

# Questions and Answers About Women's Ordination and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

*Compiled by Helen Ward Thompson, Ph.D.*

Scores of thoughtful Adventists have studied women's ordination during the past 22 years. What do they think? What actions do they recommend? Listen to them speak in their own words—church leaders, scholars, administrators, lay people, and organizations that represent some of these groups.

## **1. How did the subject of ordination of women arise in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?**

In 1881 a General Conference resolution stated:

**RESOLVED**, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.

*This was discussed by J. O. Corliss, A. C. Bourdeau, E. R. Jones, D. H. Lamson, W. H. Littlejohn, A. S. Hutchins, D. M. Canright, and J.N. Loughborough, and referred to the General Conference Committee.*

The question [of ordination of women in the SDA Church] arose out of inquiry from Northern Europe as to the advisability of ordaining some of our lady

evangelists in Finland. [Northern Europe] requested that we give them counsel on this.

*W. P. Bradley, Secretary, General Conference, to H. W. Lowe, Chairman of Research and Defense Literature Committee (forerunner of the Biblical Research Institute), November 27, 1965.*

What can we do to stimulate a little study in the area of theology as it relates to women in our church? I have in mind especially 1) in positions of leadership, 2) ordination, 3) in leadership of local churches.... I believe this is an area that we cannot ignore and that we ought to be working out something rather definite in the not too distant future.

*Robert Pierson, President, General Conference, in a letter to Gordon Hyde, General Field Secretary, General Conference, February 16, 1971, discussing the possibility of establishing a study commission. The commission completed its work in 1973.*

## **2. What conclusions were reached by the first official Adventist study on women's ordination in 1973?**

The Biblical Research Institute report to the 1973 Annual Council states: "Young men and women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work, should not be bound down to mechanical employment" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 229).

"It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God" (Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, January 15, 1901).

In our general understanding of language these two statements would place men and women alike as pastors to the flock of God and as persons to be engaged in the ministry and Bible work and the canvassing work.

. . . When God called Ellen White, a sickly young woman, in an era of considerable hostility toward women in religious roles, to be His chosen messenger (more than a prophet) to His remnant people and to the world at large, is there any way to suggest that a qualified, called, dedicated, humble woman should be denied the highest recognition that the church is able to place upon the calling of God's Spirit to service, because she is a woman—especially in an age more favorable to the involvement of women in leadership roles?

*Biblical Research Report to the 1973 Annual Council.*

[Those attending] the Mohaven conference (in 1973) said they could see no theological reason that women should not be ordained. But they also said there were no explicit texts that encourage the ordination of women. Since Mohaven ... we have had a division in the house.... I myself believe that we are in the time when the Holy Spirit wants to empower all of the people of God for ministry.

*Charles Bradford, President, North American Division.  
Reported in the Adventist Review, September 1, 1988.*

### **3. Why are Seventh-day Adventists divided on women's ordination?**

Some, based on their interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, hold that the order of creation mandates roles for women that exclude them from ruling over men. In my judgment that view misreads Genesis 1 and 2 and flies in the face of Seventh-day Adventist practice. We have never excluded women from public office or from teaching men; Ellen White's calling and work should be a scandal under this interpretation.

*William G. Johnsson, Editor, Adventist Review, in a paper presented to the Commission on the Role of Women in the Church at Cohutta Springs, Georgia, July 1989.*

Genesis 1:26 says Let them (together, equally) rule over the fish ... the birds ... the livestock.

There is no hint at any inequality here. At no point does this story propose male domination.... There can be no question about God's intention. It was that "male and female" should have full gender equality. "In the Creation, God had made her [Eve] the equal of Adam" (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets p. 58).

Genesis 3:16, which indicates that a woman should be dependent upon her husband and that he should rule over her, is the result of the Fall. And any body of people, including the church, that continues to support the dominance of men over women is supporting the results of the Fall—not God's intention. Jesus Christ came to dispense with the results of the Fall. The role of the church should be the same.

Because of your faith in Christ Jesus, you are all God's children. As a result, you are not to distinguish between Jew and Gentile (there is to be no racial discrimination), slave and free (there is to be no socioeconomic discrimination), male and female (there is to be no gender discrimination). You are, in fact, one in Christ Jesus (see Galatians 3:26, 28).

