PROTOCOL IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

By Pastor James F. Daniel

DEFINITIONS OF PROTOCOL

1. "The term *protocol* comes from the Greek words meaning 'the first glue.' Nowadays, protocol can be understood as the glue which holds official life in the society together. Whether on the local, state, national or international level, proper protocol is vital in assuring that relations between the officials of organizations and governments are conducted with minimum friction and maximum efficiency."
   (*International Council of Voluntary Agencies/Centre for International Support* http://www.icvacis.org/pdf/Training%20in%20Protocol%20&%20Social%20Etiquette.pdf)

2. "The system of rules and acceptable behaviour used at official ceremonies and occasions." (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=63647&dict=CALD)

3. "Protocol is commonly described as a set of international courtesy rules. These well-established and time-honored rules have made it easier for nations and people to live and work together. . . . Protocol rules are based on the principles of civility."
   (Dr. P.M. Forni on behalf of the *International Association of Protocol Consultants and Officers*. In *Wikipedia*, the free online encyclopedia)

PROTOCOL IN RANK/HIERARCHICAL STANDING

"Part of protocol has always been the acknowledgment of the hierarchical standing of all present."

(Dr. P.M. Forni on behalf of the *International Association of Protocol Consultants and Officers*. In *Wikipedia*, the free online encyclopedia).

The Bible also recognizes rank or standing amongst persons (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17).

THE PRACTICE OF PROTOCOL IN THE CHURCH

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a highly structured church with clearly outlined principles of practice. The expression of those principles is contained in the *Church Manual*. In fact, the Manual says this of itself: "The content of the Church Manual is the expression of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's understanding of Christian life and church governance and discipline based on biblical principles" (2005 ed., p. 2).

Constituent Levels of the Church

Among Seventh-day Adventists there are four constituent levels leading from the individual believer in the local church to the worldwide organization, the General Conference, which is the highest decision making body in the structure of the church:

1. *The Local Church* -- a united organized body of individual believers.
2. *The Local Conference/Mission or Field* -- a united organized body of churches in a state, province, or territory.
3. *The Union Conference or Union Mission* -- a united body of conferences, missions, or fields within a larger territory.
4. *The General Conference* -- the largest unit of organization-- embraces all unions in all parts of the world.
    - Divisions are sections of the General Conference, with administrative responsibility assigned to them in designated geographical areas.

Authority of the General Conference: ". . . the highest authority under God among Seventh-day Adventists is found in the will of the body of that people, as expressed in the decisions of the General Conference when acting within its proper jurisdiction; and that such decisions should be submitted to by all without exception, unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience" (*Church Manual*, p. 2; see also pp. 27-28).

"When differences arise in or between organizations and institutions, appeal to the next higher organization is proper until it reaches the General Conference in session, or the Executive Committee at the Annual Council. During the interim between these sessions the Executive Committee shall constitute the body of final authority on all questions where a difference of viewpoint may develop" (*Church Manual*, p. 27).

Rank Expressed in Titles

The titles attributed to certain officers indicate rank and the way such officers should be recognized and addressed. At the constituent levels of the Conference/Mission, Union, and General Conference the ranking officers are:

a) *President* - - first officer at each level.
b) *Secretary or Secretary-Treasurer* - - second ranking officer at each level.
c) *Treasurer* - - third ranking officer at each level.
d) (Other positions may include Vice-president, Associate Secretary, Associate Treasurer, Field Secretary, etc).
    - At the College/University level the ranking officer also carries the title of President.

<u>*Local Church*</u>. At the constituent level of the local congregation, title also expresses rank:

1) Pastor/Minister -- the ranking officer in the local church (*Church Manual*, p. 51).
2) First Elder(s)/or Leader(s) – officer(s) second in rank (*Church Manual*, p. 50-54).

Authority of the Rank of President. "The conference/mission/field president in counsel with the conference/ mission/field committee directs the workers of the conference/mission/field in their varied activities" (*Church Manual*. P. 149).

The President is the chief pastor/elder or overseer of all churches in the territory. "He has access to all the churches, church services, business meetings, and church boards, without vote unless granted by the church, and may, by virtue of his office, preside over the sessions of any of the churches when such a course is necessary. He has access to all church records, report books, et cetera" (*Church Manual*, p. 145).

Authority of the Ranking Officers in a Conference/Mission/Field. "The officers -- president, secretary, treasurer-- of the conference/mission/field to which the church belongs may attend without vote (unless granted by the church) any church business meeting within the conference/mission/field territory" (*Church Manual*, p. 89).

Deference Shown to Ministers and Unordained Workers

"When an ordained minister of the conference/mission/field, or one sent by the conference/mission/field, visits a church, it is expected that the local elder will show him proper deference by inviting him to occupy the pulpit. This also applies to unordained workers sent by the conference/mission/ field" (*Church Manual*, p. 147).

