

# Women as Elders – Summary of Town Hall Meeting #1

## RCAC's Background on Women as Elders

*Historically, our denomination is from a Presbyterian background. General Assembly (which occurs every two years) is the highest authority with the C&MA in Canada. At General Assembly in 2000, the decision of whether to adopt women as elders was opened to the local church - to decide one way or the other. As a denomination, we recognize both complementarian and egalitarian positions. A vote was held at RCAC in 2001 and the outcome was approximately 55% to keep the existing position – to only have men serve as elders. A few years ago through an official letter to the Board and with questions arising from a few AGM meetings, church members raised the question of whether RCAC would revisit the topic of women as elders. A committee was established and called in 2018. The task of this committee is to educate, collect and listen to feedback, then report back to the Board after the 2<sup>nd</sup> town hall meeting.*

## Brief Overview of the Process

*According to the current plan, town hall meetings are part of the process needed to move to the next steps. The Board will discuss whether this topic needs to move to a vote during a Board Meeting. Should the Board decide that the church is ready to move to a vote there are two options: The Board may choose to move to hold a vote during our scheduled AGM (in Oct. 2020) or call a Special AGM prior to that.*

*The committee prepared a questionnaire in February and received a total of 147 responses via the collection box and online. The committee has formalized /summarized some of the frequently asked questions and will address them below.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### I. C&MA (National & Pacific District)'s Position and Related Data

#### 1. What is the Alliance denomination's position on the issue of women as elders?

*According to the article "The Roles of Men and Women in Ministry" issued to all churches as adopted in the C&MA General Assembly of 2016, it is clearly indicated that the denomination has considered this subject matter, and "welcome, respect and value those who hold differing views (complementarian and egalitarian perspectives) on the roles of men and women in the church." Taking these differences into account, women eldership was passed at the national level in 2000, and according to the Constitution, local churches may, by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a duly called meeting of the membership, choose to have women serve on the Board.*

#### 2. How many churches in the C&MA have adopted having women as elders? Are there other Chinese Alliance churches that have made this change?

*According to the C&MA in Canada, there are currently approximately 445 local churches in Canada, and it's estimated that approximately 20% presently have women serving on their boards. Among these churches, there are Chinese Alliance Churches who have adopted women as elders. While formal data has not been kept on the national level, in our local district (Pacific District), there are eight. These churches are: Chilliwack Chinese Alliance Church, Coquitlam Mandarin Church, Fraser Lands Church, Newbern Memorial, Richmond Grace*

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*Alliance Church, Surrey Christian Alliance Church, Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church, and Vancouver Fountain Alliance Church.*

### **II. RCAC's Position & Approach**

#### **1. Why does RCAC want to look into this matter?**

*In every AGM in the past 2 - 3 years, the congregation had asked when RCAC will look into the topic of women as elders. In response to this congregational request, as well as a written request addressed to the Board prior, a committee was formed in 2018 to begin planning for this discussion. We want to clarify it is not because we have insufficient elders on our Board that we are looking into the topic of women as elders.*

#### **2. Is the question of women as elders a fundamental doctrine of the church?**

*Although this is an important question for each church and believer, it is not a "fundamental doctrine" or moral issue, and our church ministry will not stand or fall on our decision. We are seeking God's will for RCAC and the membership decision will guide our approach to handling this question.*

#### **3. How would RCAC approve and implement such a change?**

*The denomination's "Local Church Constitution" allows for a local church membership, "by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a duly called meeting of the membership", to choose to have women serve on the Board of Elders.*

### **III. RCAC's Board of Elders Nomination & Election**

#### **1. What is the current process for elder nomination at RCAC?**

*Currently, the nomination of elders is carried out by the nominating committee and/or members of RCAC. Qualified persons of eldership are identified using Guidelines for the Nomination of Elders, which outlines the criteria in selecting individuals for nomination.*

