



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

HOLY
BIBLE

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

AT LMPC

A PASTORAL STATEMENT

At the 2017 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, the teaching and ruling elders in attendance considered a report given by an ad interim committee, made up of men and women, on the subject of women serving in the ministry of the church. The report made nine separate recommendations that the assembly evaluated one by one. The entire report is available on the PCA website and at byfaithonline.com, as is a summary of the actions the General Assembly took in response to the recommendations. For individual congregations, the primary takeaways from this report and the actions of the General Assembly are as follows:

1. The PCA is committed to the scriptural teaching that affirms sacrificial male leadership in the home and in the church, thus confining the roles of ruling and teaching elders and deacons to men who meet the biblical qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus.
2. The PCA desires to recognize, develop, and use the gifts and abilities of all its members, joyfully including both men and women in the worship, work, and service of the church.
3. The PCA allows for latitude in how individual congregations will use the gifts of women and unordained men in the church. Practices of individual congregations have varied in what they have permitted unordained members to do. Some churches have appointed female “deacon assistants” or “deaconesses,” for example, to serve as unordained assistants to the diaconate. Some churches have encouraged unordained members, both men and women, to participate in worship by serving as lay readers or as ushers. Others have restricted some of these roles to church officers only, while looking for other ways to utilize the gifts and abilities of women and unordained men. The General Assembly affirmed that these varying ways of encouraging the service of unordained church members, both men and women, may continue.



The pastors and Session fully support the three principles outlined above, greatly desiring to see the gifts of both men and women flourish in the service of Christ and his Kingdom, but also believing that the leadership of the session and diaconate in the church is restricted by Scripture to qualified men. In the last several years, we have actively sought to provide more ways for women and unordained men to serve and use their gifts in the life of our church, within the parameters that we believe are established in Scripture.

We generally have over one hundred women who work alongside elders, deacons, and unordained men on the various committees that organize, plan, and govern the many kinds of service and work in which our church engages. We have a women's ministry leadership team that not only supports the women's ministry in our church but can also serve as a sounding board for the pastors and Session as needed. They were consulted, for example, before the pastoral succession plan in 2017 was announced to the church. Women participate in the leadership of adult Sunday school classes by giving announcements, praying for the needs of the class, facilitating discussions, and occasionally teaching (with pastor and elder approval, which is our policy for all unordained persons in teaching roles).

Women frequently lead discussions in our adult mixed small groups as well as teach women's and youth Bible studies. Women can read Scripture, take up the offering, and serve as ushers during the worship services on Sunday mornings. We hope that the congregation is cognizant of the great appreciation we have for the gifts, wisdom, skills, and abilities offered by women in our church. Even as we affirm our commitment to developing and using the gifts of women in our congregation, however, we recognize that the role of women in the ministry of the church can be a contentious and difficult issue for many to navigate.





In the world today, women work successfully in every kind of career, are elected to public office, and generally outnumber men in seeking both undergraduate and graduate degrees. We are aware that in our culture, prohibiting women from certain positions or roles in the church can be not only surprising and disheartening but deeply offensive. The PCA report, at over 60 pages in length, is an excellent starting point for those seeking a better understanding of the teachings on the roles of women in the church. It offers an extensive examination of the pertinent Scripture passages as well as an overview of the varying roles of women during different periods of biblical and church history. In addition to encouraging members to read this report, however, we would like to explain what our support of male leadership here at LMPC means and what it does not by considering:

- 1) our allegiance to the teaching of Scripture,
- 2) our affirmation of the equal worth of women and men,
- 3) our desire to avoid elevating the cultural standards of any past historical era to the status of Scripture, and
- 4) our beliefs about the roles of women outside the church in other venues.

First and foremost, we believe that the teachings of Scripture should be our most important guide when determining how we are to worship, work, and govern in the church.

Our desire, above all else, is to conform everything we do in the church to the teachings of the Word of God, which we hold to be infallible and inerrant.



In continuing to support the leadership of qualified men in the church (who are not appointed, but duly elected by the entire congregation), we are striving to faithfully structure our church according to the Bible, even when the teachings of Scripture are counter-cultural. We believe that all of us, men and women alike, need to submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture. If we do that with the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit, we will all find ourselves at times made uncomfortable by Scripture that brings into question some of our desires and beliefs. We all need to understand that if the teachings of Scripture never disturb our thinking or never challenge long-cherished ideas, then we may very well be adhering to a self-created religion instead of following our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We trust, however, that everything God has given us in his Word is truly for his glory and our great good.

Secondly, we believe that men and women are equal spiritually, intellectually, and morally.

