

WAY FORWARD STATEMENT #1

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To remain faithful to Scripture, to reaffirm and further promote women in ministry, and to preserve Bible-based unity in the Church, we recommend the following for consideration by the General Conference in full session: (1) Reaffirm and encourage, with public recognition and licensure, women whom God has called to gospel work; (2) Provide enhanced access to educational opportunities for women in gospel work and ensure fair and just treatment upon their placement in ministry; (3) Promote the greater development of various lines of ministry for women, according to their spiritual gifts, including but not limited to personal and public evangelism, teaching, preaching, ministering to families, counseling, medical missionary work, departmental leadership, etc. While increasing opportunities for women in ministry, we also recommend that the Church (4) Retain the scriptural practice of ordaining/commissioning only qualified men to the office of pastor/minister throughout the world church in harmony with the consistent example of Christ, the apostles, and the Adventist pioneers; and (5) Return to the biblical practice of electing and ordaining only men to the office of local elder throughout the world church, while providing for women to serve as un-ordained church leaders under certain circumstances.

SUPPORT AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- God calls women to both full- and part-time ministry (DG 20, 110; Ev 472). The lines of service in which women may work are broad and far-reaching (Exod 15:20; Judg 4-5; Acts 9:36, 39; Rom 16:1-12; Titus 2:3-5; 9T 128-129; ChS 68). For its mission, the Church must make full use of the indispensable role of women in the ministry of the Church. Women “can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their work is needed” (ChS 27). The Church should issue an appropriate license with equitable compensation to qualified women “although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon” them (MS 22, 1892; Ev 491-493; 12MR 160; GW 452).
- Although both men and women are called to various lines of ministry, the Bible consistently assigns the office of local elder or pastor/minister to faithful men who satisfy the scriptural requirements. See the examples of Jesus and the early church as well as Paul’s instruction (Mark 3:14; Acts 1:21-26; 6:3; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). This assignment, rather than being based on culture, is grounded by Paul in the male spiritual leadership role established at Creation and reaffirmed after the Fall (1 Tim 2:13, 14; 1 Cor 11:3, 8-9). While spiritual gifts include pastoral care, this is not equivalent to the biblical office of elder that is today often referred to as “pastor.”

- Ordination involves a call from God (Acts 13:2) and recognition by the church regionally (Acts 13:3) in harmony with the church globally (see LP 43). Ordination to the office of pastor/minister (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:1-9) grants full ecclesiastical authority to establish new churches, ordain local elders, baptize converts, and lead out in the ordinances of the church in cooperation with the local conference (AA 160). In certain circumstances, a woman may serve as a local church leader (Church Manual 75, 76) without being ordained as an elder (19MR 56).
- Allowing regionally established beliefs or qualifications for ordination would fracture the church, create confusion and disunity, and set a dangerous precedent. It would remove an important protection from non-biblical cultural influences (see AA 95-96) and move the church toward becoming an association of national churches instead of a united world church.
- Global church unity can be preserved only by yielding to the “plain” and “obvious meaning” of Scripture (GC 268, 599, 521, 54), rejecting “higher criticism” (Ed 227) or other methods of Bible study that give the reader authority over the divinely inspired text (2 Tim 3:16; Luke 24:27).
- Jesus is our example of servant leadership. His life expresses the loving authority and submission that exist in God’s family in heaven and on earth (1 Cor 11:3; 15:28; Matt 6:10).