



Frequently Asked Question regarding Declaration Conference Executive Committee

Question A: What was exactly the question that was asked at the General Conference in San Antonio in 2015 about women's ordination?

Answer A: The question that was put forward was as follows: "Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry?" One could only answer with a "yes" or "no". The question was not whether women could be pastors at all, that is already possible since 1985¹. The question was also not whether women could be ordained. The question was whether Divisions were allowed to decide to that women could be ordained. Ted Wilson in his speech directly after the vote, made clear that this vote did not say anything about the ordination of female elders, deaconesses or commissioned pastors².

Question B: What is the difference between an ordained pastor and a commissioned pastor?

Answer B: An ordained pastor is a pastor upon whom they have place hands by another ordained pastor. He may lead all services and ceremonies. It takes around 7 years before a pastor will be ordained in our conference. At this moment only male pastors can be ordained. A commissioned pastor is a pastor that has been confirmed as a pastor at a ceremony³ and can do the same tasks as an ordained pastor, except: 1) ordain elders⁴, 2) start churches⁵ and 3) combine churches⁶. Also a commissioned pastor cannot be elected as president of the Conference, Union, Division or General Conference, as a pastor has to be ordained for that. See Annex 2.

Question C: Who decides whether someone can be ordained or not?

Answer C: Unions decide on recommendation of the conferences whether someone will be ordained or not. The ordination itself can be done by the conference⁷. There are 15 criteria that a pastor has to fulfil before the ordination takes place. The criteria are in the "Working Policy" of the General Conference⁸. The "Working Policy" can be changed by the Executive Committee of the General Conference or at one of her annual meetings.

¹ General Conference Bulletin, July 11, 1985, pages 20-21

² <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2015-07-10/gc-president-says-ordination-vote-doesnt-change-current-policy/12/>

³ GC Working Policy 2014-2015: E 05 10

⁴ Church Manual 2015: p. 73

⁵ Church Manual 2015: p. 36

⁶ Church Manual 2015: p. 39

⁷ GC Working Policy 2014-2015: L 45 05

⁸ GC Working Policy 2014-2015: L50



Question D: Is it the pastor's right to be ordained, or is the conference obliged to ordain a pastor?

Answer D: The pastor does not have the right to be ordained, neither is the conference obliged to ordain a pastor. The ordination is neither a reward for loyal service⁹. Off course a conference does not hire pastors to deny them unnecessary the ordination. Ordination is the setting apart of a person for a task in the church and a confirmation of God's calling.

Question E: What did the conference executive committee exactly decide on the 29th of November 2015?

Answer E: The conference executive committee decided to no longer suggest any pastors for ordination starting at the 29th of November 2015; the ordination of pastors has been postponed. It also decided, echoing the declaration of the union (see annex 3), to no longer make a distinction in salary between commissioned and ordained pastors. It also decided to request the Inter-European Division to decide that commissioned pastors can ordain elders, start churches and combine churches.

Question F: Is a conference executive committee allowed to decide this (see question E) by itself or does it have to consult the churches?

Answer F: Yes, the conference executive committee is allowed to take this decision by itself. The conference executive committee is elected by the delegates to lead and to decide on policy in the conference in between the two Administrative Assemblies (once every 4 years), off course within the restrains of her own constitution, the "Working Policy" of the General Conference and the Church Manual¹⁰. There is no provision in the constitution, the Church Manual or the "Working Policy" for a referendum among the churches for policy decisions.

Question G: Is a Division allowed to decide independently to extent the authorization and responsibilities of a commissioned a pastor?

Answer G: Yes, it is the executive committee of a division that can extent the responsibilities and authorization of a commissioned pastor. The union nor the conference executive committees are authorized to do so¹¹.

Question H: Why didn't the conference executive committee decide to ordain women, instead of postponing ordinations?

⁹ GC Working Policy 2014-2015: L 35 35 & L 35 50

¹⁰ Statuten BLF: artikel 6 § 3

¹¹ Church Manual 2015: p. 33



Answer H: A conference cannot decide who will be ordained, that is reserved for a union¹². Also the conference executive committee wanted to respect the decision of the General Conference and be compliant with the “Working Policy”.

Question I: Is the decision, taken by the conference executive committee, not in opposition of the General Conference?

Answer I: No, the conference executive committee, is not going against any agreement. The conference executive committee has no intention to go against these agreements. She chooses, for now, to not recommend any pastor for ordination to the union. This is the same as a local church, deciding not to elect female elders, as they don’t want to ordain female elders.

Question J: How long is this decision valid?

Answer J: The decision remains valid till there is a solution or till the conference executive committee (current or new one) recalls the decision.

Question K: Doesn’t this decision create more inequality among the pastors?