#### **2. When would women be eligible for nomination and election at RCAC?**

*Assuming the change is approved at the next membership meeting, (whether it is Special General Meeting or Annual General Meeting), as well as the approval of amendment of the church bylaws, then the first time women could be nominated and considered as candidates for eldership at RCAC is at the subsequent Annual General Meeting.*

#### **3. Will the elder nomination, election process and criteria such as marital status, age of 30 or above change when women as elders is approved?**

*Under our current Guidelines for the Nomination of Elders, elders must be "born again, baptized Christians of at least 30 years old with a minimum of 3-year membership in our church." If having women as elders is adopted at RCAC, the Board will be addressing any changes to the current bylaw and nomination guidelines. This committee can pass this suggestion to the Bylaw committee to consider.*

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### 4. What roles do elders currently serve at RCAC? What do they actually do?

*As per bylaw, elders shall serve with the senior pastor in the overseeing of the spiritual, administrative care, teaching, and evangelistic functions of the Church. The Board of Elders possesses the full administrative and ministerial authority as well as the responsibility of the Church. Each elder shall share the load of the pastoral staff assisting them to carry out matters adopted at the Board of Elders' meetings.*

## IV. Scripture's Position

### 1. Paul clearly states in 1 Timothy 2:12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet" (ESV). Doesn't this verse already illustrate why women shouldn't/can't be elders?

*The context of this passage (v. 8-12) addresses the issue of worship in the church. At that time, women gathered in the back of the church and engaged in chatter and gossip amongst themselves. So Paul advised Timothy that these women should be reminded to focus on worship.*

*It was a male-dominant society in those days. Every position holder, such as Pharisees and priests, was a male figure; evangelists and teachers like Paul and Timothy were also predominately male. And so, Paul's first advice was for the women to keep silent. Teachers would then be able to instruct properly.*

*When Paul explained the roles of male and female, he used the order of Creation in Genesis, that God first created Adam (male), then Eve (female). According to this order, male was first created and therefore considered as the head, the beginning of life. Under this circumstance, the man is supposed to work hard, sweat, make a living, and the woman is to assist and be a helping hand. So Paul was dealing with the issue of role, and not authority of the people.*

### 2. If it is not found in Scripture examples of women as elders, what is the argument for it?

*There are many things that aren't listed in scriptures but that doesn't mean that they aren't worthy of our consideration. The Bible will not always list each item or situation specifically. Our responsibility is to study the scripture and listen to the Spirit with regards to how to use the principles in such a way that applies. There has been extensive academic study on this topic and even the experts have not come to only 1 conclusion. Our goal is to study and discern as a church as to what kind of community God is calling us to be.*

### 3. What is our church's interpretation of "Biblically Qualified" elders?

*RCAC's Bylaw and Guidelines for Nomination of Elders outline our church's interpretation of "Biblically Qualified" elders. In the nomination guideline, there are a total of 11 points detailing the qualification.*

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### V. Resources

- “*The Roles of Men and Women in Ministry*” - C&MA Canada (Adopted – 2016)  
<https://www.cmacan.org/manual/>
- “*Local Church Constitution*” - C&MA Canada (Amended – General Assembly 2018)  
<https://www.cmacan.org/manual/>
- Guidelines for Nomination of Elders for RCAC (last amended Oct 1999) (available upon request)
- Bylaws for RCAC (last amended Oct 2005) (available upon request)
- Audio material from Adult Sunday School by Pastor Collins Kung – Christian Ethics (Chinese-only) <http://online.rcac.ca/womeneldership>
- Sermon on “*Women in Ministry and Leadership*” by Errol Rempel, District Superintendent  
<https://english.rcac.ca/grow/women-as-elders>
- Sermon on “*Our Position on Women Elders*” by Pastor Jeannie Au-Yeung (Chinese-only)  
<http://online.rcac.ca/womeneldership>
- CBE International (Christians for Biblical Equality) <https://www.cbeinternational.org/>
- The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood <https://cbmw.org/>