Throughout its history, the Christian church has consistently honored Galatians 3:26-28 as its Bill of Christian Rights. Humankind is broken. And it will remain broken as long as men hold dominance over women. For their own good, as well as the good of women, men ought to recognize the need for women to find full equality. Humankind will not be whole until we attain full equality—with equal rights, equal privileges, and equal opportunities for all. And that means, given the Bill of Christian Rights, full racial, socioeconomic, and gender equality.

*James Cox, Vice President, Washington Institute of Contemporary Issues, in an address at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, October 1988.*

I can't bring myself to accept this division between clergy and laity. I can't accept the argument that some call "headship" and this order of creation—man first, woman second. I cannot accept the Levitical priesthood as being the New Testament model for ministry. I can't even accept the choice of 12 men as being the "eternal paradigm." . . . The Lord calls whomever He will and assigns whomever He will. The position that the church needs to take today is to listen, listen, listen ... to what the Spirit has to say today.

I am praying that the day will come when the Holy Spirit will so move and control that the church will be willing to affirm and fully empower whomever the Holy Spirit has evidently called.

*Charles Bradford, Adventist Review, September 1, 1988.*

As far as I see—and you said the same [recalling a conversation he had with R. H. Pierson] there is no reason, neither from the Bible nor from the Spirit of Prophecy, not to ordain female ministers.

*Gunter Fraatz, Secretary of the Westphalian Conference, to R. H. Pierson, President of the General Conference, July 1, 1977.*

Inspired writers, ancient and modern, nowhere explicitly discuss the matter. Neither are there examples or principles that would have the weight of explicit divine prohibition or endorsement today. There are favorable arguments that some would deduce from certain considerations, but there are countering arguments.

*Gordon Hyde, Director, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference, "A Summary Report to BRIAD [Biblical Research Institute Administrative Committee] on Roles of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 1977.*

#### **4. What should Adventists do if the Bible gives no explicit command on a specific issue?**

All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed.

*James White, "Making Us a Name," Review and Herald, April 26, 1860.*

#### **5. Who supports ordaining Adventist women, and why?**

With the exception of one or two individuals, all those present indicated that they approved of an increasing leadership role for women in the church and would have no objection to giving recognition to this role by ordination, including ordination to the gospel ministry.

There was not a single expression of doctrinal objection to ordination of women.... So it appears that when and if the General Conference gives the green light for official recognition of women who carry important church and ministerial responsibilities, there will probably be a ready acceptance of this advanced

step as far as the Far Eastern Division is concerned.

*Paul Eldridge, Far Eastern Division President to W. Duncan Eva, Vice-President, General Conference, June 3, 1974, referring to the 1974 FED committee mid-year meeting.*

Regarding the possibility that a day will come in our church when women might become ministerial candidates for ordination, and a woman who might be currently serving, a candidate for ministerial license—in answer to this, it is my opinion that the actual sex of the person should not enter into the picture.... If a young woman feels called to the ministry in her youth and goes through the same educational process on a collegiate level, and then goes on into a scholarship as seminary men do, that hardly anyone would take issue with this process.

*Letter from W. B. Quigley, President, Columbia Union Conference to N. C. Wilson, President, General Conference. June 25, 1974.*

... Employment at all levels of the church to be open to the best qualified persons regardless of gender, including the ordained ministry.

*Resolution of the Association of Adventist Women, December 1986.*

We believe God calls both men and women to serve in all aspects of the ministry. We believe the time has come for our church to recognize by ordination the called of both men and women. We believe, in spite of the need for sensitivity to cultural diversity, that now is the time for the leadership of our church to encourage the ordination of women in North America and wherever else this step will enhance the mission of the church. We pledge to recruit and encourage qualified women to prepare themselves for ministerial service.

*Resolution of 40 North American West Coast Religion Teachers, May 4, 1986.*

We believe it is neither right nor expedient for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to continue denying anyone full participation in ministry simply on the basis of gender. We beseech you to open the door of ordination to the women in our midst. God expects, we believe, that this should happen. The Bible has been used against the idea, but it has also been used against mercy, against emancipation, against the equality of peoples. When we read it aright, however, as the story of a journey to deeper understanding, we will humbly acknowledge its highest truth: that in Christ our servanthood is mutual, no person is higher than another because of race or class or gender.... We should never impose female ordained ministers on any congregation or any territory of the church. But wherever our people wish to accept the full leadership of women in ministry, we must not only in faithfulness to Christ but also in determination to renew our church's vigor, allow them to do so.

