

FIFTEENTH BUSINESS MEETING

Sixtieth General Conference session, July 10, 2015, 1:59 p.m.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Good afternoon, remnants. Apparently, you are the true remnants. Or maybe not; others are flowing in still. But it's time, and we would like to begin our afternoon session.

We are glad that you came back. We have two hours of the last session of the business session of the sixtieth General Conference session, and therefore we will try to maximize our time with the remaining items. And we will start with the item that we left off with just before lunch.

At this point we'll open the session.

On the platform with me is Wendy Trim, our recording secretary; Gary Krause, our secretary; and our parliamentarian, Todd McFarland.

I would like to invite us this afternoon, then, to have a word of prayer, and then we will be ready to proceed with the afternoon session.

May I ask Gary Krause to lead us in the opening prayer.

[Prayer.]

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. OK. May I remind delegates that later on this afternoon we'll receive a report on an item that was referred to the Steering Committee, so please take note of that.

We have several items and two hours, but we would like to finish the agenda that is before us. We appreciate the sweet spirit that has prevailed so far in our discussion, and the active participation. And I'm sure everyone is eager to enter into the Sabbath rest that is the last day of our session here. And, therefore, let me again thank each one of you for participating and again for being here this afternoon.

I have a number of points of order already. And I would like to recognize at this time Israel Leito on microphone—I'm sorry. The order has changed. OK.

Julie Sanders Keymer—

OK. Let me do this. I'll take the bottom one first, and that's the first one to come in. Thank you.

Microphone 6, Passmore Mulambo, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

PASSMORE MULAMBO: Mr. Chair, my point of order is that I have been told that the delegates are being told at the gates that the afternoon session has been canceled, and they're turning away.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Thank you. Thank you for that information. I think the matter has come here and is being addressed. It is being addressed as we talk. We appreciate your mention of that.

PASSMORE MULAMBO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Most of our people are being turned down. I was told, Don't even go in, the meeting is not there, unless you insist. So I and my colleagues, we insisted on coming in. That's why you see most of our people are not there. So the legitimacy of this meeting this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, is being questioned.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. I will consult a bit. But as I mentioned, that matter is being addressed. And it's very unfortunate that such an announcement went out. It did not come from this table, not even from the leadership.

We'll take a little break right now, and then we'll be back to you.

If you were standing at the microphone to make that same point of order, you may take your seat for now, because we are doing our best to address the issue right now.

[Recess.]

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Dear delegates, we want to bring this information to you. First, we have checked. The announcement did not come from the leadership of the General Conference, nor from the session management committee. But nonetheless we are aware that some people were turned back.

This is what we are doing right now. We are announcing over the convention center speaker systems that the session is going on inside the dome, and we are also sending a similar announcement through the app so that everyone who is a delegate can get the information that the business session is continuing this afternoon.

And since we have looked at the issue of legitimacy, we would think that the session is legitimate. But we are looking into the fairness of the whole matter. And therefore we are suggesting that we hold back until 2:30 to give time to those who were turned back to get the announcement.

Yes. The announcement has already been made. Thank you.

We are in recess, so we are not taking any names now. We are not taking any names now. We are in recess until we start again.

[Recess.]

GEOFFREY MBWANA: It is 2:30. We are going to open. We are ready to start the session here. And as we do that, let me invite Elder Ted Wilson to make a statement.

TED N. C. WILSON: Brothers and sisters, we have a very strange problem, which you heard just a few moments ago. We have done research, and no one informed the security system within the building that we were closing the session this afternoon, that it was ended. Apparently one of the security guards employed by the dome heard that the session was to be ended, and that word got through to administration, and they were informing people that the session was ended.

None of our General Conference session management people have indicated such to the security.

We're caught in a bit of a problem, because that means there may be several hundred—I don't know how many—individuals who were, not turned away, because apparently security guards were saying that they could enter but that the session had been closed.

I realize this causes a real problem, because you look around you and there's hardly anybody here. Well, you're here, so that's very important. But we don't have a massive amount of people.