Correspondence from Conference/Mission Office Treated With Importance

"The elder should regard all correspondence from the conference/ mission/field office as important. Letters calling for announcements to the church should be presented at the proper time" (*Church Manual*, p. 53). It follows that correspondence from the President-- the ranking officer in the territory-- should be presented in its entirety to the congregation.

PLATFORM PROTOCOL

"Protocol promotes orderly procedure following the rules of etiquette. Personal friendships, likes, and dislikes must not be considered. The office is being honoured not the person" (*Wisconsin Hospital Association*, at http://www.wha.org/partners/pdf/iProtocol.pdf).

In seating persons on a platform, place the first ranking officer or platform member at the right of the principal speaker; the second ranking platform member at the left of the principal speaker; the third ranking platform member at the second right; the fourth ranking platform member at the second left; the fifth ranking platform member at the third right, etc. This order should be observed at all times for seating, introductions, etc. However, common sense sometimes dictates slight deviations (http://www.wha.org/partners/pdf/iProtocol.pdf).

FLAG PROTOCOL ON PLATFORM

For a speaker on stage, either standing or sitting, the National flag is placed to the *speaker's* right (also known as stage right or house left); while other flags are placed to the speaker's left.

(http://www.specialevents.ucla.edu/documents/FlagProtocolforUCLAEvents.pdf)

RELATING TO PREACHERS/KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Speakers should be given advance written information:

1. Time, date, place of meeting.
2. Time allowance for presentation.
3. When fees are involved, complete understanding should be reached at time of making arrangements.
4. Dress (formal or informal).
   Note: It is never courteous to keep a speaker waiting.
   (http://www.wha.org/partners/pdf/iProtocol.pdf)

Introduction of the Speaker

a) **A** person known to the audience is presented; a stranger is introduced.
b) The purpose of an introduction is to acquaint the audience with the speaker's background, qualifications, and subject.
c) The introduction should be brief. Do not give the speech yourself.
d) Be factual, not too flowery. Put both the speaker and the audience at ease.
e) Mention the speaker's name at the end of the introduction.
   (http://www.wha.org/partners/pdf/iProtocol.pdf)

PROTOCOL AND NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY OFFICIALS

From time to time the church (at different the levels) invite national and community officials to functions/occasions. How do we address them?

"The spirit of formality among diplomatic representatives usually means not addressing others by their first names. One should rely on courtesy titles until invited to do otherwise." (*Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC*, 2007. (http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/99260.pdf).

Addressing Persons

Note when "Your" and "His/Her" may be used in addressing certain officials.

The Governor General or President of the country:

- When addressing directly: "Your Excellency . . ."
- When speaking about: "His/Her Excellency, (Sir) . . ."

The Prime Minister

- Addressing directly: "Mr./Madam Prime Minister"
- When speaking about: "The Right Honourable Name"; Or The Honourable Name; or Dr., The Hon. Name . . ."

Member of Parliament

- Addressing directly: "Honourable Name . . .
- When speaking about: "The Hon. . . .

Ambassador

- Mr./Madam Ambassador; or Ambassador Name.
- British ambassador who is a knight: "Sir First Name (generally); or Dame (woman).
- Ambassador who is a Barron**: "**Lord (Surname)Montgomery"

High Court Judge

- ✓ Directly: "Your Honour"
- ✓ When speaking about: "His/Her Honour"

The Spouse

- Of the Governor General, President, or one Knighted: "Lady Surname"
- Of an ambassador or Parliamentarian: "Mr./Mrs./Ms. Surname.

(http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/99260.pdf)

National Anthem

The national Anthem is played on the arrival of or at the presence of the head of state, not for the head of government or other politicians.

On the Arrival of the Head of State

On the arrival of the head of state the programme begins. The Governor General or President of the country is not to be kept waiting for the programme to begin.

Meeting National, Community, and Church Officials on Arrival

The highest ranking church official present should meet and welcome national, community, and church officials/leaders on their arrival at a church programme/event.

Start Programmes/Services on Time

Officials should not be kept waiting. When an invitation is accepted by them, secure emergency number for him/her just in case there is a delay in his/her arrival.

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INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

a. **A** person known to the audience is presented; a stranger is introduced.
b. The purpose of an introduction is to acquaint the audience with the speaker's background, qualifications, and subject.
c. The introduction should be brief, not more than one minute. Do not give the speech yourself.
d. Be factual, not too flowery. Put both the speaker and the audience at ease.
e. Mention the speaker's name at the end of the introduction.

CONCLUSION

The final word on protocol has not been said. But protocol, the glue that holds official life in society together, is of vital importance to church life also. It is vital for assuring that relations between leaders of the church and the general church body; and the relations between the church and national/community leaders are conducted with minimum friction and maximum efficiency. We follow protocol because "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace . . . in all the churches of the saints. [Therefore] "let all things be done decently and in order" (*1 Corinthians 14:33, 40*).

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2010