*Statement addressed to the General Conference Officers by 12 University and College Pastors in North America.*

*Signed by pastors of the following churches: Kettering College of Medical Arts,*

*Walla Walla College, Pacific Union College, Collegedale (Southern College), La Sierra Campus Church, Atlantic Union College Church, College Heights Church at Canadian Union College, Sligo Church (Columbia Union College), Kingsway College Church, Loma Linda Hill Church. Loma Linda Campus Church.*

Of the 94 responses in North America, 83% supported ordination of qualified women to the gospel ministry; 13% opposed. From other parts of the world, 99 Bible teachers responded. Of these, 57% supported ordination of women while 33% opposed. [The other respondents chose to abstain from answering this particular question.]

*NAD Bible teachers' poll as reported in the Adventist Review, June 4, 1987, and by the director of the study, Roger L. Dudley of Andrews University, in the August 1987 issue of Ministry.*

The Potomac Conference Executive Committee remains firm in its support of full equality for women in ministry.

*Potomac Conference Executive Committee, Voted, September 23, 1987.*

**VOTED** encouragement and affirmation to the officers, executive committee and constituency of the Southeastern California Conference as they combine education and action to deal creatively with "equality without regard to gender" within their conference.

*Potomac Conference Executive Committee Action, January 11, 1989.*

The specific purpose of this corporation is to pursue actively the attainment of full and equal participation, education and development of all persons within the Seventh-day Adventist Church community, particularly women of all ages, without regard to ethnic origin, and economic and social status.

*Articles of Incorporation of Adventist Women's Institute, January 1988.*

Women have shown themselves to be essential members of the health care team. The uniqueness a woman brings to ministry empowers her effectiveness to minister for Christ and the church she represents. It is no more fitting to restrict ministry and ordination to one gender than to restrict it to one race or color. We recommend the ordination of women.

*Statement by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, March 22, 1985.*

Having again been blessed by the ministry of women at this meeting of chaplains, we affirm the efficacy of their response to God's call to ministry. From the diversity of our ministries in health care, military, correctional and business settings, we unite under One Spirit, in one accord in recognizing the equality of pastoral gifts of men and women in ministry.

We call our church into a full recognition, by ordination, of the ministry of women. As Adventists compelled by the imminence of our Lord's return, we

believe this calls for leadership, not waiting.

We pledge to continue our spiritual and emotional support and affirmation of women who are our colleagues in ministry.

*Statement by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, March 14, 1989*

.. [H]ereby affirms its faith in the fundamental equality of all believers in Christ; in the desirability of developing all those gifts, talents, and abilities bestowed by our Lord upon His church; and in the Scriptural basis for the equality of men and women in service to God and to His church.

We pledge ourselves to encourage, support, and uphold the hands of the general church leadership and the Commission on the Ordination of Women. We urge the Commission to recommend to the church in its forthcoming quinquennial session that women be considered as candidates for ordination to the gospel ministry wherever it would strengthen the work of the church.

*Statement of Andrews Society for Religious Studies, December 13, 1984 and March 14, 1989.*

**VOTED** to submit the name of Mrs. Leslie Bumgardner along with three male candidates for ordination.

*Voted recommendation from the Ohio Conference Executive Committee to the Columbia Union Conference, April 30, 1989. Reported in the Worthington, Ohio, SDA Church newsletter. May 27, 1989.*

In light of the need to forthrightly address the status of women ministers in regard to ordination. Southeastern California Conference shall hold a special constituency meeting in the fall of 1990. This meeting need not be held if the upcoming General Conference session votes an ordination policy of gender equality which would apply to our Conference.

.. . The SECC Sixth Triennial Session instructs the incoming Executive Committee to approve the ordination of women pastors in our Conference who have already met regular ordination qualifications, and present those names for approval to the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee.

. . . The SECC Sixth Triennial Session requests that the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee look with favor upon the above recommendation, authorizing the ordination of qualified women pastors no earlier than August, 1990.