In the creation story in Genesis, we are told that God created both man and woman in his own image (Gen. 1:26-28). Jesus affirmed the worth and dignity of women again and again during his earthly ministry. He warmly welcomed his friend Mary (sister of Lazarus and Martha) as his student, at a time when Jewish rabbis allowed only men to be educated (Luke 10:38-42). He raised a twelve-year-old girl from the dead and healed women of various diseases, never questioning their value in society or the time that it took for him to take care of them (see Mark 5:21-43). The longest recorded conversation that Jesus had with any particular person is the one between himself and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42). The first witness to his resurrection was a woman (John 20:1-2). Indeed, a central theme of the gospel of Luke is the worth of women.



It is true that, to its great shame, the church has not always correctly valued the contributions and gifts of women, and there are, in fact, multiple examples of church fathers who wrongly questioned the intellectual and/or moral capacity of women. But if we are to follow the example of Jesus, we will reject the denigration of women whenever and wherever it occurs.

Furthermore, the PCA's affirmation of male leadership does not mean that in our church all of the women submit to all of the men. Our church asks every member (male and female alike) to "submit to the government and discipline of the Church," and, when officers are ordained or installed, to promise to "yield them the honor, encouragement and obedience in the Lord to which their office entitles them." We are taught in Scripture that the leadership of these ordained men is to be sacrificial and loving, like that of Jesus who washed his disciples' feet. Our church also affirms the biblical teaching of the priesthood of ALL believers, with everyone called to reflect the roles of prophet, priest, and king in the various spheres to which God has called them. Every member therefore, whether male or female, has an important role to play in the body of Christ, and all of them together serve and work in the church under the authority of the Session and diaconate. It is perhaps also important to point out that just as the Bible does not teach that men are superior to women, it also does not teach that women are superior in certain ways to men. Both men and women are made in the image of God, and men and women are equally in need of a Savior because of the fallen state into which every person is born. In the history of the church and in the history of our country, there have been many attempts to portray women as more virtuous than men, putting women on a pedestal from which they are assigned the task of making their homes or even the entire society around them more principled and wholesome.



Placing the primary burden on women to transform or purify their homes and society is not the teaching of Scripture either. As the writer Dorothy Sayers once put it, “a woman is just as much an ordinary human being as a man. . . .” We want to value women and affirm their equality with men in the sight of God while at the same time being careful not to have wrong, unbiblical expectations of them.

Thirdly, our commitment to the teaching of Scripture alone means that we also want to avoid elevating the cultural standards of any previous era to the status of Scripture.

We seek conformity to Scripture alone, not the promotion of ideals that are rooted in traditionalism or nostalgia. Scripture does not give us a detailed list of the different kinds of work men and women are supposed to do, and in accordance with Scripture, we want to avoid labeling certain kinds of work as “female” and other kinds of work as “male,” based solely on the traditional roles of men and women in a particular era of history. LMPC is, therefore, not a church where women are only welcome to work in the nursery, cook in the kitchen, or create beautiful flower arrangements, though the dedicated and talented work of many women here in these areas is greatly appreciated. We also have, however, elders teaching children’s Sunday school classes and women spearheading church events for hundreds. There are men here who cook and serve food, and women who are integral parts of committees that make decisions involving thousands of dollars. We seek to be a church where every person is equipped to use his or her gifts to the fullest in the service of Christ and his Kingdom.

Finally, we believe that Scripture commends the leadership of women in other venues, such as workplaces and civic organizations (Proverbs 31 and Acts 16:13-15).

While there are some Christians who interpret the biblical teachings on male leadership to mean that women may only fill domestic roles by working at home, always under a male authority, that is not the position of this church. At LMPC, we do have many women who serve diligently and faithfully as the chief caretakers in their homes, managing all of the ever-changing logistics and numerous needs of family life. But we also have female members who sacrificially serve our community and city in a variety of careers, some of them taking on significant leadership roles. Women in our church have served in various elected offices, and other women here work as doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, lawyers, bankers—the list is almost endless. We want to appreciate and support the selfless service of caring for others that the women in our congregation give as wives, mothers, daughters, and friends while also encouraging and supporting women who are giving of themselves, and often helping to provide for their families, by working and serving in various venues outside of their homes.

So, what does this mean for our future? We see our church and our denomination remaining committed to what we believe Scripture teaches about leadership in the church. But we want to pair this steadfast commitment with an equally wholehearted desire to continue to explore the best ways to use the gifts of every member here in every area of church life. We unreservedly affirm the worth of men and women alike and welcome the myriad ways in which male and female members of our congregation can serve the Lord in our church, on the mountain, in our city, and around the world.

This statement was endorsed by the women's ministry leadership team and adopted by the Session on May 21, 2018.

The entire "Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church to the Forty-Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America," can be found at pcaac.org/ad-interim-committee-women-in-ministry/. Additional information regarding the report and its consideration at the 2017 General Assembly can be found by using the search engine of the online magazine of the PCA, byfaithonline.com.