However, from a technical protocol standpoint and from a parliamentary standpoint, we have a quorum. And my suggestion would be that we move ahead in a cordial way. If we come to a point that is so filled with contention that we do not seem to have a very strong majority ruling on a particular point, we may simply want to say that, because of the extenuating circumstances, we will not take any further action on that particular point.

We do have a few points that do need to be addressed, and this is the last business session that we have. There's no real way that we can have a session tonight. We have a program that is extremely full beginning at 7:00. We could not conceivably have a session tomorrow night. We end about 9:00, and that is one of the most important parts of our session, The Mission on the Move. We want people to leave here with a great focus on what our true mission is. It's going to be an incredible program.

But I would appeal to your hearts and recognize that we may run into some challenging situations. If an item is highly contentious, I think that we probably, because of these circumstances, may simply want to put it on hold, which means that it would not be looked at for another five years. But there are a couple points, one being the item that I believe was being discussed regarding youth ministries. Apparently many people had heard the discussion already; that one we could take up.

There is also one that has to do with church discipline, and that perhaps could engender some discussion.

But I would suggest that, given the unusual circumstances—and it's a rather odd thing to have, on the very last business session, something that certainly we did not intend or have, to our knowledge, anything to do with.

So, Brother Chairman, you know, there may be people who will disagree, but let's move ahead with a congenial spirit. And if we find that we run into a very contentious situation, let's evaluate it at that point. That would be my suggestion. We do have a quorum, and we are constituted as a body, recognizing that people, unfortunately, were not turned away but were informed that the session was not open, which, of course, it is. Anyone having been here at 12:00 when the meeting ended, you would know that the meeting was in session for 2:00.

Brother Chairman, that's my informal counsel and plea from the heart, but the body certainly can do as it would like.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you for the counsel. And with those remarks, we would like to proceed and request Elder Armando Miranda to remind us on the item that was on the floor just before we adjourned for lunch. And then we will provide from there.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The item is number 418 on page 111, the Youth Ministry Department.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Maybe before you proceed, we will take a point of order from microphone 6, Mbulelo Nqumse, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

MBULELO NQUMSE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. As much as the president has appealed that we should proceed, I'm concerned with the legality of any decisions that may be taken hereafter. Any member who is a legitimate delegate who has been turned away has a right to object and protest any decisions made.

So I think it's not a matter that we could treat very simply. We need to look at its legality, because decisions that we take, even if they are not contentious, may be assailable if somebody attacks those decisions.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. Thank you for the advice.

We will continue with microphone 4, David Trim, General Conference.

DAVID TRIM: Thank you, Brother Chairman. The previous item we have really discussed very thoroughly. I was one who suggested minor tweaking of words, but I think it's OK. I move the previous question.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. There is a point of order from microphone 2, Julie Sanders Keymer, North American Division.

JULIE SANDERS KEYMER: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if this is a point of order. I changed it back there. However, with regard to the brother who said that there were delegates who might not be here—I was turned away as well, but I continued to come to the dome to hear it from the chair. So, with due respect to our brother—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you.

JULIE SANDERS KEYMER: —we need to proceed.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. It is not a point of order. Nonetheless, thank you for making your point.

Microphone 3, Henk La Dru, South Pacific Division, a point of order.

HENK LA DRU: Thank you. I appreciate that. But I think we need to start with prayer before we start.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: We already prayed.

HENK LA DRU: As a congregation?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Yes. We had a prayer here. And it's not a point of order.

All right. The question was called on the motion, and that is not debatable. The motion is to cease discussion. You have your yellow card with you. And at this time, all in favor of ceasing debate, please raise your cards. Thank you.

Opposed. Thank you.

It's carried.

And to the main motion. But before we do that—OK. Thank you.

To the main motion, can you remind us on the motion again? Can we put it on the screen?

There is the motion before us to amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 8, as presented.

With your yellow card, all those in favor of approving the motion, please raise your cards. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign. Thank you.

The motion is carried. And we are ready to move to the next item.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Mr. Chairman, the next item, number 405, and it's found on page 95. And it's in regard to the reason for discipline. The secretary will introduce.