*Recommendations made by Southeastern California Conference to the General Conference and the Pacific Union on May 21, 1989.*

The Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee looks with favor on the ordination recommendations of the Ohio Conference. We believe the inclusion of Mrs. Leslie Bumgardner is morally and theologically correct. Accordingly, **VOTED** to approve ... the ordination of Mrs. Bumgardner no earlier than August, 1990. The delay of Mrs. Bumgardner's ordination is out of

deference to the process established by the General Conference to resolve this issue and is intended to convey the readiness of the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee to authorize the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

*Columbia Union Conference statement of May 24, 1989.*

As members of the PUC executive committee, we strongly urge the General Conference to eliminate gender as a consideration for ordination to gospel ministry. We endorse the ordination of qualified women to the gospel ministry in Divisions, Unions, and Conferences where deemed helpful and appropriate.

*Pacific Union Conference statement, June 7, 1989.*

The doctrine of salvation in its fullest unfolding leads me to conclude that it is simply unacceptable to assume that women, because of their sex, are incapable of being empowered for full participation in ministry....

The Christian ministry is not a new priestcraft. Anything that smacks of a privileged ruling class who have received perks by their initiation into the club [ordination] must be demolished with the realities of the gospel

*Statement included in a paper prepared by Charles Bradford, President North American Division, for distribution to NAD members of the 1989 Women's Commission meeting in Cohutta Springs, Georgia, July 1989.*

The Union presidents of the North American Division endorse the concept of women's ordination in those divisions where it would be deemed helpful and appropriate.

*Action of NAD Union Presidents. June 14, 1989, at Angwin, California, and directed to the Commission on the Role of Women in the Church, meeting at Cohutta Springs, Georgia. July 12-18, 1989.*

... Whenever we erect barriers against women in the church we are not walking straight according to the truth of the gospel. If God calls a Gentile, a slave, or a woman, who are we to resist?

*Statement included in a paper prepared by William Johnsson. Editor Adventist Review, for presentation at the 1989 Women's Commission meeting in Cohutta Springs, Georgia, July 1989.*

**VOTED**, To adopt a new policy NAD D75, Equal Opportunity for Service, to read as follows:

The official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that all members in good and regular standing shall be given full and equal opportunity within the Church to develop the knowledge and skills needed in the building up of the Church. This position and its resultant course of action requires that all services and all levels of Church activity be opened to all members on the basis

of their qualifications. The North American Division will seek applications from qualified women, minorities, and the handicapped; and will afford all individuals equal opportunity in employment, appointment, promotion, salary, and other organizational benefits without consideration for race, color, gender, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, age, height, weight, marital status, or prior military service.

*North American Division Action, October 1989, 323-89N EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE STATEMENT*

...To urgently request that NAD leadership take a clear position in support of the ordaining of women to the gospel ministry.

*Vote of the Association of Adventist Women, November 30, 1989.*

From the beginning, from the charter issue of the newsletter, AAW has positively affirmed Adventist women in all areas of endeavor and has repeatedly promoted education of women and the church at large on the subject of women being called to the ministry and confirmed officially by ordination.

*Statement by Nancy Marter, President of the Association of Adventist Women.*

The Bible supports the ordination of women through the principles of unity, equality and spiritual gifts. Ellen White approved of women and men serving the church with equal authority, recognition and pay. The fulfillment of the gospel commission by the Seventh-day Adventist Church requires the spiritual gifts of women in the ordained ministry. By ordaining women the Church ensures true unity among believers, demonstrating that all are equal before God and one in Christ. TEAM calls for the SDA Church to approve the ordination of women to the gospel ministry at its 1990 General Conference session.

*TEAM (Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry) Mission Statement, 1989.*

In recognition of women pastors' calling to and gifts of ministry, the conference executive committee

**RECOMMENDS** to the SECC 1990 Special Constituency Session, the expeditious ordination of qualified women pastors to the gospel ministry, with all benefits and considerations thereunto accorded to an ordained minister of the gospel in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*Statement by Southeastern California Conference Executive Committee, January 21, 1990.*

**VOTED**, to reaffirm commitment to women's ordination and request the General Conference Session delegates "to take no action that would forbid or compel the ordination of women in the gospel ministry in any part of the world."

*West Coast Religion Teachers, April 8, 1990.*

Women throughout the world have been called by the Holy Spirit to devote their talents and time to the gospel ministry. The fruits of their efforts have been positively manifested. Therefore:

We call upon the delegates of the General Conference session in Indianapolis to support and vote, as a moral issue, to ordain those qualified women who are prepared for the ministry.

