

It's Time to Change the Rules: Averting a Fall
Council Disaster Over Women's
Ordination

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During the years that I've been a pastor in the Adventist Church, I cannot recall a time when there was sharper, more enduring, and more pervasive division over a single issue than what currently exists over women's ordination (WO). In fact, it seems that we have discussed, argued about, exchanged insults over, and generally mucked about in WO so long now that the last thing we need is another article on the topic. A vow of silence seems more fitting.

But I nonetheless am writing about WO in an attempt to bolster a simple, if incredible, claim: There are some potentially game-changing facets of the current WO debate that, to my knowledge, have not yet gained wide exposure. It's furthermore my belief that if these facets can be brought to light, disaster may yet be averted at the 2017 Fall Council. And with some humility and the smile of God, we may even be able to use the WO debate as a springboard to good things—perhaps even great things—happening in the wider church.

Imminent Disaster?

Currently, the possible outcomes of the pending Fall Council seem limited and uniformly grim. If the General Conference, for instance, succeeds in obtaining license to discipline those unions which have ordained women as local pastors, then the forms that discipline will take will almost certainly be formidable and potentially fatal to the good will of immense swaths of Adventism. Mass alienation is thus a distinct possibility and may lead to the defection of generations of heretofore faithful members. (Add to this the possibility of post-Council legal

action—action which rarely concludes quickly—and long-term WO-supporter angst seems virtually guaranteed.)

On the other hand, a “win” by those in favor of WO seems not only unlikely (given the number of votes apparently held by anti-WO delegates from non-Western portions of the world), but would be very difficult to sustain even if achieved. Suppose that somehow, Fall Council chooses to not vote for disciplinary action against WO-supporting unions. Does anyone at this point believe such a stay of execution would last? It seems instead that it would only be a matter of time before the General Conference would approach the subject again, from another angle, at another meeting, thus prolonging the WO war still further. Add to this the uncomfortable fact that our anti-WO brothers (and some sisters) at the GC are, in my opinion, genuinely committed to the Lord and His work. This means they understandably believe that they have a duty to defend the honor not only of God, but also of the GC as the leading institution of the global church. In other words, regardless of other reasons to oppose WO, it is likely that GC administration knows that too much leadership horsepower has been publicly pumped into their anti-WO efforts to turn back now, even if they wished to. They would be perceived by untold numbers of anti-WO Adventists as pious but pathetic paper tigers if they did—a perception that would not soon go away.

So regardless of who “wins” in October, Adventism as a whole stands to lose a great deal. What’s a thoughtful church to do?

I suggest we do what our mothers and teachers told us we shouldn’t: change the rules of the game.

New Rules for a Win-Win Game

The premise of my suggestion is simple: If two opposing sides are playing a game by the rules, and after playing by the rules, neither side can truly win the game, it is time to change the rules. In the Adventist Church today, it seems abundantly clear that because of the extensive and inevitable collateral damage, neither the pro-WO nor anti-WO factions can truly win come October. Therefore, it's time to change the rules—adopting the rules that God may have intended for us to have in the first place—and see if the resulting new game can indeed result in a win for both sides this Fall and beyond.

The new rules should be at least two in number. ***First, both sides must agree what the argument is actually about.*** In my opinion, one of the great ironies of the WO debate is that those of us in the West—both liberal and conservative—have generally misunderstood what our brothers and sisters in the rest of the world are actually arguing over. If you ask a church administrator from, say, Central Africa, “Should a woman be ordained as a pastor?”, the picture formed in his mind of just what a “pastor” is will almost certainly be starkly different from that of an administrator from North America. In Central Africa (as in much of the rest of the Adventist world), the term “pastor” describes what is essentially, biblically speaking, an apostle. In more modern terms, we would call him a “church planter.” A pastor of this type is someone who may have 20, 30, 40 or more churches under his care, and who also has the duty to start (plant) even more churches. It is a calling that requires deep devotion to Christ, much travel, a thoroughly entrepreneurial worldview and skillset, and the ability to effectively train new church members to take over all discipleship functions of the church (evangelism, retention, administration, etc.) since he (the pastor/planter) will likely not be staying on-site for more than 6-12 months.