HARALD WOLLAN: Thank you. What we went back to the committee with was some concerns regarding some of the things that were deleted in the original proposal that was presented the other day. And then the request that was made in the referral was that we look at some of these and bring the wording or some of the wording back.

The committee studied this. And we have gotten input from several people on this and feel that point 3 describes the situation very well. But in order to make everyone at peace, we have brought back some of the wording from before.

This we have tried to do in changing point 4, dividing it into two, so part of the previous 4 becomes 5, and then subsequently the numbering changes also.

So the changes we bring to you today is in addition to what was presented the other day on line 27, point 4. And we are talking about reasons for which members shall be subject to disciplines are. And point 4 is “Fornication, which includes, among other issues, promiscuity, homosexual activity, incest, sodomy, and bestiality.”

And then we have moved something down to point 5, which reads on line 31, “The production, use, or distribution of pornographic material.”

When we talk about fornication, it’s also been pointed out to me that fornication is a biblical term that includes sexual deviation addressed in the Bible. So the addition to the motion that was brought to you last time, I’m bringing to you points 4 and 5 on lines 27, 28, and 31.

So I’d like to move this, the whole section.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Before we—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Before you do that, I will take a point of order from microphone 3, Jerilyn Burtch.

JERILYN BURTCH: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, it’s hard to see the screen, let alone evaluate it, when it isn’t in our hands. I’m wondering if the revisions could be passed to us in hard copy or, if that’s impractical, if they could be downloaded to the delegate portal so we could have the proposed revision in our hands.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. An apology was made this morning. And I will repeat again that—
All right. Will that help?

OK. We’re trying to work with that. That’s the best we can do. Trying to print it out now, with the time constraints on our side, it may be very challenging, so let me plead that we work with what is available for us right now. Thank you.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Mr. Chairman, before we proceed, if you allow me. We as the *Church Manual* Committee, when we met, considered the necessity to add number 14 to the reasons for discipline. And because of the situation that in some areas of the world *Cannabis sativa*, marijuana, is already legal if used, we considered that it is appropriate to include reason 14, which says, “The use or

manufacture of illicit drugs or the use, misuse, or sale of narcotics or drugs without appropriate medical cause and license.”

So we recognize that we are bringing something that is not part of the original agenda, but we consider this is something really important. And if the body accepts the inclusion of this, we would like to see it reflected here.

HARALD WOLLAN: Mr. Chairman, this is included in the motion from both of us. Thank you.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Thank you. It’s been moved. Do we have a second? Second.

Thank you, sir.

And let’s move on. We have names here on microphone 6. We have Megan Mole, Trans-European Division.

MEGAN MOLE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I was actually very happy with the previous wording of number 3, because it seems to me to be very strange to specify sexual perversions and fornication, which was already very well covered in that point. Otherwise, unless you want to put together a committee of sexual perversions to list every single thing that we disagree with—this seems to be very arbitrary to me. So for this reason I move to strike the new point 4 and to restore lines 22 to 30. Thank you very much.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Let me humbly say that we had this guideline that we’ll not try to edit here on the floor. And this being the last session of our business sessions, we can’t even refer back, so the options actually before us are either to vote it up or to vote it down. My—

MEGAN MOLE: Brother Chairman?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Yes, please.

MEGAN MOLE: My understanding was that we had agreed not to amend unamended texts, but that we are still—according to the *Rules of Order* and according to the process that we’ve followed so far—taking amendments to amended text.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: We have another concern, and that is we have fewer people here. And therefore an attempt to do that—this item was sent back, and it has come back to us the way it is. We would have concerns if we would do much more than what we had presented.

MEGAN MOLE: It is my right as a delegate to suggest this motion, to move this amendment.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. We will take the motion. Would you mind restating it, Megan?

MEGAN MOLE: Not at all. I move to strike lines 27 and 28.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. There is a motion before us. Is there a second?

Seconded. Thank you. And therefore we can speak to the amendment. Please, if you want to speak to the amendment, go to the microphone.