We also call upon those conferences/missions, unions, and divisions to recognize God's blessing being poured out upon them by the ministry of women and to recognize the importance of involving both men and women in spreading the gospel, and to actively seek to employ women in ministerial positions.

*Resolution adopted by the Association of Adventist Women, Berrien Springs MI June 21-24, 1990.*

... At the General Conference level, by 1995, permit divisions, where culturally acceptable, to authorize ordination of qualified women and confer on other women all rights and responsibilities pertaining to ministry.

*International Women's Caucus, Addison, PA, September 21-23, 1990: A Declaration of Goals, Toward 2000.*

**Whereas**, the SECC Constitution affirms that, in Christ the constituents "in this community of faith are all equal," and

**Whereas**, the SECC Constitution states that "each [constituent] has a legitimate inalienable interest in, concern for, and a God-given opportunity and responsibility to contribute to its effective operation and the success of its mission," and

**Whereas**, the North American Division has approved an "Equal Opportunity for Service Policy" (NAD D-75) which "requires that all services and all levels of church activity be opened to all members on the basis of their qualifications ... and will afford all individuals equal opportunity in employment, appointment, promotion, salary, and other organizational benefits without consideration for race, color, gender, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap, age, height, weight, marital status, or prior military service,"

**Whereas**, the General Conference has already granted qualified women all the functions of the pastorate,

**Resolved:** That the SECC hereby commits itself to the full implementation of the General Conference policy on the role and function of women pastors based solely on qualifications. We vote moreover, that

a) The executive committee and conference administration of SECC lead out in a strong concerted program in the recruitment, hiring, education, placement, and support of women in ministry, and

b) the SECC administration work closely with other levels of denominational leadership to facilitate the ordination of all qualified ministerial candidates without gender discrimination in the SECC, and report back to the next regular

constituency meeting in 1992; furthermore requests a new vote on the ordination of women at the Annual Council.

c) The SECC appoint a Commission on Justice to fulfill the church's goals of racial, ethnic, and gender equality.

d) This motion shall be interpreted in light of President Gifford's address "Higher Ground" delivered on October 21, 1990, to the assembled delegates of *The Southeastern California Conference resolution on ordination during its special constituency session, October 2, 1990.*

We recommend that the church recognize that women's ordination is an essential step in the growth and development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

*Resolution for ordaining women voted at AAW Conference, July 4-8 1991 Santa Clara, CA.*

The church should move to take full advantage of women's talents. On the eve of the third millennium we can expect the pace to pick up as we move on from grace to glory.

On women's sense of call to gospel ministry: We've got to move beyond where we are. We must shake off the vestiges of Romanism. We don't stand where Luther stood—we've moved on. If the Lord calls Samuel, let Eli listen up. Let's not be arguing about ordaining women in ministry; let the Holy Spirit do its work.

Ordination is not a question of rights. No one has a right to be ordained. But the church has an obligation to recognize the gifts God gives it. We have an obligation to affirm those gifts and those gift bearers.

Do not make your ordination an Nation into a theological club of the good old boys. He that would be greatest among you let him be your servant. We are to facilitate the gifts in others—draw them out, give them the best use.

We don't need a text in the Bible that says, "Thou shalt ordain women." We serve a big God, a God we can't limit. As Jesus told Nicodemus, the Holy Spirit blows wherever He wants to blow. And if He wants to blow on she it's the same as when He blows on he.

*Charles E. Bradford, retired President of the North American Division, addressing a division-wide evangelism council, December 18, 1992 (selected passages).*

**VOTED:** To recommend to the North American Division the following statement and requests:

Recognizing the need to maintain unity, and recognizing that the ordination of women as pastors is a critical issue with potential to further divide the church,

And recognizing that there is significant precedence in a number of areas of church life giving room for regional differences in the ordination of women elders;

We respectfully request that the ordination of women be authorized and allowed on a regional basis, and that the North American Division and General Conference Administration help devise a strategy for the ordination of women pastors.

*Recommendation of the Ministerial Council and Pastors' Meeting of the Ministerial Association of the North American Division, Denver, Colorado January 26 1993.*

*W. C. Scales, Jr., Chairman*

*Paul W. Nelson, Acting Secretary*

We find hope in the renewed vitality in the church: new ways of operating now free resources once locked in old structures; specifically, we believe the increasing empowerment of women to practice ministry in the North American Division has the expanded power of all ministry and the effectiveness of the church.

