

POLICY POSITION ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

The goal of this paper is to state the position of the elders at Mount Carmel Christian Church and only for the Mount Carmel Christian Church (MCCC). While we are confident that our position on this aspect is biblically sound, we recognize that the issue has been debated throughout church history. We have arrived at our conclusion that women can serve in most positions except those of elder or senior minister. We concluded this through a careful interpretation of the relevant scriptures, and with a desire that MCCC truly be the Lord's church in this community. The following Biblical references serve as the foundation of our position on the Role of Women in Ministry:

1. The birth of the church was in a culture that mostly considered women as possessions or second class citizens - the Gospel of Jesus Christ changed that. In Christ women are equal recipients of God's grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Throughout history, Christianity has elevated the status of women in society as valuable and having value to add to all aspects of life. This truth is captured but not limited to Paul's grand statement on the result of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. "But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:25-29 (NASB)
2. The testimony of the New Testament is that women have played significant and important roles in ministry of Jesus and the 1st Century Church. Note the names of women highlighted in the following scriptures:
 - **Luke 1:26-33** (NASB) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name **was Mary**. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God." And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
 - **Luke 8:1-3** (NASB) Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also **some women** who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and **many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means**.

- **Luke 24:1-12** (NASB) But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.** But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.
- **Acts 16:14-15** (NASB) A **woman named Lydia**, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.
- **Acts 17:34** (NASB) But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a **woman named Damaris** and others with them.
- **Acts 18:1-3** (NASB) After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with **his wife Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.
- **Acts 18:24-26** (NASB) Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when **Priscilla** and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.
- **Acts 21:7-9** (NASB) When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. **Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.**
- **Romans 16:1-16** (NASB) I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchræa; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. Greet **Prisca** and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ

Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphæna and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his **mother** and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his **sister**, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

- **1 Corinthians 16:19** (NASB) The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and **Prisca** greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.
 - **Philippians 4:2-3** (NASB) I urge **Euodia and I urge Syntyche** to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
 - **Colossians 4:13-15** (NASB) For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also **Nympha** and the church that is in her house.
 - **2 Timothy 4:19** (NASB) Greet **Prisca** and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.
3. The local congregation leadership roles of Elder/Bishop/Shepherd and Deacon are given to MARRIED men. As married men, their wives are to be active partners in the ministry. They are to be role models of godly Christian women discipling other women.
- **1 Timothy 3:1-13** (NASB) It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the **husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as

deacons if they are beyond reproach. **Women (Or Wives) must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.** Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

- **Titus 1:5-9** (NASB) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the **husband of one wife**, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.
4. Women are specifically instructed to devote themselves to the discipleship of other women in Christ.
- **Titus 2:3-5** (NASB) **Older women** likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the **young women** to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.
5. Instruction dealing with problems in the church concerning the conduct of women within the church. In Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthian church he addresses a number of problems that were going on in that young congregation. One of the biggest issues was the disorder in their worship gatherings. The women were not appropriately dressed in church, the church was taking the Lord's Supper in divided groups, and people were out of control speaking in tongues. As part of his conclusion to his corrective teaching Paul says these words:
- **1 Corinthians 14:34-36** (NASB) **The women are to keep silent in the churches;** for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

A similar issue is addressed in Paul's 1st letter to Timothy, he gives instruction to Timothy on issues that Timothy needed to address and correct in the church of Ephesus. One of those issues had to do with women who were not demonstrating a godly attitude and conduct. These women were trying to take over the church. Hence we have Paul's instruction as follows:

- **1 Timothy 2:9-15** (NASB) Likewise, **I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing,** modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. **A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.** For it was Adam who was first created,

and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

It should be noted that immediately following this admonition, Paul goes into his instruction on the selection of Elders and Deacons. He makes it clear that these are the individuals who are given the responsibility to oversee and shepherd the local church.

So what can be concluded from these two passages?

