

Statement Members Manifesto NUC Session, June 5, 2016

Delivered by Benito Wijngaarde

On October 16, 2012 a statement was voted in the Annual Council of the General Conference, that makes an urgent appeal to all world fields; all conferences, all unions and divisions, not to take unilateral actions on ordaining women to the gospel ministry. This statement was accepted by more than 91% of the delegated executives in the meeting. Our president was one of those executives.

On November 11, 2012 The Netherlands Union's delegates voted on a motion, I quote *"For this reason, also considering the context of Dutch society, they charge the Executive Board to vigorously promote this perspective in the worldwide church. As quickly as possible, and no later than six months after the next session of the General Conference (2015), equality between men and women will be implemented at all organizational levels of the church in the Netherlands. The equal ordination of female pastors also falls into this category."* End quote.

The president of the EC promised to wait until after the GC Sessions of 2015. The chair of the Plan's Committee said, I quote, *"The aim is to wait until after the GC Sessions."* End quote
All promised in vain. In 2013 the EC took action to implement the motion.

Dear Chair, the distress of more than 800 baptized members that visit the congregations, is not about the role and the position of women in the Church. You may well understand that approximately 40% of the on average 2,400 church visitors, including non-members and children, have signed the Manifesto.

The Members' Manifesto is not a protest against ordination of women as Deaconess and Elder, and not against Commissioning of women ministers.

It is not a motion of no confidence in the EC.

The signers are not enemies of the church.

The decision and the implementation of the motion of 2012 is in violation of the Netherlands SDA Constitution and Bylaws (also called, Statutes) and the GC Working Policy.

In a democracy, even the highest authority is subject to agreed laws and regulations. Even so the delegates in session. Statutes and Working Policy are an agreement, a surety even to the individual in the Church, that his rights will not be violated.

By allowing this motion and the implementation thereof, the EC has elevated itself above law and regulation.

I quote the EC from the brochure Leadership M/F: *"The manner in which currently a power struggle arises within the Church, by which the possibility to find solutions in good understanding has gone, is against the principles of the Working policy."* End quote.

Must it be concluded that authority has given way to power and that the EC has become a power on its own?

- A power, that simply ignores the Annual Council action of October 16, 2012 not to take unilateral decisions on women ordination.
- A power, that simply ignores the San Antonio-action of the World Church.
- That ignores the GC Secretariat document, send to all Division and union presidents on August 18, 2015.
- Ignores the Annual Council statement of October 11, 2015. And that sees no path of good understanding anymore? How then, can we go forward?

Today, today, dear chair, the voice of more than 800 signers of the Members' Manifesto resounds through this room. And their voices call for the reestablishment of their Church rights; call for the reestablishment of the authority of the Netherlands Statutes and the Working Policy.

What has the EC de facto accomplished by its decision of 2013?

On the page of the TED in the SDA Yearbook, it is stated that Bert Nab is the secretary of the Netherlands Union.

Dear Chair, a good decision.

Nowhere the SDA Yearbook makes mention of the women that are ordained by the EC, to have the status of ordained minister. They are recorded as Commissioned.

The EC has actually given the women a status that is not recognized. It is not the EC, but the GC defines the status of ordination and what the criteria for ordination are. Have these women become the emblem of the power struggle?

General Law on Equal Treatment (Awgb)

I quote, "As We have considered, that it is advisable to, in accordance of article 1 of the Constitution, To provide protection against discrimination ..., subject to lawful exceptions." End quote.

In other words, our Constitution allows for deviations from article 1, because of the right of freedom of religion, subject to lawful exceptions. For religious organizations this exception is mentioned in article 3 of the Awgb. A Church organization does not have to appoint women in the pastoral position if the Church Constitution does not sustain such action. But if a Church does appoint women, they must be treated equal to their male colleagues.

This is exactly what the WP indicates also. Just because in our Church women cannot be president, cannot establish a congregation, etc, the Church has chosen not to ordain them to the position of ordained minister. But a commissioned female pastor has the same status and the same rights as a male commissioned pastor.

What is the role of women in the context of the Dutch society?

Example: The Netherlands Marine, <http://marineschepen.nl/vrouwenmarnsozd.html>

I quote, "*There are no women working in the Marine Corps. There are no existing female marines and women are not allowed to apply for a job as a marine... There are women working in the Marine, but not as mariner. Often people think that everyone who works in the Marine, is a mariner. This is not so. Mariners work in the Marine Corps, and the men and women working on Marine Ships, are not mariners. ... The Committee Equal Treatment has ruled on this in June 2000 (no. 2000-38) and has come to the conclusion that the standpoints of the Marine on this issue are valid.*" End quote.

The Committee Equal Treatment has spoken and that ended the debate then and until now.

The application form on werkenbijdefensie.nl/Marinier-83.html states: I quote, "*Who do we seek?*"

First bullet: "*You are male and in good physical health.*" End quote

On Friday May 26 it was made known that possibly next year women will be allowed in the Marine Corps. The announcement stated that if they do, they should meet the same criteria of acceptance as men. The authority for this decision is at the State Secretary of Defense.

Dear Chair, No one, no one in this country will think about appointing a woman as a mariner!

Dear Chair, The EC action of 2013 is devoid of every connection to the Dutch society, which was one of the main arguments of the 2012-motion. The action is so un-Dutch!

This country does not want people placing themselves above the law!

- It brings bewilderment,
- Creates anarchy,
- Disunity,
- Splintering and
- Separation.

This very moment we see this happening in our world church. This is not what we want, is it?

The GC has spoken in San Antonio.

Why is it that the EC cannot subject itself to the highest authority in our Church?

Isn't it that the majorities decisions are binding even to the EC?

Dear Chair, The respect and dignity of the women in question must be reestablished!

We don't want them to be used as sign posts to make a statement to the GC.

We want our women to be placed in respected and dignified leadership positions where they can shine forth their God given talents.

Appoint them as Vice Presidents; that is fully allowed.

Appoint them as Secretary; appoint them as Treasurer.

EC, make full use of the possibilities of the current Working Policy to appoint women in leadership positions, while cavaliering for more.

Dear Chair, I want to close with these words:

Everyone has the right to be in favor or against regulations of the Church, but nobody, nobody, chairman, has the right to place himself above the agreed regulations of the Church.