However, we see a need to apply the biblical principle of inclusion and equality in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28) to full inclusiveness among clergy as well as among laity. The present choice not to fully affirm women ministers through ordination is a real and ongoing problem for the women who have responded to God's call to gospel ministry. They are painfully reminded of their status every time someone asks, "Are you a real minister? I mean, are you ordained?" Having the duties and responsibilities of ministry without its full recognition is like a couple living together in a common-law relationship rather than having the full blessing of the church in marriage.

The effect of this exclusion extends to all inside and outside the church who see the pain of women in ministry or who identify with their marginalized status. The result within the church for many of us who support equality as a biblical principle is discouragement. In our relationships with spiritual people outside of our church, we meet ridicule, pity, and their inability to see beyond our behavior to the message we wish to share.

Beyond women's pain, our disappointment, and others' impressions, we see a danger that God's effectiveness among us is limited by our inability to fully bless the ministry of women. It is an expression of the spiritual law of reciprocity that when the church withholds blessing it becomes incapable of freely receiving all of God's intended blessing.

We envision a church in which the intentional inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry becomes our model, again unleashing the latent power of all those who are included and fully blessed.

We pledge to continue our spiritual and emotional support and affirmation of women in ministry. Having again been blessed by the pastoral gifts of women at this [annual professional] meeting of chaplains, we affirm the efficacy of their response to God's call. From the diversity of our ministries we unite under one Spirit, in one accord in recognizing the equality and mutuality of pastoral gifts of men and women. We call our church into a full recognition, by ordination, of

the ministry of women. As Seventh-day Adventists compelled by the imminence of our Lord's return, we believe this calls for leadership, not waiting.

*Pastoral letter voted by Seventh-day Adventist Healthcare Chaplains Association (SDAHCA) annual meeting, February 11-17, 1993, Anaheim, California.*

*Harry Krueger, President*

*Penny Shell, President-elect*

1. Recognize the necessity of implementing the September 20, 1992, SECC Constituency Session nondiscriminatory resolution.

2. Invite the North American Division and the Pacific Union Conference to Support the SECC Executive Committee in implementing the resolution.

*Proposal adopted by SECC Executive Committee, February 4, 1993.*

**VOTED**, for recommendation to NAD officers:

We, the members of the NAD Women's Advisory, recommend to the North American Division officers that the ordination of women be authorized and allowed regionally where it is helpful to the church's growth and vitality, and that the North American Division help devise a strategy for the ordination of women in ministry.

*NAD Women's Advisory, March 4, 1993, Silver Spring, MD.*

*Robert Dale, Vice President, North American Division, Chairman*

*Elizabeth Sterndale, NAD Office of Women's Ministries, Secretary*

**VOTED**, to accept the following Affirmative Action Statement and recommendations of the Gender Inclusiveness Taskforce:

**WHEREAS**, the Potomac Conference Gender Inclusiveness Taskforce supports the following:

The Washington Conference constituents who offered the first affirmative action plan in the NAD,

The Ministerial Council and the Pastors' Meeting of the Ministerial Association of the North American Division action of January 26, 1993,

The Southeastern California Conference Gender Inclusiveness Commission and the Southeastern California Executive Committee action of February 4, 1993,

The Pastoral Letter from the SDA Healthcare Chaplains Association of February 26, 1993.

We **COMMEND** the Potomac Conference Executive Committee for its commitment to the youth of our conference and to the continued recognition of women conference members by currently having two women elected or appointed to conference staff.

We **RECOMMEND** to the Potomac Conference Executive Committee to as soon as possible:

1. fill the position of Children's Ministries (as the executive committee has previously voted to do,)

2. appoint a qualified woman to Church Ministries, and
3. appoint a women's ministry coordinator.

We **COMMEND** the Columbia Union for its commitment to recognition of women in our union by currently having seven women appointed to union staff positions.

**BECAUSE** we recognize that God's calling to service in Christ is ever inclusive and unifying, leading both men and women to a full and equal ministry in the Church,

We prayerfully **RECOMMEND** and **INVITE** the Columbia Union Administration and the Potomac Conference Executive Committee to join us in urging the North American Division Administration to now arrive at a position that would allow qualified women pastors to be ordained to meet the needs of the church in our region.