We have a point of order. Microphone 3, Roscoe Howard, North American Division, please.

ROSCOE HOWARD: I believe we had established this morning that you cannot amend a document from the floor; you can only make suggestions to that document and refer it back to the committee. So it is out of order to accept a motion of amending this document on the floor.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I have been reminded here that we did not actually do that, and that's why we find that move in order. Thank you.

OK. We have two people so far wanting to speak to the amendment of the motion. Microphone 4, Eugen Hartwich, Inter-European Division.

EUGEN HARTWICH: Hello, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the possibility to speak.

I speak against striking lines 27 and 28, because it is a problem if we don't define what fornication is. And "fornication" is a term that is not common among young people. And if I as a pastor need to explain what fornication is, I need to use the words "homosexuality" and "adultery" and "bestiality" and all of the other terms. So I am against the strike. It's very important to have a definition, so I'm against this. Thank you very much.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. We have a point of order on microphone 3, Marcia Moore, North American Division. Please.

MARCIA MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You have accepted minor edits from the floor but you have not accepted motions to make amendments from the floor. So I believe that this motion is out of order.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I will ask the parliamentarian to clarify this.

TODD MC FARLAND: The rules provide for amendments. That has to be read in context with the constitutional provision that says new items do not come from the floor. All prior motions to amend have either been withdrawn by the person at the suggestion of this chair, which the delegate declined to do in this particular case, or they've attempted to amend language that was not being dealt with.

In this particular case, the language is new language, so moving to strike this is not new business; it is current business. And therefore, that's what distinguishes it from the prior incidences and times.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: We have another point of order on microphone 3. Roscoe Howard, North American Division.

ROSCOE HOWARD: I would really disagree with the parliamentarian, because even though this is new business, it has been amended by the committee. We are still amending from the floor.

And the very reason we don't do that is evident: people will come up to the microphones, and there are be arguments back and forth, back and forth. And that's the purpose of the committee, to do that work behind the scenes. And I know that we would have to refer back, and it would wait for five more years. But that is the very reason we do not amend from the floor. There are too many people here that would have disagreements amending from the floor.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. The chair will be ready to receive a motion to refer—it makes it a little bit more complicated, but a motion to refer, and then we will have to wait till another time. Thank you.

Microphone 6, Lorraine Questel, Trans-European Division.

LORRAINE QUESTEL: I'm against the strike as well. I think it's important that these particular practices, or whatever they are, you know, sexual abuse of children and youth and all the rest, I think it's important that they are clearly defined.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. The next speaker will be on microphone 2, Rebecca Nkwantabisa, West-Central Africa Division.

REBECCA NKWANTABISA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am also against the striking lines 27 and 28 for the fact that what has been spelled out there clearly defines what we mean by fornication. If you look at the previous item that was brought, we had “other sexual perversions,” which were not clearly defined. But this one is clearly defined and everything, and so we have to maintain it. Thank you, sir.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. We go to the next speaker. Microphone 6, Edwin Shimunzhila, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

EDWIN SHIMUNZHILA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think, as an elder in the local church, the fornication issue has been defined very clearly. In the past, in local churches, it has been very difficult to really come and give statements, because you will be asked where in the *Church Manual* we talk about fornication.

So this one is very clear. Let it be there. Don't strike it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. Microphone 6, Finn Eckhoff, Trans-European Division.

FINN ECKHOFF: Mr. Chair, I'm speaking in favor of the motion. The leader of the committee referred to some other of the instances in this list, but it had been changed since it was legal to do certain things. In the two lines we have, we have a mixture of things that are criminal and legal in countries that we come from.

So we create a big problem when we put these mixed things together in one line. So, therefore, I speak in support of this motion.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Thank you. I now call upon Harald Wollan.

HARALD WOLLAN: Mr. Chairman, if I may move the previous question.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. The previous question has been moved. Is there a second? And that is to cease debate. Thank you.

OK. There's no debate—I mean, we can't debate that.

So with your card, all in favor that we cease debate, please indicate by raising your card. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign. Thank you.

