

Men and Women Serving in Ministry

Position Paper

Bethel Church, Fairbanks, AK

Preamble

As image bearers of God, we embrace our God-given masculine and feminine natures as gifts that allow us to uniquely serve one another as we submit to Christ. The key question addressed in this position paper is “Are there ministries or offices in the church that are gender specific?” Three commonly identified positions held are; Egalitarian, Complementarian (Moderate), and Hierarchical. We believe a Complementarian position best summarizes the scriptures dealing with the responsibilities God calls men and women to fulfill in the church body.

Consequent to a Complementarian view, leaders encourage women to participate in any ministry or office open to non-Elders and that Eldership is reserved for qualified men. To this end, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that both men and women are made in the image of God, are distinct in their manhood and womanhood, are saved by grace, and have equal value before God.

WE DENY that Scripture teaches any superiority or inferiority of essence or value between men or women.

Genesis 1:27 & 31, Ephesians 2:8-10, Galatians 3:27-29

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that both men and women are gifted by God and called to exercise their respective gifts in the local church. All are to serve in submission to biblical qualifications and authority.

WE DENY that gifting or one’s sense of calling alone qualifies one to serve in particular roles. Rather, spiritual maturity, character, and biological sex, among others, are to be considered for any role.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 18-20, Ephesians 4:15-16, I Timothy 3:1-12

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that headship and submission roles were assigned before humankind's fall into sin. Sin subsequently introduced distortions of these roles.

WE DENY that headship and submission roles are the consequences of sin and that the effects of God's redemption of humans undo or reverse these roles. We also deny that headship and submission imply a loss of equality or value; for example, headship and submission are evident and exemplified in the Trinity without loss of equality or value.

We further deny that exercising the relational dynamics of headship and submission as exemplified by Christ and the Church or the Trinity is burdensome or causes disunity. We note as well, that Scriptures emphasizing headship and submission of husbands and wives within a marriage context do not have direct bearing on the Church. Subsequently, we deny that women generally must submit to all men generally within the Church.

John 5:19, Luke 22:42, John 16:13, I Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:21-27, I John 5:3

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that the office of Elder/Pastor is reserved for men, carrying with it the primary responsibility of teaching and protecting the doctrine of the church and exercising oversight of all within the church. Additionally, we affirm that all other offices and ministries are open to women or men, according to their qualifications and appropriate gifting. All teaching is done under the authority and oversight of the Elders.

WE DENY that the office of Elder/Pastor being withheld from women diminishes their importance or service within the church.

I Timothy 2:11-3:13, Titus 1:6-9, 2:1-8