Contrast this with what average North American administrators likely think about when they hear the word “pastor.” They probably think of someone who has at most three or four churches—and in fact, if a pastor is really “doing well,” he or she will have only one church (possibly with other pastors on the staff, as well) to work with year-round. A pastor in such an environment is not an apostle, but rather (again, biblically speaking) more of a local elder that also receives a salary from the local conference. This type of pastor is paid to perform basic Christian duties such as visiting the sick, attending to the needs of shut-ins, counseling the wayward, etc. He or she also performs many duties on Sabbath mornings, such as teaching a Sabbath School class, doing baby dedications, and of course preaching—again, to the same congregation or small group of congregations each Sabbath. Other duties include chairing the church board and other committees the church deems important. It is a job description that calls for effective communication skills (particularly with regard to teaching), strong caretaking abilities, and a mastery of administrative methods.

Interestingly, as a general rule, such a pastor does no church planting, as his or her time spent with existing church members provides nowhere near the time needed to reach out for new ones via this time-intensive (yet historically quite effective¹) method.

Consequently, those in the West have generally been talking right past their 2nd- and 3rd-world counterparts—a majority of which appear to be opposed to WO—when discussing WO, and vice versa. We have all assumed we were speaking of the same thing when we asked, “Should women be ordained as pastors?”, yet this is emphatically not the case.

This has immense implications for our ability to resolve our differences. The Women’s Ordination debate has often orbited around the question of whether or not women meet the qualifications to be ordained as pastors. But inevitably, much of the answer to that question

depends on one's definition of just what it is that a "pastor" does! Different job descriptions call for different skill sets and qualifications, and the more different the job descriptions, the more different the skill sets and qualifications of necessity must be....

...And it is right here that we must deal with a rather awkward fact: *The typical Western understanding of what a "pastor" does is almost completely—from a biblical and Spirit of Prophecy perspective—illegitimate.* Such a role is implicitly dismissed in the New Testament; it is explicitly condemned by the Spirit of Prophecy; and according to Ellen White and other early Adventist pioneers, it should not be utilized by the Adventist Church except in highly specific and very limited circumstances.

Why It Matters

This is not an arcane point over culturally-conditioned and therefore-now-outmoded methods of pastoring. It is instead a powerfully influential (if heretofore largely ignored) facet of the WO debate, and if taken seriously, could positively shift the tenor of discussions over WO significantly.

One example of this potential shift is that in determining what we mean when we question whether or not women should be ordained as "pastors," it will help restore a much-needed measure of integrity to the debate. For instance, those that are opposed to WO often see themselves as the side that is faithful to scripture, to the spirit of the early Adventist Church, and to the writings of Ellen White. At the same time, they often commensurately see those in favor of WO as denying the authority of scripture, the roots of our faith, and the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy.

But there are profound problems with such a viewpoint. For one thing, the role of the "settled" pastor—that is, the kind of pastor usually employed in Western Adventism as described

earlier—is not found in the New Testament. I repeat: *the role of the settled pastor, as generally practiced in the Western world, is not to be found anywhere in use in the 1st-century Christian church, much less as the prime leadership role at the local level.* (Interestingly, this may be why TOSC and other committees studying the question of “Should women be ordained as local pastors?” have been chronologically interminable and ideologically inconclusive: *One cannot form a biblical argument for or against a role which the Bible does not address.*) What we find instead are local elders leading the local church,² with the only people regularly paid for their ministry being apostles.³

However, there is a biblical role that somewhat mirrors the Western version of “pastor” that is so pervasive in the West today: the Old Testament priest. In other words, the settled pastor role—complete with the sacerdotal, hierarchical, and elitist overtones that in my opinion⁴ and that of others⁵ inevitably accompany that role—is a genuinely pre-Christian and therefore even non-Christian office that was implicitly abolished at the cross.⁶

And what a difference the abolishment made! As the Old Testament priesthood was relegated to history, the priesthood of all (rather than some) believers rushed in, bring with it the revolutionary advantages of a far larger workforce,⁷ profoundly lower costs,⁸ and greatly enhanced geographic agility.⁹ This arrangement enabled the Gospel to cross national and even international boundaries (since these new “priests” were no longer tied to a specific temple or area), as well as provided a built-in method for maturing new believers (by witnessing as “priests” for Christ, they became like Christ¹⁰).