It's carried, and therefore we are back to the main motion. Sorry. We are back to the amendment.

OK. On the amendment, can we have it on the screen?

OK. Moved to strike lines 27 and 28.

We will now take a vote on that motion.

But there is a point of order. Microphone 3, Roscoe Howard, North American Division.

ROSCOE HOWARD: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to be a burden to the chair, but this motion is inappropriate. We are amending from the floor. The only motion that can be properly positioned to the chair is to refer the report back to the committee. So this motion that we're voting on is improper. We're amending from the floor.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. Thank you for your point.

We will take the next one, point of order, microphone 4, Clinton Wahlen, General Conference.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Brother Chairman, I, too, have my doubts whether this is in order to amend from the floor. But at least could we see those lines again that this motion concerns so that we know precisely what we're voting on?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. That will be in order. They are lines 27 and 28. If we can have them on screen. OK. All right.

With that, we are ready to proceed with the vote on the amendment. Again, let's have the motion on the screen.

OK. All those in favor to strike lines 27 and 28, indicate your favor by raising your card.

OK. Opposed, by the same sign.

The motion is lost.

We go back, then, to the main motion. Would you put on screen the main motion at this time?

OK. We have microphone 3, Barry Oliver, South Pacific Division, please.

BARRY OLIVER: Thank you, Brother Chairman.

In view of the fact that we had quite a discussion about this previously and although personally I think there are some words that could be changed, nevertheless I move the previous question.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Previous question has been moved. Is there a second? Thank you. Not debatable. This is a motion to cease discussion.

All in favor, indicate your favor by raising your card. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign. Thank you.

With that, it carries. And we can go now to the main motion, if you can put that on screen.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Mr. Chairman, the next—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: No, no, no.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Oh, sorry.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. The motion is to amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 7, as presented.

All in favor of the motion, please raise your cards. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign. Thank you.

It is carried.

We can now go to the next item.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The next item is 426, definition of marriage. We consider it important because of the situation in different parts of the world. We need to be clear what is our definition of marriage.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: What page is it?

ARMANDO MIRANDA: The secretary will present the item.

HARALD WOLLAN: It's on the original document, page 131. It's item 426. It's under the section in the *Church Manual* talking about marriage.

The sentence on lines 26 and 27 reads, “As such, marriage is a public, lawfully binding lifelong commitment of a man and a woman to each other and between the couple and God.” And there are references to Mark 10:2-9 and Romans 7:2.

Bear in mind that what we just voted, there is a definition there also regarding marriage, and it’s more extended there. So when we deal with the definition of marriage, we also need to take that into consideration, because we already stated that marriage is defined as a public, lawfully binding, monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one man and one woman.

In reference to this, we then, on page 131, have added into the document about marriage the definition that you have on that page.

And I move this.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. It’s been moved. Is there a second? We have a second.

And let me at this point make an announcement that we have received information here that these reviews have already been updated in the delegates’ portal, so you can receive them in the delegates’ portal.

OK. It’s been moved and seconded. And if we can also enlarge it a bit here. It’s not a very—oh. We can’t. OK.

All right. And a discussion, anybody coming to the mike, you can indicate that. I don’t see anybody coming to the mike.

Therefore, all in—

Oh, OK. OK. Microphone 3, Wesley Szamko, Southern Asia-Pacific Division.

WESLEY SZAMKO: Just a very minor recommendation. Could we change that from “a man and a woman” to “one man and one woman,” just for absolute clarity?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. It’s not minor.

WESLEY SZAMKO: I think this could probably be done by consensus. If not, I’ll leave it to the discretion of the—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. Thank you for your point.

All right. Microphone 3, Ray Roennfeldt, South Pacific Division.

RAY ROENNFELDT: Mr. Chair, I wonder whether we could just have the statement up on the screen just for a moment.

