

WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY CHURCH OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS
CHURCH BOARD

ACTION: Letter to Upper Columbia Conference Executive Committee and Upper
Columbia Conference Administration

August 22, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Upper Columbia Conference Executive Committee
and Upper Columbia Conference Administration,

We, the Church Board of the Walla Walla University Church of Seventh-day
Adventists, respectfully request that the Upper Columbia Conference Executive
Committee reinstate a March 29, 2016 decision, which offered technically minor, yet
symbolically significant provisions in an attempt to greater equalize the status of
commissioned (female) ministers with their ordained (male) colleagues. These
provisions, which were supported by the North Pacific Union Conference and
followed the precedent of the Washington and Oregon conferences, brought joy and
hope to our local church congregation, which employs three female ministers.

The Executive Committee's July 19, 2016, reversal, in stark contrast, has brought
much sorrow.

Furthermore, we wish to express our concern with regard to the circumstances
prompting the Executive Committee's sudden reversal. It seems to us that a small
number of sister congregations, through ways and means discordant with the
Christian values of careful, hopeful, face-to-face conversation, were enabled in their
desire to hinder the will of the larger body and, we believe, the clear movements of
the Holy Spirit.

We contend the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only reactively permits but also
proactively invites all human beings, regardless of gender, to serve God's Church
(Acts 2:17-21; Galatians 3:26-29). Indeed, we acknowledge and celebrate the
theological, pastoral, and administrative leadership of Ellen G. White, the visionary
founder of Adventism, a woman. We also wish to, once again, affirm the high quality
ministry we have enjoyed from female pastors over the years, and also the current
ministry of Alareece Collie, Jenniffer Ogden, and Lois Blackwelder.

The WWUC Board requests:

- a discussion of our letter (and this subject more broadly) at the September
27, 2016 Executive Committee meeting
- a meeting with conference leadership as soon as can be arranged

Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Walla Walla University Church Board

Upper Columbia Conference Commissioned Minister Policy
(Voted 3/29/2016)

“God has a church, and she has a divinely appointed ministry. ‘And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’ Eph. 4:11-13”—Testimony to Ministers p. 52-53.

Ellen White emphasizes that, “it is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God” Testimonies to the Church, vol. 6, p. 322. It is God who calls and the Holy Spirit who commissions persons for ministry. The time and need for gospel workers is urgent. Ellen White exhorted, “signs which show that Christ’s coming is near are fast fulfilling..... young men and young women ... should be engaged in the ministry...” Testimonies to the Church, vol. 8, p. 229. The church acknowledges and affirms the fruits of God’s call in the life and ministry of a vocational gospel minister through the public rites of ordination and commissioning.

The Upper Columbia Conference respectfully abides in harmony with the world church policy of ordination and commissioning while exercising faithfulness to the principles of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. We acknowledge and affirm the gifts of the Spirit in all persons called to vocational ministry by God and officially commissioned to gospel ministry. It is the conviction of the Upper Columbia Conference that all such persons shall be afforded the full authority and privileges of Seventh-day Adventist gospel ministry within the Upper Columbia Conference territory, as elaborated below.

- That the procedures for ordaining and commissioning shall be identical processes.
- That the Upper Columbia Conference Executive Committee shall approve recommendation of ordination and commissioned minister candidates to the North Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee (NPUC-EC) for their approval.
- That Upper Columbia Conference shall grant to those holding Commissioned Ministerial Credentials to perform weddings and baptisms within the territory of our conference. And that those coming from outside of the Upper Columbia Conference with the same credential shall be granted the same privilege.
- That Upper Columbia Conference approval shall be granted to those holding Commissioned Ministerial Credentials for participation in organizing a church or uniting churches, in consultation with conference administration, as is practiced by those holding a Ministerial Credential.
- That those holding a Commissioned Ministerial Credential and who have been ordained as a church elder be permitted to conduct the ordination of elders, deacons, and deaconesses in their appointed church district.

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
Statement on the Unity in Mission Document
October 31, 2016

The Seventh-day Adventist Church exists to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Three Angels’ Messages. Nothing should impede this prophetic mission.

It is thus with grave concern that the members of the North American Division (NAD) Executive Committee witnessed the passing of the Unity in Mission document at the recent Annual Council. The implementation of this document will create—indeed, is *already* creating—a profoundly divisive and demoralizing reality in many parts of the NAD.

While we wish to register our vigorous disagreement with the intent of the document, we do not wish to respond impulsively. Therefore, in light of this document, we move to authorize NADCOM to appoint a subcommittee to craft a thoughtful path forward.

Furthermore, recognizing that the underlying focus and context of the Unity in Mission document was the ordination of women to ministry in two unions in our Division, we wish to once again publicly affirm our unwavering support and steadfast intent to realize the full equality of women in ministry, in fulfillment of biblical principles, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In light of these realities, we do not want the Unity in Mission document to be a deterrent to the ongoing, proactive progress toward the full equality of women in ministry in our Division.

We invite earnest prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit as we engage in this process.