From the Early Church to Early Adventism

For these reasons and more, it’s no wonder that Ellen White was far more clear and abundant in her condemnation of settled pastors than she was in any condemnation of women

serving in church leadership roles. For instance, in a January 27, 1890, article in *Signs of the Times*, she stated that

The success of a church does not depend on the efforts and labor of the living preacher, but it depends upon the piety of the individual members. When the members depend upon the minister as their source of power and efficiency, they will be utterly powerless. They will imbibe his impulses, and be stimulated by his ideas, but when he leaves them, they will find themselves in a more hopeless condition than before they had his labors. *I hope that none of the churches in our land will depend upon a minister for support in spiritual things; for this is dangerous.... Just as soon as the members of a church call for the labors of a certain minister, and feel that he must remain with them, it is time that he was removed to another field, that they may learn to exercise the ability which God has given them.* (para. 9, emphasis supplied)

Mrs. White's aversion to settled pastors held firm even when a local church was facing difficult circumstances. For instance, as the Adventist work grew in the 19th century, not all churches that were planted thrived. Some had substantial internal disagreements and consequently asked for a settled pastor to come and attempt to rectify their situation—a line of reasoning heard frequently even today as a supposedly compelling reason for retaining settled pastors. Mrs. White's reply to this (in 1902) was firm:

God has not given His ministers the work of setting the churches right. No sooner is this work done, apparently, than it has to be done over again. *Church members that are thus looked after and labored for become religious weaklings.* If nine tenths of the effort that has been put forth for those who know the truth had been put forth for those who have never heard the truth, how much greater would have been the advancement made! (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 18, emphasis supplied)

Here, Ellen White shows clearly again why having a settled pastor over a church is patently detrimental: It makes church members depend on the pastor rather than on Christ, leading to a spectator mentality that is inimical to both personal spiritual growth and corporate numerical growth.

But the strongest statements from Ellen White about the negative impact of depending on settled pastors came in response to local churches whose condition was nearly fatal. To them, she noted flatly (in 1901) that indeed,

the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught [instead] to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that *unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.* (*Evangelism*, p. 381, emphasis supplied)

The force of this statement should not be underestimated. *Ellen White clearly posits that the need for a minister—a located, supposedly spiritually superior pastor who intercedes over time in significant ways for his or her members—is a sign, not of good health, but of apostasy, the only cure for which is a rebirth experience in Christ.*

Incidentally, this is why it is profoundly ironic that so many conservatives in North America, for instance, who claim fealty to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as the basis for their opposition to WO, are actually at the same time affirming men in the role of settled pastor—a role the Bible implicitly and the Spirit of Prophecy explicitly condemns!

Irony on the Left

Lest more liberal-leaning Adventists rejoice in the duplicity of their conservative counterparts, I should also point out that the Adventist left, in its at-times voracious support of WO, is not free from similar charges of hypocrisy. A prime example of this is the pro-WO faction's regular charge that the General Conference is wielding "kingly power" in its fight against women being ordained. Specifically, GC president Ted Wilson, it is claimed, is using near-royal authority to advance his personal agenda, using political force rather than biblical persuasion to attain his personal goals.

Whatever the truth of these claims may be, it ought to be deeply troubling that in condemning the use of “kingly” power by the General Conference, advocates of WO are often at the very same time affirming what is one of the most kingly roles to be found outside of an actual monarchy: the settled pastor.

To those who object to this characterization of the settled pastor, I would point out that in my experience, most settled pastors wield immense authority in the local church. In fact, far too many Adventists feel they haven’t been prayed for till the pastor prays for them. They haven’t been visited till the pastor visits them—regardless of how many other members may have visited them previously. It wasn’t a real sermon they heard last Sabbath unless the pastor preached it (I’ve heard many a lay person’s sermon described by other members as merely a “testimony” rather than a bona fide sermon). And generally speaking, the larger the church and the longer the tenure of the pastor, the greater the level of kingly authority and influence available to that pastor. In short, *by insisting that women be ordained as local pastors, WO advocates may ironically be voting in favor of the single largest expansion of kingly authority in the history of the Adventist Church.*

Rule Change #2: A New Goal

I would consequently suggest that if we are going to be faithful to God and His will as revealed in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, we must cease to argue about whether or not women should be ordained as local, settled pastors. Based on the evidence given above, the answer to that question is clearly “No—and neither should men!”

Instead, we ought to make a second change to the rules of the current WO debate: ***The goal of the debate will no longer be deciding if women ought to be ordained as settled pastors. It will instead be deciding if they should be ordained as apostles.***

Unlike the settled pastor role, the apostolic role has a genuine basis in scripture. It was the role that early Adventism employed to spread its message so effectively to the United States and beyond. They called these apostles “ministers,” but they were indeed fulfilling an apostolic role. I am strongly convinced that a return to an apostle-based paid ministry—rightly executed—would have positive, perhaps overwhelmingly positive, results in the long run for Western Adventism.

