

ORDINATION OF WOMEN Vote Results

January 19, 2007 Bishop Board Meeting:

*15. RECEIVING CREDENTIALLED LEADER'S VOTE ON BISHOP RECOMMENDATION	Marcus Smucker led bishops in a time of prayer prior to hearing a report of the recommendation ballots. Ernie Hess, head teller, reported that 359 votes and 14 abstentions were received from credentialed leaders. The results of the ballots were: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"><tr><td>Total ballots</td><td>359</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Yes ballots</td><td>236</td><td>65.74%</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>No ballots</td><td>123</td><td>34.26%</td><td></td></tr></table>	Total ballots	359			Yes ballots	236	65.74%		No ballots	123	34.26%	
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Based on these results, the recommendation did not meet the 66.67% required by the constitution and, therefore, did not pass.

From: Keith Weaver
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2007 3:38 PM
To: LMC
Subject: Announcement

Lancaster Conference Credentialed Leaders Do Not Affirm Recommendation Regarding the Ordination of Women

By ballots counted on January 19, the active ordained and licensed leaders of Lancaster Mennonite Conference did not affirm a recommendation from the Board of Bishops that would have allowed for the ordination of women called and affirmed by congregations to serve in ministry and pastoral leadership. The recommendation was not affirmed by the constitutionally required 66.67 percent approval. Of the 359 credentialed leaders who voted, 65.74 % affirmed the recommendation and 34.26% did not affirm the recommendation (*there are 455 active credentialed leaders in LMC*). Thus, the recommendation did not pass. The vote on the recommendation from the Board of Bishops came after a lengthy and significant process of spiritual discernment.

In March of 2006, the Board of Bishops introduced a process of spiritual discernment to consider adopting a policy that would enable congregations to follow their convictions in discerning the gifts and calling of persons, regardless of gender, into ordained leadership roles in the congregation. Following ten regional cluster meetings for credentialed leaders and three forums for lay persons held in April and May, the 23-member Board of Bishops reviewed the helpful, but diverse, feedback from across the conference. This feedback along with dwelling in God's Word, prayer, fasting, listening, searching, and study moved the Board of Bishops to approve a recommendation in August. The recommendation was then sent to credentialed leaders for their discernment and affirmation.

One of the themes that emerged from the 2006 cluster meetings was a shared desire in all LMC congregations to be faithful to Jesus Christ as revealed in Scriptures. Within LMC, there are a variety of beliefs and practices regarding roles of men and women in ministry and pastoral leadership. Contrary to the either/or clarity that some persons wished to bring to this discussion, the practice of LMC congregations is more accurately described as a continuum in which women are involved to lesser or greater degrees in congregations. Through the process of spiritual discernment it was clear that equally sincere and faithful people understand Scripture differently and come to differing conclusions regarding the practice of women in leadership and ordination.

Because this recommendation was not affirmed, the policy affirmed by credentialed leaders in 1999 will remain in effect. The 1999 recommendation approved granting a License for Specific Ministry to women serving on church planting teams, pastoral teams, or other specific ministries. While this license grants all the privileges and responsibilities of an ordained person, this credential does not lead toward ordination for women. The 1999 policy states that men will serve as primary leaders (*lead pastors*) in LMC congregations and that any exceptions will require the approval of the Bishop Board.

The Board of Bishops brought the following recommendation:

That Lancaster Mennonite Conference respect each member congregation in its -discernment of Scripture, as led by the Holy Spirit, to call and affirm persons to serve in ministry and pastoral leadership, and

That the LMC Board of Bishops license and/or ordain, regardless of gender, those who have responded to God's call, who have been affirmed by their respective congregation, and who meet LMC qualifications for credentialing.

The recommendation also includes the following understandings:

- *To most fully respect the differing Scriptural under-standings, beliefs, and practices of our congregations, the role of bishop and similar conference oversight roles, will be reserved for men.*
- *The Board of Bishops will assist in defining protocol for healthy, God-honoring male and female relationships in ministry teams.*