

Recommendations to support women in ministry and leadership

Request for an official statement endorsing women in ministry and leadership

From time to time the Seventh-day Adventist Church publishes position statements and guidelines. These statements are not an end in themselves, rather an attempt to respond and clarify the Church's stance on a wide range of issues, such as the nurture and protection of children, freedom of speech, religious liberty, marriage, health, climate change, creation and global poverty:

<https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/>

Given the current discussion in the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding the role of women within the life of the church, which has an impact both internally and externally, we request the Officers of the General Conference to initiate the drafting of a position statement affirming women, and their role and contribution within the church at all levels, to be presented to the Spring Meeting 2019 of the General Conference Executive Committee for consultation and to be voted on by the full Executive Committee at Annual Council 2019.

Request to the Church Manual Committee: Elders

In 1975 the GC Executive Committee voted:

75-153-15

... 4. That the way be opened for women elected to serve as deaconesses in our churches to be ordained to this office and that the Church Manual Committee be requested to give study to a statement of the qualifications of deaconesses and suggestions in regard to a suitable ordination service.

5. That in harmony with the spirit and intent of paragraph 3 of the Annual Council 1974 action (pages 12-14) the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordaining of women to the office of local elder, counsel being sought in all cases by the local conference/mission from the union and division committees before proceeding.

In 1984 it affirmed this decision when it voted:

84-386-387:

1. To reaffirm the Spring Meeting action on the General Conference Committee of 1975 Role of Women in the Church (GCC 75-153).

2. To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.

In 1996 the GC Executive Committee when voting an amendment to Human Relations Policy B17 10 noted in the footnote to para 6 96-263-264, which clearly states that women may be ordained as elders in local churches:

...

6. Employment opportunities, membership on committees and boards, and nomination to office shall not be limited by race or color. Neither shall these opportunities be limited by gender (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry*).

_____ *The exception clause, and any other statement above, shall not be used to reinterpret the action already taken by the world Church authorizing the ordination of women as local church elders in divisions where the division

executive committees have given their approval. Source: General Conference Committee Minutes, October 8, 1996, 96-263-264 (<http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/GCC/GCC1996-10b/index.djvu>).

Based on the decisions taken in 1975 and 1984 there is a long practice of women being ordained and functioning as elders in local churches.

As “elder” is gender neutral, there is no indication in the *Church Manual* that the term is inclusive of both male and female.

We would request that the *Church Manual* Committee, amend the language to reflect that elders may be male or female.

Request to the Church Manual Committee: Credentials

Credentials are issued by local conferences or employing organisations but are defined in Working Policy and their scope is voted by the General Conference Executive Committee. The *Church Manual* relates to ministers who are ordained or commissioned, and there is no provision should the Executive Committee vote other credentials for people carrying out ministerial functions. Given that the *Church Manual* can only be amended every five years at a General Conference Session, we request that the *Church Manual* Committee insert a provision which would allow for other ministerial credentials, to be created between General Conference sessions, on the understanding that they were subject to ratification at the next General Conference, when the *Church Manual* could be updated.

Educational Financial Support for women to enter ministry

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Trans European Division is fully supportive of women in ministry. To encourage and facilitate more women entering ministry we recommend that over the next three years (2019-2021) the TED sponsor 32 women to train for ministry by providing the following sponsorship for the BA, subject to regular sponsorship guidelines:

- Sponsoring 75% of the composite fee for room, board and tuition for 20 women at Newbold College of Higher Education
- Sponsoring 75% of the composite fee for room, board and tuition for 3 women at each of the Union Seminaries (total of 12 women)