



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH

*North American Division*

January 31, 2012

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Members of the North American Division Executive Committee

Dear Fellow Committee Members,

I am writing this letter to you at the direction of and with the full support of the North American Division Administrative team. We believe that it is important for you to have a first-hand account of the outcome of the many discussions that have taken place on the E-60 Policy issue (Conference/Mission President) since the time of our meeting in October, 2011. I will summarize the observations and conclusions drawn and then make some suggestions for the future.

The North American Division (NAD) Administration has taken the initiative to carefully review, in great detail, the issues surrounding the serious discussion that has arisen over the action taken by the North American Division Executive Committee (NADCOM) on Oct. 31, 2011, to re-affirm the change made to the E-60 Policy that was voted by the NADCOM in both 2009 and 2010. This review has led us to the following observations:

1. We believe that all those who have participated in this discussion during the past three years have done so in good faith and with a good spirit.
2. In all of the discussions of the E-60 Policy there has been no attempt to hide the potential discussions, withhold information or to subvert any point of view. Two NAD administrations as well as three NADCOMS in Year-end Meetings (2009, 2010 and 2011) believed that they were taking up business that was appropriate to their delegated purview and were open in doing so.
3. Each action of the NADCOM throughout 2009 - 2011 was undertaken with the full knowledge of the two General Conference Presidents involved during this period of time and with the supervision of Officers and Vice-Presidents of the General Conference who were present at the time when the NADCOM actions were taken.
4. With specific reference to some of the concerns expressed to us in recent discussions, we strongly assert that neither the NAD Administration nor the NADCOM have "rebelled" against any the vote of the General Conference, nor has it been their intention to do so. The General Conference Executive Committee, meeting in its 2011 Annual Council, denied our

request for a variance to the Model Constitution. We have therefore not modified the Model Constitution.

The discussion and subsequent action of the 2011 NADCOM to re-affirm its previously voted E-60 Policy was not undertaken as a reaction to nor a rejection of the 2011 General Conference Annual Council's denial of the NAD request for a variance from the Model Constitution. On the contrary, the matter was taken up out of consideration for the Annual Council action. The discussion was engaged in as a response to motions proposed by members of the NADCOM, and with respect for the General Conference and the unity in the worldwide church. The members of the NADCOM were asked to review their vote of 2010 within the broader context of the actions of the 2011 Annual Council.

5. At no point prior to or during the 2009 or 2010 NADCOM Year-end Meetings, nor prior to the 2011 Year-end Meeting, was any counsel given by anyone to the NAD Administration that the NADCOM "did not have the authority" to add the word "commissioned" to the NAD E-60 Policy.

6. In discussions held following the 2011 North American Division Year-end Meeting it was brought to the NAD Administration's attention that Divisions do not have Constituencies, in that they are all (that is, the Divisions) parts of the same General Conference "whole" therefore they must act in harmony with the policies of the world church. In other words, Divisions do not have the independent right to develop policies which are out of harmony with the General Conference Model Constitution or voted General Conference Working Policy. While all Divisions have the authority to develop and implement policies related to their field, they may not act independently when it comes to voted General Conference policies.

7. The NAD Administration took this matter very seriously and requested legal counsel to undertake a review of the General Conference Constitution, General Conference Working Policy and the Church Manual in order to verify the governance role of the NAD in terms of its relationship to the General Conference. The results of this review were provided to us on January 3, 2012, and clearly support the opinion that the North American Division Executive Committee does not have the right to establish policies which are out of harmony with the General Conference Model Constitution or General Conference Working Policy.

The conclusions that NADCOM has come to are the following:

- a) From 2009 through 2011 the North American Division Committee did not have the authority to vote a policy (E-60 – with the inclusion of the word "commissioned") that was out of harmony with the General Conference E-60 Policy.
- b) The editors will be directed to omit the word "commissioned" from the E-60 Policy contained in the 2011-2012 edition of the NAD Working Policy.

The Administration of the North American Division takes full responsibility for failing to do sufficient research into the constitutional issues that impacted our decisions. In bringing this matter to the floor in 2010 and 2011 we were doing so under the assumption that the North

American Division had a constituency separate and distinct from the General Conference. Unfortunately, we were wrong and we sincerely apologize. During our 2012 Year-end Meeting we will provide time for questions and further explanation of this matter, if requested.

### **LESSONS WE MAY LEARN**

To say that we are perplexed regarding the outcome of the actions taken over the past three years would be a huge understatement. However, rather than throwing our hands up in despair we need to see what can be learned from this experience.