*Potomac Conference Executive Committee, May 12, 1993.*

*Ralph Martin, President*

We, the concerned youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, envision our church as a place of spiritual solace in a world of faddish movements, of high morality and justice in a world motivated by politics and convenience, of a community of believers in a hierarchical world of power structures. We look to the church to act with vision and courage in a world where expediency caters to the lowest moral common denominator for the sake of harmony.

In issues such as the role of women in ministry, our church has failed to act on its own vision of the equality of believers. How can God fully bless a church that does not pursue simple moral justice?

As we, Adventist youth, weigh our continued participation and potential leadership in this church, we wonder if it will continue to be meaningful to us.

We want to honor our church when explaining its beliefs and practices to non-believers, but we are ashamed when we must make excuses for our church's political actions and compromises. We need our church to hold the highest possible moral standards.

We request that the Seventh-day Adventist Church fully recognize the spiritual gifts of its women pastors by ordaining them to the gospel ministry. We pray for continued unity of belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fundamental doctrines of the church, as well as an invigorated tolerance of cultural differences throughout the world body.

We join with the Ministerial Council and Pastors' Meeting of the North American Division Ministerial Association, the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference Executive Committee, the Potomac Conference Executive Committee, the Seventh-day Adventist Healthcare Chaplains Association, the Seventh-day Adventist Military Chaplains, the North American Division Women's Advisory, the Association of Adventist Women, and Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry (TEAM), in asking the church to enable the North American Division to ordain its women ministers.

*Students petition for women's ordination.*

*Walla Walla College, April 1993.*

*Rich Taylor, Student Body President Walla Walla College and AIA regional director*

**Whereas** AAW has historically supported and requested the ordination of qualified women to the ministry by the Seventh-day Adventist Church,

**It is resolved** that AAW request the North American Division to authorize the ordination of qualified women immediately.

*AAW Annual Conference, Seattle, WA. October 15 and 17, 1993.*

*Members vote to reaffirm the recommendation voted at AAW's 1992 annual conference regarding women's ordination.*

*Elisabeth Wear, President*

AIA will be represented at the [church's] Annual Council where the issue of women's ordination is [expected] to [be] on the agenda.

Once the tally is gathered from the various NAD college and university campuses, the AIA officers have asked to present a formal proposal to a special session of the North American Division officers on October 3, 1994. The student leaders will request that women's ordination be considered favorably by Annual Council and the 1995 delegates to the General Conference session.

*Adventist Intercollegiate Association proposed action following a multi-campus petition for women's ordination for review at 1994 Annual Council and 1995 General Conference Session, Spring 1994.*

A petition to the North American Division stated,... As Adventist youth we support and pray for the unity of women pastors by ordaining them to the gospel ministry.

*Adventist Intercollegiate Association (AIA), Union College. April 3-10, 1994.*

**VOTED:** We, as concerned members and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Atlantic Union Conference (USA), request that the Church and its leadership fully recognize God's call to service and bestowal of spiritual gifts on the women pastors in the North American Division by ordaining to the gospel ministry those who meet the same qualifications (i.e. preparation and length of service) required for other pastors.

We join with the Ministerial Council and Pastors' Meeting of the North American Division Ministerial Council and Pastors' Meeting of the North American Division Ministerial Association, the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference and Executive Committee, the Potomac Conference Gender Inclusiveness Task Force and Executive Committee, the Seventh-day Adventist Healthcare Chaplains Association, the Seventh-day Adventist Military Chaplains, the North American Division Office of Women's Ministries Advisory, the North American Division Office of Human

Relations Advisory, the Association of Adventist Women, the Adventist Women's Coalition, and Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry (TEAM) in asking the Church to enable the North American Division to ordain its women ministers.

We pray for continued unity of belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fundamental doctrines of the Church, as well as a tolerance of cultural differences throughout the world body. We humbly and unitedly present this request to the North American Division and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists this 19th day of May, 1994.

