades, papers and materials have been available worldwide for a long time, and we have placed it in God's hands.

I also want to thank the fine voting process that our Secretariat and General Conference Auditing Service conducted. We are very much in appreciation of that.

We've been here together to watch God's work take place as an assembled group in this session. And I believe the Holy Spirit has worked on hearts.

I want to speak to your hearts for a moment. We have today a spiritual opportunity to refocus our attention on mission and turn our eyes away from this subject.

I appeal to all of us in this church to put away differences of opinion. You may guard an opinion, but let's be careful how we express it and move ahead. We need to humble ourselves before God as we recognize God's instructions regarding a General Conference in session.

I share with you in humility *Testimonies*, volume 9, page 261: "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth"—and that means every single one of you—"when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority." In this quotation we see the call to humility on the part of all of us in order to accomplish the prophetic mission that God has given to us.

My friends, my colleagues, my fellow church members in this great Advent movement, now is the time to unify under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ and His power, not our own power. Now is the time—and I'm very serious about this—to unify in the mission of God's church. As we move forward in unity, I appeal to your heart for calmness and peace.

How important it is for us to avoid controversy since the mission of the church is at stake.

Another beautiful quotation from *Testimonies*, volume 9, page 216: "Let every believer do his best to prepare the way for the gospel missionary work that is to be done. But let no one enter into controversy. It is Satan's object to keep Christians occupied in controversies among

themselves. . . . God's workers are to be of one mind and one heart, praying for the impartation of the Spirit and believing that God will fulfill His word.”

My dear brothers and sisters, here at the 2015 session, let us unite under Christ's leadership. Let us fulfill Christ's prayer in John 17. We are to plead with the Lord for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, who will give us the needed unity and purpose of mission in proclaiming the messages of the three angels and the fourth angel of Revelation 18. Let's place ourselves in the hands of God as we grow in His grace and serve together.

Another quotation from *Testimonies*, volume 9, pages 187 to 188: “We are not to seek to maintain a peculiar identity of our own, a personality, an individuality, which will separate us from our fellow laborers. We have a character to maintain, but it is the character of Christ. Having the character of Christ, we can carry on the work of God together. . . . Strive earnestly for unity. Pray for it, work for it.”

In closing, my dear friends, I earnestly appeal to each of us to put away any animosity, any frustration, and unite in the Lord's entrusted mission for His church. Unity can come only as we lean completely on the Lord for His direct guidance in our lives and in connection with each other.

Now, at the end of this discussion and after this period of voting, may our hearts be softened through the Holy Spirit. May there not be anxious thoughts, independent action, agitation, but may we receive clear guidance from the Holy Spirit about how we can unite in the mission of the church.

May we earnestly ask that all concerned will seek the unity that Christ pleaded for in John 17.

Let's place ourselves in His hands.

And I close with one of the most powerful messages in the Pauline epistles, Ephesians 4:1-6: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” [KJV].

We are one family. I plead with you. Let us, as we’ve been encouraged in the Spirit of Prophecy, press together, press together, press together. Let us unite. The mission of the church, entrusted to us by heaven itself.

Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!

And I believe soon. I encourage you to unite by singing our theme song right now, “We Have This Hope.” I invite you to stand.

[Singing.]

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” [Jude 24, 25, KJV].

[End of session.]