Thank you. There are definitions of marriage in society as well. And I actually think that this at the same time should read, "As such, marriage, as defined in Scripture, is." I think that's an important part of what we want to say. And I would like to move that we amend this statement in that way.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I'm really hesitating to edit this on the floor. And if I can make an appeal, Ray, that we have taken note of your observation. Can you bear with us that we proceed and then it will be looked at subsequently and come at a later time?

Microphone 4, David Trim, General Conference.

DAVID TRIM: Brother Chairman, I move to call the previous question.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. It's been moved. Is there a second? Thank you. We have a second that we cease discussion on the motion.

All in favor of the motion, please indicate by raising your card. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign. Thank you.

The motion carries.

We have a point of order. Microphone 4, Clinton Wahlen, General Conference.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Thank you, Brother Chairman.

I confess my confusion here, really, because this morning when we were considering amendments to what was presented, it was disallowed. Then a few moments ago it was allowed, and we voted on it. And now when an attempt has been made, it's been disallowed. I don't understand the procedure we're following here. It seems inconsistent and unfair.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you very much. I observe that, and we will proceed then as we have it now. Thank you.

Kevin Nwaigwe, microphone— Oh, sorry. I'm sorry. I forgot about that. So we are back to the main motion. And we'll have the motion on the screen.

To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 13, as presented.

All in favor of the motion, please indicate your favor by raising your card. Thank you.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

Thank you. The motion is carried.

We will now proceed.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Mr. Chairman, we still have four items, but basically two of them are dealing with the same issue. And we consider that this item could be contentious, and for that reason we consider it appropriate to move that we table these items in order to leave it to the next *Church Manual* Committee and just follow the regular process for the next General Conference session. I move.

OK. We are not bringing back the items.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Thank you. And we want to thank you for the work that the Standing Committee has done. You have worked in sometimes difficult times, but we thank you for what you have processed.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: I would like to take the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to say thank you to the members of the *Church Manual* Committee for the work during the past quinquennium. Thank you so much, and God bless you.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: We have a point of order. Microphone 2, Jay Gallimore, North American Division.

JAY GALLIMORE: Yes. I want to thank the *Church Manual* Committee for their work. But my point of order is we were a little confused on what they're not bringing back, on what is being tabled, what is being withdrawn. We just aren't sure. Thank you.

HARALD WOLLAN: There are two items relating to who can perform communion, and there are two items dealing with who is authorized to speak. And the main reason for not bringing it forward is simply that we can see that it's better that it's dealt with in full session, so that is why we are not bringing it forward at this time.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Brother Chairman, I would like to make the clarifications that these items will remain, so there is no change until the new *Church Manual* Committee reviews them and makes the recommendation to the different levels of the church.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you very much. We have one more item that we want to process. And as Elder Myron Iseminger is coming up, I would like to recognize someone on the microphone. But before we do that, there is a point of order from microphone 4, David Trim, General Conference.

DAVID TRIM: Brother Chairman, my point of order is that there was a motion to table, but there hasn't been a vote, nor was there a second. Can we clarify?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: It was not taken.

DAVID TRIM: It's just been withdrawn?

GEOFFREY MBWANA: It was withdrawn.

DAVID TRIM: Thank you.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Microphone 2, Bhajuram Shrestha, Southern Asia Division.

BHAJURAM SHRESTHA: Mr. Chairman, I am coming from Nepal from the [indiscernible] earthquake. I'd just like to say, I'd like to thank you on behalf of my country for being a part of the Adventist Church that runs democratically what is best for the country and best for the church. So I would like to express my solidarity and my gratefulness to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you very much. Your comments are taken kindly. Microphone 3, Lawrence Geraty, North American Division, please.

LAWRENCE GERATY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't say that I disagree with most of what has been voted this morning. But my heart is heavy because I sense a lack of compassion in the church for people whom God has created, many of them the way they are. And the Lord that I serve said, He that has not sinned can cast the first stone. Go and sin no more.

So I think the church should be clear about our teachings, but I also think that we have to recognize that there are people whom God has created who cannot always follow the dictates—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you.

LAWRENCE GERATY: —of the church.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I have recognized you, but actually we don't have a motion on the floor.