I would also suggest that such a return may also be the key to creating a win-win situation come Fall Council in October.

An Imaginary Fall Council

Let’s imagine that we as a church did decide to make the above two rule changes in the debate over WO. And for the sake of discussion, let’s further imagine that the General Conference took the following steps as a result:

1. General Conference delegates decide at Fall Council that yes, the Adventist Church ought to return to a biblical and Spirit of Prophecy-based clergy class. They further decide that they will consequently begin to move the church in strategic, gradual fashion back to the New Testament plan of paying salaries for apostles rather than for settled pastors, with the aim to eventually and finally implement the priesthood of all believers.
2. GC officials would then meet with the leadership of those unions which have ordained women as pastors and say in essence, “Our apologies, but we’ve been arguing over the wrong thing.” They would then offer the Unions the following:
 - a. Go ahead and ordain whomever you wish—male or female—as settled pastors.
Because the world church has already said that women can serve as local elders, and because settled pastors are essentially local elders that also happen to get

paid by the local conference, you can continue to subsidize the local church as you wish.

b. However, from this point forward, within our policy-dictated purview, we are going to gradually restructure the wider church to support an apostolic clergy more than settled pastors.

3. The GC, in consultation with union and division leaders, would then map out, say, a 7-year plan to transition the wider church from supporting settled pastors to favoring the support of apostles, perhaps in the following way:

a. All current settled pastors' jobs would be secure.¹¹ The GC would not use whatever legitimate leverage is at its disposal to attempt to terminate settled pastors.

b. The world church would gradually reallocate its financial resources to give priority to apostolic ministry rather than to settled pastor ministry. This would include strategic adjustments in tithe allocations at all levels of the church (to fund the launching of new church plants in metro areas, for instance), as well as changes in the subsidizing of Adventist seminaries, i.e., less money given for the training of settled pastors and more given for the training of apostles. (Again, these changes would need to be calculated and gradual, since existing settled pastors are staying on and still need salaries, benefits, etc.)

c. Because the settled pastor paradigm is plagued with the weaknesses discussed earlier, yet settled pastors are being left in place in this proposal, the GC could also implement a robust training regimen for both settled pastors and the lay members in their churches. Settled pastors could be taught how to best mitigate

the risks inherent in their position, including how to alter the nominating committee process and board structure to best facilitate lay ministry. Lay members could be taught such things as: what the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy say about their role as priests of God; best practices for lay ministry in the confines of a settled pastorate; how to start new ministries without a pastor spearheading the effort¹²; and more. Such training would not only help grow support for the transition to an apostle-based ministry happening elsewhere, but may also yield spiritual and numerical growth in existing churches.

The Payoff

This proposal is certainly not the only way to move forward. There are undoubtedly multiple ways to skin the settled pastor cat. But if implemented, even this simple plan could bring some sizable benefits. For one, WO supporters would have the satisfaction of advancing the cause of women, as women could now be ordained as local pastors. On the other hand, those opposed to WO would have the satisfaction of claiming a higher biblical ground. (If either of these sources of satisfaction sound shallow or immature to you, I would suggest that, given the exceedingly high probability of disaster occurring at Fall Council if the current status quo holds, we ought to take what we can get.)

Additionally, both sides would genuinely benefit in the long run. For instance, an apostolic ministry is less expensive than a settled pastor ministry, for the simple fact that there are less apostles required for healthy Gospel advancement.¹³ Additionally, church members would learn far more of Christ and His ministry, as they would be personally carrying forward the work of their local churches rather than watching a paid clergyman or woman do their work for them. Also, the church in the West would most likely begin to grow markedly, as church

planting would be able to take place in such areas on a much more frequent basis. The unreached millions that live in the United States' metro areas, for instance, would become areas of growth as apostles started new churches in them. These new churches could in turn generate more tithes, which could lead to more church planting ministry—a cycle which served the New Testament church so well that the apostle Paul could make that astonishing, extravagant claim: “The gospel has been preached to every creature under heaven.”¹⁴

But What About THE QUESTION?

In light of the tremendous benefits that a return to apostolic ministry might yield, we now need to answer that stubborn question: Should women be ordained—in this case, as apostles?

