

## **Policies of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® Regarding Women Serving as Local Church Elders**

**1973** The General Conference Executive Committee voted the following:

“6. That continued study be given to the theological soundness of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination and the division committees exercise discretion in any special cases that may arise until a definitive decision is adopted. This matter will continue to be studied as arranged for by the President’s Executive Advisory.”<sup>1</sup>

**1974** The General Conference Executive Committee voted the following:

“4. To request the President's Executive Advisory to also arrange for further study of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination and that division committees exercise discretion in any special cases that may arise before a definitive position has been adopted.”<sup>2</sup>

**1975** The General Conference Executive Committee voted GCC 75-153 as follows:

“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.”<sup>3</sup>

**1984** The General Conference Executive Committee voted 272-846N as follows:

“272-846N WOMEN (LOCAL CHURCH) ELDERS--ELECTION AND ORDINATION VOTED, 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.

3. To suggest that the following guidelines be used in the selection and ordination of women as local church elders:

a. The concept should be carefully examined, discussed, and properly accepted at the local church level.

b. If a church contemplates such an action, the entire matter should be discussed and approved by the conference committee after the conference administration has sought counsel from the union leadership. The negotiation between the church

---

<sup>1</sup> General Conference Executive Committee, “Actions of General Interest from the 1973 Annual Council—2,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 150.49 (December 6, 1973): 19.

<sup>2</sup> General Conference Executive Committee, “Actions of General Interest from the 1974 Annual Council,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 151.48 (November 28, 1974): 19.

<sup>3</sup> General Conference Executive Committee Minutes, Spring Meeting—Three Hundred Fifteenth Meeting, April 3, 1975, 9:25am, 75–153, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1975-04.pdf>.

and the conference should occur in advance of the final decision and vote by the local church.

c. The action to elect and ordain a woman as a local church elder must not be taken unless a clear consensus exists that the ministry of a woman elder is desirable and even essential to the spiritual well-being of the local church family. It should also be the consensus of the church that a woman elder will be respected as a spiritual leader and soul-winner. The church should also express its belief that there are dimensions of spiritual service and counsel which cannot be properly fulfilled by a male elder.

d. A clear majority of the voting members of the local church must be in favor of the action. The matter should be considered at a specially called church business meeting. Every church member should be given the opportunity to vote on this issue rather than only the few who might be present at a regular meeting where routine items of business are on the agenda. Although preliminary study could be given to this question by the church board, any final action should be taken by the church in a business meeting.

e. Whatever the decision of the church, it should result in unifying the members and not be the source of divisiveness or alienation. The body of Christ, the Church, must not be tarnished in any way. In this important issue, as in all things, the name of our Lord and Saviour must be exalted.”<sup>4</sup>

**2009** The following is affirmed in the *Seventh-day Adventist® Minister’s Handbook*:

“By action of the Annual Council of 1975, reaffirmed at the 1984 Annual Council, both men and women are eligible to serve as elders and receive ordination to this position of service in the church.”<sup>5</sup>

**2016** The following is affirmed in the *Seventh-day Adventist® Elder’s Handbook*:

“In recent years, the world church has determined that where division committees approve and where a local congregation agrees, both men and women may serve as local elders.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> General Conference Executive Committee Minutes, 272-846N, The Sixth Meeting of 1984 Annual Council, October 14, 1984, 2:30 pm, 84-386–387, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1984-10.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist® Minister’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 2009), 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist® Elder’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 2016), 27.

*Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®*

**BA 60 Human Relations**

**BA 60 05**

“**BA 60 05 Basic Principles**—Seventh-day Adventists believe in the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and are dedicated to the proclamation of the message of Revelation 14:6-12 to all peoples of the earth. This philosophy and its resultant course of action has made the Church multiracial, multiethnic, and gender inclusive. The Church is enriched by such membership and by the valuable contribution to its mission of both men and women of different nationalities and races as they serve as laypersons and employees at various levels of the Church. The Church rejects any system or philosophy which discriminates against anyone on the basis of race, color, or gender. The Church bases its position on principles clearly enunciated in the Bible, the writings of Ellen G White, and the official pronouncements of the General Conference.”<sup>7</sup>

**BA 60 10**

“**BA 60 10 Official Position**—The world Church supports nondiscrimination in employment practices and policies and upholds the principle that both men and women, without regard to race and color, shall be given full and equal opportunity within the Church to develop the knowledge and skills needed for the building up of the Church. Positions of service and responsibility (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry\*) on all levels of church activity shall be open to all on the basis of the individual’s qualifications.

1. Membership and office in the local church, and at various levels of administration, shall be available to anyone who qualifies, without regard to race, color, or gender.

2. The appointment of individuals to serve as Bible instructors or chaplains, or in departmental or pastoral responsibilities, shall not be limited by race or color. Neither shall these positions be limited by gender (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry\*). ...

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\*).”<sup>8</sup>

**BA 60 10 note**

“\*The exception clause, and any other statement above, shall not be used to reinterpret the action already taken by the world Church authorizing the

---

<sup>7</sup> BA 60 05, *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®*, 2019–2020 ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019),136.

<sup>8</sup> BA 60 10, *Working Policy*, 137–138.

ordination of women as local church elders in divisions where the division executive committees have given their approval.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> BA 60 10 note, *Working Policy*, 137.