So I would move to the next speaker, Boyce Mkhize—

There is a point of order. Microphone 3, Alvin Kibble, North American Division.

ALVIN KIBBLE: Chairman, over the past few minutes, several things have taken place that have left some of us rather confused. We thought that there was a motion before the body, and the previous speaker at the other microphone was raising that to bring it back to the chair's attention. Your response was that it was withdrawn. Could you please just review that proceeding with us so that we can follow where things are going, because it just seems as though it kind of evaporated here, and some of us are at a loss.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I'm sorry. I probably should have made that a little clearer. We heard that the mover of the motion was withdrawing the tabling, and instead they were just not bringing back the items. Thank you.

We go to microphone 6, Boyce Mkhize, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

BOYCE MKHIZE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A vote of appreciation to the *Church Manual* Committee for the work well done. It's just a suggestion going forward to the new *Church Manual* Committee, together with the issues that are to be further considered, to say that the committee should please look at harmonizing some of the amendments with the rest of our policy framework within the church.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you for the advice, and it has been noted. Thank you.

All right. We move to microphone 2, Kendra Jo Haloviak Valentine. Please.

KENDRA JO HALOVIK VALENTINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There are reports coming in that Seventh-day Adventist women in various parts of our world church who serve as commissioned ministers and ordained elders, according to our current world church

policy, are being asked to resign their positions because of Wednesday's vote. Our vote Wednesday did not change our global policy on women serving as commissioned pastors or ordained elders—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Excuse me—

KENDRA JO HALOVIK VALENTINE:—so I request an official worldwide statement—

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Excuse me, Kendra—

KENDRA JO HALOVIK VALENTINE: —requesting that our president or our church leaders make this statement.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: I will rule that out of order. We don't have a motion on the floor. We don't have—and therefore will just rule that out of order.

I will take microphone 6, Emmanuel Mwale, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

EMMANUEL MWALE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate how we have done business. But I wanted to echo the words of someone who spoke previously, that we need to look at our statements in the *Church Manual* so that they are consistent.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. I have a point of order. Microphone 2, Kevin Nwaigwe.

KEVIN NWAIGWE: Mr. Chairman, I'm a little confused about which item we are discussing.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: There is nothing on the floor right now.

KEVIN NWAIGWE: Because I know there is nothing on the floor, so please could you direct us properly.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. Thank you. We have on microphone 3 a point of order, Roscoe Howard.

ROSCOE HOWARD: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

I am really confused, because several went to the mike and made suggestions, some went and did congratulatory remarks, others made statements, and they were told to sit down because there wasn't a motion. I would wish that there is consistency in the chair and making sure that whoever comes to the mike, if it's to be a motion, then that be a motion so that there's fairness for those who address the chair.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. And as for now, then, I will not take any right now.

Allow me to go to the other item that we wish to bring at this point. And I would like to call upon Elder Myron to present it.

MYRON ISEMINGER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yesterday we voted an action with a request to the Steering Committee that the world church take time to study our hermeneutic or our system of biblical interpretation.

The Steering Committee sees value in that request, and they have agreed to work with the Biblical Research Institute to address the issue. In fact, the Biblical Research Institute is already studying the issue and has plans to publish their findings in the form of a revised second edition of the book currently available on biblical interpretation.

So I think the item was heated, the advice was heated, and there will be action taken.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you. With that, we have come to the end of our items. And at this point I will turn to Ted Wilson to make a statement.

TED N. C. WILSON: First of all, my brothers and sisters, let me thank you for being so cooperative this afternoon under very unusual circumstances. I appreciate it, and I'm sure those here on the platform do as well. Thank you for working with us on this. It was certainly not anything of our doing. But we have pleaded with you, and you have worked with us. I really appreciate it.

Let me make two statements here. One has to do with the item that was taken this morning, which I'm afraid caused some confusion regarding appeals that can be made. The wording used in the action that is in the *Church Manual* that was voted this morning is wording that is almost the same as is currently in the *Working Policy* in Section B, B-10-22. There is no secret agenda, no malicious intent to try to limit in any way the exercise of activity and authority on the part of the General Conference. The reason for the wording is to limit any frivolous appeals from coming up through the system.