The answer is rather provocative: Of course women can be ordained as apostles—though it is an open question as to whether God will call many women to be so ordained.

Women can be ordained as apostles for the simple reason that, as alluded to above, the New Testament ushered in a *gift*-based¹⁵ priesthood and dispensed with the genetics/gender-based priesthood. This logically means that if someone has been given the spiritual gift of being an apostle, and they meet the other requirements of ministry (character qualifications, for instance), we ought to ordain them—be they male, Martian, or female! God gives the gifts to the body as He sees fit (I Corinthians 12:11). And to say the least, it is unbecoming of any church to deny what God has already permitted.

In contrast to this, “*settled pastor,*” *in name and in concept, is neither a spiritual gift nor a biblically legitimate office. Thus, no one is eligible for it* (including the aforementioned Martian). True, someone *can* be given the spiritual gift of being a “pastor/teacher” such as in Ephesians 4:11. But this compound word in context points to a job description that is closely

tied to the office of elder and not that of a paid, settled, clergyman or clergy woman who stays over a church for years at a time.

This is why there is a profound difference between arguing over women being settled pastors and arguing over women being apostles. The office of settled pastor is not biblical; the Bible does not create and does not sanction such an office. Therefore, no one, including women, can be eligible for it. But the office of apostle *is* biblically legitimate; it is a bona fide spiritual gift. Furthermore, all three major listings of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-8, I Corinthians 12:1-11, and Ephesians 4:11 & 12) are found in books that are clearly addressed to believers in general—men, women, all who believe in Christ. Since “apostle” is one of the gifts given to such believers, it is undeniable that women can be apostles.

A Flood or a Trickle?

But that said, how many women will God call to apostolic ministry? Is it possible that God is calling relatively few women to fill this role? There are several reasons for believing this to be a possibility.

First, there is an element of physical danger in church planting, particularly in parts of the world (inner cities in the U.S. and abroad, etc.) where crime is a constant factor. A case could be made that God has historically called fewer women into physical danger zones than men.

Second, the role of an apostle can be a formidable impediment to raising a family. True, many women are not called to raise a family, nor wish to. There are also a handful of women that God has indeed called to ministry, but then specifically separated them from their children (as was the case with Ellen White). But for those who are called to be mothers, the demands of apostolic ministry would be a severe challenge during child-rearing years, making a call from God to do both at the same time seem unlikely.

Third, in many cultures in the world today, women are seen as inferior to men. I'm certainly not defending this! But a case can be made that God has more often chosen initial conformity to certain errors of a given culture rather than an immediate overthrowing of those errors. In other words, God often opts for cultural sensitivity at first in order to inject the Gospel into that culture in as unimpeded a way as possible, leading to great changes (including gender equality) later on. Might God call a woman to be an apostle in such cultures to thrash the status quo and bring in reform at multiple levels from the get-go? Of course! But history seems to indicate that this is not the norm. (This may be why Junias is cited in the New Testament¹⁶ as an apostle—and as far as we explicitly know, she was the sole female so called at that time.)

I point these things out because on the one hand, many pro-WO Adventists seem to believe that an agreement to ordain women would almost immediately usher in a new day where men and women are represented 50/50 in ordained ministry. On the other hand, many of those opposed to WO seem to believe that if they budge in their own views on WO even moderately, men in ministry will soon be edged out in favor of women. Both sides might do well to reconsider their thoughts in light of the reasoning given above.

That said, regardless of the number of women God calls into apostolic ministry in the future, *every last one of them ought to be welcomed, fully resourced, and yes, ordained by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that they may accomplish all that God wishes for His kingdom.*

Will We Play by the (New) Rules?

Fall Council is coming soon, and with it the possibility for both great good and great damage. Which fate we experience depends greatly on what we do with God's will as revealed in His Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. If we continue to debate whether or not women should

be ordained as settled pastors, I do not see any genuine “winners” coming out of the October’s meeting. But if we are willing to change the rules of the game and move the debate upstream to the question of apostolic ministry rather than the unbiblical role of the settled pastor, both sides of the current WO debate may find sufficient reasons to celebrate and move forward together. And who knows? Perhaps the entire church might benefit from a resurgence of lay ministry the likes of which has been foreign to us for generations.

It’s time to change the rules. Will our leaders—and we ourselves—have the courage to do so?