*Atlantic Union Conference Executive Committee. September 22 1994*

*Note: Southern New England Conference President, Charles Case, voted against the statement and asked that his name be excluded and thus recorded.*

**VOTED**, Whereas the church needs to use all of its resources in the spreading of the gospel, and whereas hundreds of women throughout all of the divisions are being trained for evangelism, and whereas thousands of convert have recently been brought into the church by these women, and where as the dedication and competence of women evangelists, pastors, chaplains, and other women in ministry (such as Bible teachers) has been amply demonstrated during the entire history of the Adventist Church, and whereas there has been a spontaneous recent growth in the numbers of women active in evangelism in the Adventist Church around the world,

**IT IS RESOLVED** to request that the North American Division and the General Conference vote to allow for the ordination of women to the ministry in *AAW annual conference, Washington. D.C., September 29-October 2, 1994.*

On October 1, 1994, Adventist Intercollegiate Association (AIA) representatives presented to NAD president A.C. McClure and Jose Rojas, NAD youth director, a statement of petition signed by hundreds of students at NAD colleges and universities. That statement supported the ordination of women and was included in the discussion of ordination at the October 3, 1994 NAD year end meeting by both McClure and Rojas.

*Eric Sanford, President AIA*

*Tiffany Wishart. Executive Vice-president, Walla Walla College Student Association*

*Ruby Ilapogu, Vice-president. Walla Walla College Student Association*

*Jackie Ravine, Theology major, Walla Walla College*

**VOTED**, to refer the following action to the General Conference Session for consideration and action:

The General Conference vests in each division the right to authorize the ordination of individuals within its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender.

In divisions where the division executive committees take specific actions approving the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, women may be ordained to serve in those divisions.

*Annual Council, Silver Spring, MD, October 9, 1994.*

*Calvin B. Rock, Chairman*

*Mario Veloso, Secretary*

*Rowena Moore, Recording Secretary*

## **6. How could women's ordination be implemented in a positive way?**

The cultural differences prevailing in different parts of the world field would call for judicious implementation of broader roles for women in the Church, but should scarcely require that all parts of the world must await universal readiness.... Ordination to the ministry would show that all doors [of the church] are open.

*A. S. Jorgensen for the Australasian Division Committee to Study the Role of Women in the SDA Church, 1974.*

Perhaps it would not be good to open the way for the ordination of ladies irrespective of the different countries of the world with their different cultures. But if we as a church could go so far as to allow the Unions to decide... it would surely help.

... I write this letter with the full support of my president. Brother Fischdick, as well as with the knowledge and authority given by Brother Kilian, the Union Conference President, and by Brother Ludescher, the Division President.

*Gunter Fraatz., Secretary of the Westphalian Conference, West Germany, to R. H. Pierson, President, General Conference, July 1, 1977.*

It is... a serious matter for the church to consider when able, humble and earnest young women present themselves to our colleges and the seminary asking admittance to ministerial training and claiming to have heard the call of the Lord to the ministry. The church has to weigh such a conviction most carefully, lest she be found out of touch with leadings of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, as with a young man, the church has to be able to recognize the call of the Lord to the ministerial candidate. A conference committee has to be able to extend a call. Churches or institutions have to be ready to welcome the candidate. There would presumably need to be additional General Conference internships made available to young women or at least discrimination would need to be removed from present practice.

Annual Council actions have taken the position that the whole world field should be open to calling women as ministers before they could be called to any part of the field. Who could not agree that it would be ideal for the world field to be united on the proposal at the outset. On the other hand, we do make regional

or divisional distinctions on other matters of church policy. (The position on the wedding ring is an example.)...

Today it is asked: Should we risk splitting the church over the question of ordination of women? ... Is the unity of the Adventist Church really fragile enough to be shattered by this matter? ...

The above observations, tied to the work done over a period of several years by the BRI [Biblical Research Institute] and an associated study committee, provide the consensus of those involved that there is neither theological mandate nor objection to ordination of women to any level of responsibility for which ordination is indicated.

*Gordon Hyde, Director, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference "A Summary Report to BRIAD [Biblical Research Institute Administrative Committee] on 'Roles of Women in the SDA Church,'" 1977.*

**VOTED**, to request that the divisions be allowed to address the issue of the ordination of women independently of the world church, if necessary

*Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee, May 4, 1989.*

Delegates voted to adopt a resolution supporting the pastoral role of 16 women now serving SECC as ministers and asked leaders to continue to "recruit educate and employ women ministers." The resolution was put forward by the Gender Inclusiveness Task Force (warned the Gender Inclusiveness Commission by the same resolution).

The constituency's vote further directed the conference executive committee to devise a plan to ordain women ministers to serve "within our jurisdiction of the world church," and stipulated that the ordination of qualified candidates, male or female, be uniform and nondiscriminatory.

*Southeastern California Conference Constituency Session, September 20, 1992.*