There was no attempt, to my knowledge—and if there was an attempt in someone's mind, it certainly has not surfaced in our General Conference sessions—to try to reduce the authority or the involvement of the General Conference in items that may be working their way through a system to a

local church to a conference to a union to a division. It simply means that a particular item can rest there and does not have to be put forward to the next level of the organization.

However, there is no language that limits the General Conference from not becoming interested and involved in anything in the church. The General Conference uses discretion. It uses an appropriate approach. It generally works through its divisions and through its different levels.

In fact, it is interesting. In the very constitution that begins in the very beginning of our *Working Policy*, it says, “The General Conference conducts much of its work through its divisions.” It doesn’t say it conducts all of its work through the divisions. It says “much of its work.”

In the bylaws of that same constitution, it says at the very beginning that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, hereinafter referred to as the General Conference, normally shall conduct its worldwide work through its divisions, each division to operate within a specified territory in harmony with General Conference policies.

So it normally does that. It does not rule out any option for the General Conference that if it feels there is a necessary reason to investigate, to try to work with a particular problem, that it cannot do so.

So please do not imagine things that, in my opinion, and in my understanding, are never there.

If, in fact, we find out that that becomes a problem, we will have to address that.

The second item that I would like to mention is one that was brought up at microphone 2, and in fact, I was going to make a statement on that anyway. In Steering Committee this morning, we had a very lovely spirit, a very strong spirit, and, I must tell you, a very committed spirit on the part of division presidents and officers to maintain, to adhere to, to uphold what the General Conference in session votes. It was a very gratifying and wonderful spirit. And I applaud all divisions for this spirit. And we appeal to everyone as individuals to uphold that spirit as well.

However, what we voted on Wednesday was simply to not allow divisions to make a decision about ordination for women in their divisions. What the vote meant is that we maintain the current policy, the current understanding. And there is, in this book, some may contend—but I could show you, and others could as well—that it is very clear that it is intended that men be ordained.

Now, there are additional policies and provisions that have been voted by the Annual Council and have been accepted. Whether people agree with them or not, they are there. The vote on Wednesday did not have anything to do specifically with women being ordained as local elders.

Now, people may have differing opinions on that particular subject, but the vote on Wednesday was not pertaining to that. Neither was it pertaining to anything in policy regarding commissioned ministers.

So let us be clear on what was voted on Wednesday. We are now back to our original understanding. And I would strongly urge all to adhere by what has been voted. But do not place into the vote other things that were not listed in the vote. We need to be fair, we need to be open, and we all need to accept what is voted at a General Conference session.

I have asked the division presidents to care for specific items that come up within their division. This morning I did that. I'm going to count on that. We hope over the next few weeks and months that things will go smoothly. But we will rely on the divisions to alert us to anything that we must consider at the General Conference level. Now, that doesn't preclude the General Conference from discovering information and from looking at it itself. But we want to count upon our system and our structure.

And again let me say, we had a very sweet spirit in our Steering Committee this morning, and I praise God for that.

Again, let me thank you for your generous indulgence in allowing us to proceed this afternoon under very unusual circumstances. It's a rather different way to end our sixtieth General Conference session business sessions with the unusual problem that we faced. But again I thank you for your graciousness, and I wish each of you a wonderful and a happy Sabbath.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: Thank you very much, Elder Wilson. And with those remarks, I now turn it over to our secretary to bring the next—

GARY KRAUSE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to move that we adjourn sine die.

GEOFFREY MBWANA: OK. It's been moved. Is there a second? A motion to adjourn has been seconded.

All in favor, please indicate that by raising your card. Thank you.

Opposed, by the same sign.

We are very grateful for each one of you who came back this afternoon, and we wish you God's blessings as we go into the Sabbath hours. I will now call upon Bhajuram Shrestha from the Southern Asia Division to have the closing prayer. You may do it from the microphone there, number 2. Shall we stand?

[Prayer.]

[End of session.]