Having said all of this I believe that the clear commitment of the members of the NADCOM to strengthen the role of women in ministry within the North American Division has not changed. It is of vital importance that we affirm the women clergy presently serving in our Division, that we encourage women who may be called to gospel ministry in the future and that we enhance the understanding and unity of our membership regarding the role of women in the church.

We see this as a very significant matter that needs to be dealt with. In saying this, we need to view it in the light of the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy concepts of justice, equity, morality and the calling of God to individuals of both genders. As we move this matter forward and begin to consider new approaches there are lessons for us all to learn from this experience both in terms of history and in terms of presentation.

#### **Lesson #1: We Need to Continue to Listen For God's Voice**

Firstly, it was apparent to the majority present at our Year-end Meetings in 2010 and 2011 that the discussions of the E-60 Policy were undertaken in a serious and spiritual manner. We faithfully and intentionally asked God for His guidance. We earnestly and fervently appealed for the presence of the Holy Spirit and believed and saw evidence that He was there with us. During our discussions we clarified the thinking and beliefs of the members of the Church in the North American Division on the role of women in ministry and leadership. The unity we experienced during those discussions was a blessing to all.

Now, in the midst of our present situation, some may be tempted to question if we truly were following God's lead in the discussions on this matter. However, God has not deserted us nor left us in confusion. The words of Ellen White remind us that we have nothing to fear for the future except that we forget the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in the past.

Could it be that the E-60 matter was allowed to make the progress it did to clarify decisively, the thinking and beliefs of the members of the Church in North America on the role of women in ministry and leadership? Perhaps it has made the issue so obvious that we can now develop our thinking with far more clarity and power than ever before.

As we continue to wait on God, He will lead in ways that we haven't anticipated to achieve a greater end than we had imagined. We must not allow our trust in His leading to be eroded, nor should we allow the convictions that were laid upon us as a collective group to dissipate. We must intensify, individually and collectively, our dependence on listening for His direction. He is the Leader of the Church and His direction is of supreme importance.

### **Lesson #2: We Need to Strengthen Our Understanding**

We must also commit to the hard work of further research, study and prayer. We must have a thorough and well-demonstrated biblical/Spirit of Prophecy understanding of this matter. We must have a clearly defined foundation for all that we do. Nothing less will suffice.

I am not speaking about the ordination of women, as this related topic will be taken up by other groups as directed by the General Conference. I am however speaking of the development of a theology that demonstrates the basic biblical and Spirit of Prophecy foundations that emphasize not only the necessity of women in ministerial and leadership roles but also the theological mandate that they be active in specific roles. At the same time we must also study the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy understandings of related issues such as the calling of God, justice, and equity.

### **Lesson #3: We Need to be More Intentional**

While we, as a Division family, have philosophically supported women in leadership at three successive Year-end Meetings, the time has now come for us to become practical in our application of philosophy and belief.

We are committed to the support and networking of our women clergy. Our Ministerial Department will be hosting the North American Division Women Clergy Conference in Berrien Springs, Michigan, April 23-26, 2012. We are encouraging every woman pastor, and every woman student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to attend.

The North American Division and its Unions and Conferences (as local circumstances permit) must become more intentional in the development of pathways to ministry for female pastors. We must also develop intentional methods of mentoring women who can take on executive leadership positions within our conferences.

The facts speak for themselves:

- Of the approximately 4,000 pastors employed in our division only 107 are women.
- Out of the 58 Conferences in our Division, currently 34 are being served by female pastors.

We must continue to move this matter forward throughout the North American Division in the belief that God will continue to guide His Church to the ultimate achievement of His mission on Earth. Let there be no misunderstanding of our resolve to make the

accomplishment of God's mission in our Division territory our number one priority. However, let no one fail to recognize that in doing so we must fully enable, recognize and utilize all who are called by God to serve as pastors and leaders. To do otherwise would result in a failure to fully experience that measure of effectiveness that God envisioned when He said:

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.” — Joel 2:28, 29

Ellen White clearly supports this idea:

“When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”

— *Evangelism*, p. 469

Let us move together in the great anticipation of our Lord's soon return. Let us anticipate that His work will conclude with even greater glory than it had in the beginning. May God's Spirit be present with each one of you as you pray over and ponder these things. May He continue to guide and direct His Church.

I remain,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Jackson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "I remain,".

Your brother-in-Christ,

Dan Jackson

President

On behalf of the Administration of the North American Division,  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists