



Christ Presbyterian Church

Women in Leadership

Approved by the Session 6/16/2016

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church motto is:

In Essentials. . . Unity
In Non-Essentials. . . Liberty
In All Things. . . Charity

Christ Presbyterian Church as a member of the EPC takes this motto seriously. We have the highest regard for the scripture and its authority in our life. The issue of ordaining women is a divided issue between equally sincere, Bible-believing Christians. While the issue of the authority of scripture is an essential of our faith, we do not believe that the issue of women in leadership is an essential. However, we do believe we need scriptural support to ordain women in leadership roles.

*Thus, while some churches may ordain women and some may decline to do so, neither position is essential to the existence of the church. Since people of good faith who equally love the Lord and hold to the infallibility of Scripture differ on this issue, and since uniformity of view and practice is not essential to the existence of the visible church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has chosen to leave this decision to the Spirit-guided consciences of particular congregations concerning the ordination of women as elders and deacons, and to the presbyteries concerning the ordination of women as ministers.**

At CPC we choose to ordain women because of the following understanding of scripture with some complementarian/egalitarian conclusions.†

1. **Genesis Relationship Norms:** 1 Timothy 2 & 1 Corinthians 11 cannot be dismissed as merely culturally relative. Paul bases his teaching in those texts on the creation norms found in Genesis 2-3. Those norms in the relationship between Adam and Eve are explicitly presented as the paradigm for marriage roles not gender roles. Paul confirms this understanding of a Genesis relationship of Adam and Eve in Ephesians 5.
2. **Greek Words for Man/Husband and Woman/Wife are identical terms.** In Paul's writings the word pairings occur over 50 times and are translated, "Husband and Wife," except in 1 Timothy 2. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 2 is almost a word for word, or at least thought for thought parallel with 1 Peter 3:1-7, where we translate the words as "Husband and Wife" not "Man and Woman." We also know that Peter acknowledges that he has read Paul's writing (2 Peter 3:15).
3. **Headship refers to the marital relationship not gender relationship.** The headship that is mentioned in Ephesians 5:22 is the same headship mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:3. The husband is the head of the wife, which uses the one body/one flesh imagery presented in Genesis 2. It would be odd and unseemly to extend this image as a man to be head of any woman other than his own wife.
4. **Common Practice of Scripture using masculine language for legal norms.** Jesus applies the masculine language in the divorce law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and applies it to both sexes ability to divorce in Mark 10:12. In addition the 10th Command is explicit masculine language forbidding coveting your neighbor's

* EPC's Positional Paper on "Ordination of Women"

† Logic, arguments and quotes are taken from "Women in Leadership" paper by Gordan Hugenburger dated April 14, 2008

wife, but we would certainly apply that same standard to both genders. In addition, Deuteronomy (16-18) uses explicit masculine language in its description of elder/overseer and prophet. So when Numbers 12 speaks of a prophet's job description in masculine terms it is ironic that the issue it is addressing is the female prophet, Miriam (Exodus 15:20). The description of leadership roles in masculine pronouns is a normative descriptive practice not a limiting prescriptive practice of gender roles.

5. **Priests or Elders?** The New Testament intentionally models its leadership structure after Old Testament eldership and not priesthood. The priesthood was restricted to physically perfect males from a specific tribe, but eldership is comparably unrestrictive. In the Old Testament there is no tribal, health, or gender requirement for eldership. Specifically, Deborah who is one of the judges in the book of Judges is in fact an elder, because Deuteronomy 1 connects Exodus 18, the appointment of judges and Numbers 11, the appointment of seventy elders, into the same biblical event.

As a community we therefore understand the scriptures to be crystal clear on headship and marital roles, namely that the husband is the head of his wife. Some would argue that Scripture extends headship in the church to gender specific roles as well. However, because of the biblical arguments made above, we believe scripture is not as clear on gender roles as some would perceive, and that there are good biblical arguments that allow women to serve in the leadership roles in our church, namely as elders and deacons.

However, given that there are substantial differences of opinion on this matter between sincere, bible-believing Christians, and that this is not an essential doctrine of our faith, we humbly present our views and position.

Helpful Resources (not an exhaustive list):

- Beck, James R. & Blomberg, Craig L, ed. *Two Views on Women in Ministry*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001
- Bristow, John Temple. *What Paul Really Said About Women: An Apostle's Liberating Views on Quality in Marriage, Leadership and Love*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988
- Hugenberger, Gordon P. "Women in Leadership." *Park Street Church Teaching Articles*. 14 April 2008. 21 April 2016 <<http://www.parkstreet.org/teaching-training/articles/women-leadership>>
- Webb, William. *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2001