Answer K: The decision taken is not a solution to the problem, but tries with the available leeway in the “Working Policy” to express solidarity with the current and future female colleague pastors. Also the conference would have major difficulties if it postponed current and future ordinations.

Question L: Have the pastors been consulted before this decision was taken?

Answer L: Yes, the fact is that this decision has been taken in response to a declaration and request from the pastors. The pastors themselves wanted this situation of inequality resolved.

Question M: Why did the conference executive committee feel it necessary to make this declaration?

Answer M: In the months after the vote in San Antonio it became very quickly apparent that the conference executive committee could not remain silent. The president received several reactions of members who resigned from the church or waited for a reaction from the conference. Next the pastors came with the request for a reaction from the conference or union. The conference executive committee waited first for a reaction from the Franco-Belgian Union. This didn’t seem sufficient and several pastors came with a second writing, where they requested to postpone all future ordinations. It became more and more pertinent that the conference executive committee responded.

¹² GC Working Policy 2014-2015: B 05 (punt 6)



Question N: Is our conference the only conference that has responded or made a similar decision? Or are there other unions and conferences?

Answer N: There are more unions and conferences that took similar decisions or had similar reactions. In annex 1 you find a survey of the different decisions and reactions. Several of these were already taken before San Antonio, but directly related to the ordination of women.

Question O: Doesn't the General Conference have a clear standpoint about the ordination of women?

Answer O: There isn't a consensus about the ordination of women in the World Church. The executive committee of the General Conference has recognized this by mentioning this explicitly in her proposal that was voted on in San Antonio:

“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” (140-15GS Theology and practice of ministerial ordination – p3).¹³

Question P: How did the General Conference respond to the different unions and conferences who either ordain women or chose a form or equality?

Answer P: The president of the General Conference has had several talks with the various unions who either ordain women or have adopted a form or equality. These talks took place predominantly during the winter meetings of the GC. The GC recognizes that the vote in San Antonio causes problems in European, American and Australian societies and from a missiological viewpoint the churches there will be placed for extra challenges. So far the General Conference hasn't imposed any sanctions on these unions.

Question Q: Did the vote at San Antonio close the debate about the ordination of women?

Answer Q: No, the vote was about the role of the divisions in the process of ordaining women. The vote is not a final answer to the question if women can be ordained. The debate has now started at several layers in the church and it is very probable that it could return on the agenda in some form or another of the General Conference session.



Annex 1

Columbia Union Conference	Have switched to ordaining women before San Antonio. Reconfirmed after.
Danish Union of Churches	All ordinations withdrawn.
Italian Union	Declaration not happy with the vote.
Netherlands Union	Have switched to ordaining women before San Antonio. Reconfirmed after.
North-German Union	Have switched to ordaining women before San Antonio. Reconfirmed after.
Norwegian Union	All ordinations withdrawn.
Pacific Union Conference	Have switched to ordaining women before San Antonio. Reconfirmed after.
Czecho-Slovakian Union	Declaration not happy with the vote.
Washington Conference	Commissioned pastors completely equalized to ordained pastors.
Swedish Union	All ordinations withdrawn. All pastors are commissioned.



Annex 2

Overview of different licenses

1.	Elder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- only in function in his/her own congregation, unless elected in other congregation.- may preside at Holy Supper, only in his/her own congregation.- may baptize, needs permission from conference president, only in his/her own congregation.
2.	Licensed (Intern pastor and pastors with less than 5 years of experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ordination or appointment as elder needed.- may preside at Holy Supper, only in his/her own congregation.- may baptize, needs permission from the conference president, only in his/her own congregation.- may bless marriage, only in his/her own congregation.
3.	Commissioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ordination or appointment as elder not necessary.- may preside at Holy Supper.- may baptize, only in his/her own congregation- may bless marriages, only his/her own congregation
4.	Ordained	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- valid worldwide- may preside at Holy Supper- may baptize- may bless marriage- may take marriage vow- may ordain elders and deacons- may ordain pastors- may start congregation- may combine congregations- may cancel congregations- can be elected as president