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¹ The New Testament sets the precedent for church planting as a normative mode of kingdom expansion. For instance, every epistle in the New Testament is either written to Christians in a church plant or to those engaged in church planting themselves. Furthermore, for the first 60-70 years of its existence, the Adventist Church was almost exclusively a church planting organization, helping to make it the fastest growing Protestant denomination the world had ever seen (see Russell Burrill’s 1998 book “Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church” {Hart Research Center, Fallbrook, CA} for a thorough treatment of this topic). Other churches (Baptists stand out—see <http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2003/06/sla14>, for instance) have also seen excellent results when church planting has been a priority.

² See Philippians 1:1 (note that “overseers” and “elders” can be considered comparable terms); I Timothy 3:1-7 (particularly verse 5); I Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:7, etc.

³ See I Corinthians 9:1-14, particularly verse 14. Compare with II Corinthians 8 & 9. Note that some, based on their interpretation of I Timothy 5:17 & 18, have said that local church elders also received salaries in the New Testament. Space constraints prohibit a full response to this. But I would point out that the specific context of I Timothy 5 and the wider context of the New Testament counsel on remuneration for those engaged in Gospel ministry militate against such a conclusion.

⁴ For an extended treatment of this topic, see Chapter Two of my doctoral dissertation at <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1319&context=dmin>.

⁵ Ellen White wrote extensively about the dangers of settled pastorates. For an extensive listing of some of her comments, as well as those of other Adventist pioneers, see Appendix B (pages 130-140) of my doctoral dissertation at <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1319&context=dmin>. See also

Russell Burrill’s “Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church” (Hart Research Center, Fallbrook, CA, 1998).

⁶ While the argument runs considerably deeper than a single text, Matthew 27:51’s recounting of the curtain in the Jerusalem temple being torn in two is sufficient to show a radical abrogation of the Old Testament priesthood, and implicitly announces the implementation of a different “priesthood”, the priesthood of all believers.

⁷ Texts like I Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 1:6 address all who believe in Christ as now being priests of God—a vast numerical expansion over the Old Testament priesthood.

⁸ According to some estimates, in the first century A.D., there were more than 16,000 priests and Levites employed in the Jewish sacrificial/sanctuary system. All of them were to be supported by the tithe coming from the people, making them (to say nothing of the Jerusalem temple) decidedly expensive to maintain. This changed radically in the New Testament. “Priests” were no longer on the church payroll, but rather were simply church members sharing the Gospel with others—at little or no cost to the wider church. This made the New Testament church far more financially viable than was the spiritual economy of the Old Testament.

⁹ Old Testament priests after the time of Solomon’s temple were by definition geographically tied to a specific site of worship. International missionary efforts by priests were thus exceedingly rare. In the New Testament, however, the “priests” were simply believers in Christ—believers that were not tied to a physical temple, but who could freely travel as much as their time, health, and personal resources would allow. This gave the New Testament church a geographic agility unknown to the Old Testament.

¹⁰ Revelation 12:11 is but one example of how sharing one’s faith leads to spiritual health.

¹¹ Some purists may object to this, reasoning that if having settled pastors is wrong, we should terminate all of them as soon as possible and hire apostles in their stead. But this is short-sighted. The removal of settled pastors by itself would achieve little more than mass chaos, as we would be left with pastor-dependent churches with no settled pastors to direct them (examples of this happening have occurred in recent memory!). True, a handful of churches might thrive immediately if their pastor left. But most would struggle mightily unless they were first trained and then carefully transitioned—and even then, such a transition would need to be voluntary rather than mandated by a GC vote. I thus find it more appealing to start fresh with new apostles in new places than to try and force mass conformity to the ideal.

¹² For a detailed example of a proven way to achieve this, see “Reducing Pastor-Dependency in the New Market Seventh-day Adventist Church Through Self-Managed Ministry Teams,” by Shane Anderson. Access at:
<http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1319&context=dmin>

¹³ One example of the high cost of settled pastors is that in 2000, the Adventist Church moved from the defined benefit retirement program for its employees to the defined contribution retirement program. This meant employee retirement funds would now be invested in the stock market. One of the usually unspoken reasons for this shift in policy was that the tithe system was never designed to support a settled-pastor-over-every-church economy. There were simply too many pastors in such a system for all their salary and benefit needs to be met.

¹⁴ Colossians 1:23

¹⁵ Romans 12:4-8, I Corinthians 12:1-11, and Ephesians 4:11 & 12 are the primary New Testament listings of spiritual gifts.

¹⁶ Romans 16:7