

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY—REPORT

At the 1995 Year-end Meeting in Battle Creek, it was announced that a commission was being appointed to recommend ways to expand the role of women in ministry, recognize and deploy the gifts God has given to women, and to affirm women in pastoral and other spiritual ministries. The membership and terms of reference were approved by NADCOA on February 28, 1996. The Commission met in June and July, 1996, and again in May, 1997.

The recommendations from the Commission are as follows:

I. Appointment of an Associate Ministerial Secretary

RECOMMENDED, That the NAD move with a sense of urgency to include a woman with ministerial background as ministerial secretary or an associate ministerial secretary.

II. Needs to be Addressed by the Ministerial Association

RECOMMENDED, That the following needs be addressed by NAD administration for implementation through the Ministerial Association and/or any appropriate structure.

A. A professional association for women serving in pastoral ministry that would organize an annual retreat for the purpose of mutual support, affirmation and networking. Financial assistance which should be provided where local conferences are unwilling or unable to pay for travel, etc.

B. Development of an electronic linkage to connect more experienced women pastors with women who are ministerial students or intern pastors and desire a professional mentor.

C. Development of a newsletter for women in ministry that would publish affirmative success stories, list job vacancies of interest, announce relevant seminars and workshops, and provide other helpful information. This newsletter should also be sent to conference presidents and ministerial directors.

D. Development of a database of churches in the NAD which are likely to want women as pastors. (The newsletter and other information from the resource center should be provided to these churches on a regular basis.)

E. Development of a speaker's bureau for women in ministry which would solicit and market women speakers for camp meetings, seminars, weeks of prayer, retreats, etc. The NAD might provide travel subsidies for organizations seeking a woman speaker which could be managed by the resource center.

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F. Appointment of an "ombudsman"— a person with insight into the system and denominational policies who can provide feedback and guidance when women in ministry encounter conflict with employing organizations, as well as provide mediation if necessary.

G. Development of training for women in ministry about conflict resolution skills and how to survive in a male-dominated milieu.

H. Development of a placement service that would provide a database where women in ministry could list their resumes and employing organizations could access this information. An adequate placement service should also include regular contacts with conference administrators and an identified list of local churches most likely to accept women as pastors; active promotion of qualified women, seeking to match these candidates with openings; and career counseling for women in ministry.

I. Development of regular distribution of information to conferences regarding the NAD'S support for women in pastoral ministry and policies that encourage the hiring of women pastors.

J. Opportunities for the public affirmation to church administrators who have taken risks to support and employ women in ministry.

K. Development of a fund from which to provide financial assistance for travel expenses and registration fees for women in ministry to attend continuing education events when the employing organization cannot or will not provide these benefits.

L. Preparation and dissemination of educational materials in multiple media designed to raise awareness about women in pastoral ministry and the role of women in the church.

III. The Commissioning Service

RECOMMENDED, That the NAD, and its union and local conferences, be encouraged to promptly conduct commissioning services for those women who are eligible.

IV. Ministerial Functions of Commissioned Ministers

RECOMMENDED, That the following changes be made in The Church Manual:

A. Modify the language on page 46, in the section entitled "The Church Elder," as follows:

The ordination service is only performed by an ordained/commissioned minister with credentials from the local conference.

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B. Modify the language on page 52, in the section entitled "The Deacon," as follows:

A newly elected deacon cannot fill his office until he has been set apart by an ordained/commissioned minister who holds current credentials from the conference.

C. Modify the language on page 175, in the section entitled "Organization of a Church," as follows:

Churches are organized by an ordained/commissioned minister on the recommendation of a conference or field committee.

D. Modify the language on pages 176-177, in the section entitled "Uniting Churches," as follows:

In a duly called meeting, presided over by the conference president or the pastor or other ordained/commissioned minister, each church should vote on the question of union.

V. Working Policy Revisions

RECOMMENDED, That the following revisions be made in the NAD Working Policy:

A. That gender inclusive language be used throughout.

B. That the language of CA 10 05 Union Conference Constitution and Bylaws be modified on page 100 as follows:

President: The president, who shall be an ordained/commissioned minister of experience...

C. That the language of CA 20 05 Local Conference Constitution and Bylaws be modified on page 110 as follows:

President: The president, who shall be an ordained/commissioned minister of experience ...

D. That NAD Working Policy L 21 Commissioned Minister be revised as follows:

L 21 Associates in Pastoral Care Commissioned Minister—Role and Status

L 21 05 Ministerial Employee—An associate in pastoral care A person is recognized as a ministerial employee when all of the following prerequisites have been satisfied: [The rest of the

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paragraph is unchanged.]

VI. Changes in the SDA Yearbook

VOTED, To recommend that the NAD publish a NAD version of the NAD section of the SDA Yearbook with the licensed ministers and licensed commissioned ministers included in the listings.