Annex 3

Verklaring van de Raad van Bestuur van de FBU

- ❖ Rekening houdend met de verschillende lagen in de organisatie van de Kerk der Zevendedags Adventisten die tijdens verschillende Generale Conferentie sessies¹⁴ diverse theologische commissies in het leven heeft geroepen om het principe van de inzegening (wijding) van vrouwen tot het pastorale ambt te onderzoeken;
- ❖ Rekening houdend met het werk van de Commissie Bijbelsonderzoek van de Inter-Europese Divisie en het unaniem genomen besluit van haar uitvoerend comité (Madrid, november 2013) die de inzegening van vrouwen tot het pastorale ambt aanbeveelt;
- ❖ Rekening houdend dat het besluit van San Antonio¹⁵, dat niet aan de 13 administratieve Divisies van de wereldwijde Adventkerk de mogelijkheid heeft verleent om “*nodige schikkingen te treffen voor de inzegening van vrouwen in het pastorale ambt*”, zich niet verzet tegen het pastorale ambt van vrouwen, noch tegen de inzegening van vrouwen in de lokale kerk (ouderlingschap, diaconaat);
- ❖ Rekening houdend met document 172-15G van de Generale Conferentie genoemd “*Oproep en dankbaarheid van de Generale Conferentie naar aanleiding van de stemming van de sessie 2015*”;
- ❖ Rekening houdend dat in de adventistische universiteiten en faculteiten de theologische studies altijd toegankelijk zijn geweest voor vrouwen om dezelfde academische diploma's als mannen te kunnen behalen (bachelor, master, doctoraat);
- ❖ Rekening houdend met de verschillende benamingen van de vrouwen in pastorale roeping in de geschiedenis van de denominatie (bijbelwerkster, pastorale assistente, predikante, enz.);
- ❖ Rekening houdend dat het vrouwelijk ambt een verrijking is voor de kerk binnen het pastorale corps en dat zij geen discriminatie kan onderschrijven op basis van ras, etniciteit, sekse, sociaal of cultuur (zie Working Policy, BA60 05);

BESLUIT

- **om akte te nemen** van het resultaat van de stemming van de Generale Conferentie sessie in San Antonio die volgens een democratische procedure van raadpleging van de aanwezige afgevaardigden conform de reglementen van de kerk der Zevendedags Adventisten heeft plaatsgevonden;
- **om te erkennen** dat het resultaat van de stemming het begrip van het vrouwenambt in het leven en de missie van de kerk niet heeft veranderd, dat de vrouwen net zoals de mannen ingezegend mogen worden tot ouderling van een gemeente terwijl ze een pastoraal ambt uitoefenen;
- **om vrouwen opnieuw te bevestigen** in de ambten die zij bekleden in de kerk, in haar groei en in haar theologie, door hen onze dankbaarheid te betuigen voor de verscheidenheid van hun talenten, competenties, gevoeligheden en toevoegingen; waarachtige zegeningen die het Lichaam van Christus verrijken;
- **om vrouwen aan te moedigen** tot het pastorale ambt;

¹⁴ De sessies van de Generale Conferentie van 1950 in San Francisco, van 1975 in Wenen (Oostenrijk), van 1990 in Indianapolis, van 1995 in Utrecht (Nederland).

¹⁵ Besluit van woensdag 8 juli 2015, om 18u15: aantal stemmende afgevaardigden: 2363 (waarvan 17% vrouwen), Resultaten: 977 JA, 1381 NEE, 5 onthoudingen.



- **om alle lokale kerken uit te nodigen** om zonder onderscheid van geslacht in te zegenen tot het ouderlingschap en tot het diaconaat;
- **om zich in te zetten** voor een proces dat een progressieve ontwikkeling van de houding mogelijk zal maken binnen de verschillende administratieve en kerkelijke structuren om te komen tot een inzegening zonder onderscheid van geslacht;
- **om de eenheid van de kerk na te zoeken** in haar diversiteit in lijn met de Generale Conferentie waarvan de structuur positief is gebleken door alle getuigen in de geschiedenis van de Adventbeweging, waaraan wij zijn verbonden;
- **om de FBU en haar drie kerkfederaties uit te nodigen:**
 - *om verantwoordelijken te benoemen* op alle niveaus van de kerk op grond van hun spirituele gaven en hun kwaliteiten en zonder onderscheid van geslacht;
 - *om de kerken te blijven aanmoedigen* om de inzegening van vrouwelijke predikanten tot ouderling binnen hun plaatselijke gemeenten te vergemakkelijken;
 - *om binnen het huidige administratieve kader te werken* om middelen te vinden die het mogelijk maken een vrouw, die het pastoraal ambt uitoefent, vooruitgang te laten boeken en zich te ontplooien in de uitoefening van haar roeping in omstandigheden identiek aan deze van haar mannelijke ambtgenoten;
 - *om de nodige voorwaarden te creëren* om vrouwelijke predikanten hetzelfde loon te laten ontvangen als een ingezegend predikant, volgens de toepasselijke procedures van administratieve evaluatie;
 - *om onbegrip te vermijden* aangaande het besluit van San Antonio, door de waardering van de Unie en van haar Federaties te delen met alle vrouwen die betrokken zijn bij de activiteiten van de kerk zowel op het niveau van de leden als op het niveau van de vrouwen die betrokken zijn in het (pastorale) ambt van het Evangelie.

