

Statement on Unity Through Diversity

Whereas many members and leaders in the Pacific Union Conference:

Believe the Bible supports the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, while others do not.

Whereas some local conferences in the Pacific Union Conference:

Have ordained women to pastoral ministry, while others have not.

Whereas Acts 15 records that:

When faced with this kind of conflict while the apostles were still living, the church preserved unity for mission by establishing different practices for different peoples.

Whereas the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee agreed that:

Seventh-day Adventists can disagree on women's ordination and still have a "thorough commitment to the full authority of Scripture"¹ and, by implication, live together in the same church in unity.

Whereas the General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee voted:

"To affirm that in spite of the differences of opinion on the subject of women's ordination, the members of the theology of ordination study committee are committed to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church, as expressed through the 28 Fundamental Beliefs."

Whereas the 2014 GC Annual Council action:²

1. Indicated that the issue of women's ordination is not an issue on which the church has been able to reach consensus and it doesn't "directly involve fundamental beliefs," and
2. Voted to put before the delegates in 2015 the question of whether each division should be authorized to determine its own policies on the ordination of women to ministry.

Whereas the NAD Year End Meeting voted a resolution to:

"Encourage expressions of disagreement that are honest and open, based upon a sincere desire to arrive at truth as expressed in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy," but "to avoid participating in, or being party to, all forms of unhealthy and demeaning discourse, [and] to govern our communication according to the high standards of Christian conduct ... so that God may be glorified in all we say and do."

Whereas we are all committed to the same mission of proclaiming the three angels' messages, and

Whereas we are unified in our commitment to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the church, and

Whereas Ellen White commented that:

"In the different branches of this great work, as in the branches of the vine, there is to be unity in diversity. This is God's plan, the principle which runs through the entire universe."ⁱⁱⁱ

Therefore: The Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee stands in support of the statements and actions voted at NAD TOSC, at GC Annual Council 2014 and at NAD Year End Meetings 2014, affirming unity in diversity. And we stand in support of a vote at General Conference Session 2015 that will authorize each Division of the church to develop and practice its own policies on women's ordination, because we believe diversity will best preserve the unity of the worldwide church and will enable the church in each part of the world to fulfill its mission of service and evangelism.

¹ "We believe that an individual, as a Seventh-day Adventist in thorough commitment to the full authority of Scripture, may build a defensible case in favor of or in opposition to the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, although each of us views one position or the other as stronger and more compelling."

² "The biblical example of addressing differences that do not directly involve fundamental beliefs,"
"Whereas the unity for which Jesus prayed is vitally important to the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,"
"Whereas various groups appointed by the General Conference and its divisions have carefully studied the Bible and Ellen G White writings with respect to the ordination of women and have not arrived at consensus as to whether ministerial ordination for women is unilaterally affirmed or denied,"

"After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission,"

ⁱⁱⁱ EGW, Ltr. 71. 1894. 1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, pp. 373