VII. Encourage Conferences to Hire Women as Pastors

RECOMMENDED, In order to encourage conferences to hire more women in pastoral positions:

- A. That the NAD extend a four-year internship budget (instead of the usual three-year internship budget) to each local conference which presently has no woman employed as a pastor and hires a woman in that pastoral internship.
- B. That the NAD request local conferences to set realistic goals to increase the number of women in pastoral ministry in their field during the next three years.
- C. That Adventist colleges and universities in North America be encouraged to recruit young women who sense a call to pastoral ministry to pursue ministerial studies.

VIII. Data Base of Women Candidates for Openings

RECOMMENDED, That the NAD departmental staff develop and disseminate a data base of women who might be candidates for vacancies on union and local conference staffs.

IX. Visibility of Women in Pastoral Ministry Roles

RECOMMENDED, That conferences be encouraged to invite women to speak during the Sabbath morning worship services and other general sessions at camp meetings. (Reference speaker's bureau.)

X. Articles in Church Journals

RECOMMENDED, That the NAD edition of the Adventist Review and other general church papers be asked to publish profiles of women serving in pastoral ministry several times a year; and, that multiple exposures be given to models of gift-based ministry taking place in congregations throughout the NAD, including:

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- A. Concrete portrayal and affirmation of women in ministry
- B. Indirect portrayal of women with men in creative approaches to pastoral ministry
- C. Use of both print and video media
- D. A cassette ministry of sermons and lectures supporting women in ministry
- E. ACN "First Wednesday" segments highlighting women in ministry

XI. Resource Center for Women in Ministry

RECOMMENDED, That the NAD Church Resources Consortium create a resource center for women in pastoral ministry. It should provide the following services:

- A. Support for the creation of a professional association for women serving in pastoral ministry that would organize an annual retreat for the purpose of mutual support, affirmation and networking. Financial assistance should be provided where local conferences are unwilling or unable to pay for travel, etc.
- B. An electronic linkage to connect more experienced women pastors with women who are ministerial students or intern pastors and desire a professional mentor.
- C. A newsletter for women in ministry that would publish affirmative success stories, list job vacancies of interest, announce relevant seminars and workshops, and provide other helpful information. This newsletter should also be sent to conference presidents and ministerial directors.
- D. A database of churches in the NAD which are likely to want women as pastors. (The newsletter and other information from the resource center should be provided to these churches on a regular basis.)
- E. A speaker's bureau for women in ministry which would solicit and market women speakers for camp meetings, seminars, weeks of prayer, retreats, etc. The NAD might provide travel subsidies for organizations seeking a woman speaker which could be managed by the resource center.
- F. An "ombudsman"—a person with insight into the system and denominational policies who can provide feedback and guidance when women in ministry encounter conflict with employing organizations, as well as provide mediation if necessary.

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G. Training for women in ministry about conflict resolution skills and how to survive in a male-dominated milieu.

H. A placement service that would provide a database where women in ministry could list their resumes and employing organizations could access this information. An adequate placement service should also include regular contacts with conference administrators and an identified list of local churches most likely to accept women as pastors; active promotion of qualified women, seeking to match these candidates with openings; and career counseling for women in ministry.

I. Regular distribution of information to conferences regarding the NAD'S support for women in pastoral ministry and policies that encourage the hiring of women pastors.

J. Public affirmation to church administrators who have taken risks to support and employ women in ministry.

K. A fund from which to provide financial assistance for travel expenses and registration fees for women in ministry to attend continuing education events when the employing organization cannot or will not provide these benefits.

XII. Goals for Gender Inclusiveness in Church Organization

RECOMMENDED, That each conference and union in the NAD set realistic goals for diversity on boards, committees and staff reflective of the gender and other diversity present among its membership; and that the NAD and its unions and local conferences report to each YE on the proportion of women in its executive committee memberships, pastors and administrators.

XIII. Education of Church Members on the Topic

RECOMMENDED, A. That there is urgent need to study and clarify the church's understanding and application of biblical hermeneutics. This should take the form of:

i. Multiple articles in denominational periodicals

ii. A hermeneutics conference sponsored by the NAD and/or the GC

B. That more of the advocacy for women in ministry be channeled through the union papers and other media of mass distribution, including:

i. That the Church Resources Consortium monitor and audit all NAD-produced and endorsed materials for compliance with a gender-inclusive model of ministry.

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- ii. That the NAD produce and endorse only gender-inclusive resource materials.
- iii. That the division president issue a clear call to the church for gender inclusiveness at all levels of the church—boards, committees, pastoral assignments, etc.
- iv. That materials be prepared for conference administrators and search committees that specifically address the need to consider qualified women as candidates.