Bestuur van de Frans-Belgische Unie van woensdag 11 november 2015
Secretariaat van de FBU, Jean-Paul Barquon



Déclaration du Conseil d'administration de l'UFB

- ❖ Considérant les différents paliers mis en place dans l'organisation de l'Église adventiste du septième jour par les différentes sessions de la Conférence générale¹, en donnant naissance à différentes commissions théologiques pour examiner le principe de consécration (ordination) des femmes au ministère pastoral ;
- ❖ Considérant les travaux de la Commission de recherche biblique de la Division Intereuropéenne et du vote unanime de son comité exécutif (Madrid, novembre 2013) recommandant la consécration des femmes au ministère pastoral ;
- ❖ Considérant que le vote de San Antonio² n'accordant pas la possibilité aux 13 Divisions administratives de l'Église adventiste mondiale de « *prendre des dispositions pour la consécration des femmes au ministère pastoral* », ne s'oppose pas au ministère pastoral des femmes ni à la consécration des femmes dans l'Église locale (anciennat, diaconat) ;
- ❖ Considérant le document 172-15G de la Conférence générale nommé « *Appel et gratitude de la Conférence générale suite au vote de la session 2015* » ;
- ❖ Considérant que dans les universités et les facultés adventistes les études de théologie ont toujours été ouvertes aux femmes pour accéder aux mêmes diplômes académiques que les hommes (licence, master, doctorat) ;
- ❖ Considérant les différentes appellations des femmes à cette vocation pastorale dans l'histoire de la dénomination (lectrice biblique, assistante pastorale, pasteur, etc.) ;
- ❖ Considérant que le ministère féminin est une richesse pour l'Église au sein du corps pastoral et qu'il ne peut s'inscrire dans une discrimination raciale, ethnique, sexuelle, sociale et culturelle (cf. Working Policy, BA60 05) ;

VOTÉ

- **de prendre acte** du résultat du vote de la session de San Antonio de la Conférence générale qui s'est inscrit dans une procédure démocratique de consultation des délégués présents conformément aux règlements de l'Église adventiste du septième jour ;
- **de reconnaître** que le résultat du vote ne change pas la compréhension du ministère des femmes dans la vie et la mission de l'Église, que les femmes, tout comme les hommes, peuvent être consacrées anciens d'Église tout en exerçant un ministère pastoral ;
- **de réaffirmer** les ministères que les femmes ont au sein de l'Église, dans sa croissance et dans sa théologie en leur manifestant toute notre gratitude pour la variété de leurs talents, de leurs compétences, de leurs sensibilités, et de leurs complémentarités, des véritables bénédictions enrichissant le corps du Christ ;
- **d'encourager** les femmes au ministère pastoral ;
- **d'inviter** toutes les églises locales à consacrer à l'anciennat et au diaconat sans distinction de genre ;
- **de s'impliquer** dans un processus qui permettra une évolution progressive des mentalités au sein des différentes structures administratives et ecclésiales, pour arriver à la consécration sans distinction de genre ;
- **de rechercher** l'unité de l'Église dans sa diversité en lien avec la Conférence générale dont la structure s'est avérée positive par tous les témoins de l'histoire du mouvement adventiste auquel nous sommes attachés ;
- **d'inviter l'UFB** et ses trois fédérations d'églises :



- *à nommer des responsables* à tous les niveaux de l'Église sans distinction de genre en raison de leurs dons spirituels et de leurs compétences ;
- *à continuer d'encourager* les églises à faciliter la consécration des femmes pasteurs à l'anciennat au sein de la communauté locale ;
- *à travailler dans le cadre* administratif actuel pour trouver des moyens permettant à une femme exerçant le ministère pastoral de progresser et de s'épanouir dans l'exercice de sa vocation dans des conditions identiques à celles de ses homologues masculins ;
- *à créer* les conditions nécessaires pour permettre aux femmes pasteurs d'obtenir le même taux de salaire qu'un pasteur consacré selon les procédures d'évaluation administrative en vigueur ;
- *à éviter l'incompréhension* au sujet du vote de San Antonio, en témoignant de l'appréciation de l'Union et de ses Fédérations à toutes les femmes impliquées dans les activités de l'Église tant au niveau des membres que des femmes engagées dans le ministère (pastoral) de l'Évangile.

Comité de l'Union franco-belge du mercredi 11 novembre 2015
Secrétariat de l'UFB, Jean-Paul Barquon

Notes

1. Les sessions de la Conférence générale de 1950 à San Francisco, de 1975 à Vienne (Autriche), de 1990 à Indianapolis, de 1995 à Utrecht (Pays-Bas).
2. Vote du mercredi 8 juillet 2015, à 18h15 : nombre de délégués votants : 2363 (dont 17% de femmes), Résultat : 977 OUI, 1381 NON, 5 abstentions.