



Response of the Executive Committee of the North German Union Conference to the Warning Issued by the Executive Committee of the General Conference

The North German Union Conference gladly belongs to the worldwide Adventist family appearing in cultural and theological richness. We are aware that this causes tensions and, at times, pain. This experience will always be part of a worldwide family of faith. We see ourselves as people redeemed by Jesus Christ, commissioned and enabled by him to bear witness to our faith, living it in our time and place. In this, we are united with many women and men worldwide – brothers and sisters in faith.

In this awareness of solidarity, the North German Union Conference (NGU) lodges an appeal against the warning issued by the Executive Committee of the General Conference (ExCom).

Appraisal of the Content of the Warning

- The practice of commissioning (*Segnung*) by the NGU moves within the limits of the Working Policy (WP). We perceive no obligation in the WP to issue pastors Ministerial Credentials, i.e., a commission to the worldwide pastoral ministry, referred to as “ordination” (WP E 05-10 [2b])
- The NGU has obtained no document from the General Conference establishing from the text of the WP a cogent and reasonable argumentation for the necessity of ordination (Ministerial Credentials). During the ExCom session on 10-15-2019, the chair merely stated orally that the WP must be understood as regarding ordination an obligation, not an option.
- The “Commissioned Minister Credential” (WP E-05-10 [2a]) issued by the NGU since 2016 authorizes female and male pastors to exercise all pastoral functions in Germany.¹ In order to distinguish it verbally from “ordination,” we refer to the Commissioned Minister Credential as “blessing” (*Segnung*).

Account and Appraisal of the Process Leading to the Warning of the NGU

In our view, the real difficulty here is the procedure and the leadership culture revealed by it, to be accounted for by the officers of the General Conference.

- Since 2012, the GC officers are acquainted with the position of the NGU regarding women’s ordination. In addition, the practice of blessing (Commissioned Minister Credential WP E-05-10 [2a]) applied by the NGU since 2016 has repeatedly been communicated through the EUD.
- The procedure voted by the GC ExCom in 2018 for settling cases of non-compliance has not been followed.²
- Neither the EUD nor the NGU have received minutes, meeting documents or other decisions of the GC Administrative Committee (AdCom) giving reasonable explanations of how and why the NGU has been put on the agenda of the ExCom.

¹ “Statement of the North German Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on the Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Ministry”

² “Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions”



- NGU President Johannes Naether was informed only at the beginning of the ExCom session on October 13, 2019, that a warning of the NGU was to be put on the agenda of the ExCom.
- During the ExCom session of October 15, 2019, the chair (Ted Wilson) repeatedly asserted that, in June 2019, the GC had indicated in a letter to the officers of the EUD a noncompliance of the NGU with regard to the WP. This is not in accordance with the facts, for the NGU is not mentioned in this letter.
- No information or documentation was submitted to the ExCom as basis of decision-making describing the conduct, the motives or the alleged irregularity of the NGU. The document distributed by the GC to the ExCom on October 14, 2019, merely contains one sentence: "The following entities have taken actions that are not in harmony with Working Policy and practices on credentials."³
- In order for a committee to resolve upon a disciplinary measure against an entity, the passing on of ample and well-founded information is an essential part of a fair process. At least, the NGU document of 2016⁴ could have been circulated at any time by the GC officers to the ExCom. Against this background, the ExCom was unable to reach a knowledgeable decision.
- The voting process also contradicted democratic and spiritual principles of a respectable procedure. There should have been no collective warning; rather, each Union should have been voted on separately.

Additional Perception

- It is our feeling that the GC officers exploited the ExCom for an unjust and unspiritual process in order to demonstrate might and power.
- For the NGU officers, the GC officers have become an unpredictable counterpart. Trust is deeply shaken. According to our perception, in recent years, a more and more rigid behavior of the GC officers in dealing with people and entities who are not conforming to the views of the GC officers has become apparent.
- According to our view, what is described here is alarming for the entire world church, causing great harm to it as a whole. The exemplary course of action against six unions begs the question of the culture of interaction and, beyond that, of the spiritual condition of our church. Both are significantly threatened, constituting a crucial test for the church.

For these reasons and observations, the NGU strongly objects to the warning and lodges an appeal against it at the GC.

We request the GC officers to provide insight to the NGU into the process against the NGU and to disclose all relevant documents.

We encourage our world church leadership to enter into an open dialogue with the Divisions and Unions about the understanding of leadership within our worldwide church.

For the time being, the NGU will not change its practice of blessing (*Segnung*) in accordance with the rules of the Working Policy.

NGU Executive Committee
Mühlenrahmede, 12-02-2019

³ "Recommendations Resulting from the 2018 Annual Council compliance Action"

⁴ "Statement of the North German Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on the Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Ministry"