



June 8, 2015

An Open Letter To:  
Church Leaders  
Delegates to the 2015 GC Session  
Church Members

RE: A Call for Unity and Upholding Our Doctrines

Dear Leaders, Delegates and Church Members:

As we move closer to the 2015 GC Session in San Antonio and the vote on the issue of Women's Ordination (WO), I have been thinking and praying about this upcoming vote and the concern that some have that this issue may split the Unity of the Church and have a major negative impact on some members of God's Church.

I was pleased to see that in the study by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), the majority came out clearly in favor of permitting WO and in reality they claim that "ordination" is not a theological issue. While I agree about "ordination" not being a theological question from the biblical perspective, I do have concerns how we as leaders of the Church seem to be able to divorce ourselves from the theology of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs (FB's) and are unwilling to apply these doctrines in our personal and corporate lives as we administer the SDA Church.

As leaders, we say that our doctrines are not optional nor should we allow cultural settings to prevent us from adherence to the doctrines by our members. We say that the Sabbath is to be observed, even if the majority of the people and cultures in the world do not accept the Sabbath and choose to worship on Friday (Muslims) or Sunday (most Christians). If you are an SDA, the Sabbath doctrine is not optional! Similar positions are urged by the church on other doctrines such as Creation, Salvation by Grace, Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; in fact, the church does not teach that any of our doctrines (28 FB's) are optional.

However; when it comes to following the teaching of our **14<sup>th</sup> Fundamental Belief – Unity in the Body of Christ**, and our **17<sup>th</sup> Fundamental Belief – Spiritual Gifts and Ministries**; the Church has chosen to permit cultural biases from around the world to influence how we relate to the issue of allowing God through His Holy Spirit to call women into ministry and also the writing of our GC Policies. We treat these two FB's as though they are optional for our members and leaders in the Church.

The 14<sup>th</sup> FB reads as follows: "The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. **In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ**, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; **we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation**. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures **we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all**. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His

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Children.” (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27-29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23.) [Emphasis is mine.]

In our 17<sup>th</sup> FB – **Spiritual Gifts and Ministries**: we state **“God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills,** the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. **Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God.** When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God’s varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love.” (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.) [Emphasis is mine.]

Given that our Fundamental Beliefs #14 and #17 give us clear guidance on how we as members and leaders are to relate to each other and also makes it clear that it is **God through His Holy Spirit who apportions to each member as He wills** the gifts and talents needed for the church, who are we, to say we will not recognize God’s calling of women to ministry, administration, or leadership? We should not be in the business of trying to tell God whom He is allowed to call into ministry, especially when our 17<sup>th</sup> Doctrine clearly states that **God pours out His Spirit as He wills.**

I plead with the leadership of the Church and all the delegates to the 2015 GC Session to vote in favor of upholding the theological principles of our doctrines as voted by the 1980 GC Session and to permit God to be God and act through the Holy Spirit as He may choose, to call individuals (both men and women) to serve as ministers, administrators and leaders at all levels of the Church. If God does not choose to pour out His Spirit on Women in every Division of the World Field because for cultural reasons He knows that they would not be accepted in ministerial positions at this time, then that is His choosing, but let us as delegates not vote to limit God and His choice to call women into ministry anywhere in the world if He so chooses.

It is obvious that in Europe, North America, China, and some other Divisions of the World Field; God has chosen to pour out His Spirit on women who are faithfully serving and following God’s call to ministry. How dare we as ministers, administrators, and delegates to the 2015 GC Session, think that we can forsake our 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> FB’s and tell God that we know best upon whom He may choose to pour out His Spirit in these last days.

I urge you, as leaders, to stand up at the GC Session and strongly urge the delegates to uphold our FB’s and vote in favor of the proposed motion to allow Divisions to decide on the issue of WO. Even better would be if the Session would vote to allow the ordination of women in the whole world field just as we voted in 1980 to adopt our FB’s and have them apply to the entire church in all areas of the world, even though we knew in 1980 (and still today) that not all areas and cultures of the world field were ready to accept and fully implement our 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> FB’s in their personal lives nor in the corporate church. It is time that we stand up and tell the world that we are no longer willing to consider the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> FB’s as optional!



Then, I would also urge you as leaders to encourage the delegates to return to their home fields and teach all of our beautiful 28 FB's to their members and help them to understand the true meaning of all our doctrines and to live them out within their personal lives and the corporate life of the church.

There is a gospel song that says ***"Our Talk Talks and Our Walk Talks, but Our Walk Talks Louder than Our Talk Talks!"*** Let's show the world that the Adventist Church stands by all our doctrines and that we practice what we preach and teach.

I am praying that our leaders and delegates will uphold the Word of God as expressed in our FB's #14 and #17 as the rule of thumb for administering our church in these final days. Yours for a finished work under the power of the Holy Spirit!

Sincerely

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PS. I give permission to each person who may see this letter to publish and share this letter in whatever medium (digital, email or print) you may choose.