1. There was problem in the early church of women trying to take over the church in worship service and subsequently church leadership.
2. Paul's correction was twofold: A. To reinforce the teaching that Peter reiterated in his letter regarding being a godly woman:
 - 1 Peter 3:1-6 (NASB) In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.
3. Because of this problem Paul makes a practice to direct the new churches he plants not to allow these women to behave in a manner where they take things over in church.

Based upon these scriptures and our study, the Elders of MCCC:

1. Recognize and celebrate that all people regardless of race, gender, age or status can be made right with God through faith in Jesus. Women are equal recipients of the twofold promise of the Gospel - forgiveness of sin and the gift of Holy Spirit.
2. Women are vital to the ministry of the church. The work of the church has been carried forward by the service of women from the beginning until now. We are honored and humbled by the many dedicated servant-sisters-in-Christ who heed the call to ministry in the church. These women have responded to the call to ministry and have been gifted for ministry by the Holy Spirit.
3. The ministry of Elders, and Senior Ministers as functioning preaching/teaching elder and deacon has been given to mature godly married men. It is clear from God's Word that such men are best qualified to serve in these roles. The model for the leadership structure for the church is the godly family. Just as husband and wife have roles in the partnership of marriage and family - so do the Elder (man) and his

wife in the same pattern. We see that the place for women to serve in these ministry roles is as godly wives/women - who partner in support, prayer and service with their husbands to provide oversight, shepherding and discipleship of the church.

4. Regarding the teaching on women not teaching or having authority over men. As Elders of MCCC, we believe that in light of the witness of all scripture it is incumbent on us (Elders) to apply these directives given to address the specific problems in the 1st Century church in this way: Women who are gifted in teaching scripture can be permitted by approval of the elders (either directly or through the trust given to the Minister) in gatherings that include men using the following evaluation criteria:
 - I. **Character** - Does this woman exhibit the godly character as described in scripture for a Christian woman? Is she a member of MCCC and has a track record of faithfulness in following our church leaders?
 - II. **Content** - Is what is to be taught or communicated adhere to the standards of sound Biblical doctrine?
 - III. **Context** - Does the context of the teaching event - audience, message, location etc., and adhere to the directives of scripture regarding how the church of Jesus Christ is to function?

These criteria will be used by MCCC Elders to determine the appropriateness of a woman serving in ministry in order to give approval or deny the activity or actions of women serving the church.

As stated above, we see no distinction between men and women in regards to their inherent worth as created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2: 21-23) or in their ability to be full heirs and members of the Church of Jesus Christ. In this regard we hold Galatians 3:28 that in Christ, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This verse does not destroy role differentiation between male and female as outlined in other parts of scripture, it only informs us that all people, regardless of their gender or status can receive the full inheritance that is available in Christ Jesus.

How do we summarize such a complex issue which requires multiple interpretative decisions regarding the biblical evidence? While some pick and choose various scriptures to hold more weight or relevance than others, we have tried to arrive at a position that looks at the entire canon of the New Testament specifically, but also the principles found in the Old Testament as well. With the principle of male headship, there are still tremendous opportunities for women to serve at MCCC, even in various leadership positions. Women can teach children, other women and facilitate ministries under the authority of the elders. Even with the limitations for women to not serve in the role of an elder or senior minister; it must be remembered that the ministry of eldership is the product of a Christ-centered and mature family where husband and wife operate by God given roles (Ephesians 5:22 – Ephesians 6:4) in the partnership of marriage and child rearing. Thus the ministry of eldership includes the partnership and participation of the elders’ wives, requiring these women to be as much the model of Christian maturity as women as their husbands are to be models of Christian maturity as men (See 1 Timothy 3:11, Titus 2:3-5, Proverbs 31:10-31). Women can have significant staff and volunteer leadership roles serving as ministry facilitators, team leaders, counselors, and in finance and administrative positions for example.

As a non-denominational church, we put forth this MCCC statement based on our study of the scripture. The challenge for the church at large is to affirm the inherent worth of all people, male and female, while at the same time express in loving ways the biblical distinctions regarding the roles for men and women. In the overall ministry of Christ's church at MCCC those distinctions are few.

Approved by the Elders: 02 / 8 / 2017