

Christ Central Church Gender Committee Report

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NEED FOR AND PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

Purpose of the Committee

This committee was tasked to consider how gender difference is demonstrated throughout the ministries of Christ Central Church in order to ensure the God-given dignity of each gender is fully recognized and celebrated in church ministries. Specifically, the committee was to consider the roles of men and women, both married and single, in our church and the ways we perceive and minister to single individuals. In doing so, the committee has asked the following questions: What are the roles for women allowed by the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) Book of Church Order (BCO)? Where is CCC simply holding to cultural norms in the order of worship and leadership roles for women? Is there space for inclusivity within these two findings?

It should be noted that issues related to sexuality and broader definitions of gender identity were outside the scope of this committee.

This committee was formed, in part, as a response to the CCC Leader Sexuality and Gender Survey that was conducted in 2022. Relevant to this committee were the following responses from members of the CCC leadership:

- CCC leaders support complementarianism (78%)
- A slight majority of CCC leaders disagree with the PCA position on women in leadership (54%)
- A majority leaders want to see CCC repent of the patriarchal attitudes from the PCA (71%)
- A slight majority of leaders do not think singles struggle to engage/serve at CCC due to a focus on couples/families (58%)
- A majority of leaders believes CCC fully values and affirms the voices and God-given gifts of women (83%)

Sources Informing Recommendations

The committee was asked to gather a wide variety of perspectives on these issues from members of Christ Central Church, including those outside the recognized leadership of the church body. In order to do this, committee members spoke to community group members, to single individuals as well as to married couples, to individuals who have been asked to serve in leadership roles in the past, to those currently serving on ministry teams, to CCC staff members, to individuals who are long-standing members of Christ Central Church and to individuals who joined the church within the last two years.

In addition to conversations within the church body, members of the committee engaged in study of what the Bible teaches on these issues and what leaders in the PCA as well as Christian leaders outside of the PCA teach on these issues. The end of this committee report lists the resources used in this study.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR COMMITTEE'S CONCLUSIONS

God Created Both Man and Woman Intentionally

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

In the original Hebrew text, all references to man (Adam), who was made from the dust of the earth (Adama), had a neutral term meaning "human"... that is, until God takes a portion of Adam's flesh and makes a woman. "Only at that point is Adam called "ish", a man. The Hebrew word "ishah" (woman) hints at her origins from within the "ish" (man)... Interestingly, Adam is never called an "ish" until the "ishah" has been separated from him. It is as if the text is implying that male and female cannot find themselves fully as human without the other."⁽¹⁾

God declared all of creation "good" until God judged that it was "not good" that man was alone. (Genesis 2:18). He said "I will make a helper fit for him." The Hebrew translation for "helper" is *ezer* which originally has two meanings, which depends on its pronunciation. One is "to rescue/to save" and "to be strong". It is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament. Twice it is used in Genesis 2:18 and 2:20 for the woman. It is also used for nations to whom Israel appealed for military aid but sixteen times it is used for God as Israel's helper. (Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29, Psalm 20:2, 33:20, 70:5, 89:19, 115:9, 10, 11, 121:1, 2, 124:8, 146:5 and Hosea 13:9)

'When the word *ezer* is used in Genesis 2:18-20, however, twice the word is used in conjunction with the rare word *kenegdo*. The Lord makes an *ezer kenegdo*, a "helper fit" for man that he might not be alone. This *ezer kenegdo* will provide a level of companionship that the animals are incapable of, and she will alleviate the human's unsatisfactory ("not good") solitude (Genesis 2:18).⁽³⁾ *Kenegdo* means "to what is in front of; according to" as "I will make him a help corresponding to him." In Rabbinic texts, the word means 'similar' and other Hebrew and Greek experts render the word meaning "having the same nature" or "well rendered", opposite as to him or corresponding as to him. **A woman is no better or less than the man. Man and woman are equally and uniquely created by God.**⁽²⁾

God Created Man and Woman To Work Together to Glorify Him

And God blessed THEM. And God said to THEM, 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'. Genesis 1:28

As men and women, brothers and sisters at CCC, we recognize that we have a common enemy who seeks to kill and destroy. As we stand shoulder-to-shoulder, our goal is that we better reflect the image of the Triune God described in the Scriptures and, together, we better fight against this enemy and promote the Kingdom of God.

Scripture Provides Numerous Examples of Women Leaders in the Church

Our own Interim Pastor, Josh Kim, preached a sermon on September 25, 2022 entitled “What is the Purpose of the Church?” based on the scripture 1 Timothy 1:18 through 3:7. In the sermon, Pastor Kim used the scripture to teach on what it means for women to be leaders in the church context. He stated, “There are women leaders throughout the Scripture. There are women judges, women prophetesses, those who spoke the Word of God, taught, disciplined, and guided the church. And in our day today, this is not saying women cannot be anywhere but at home. The Scripture does NOT, I repeat, does NOT prohibit women in leadership positions in general, period.” As a church who strives to be a church that glorifies the Lord and to constantly evolve to be more like what the Lord intended the church to be, this committee learns from the examples provided by scripture. The Bible shows us the value of women in leadership through these biblical references made by Pastor Kim and the committee’s recommendations are made in order to follow that biblical example to the best of our ability as a congregation.

Scripture Provides Numerous Examples of Using Single Christians Mightily in His Church for His Glory

We see throughout the scripture God using single people in His church and for His glory. Singleness is never implied to mean someone is incomplete or “less than” in scripture. In Genesis, we see God creating man and woman to complement one another and work together (Genesis 2:18, 22-24). Although we see Adam and Eve given to each other in marriage, God does not mandate marriage for all people or elevate marriage above singleness. As we have shared above, the creation of woman is as an ezer to man, to be in partnership with man not solely for the purpose of marriage.

God created this partnership to fulfill his mandate to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). This is similar to the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...” (Matthew 28:19-20). God’s intention has always been to grow His kingdom and show us His glory. He calls us to grow His kingdom, not just through marriage and children, but through evangelism and discipleship as well. Faithful adherence to this mandate requires full participation in the kingdom work by both singles and married couples.

There are examples woven throughout scripture of God using single people in the kingdom work but the primary example of this is Jesus himself. Although He was never married, He was able to be both fully God and fully man. (Hebrews 2:17, Philippians 2:5-7, Colossians 2:9) His ministry, life, death and resurrection were not adversely affected by His singleness.

We also see one of the most praised apostles of the new testament, Paul, praise singleness and wish every believer “to remain single as I am.” (1 Corinthians 7:8) Looking through the whole of 1 Corinthians 7 we see that Paul lays out both singleness and marriage as viable options for the life of a believer without elevating one over the other. Many times marriage is lauded as the end goal in the Christian walk, but here we see the scripture outlining that it is not the only way to live a godly life.

POSITION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (PCA)

It was important in the work of this committee to understand the broader context of the PCA, of which Christ Central Church is a member. The committee's recommendations are made with a careful consideration of the BCO so that Christ Central Church would not act outside those bounds.

The italicized statements below come directly from the *Report of the Committee on Women Serving in the Ministry Adopted by 45th General Assembly*. Throughout this report, it is made clear that when it comes to decisions regarding women's role in church leadership, the individual church's session can make decisions that are best for the individual congregation. It is this committee's conclusion that since the positions listed below are being taken in other PCA churches then Christ Central Church should not hesitate to make these positions available to women within our congregation.

Though many ministries among women and children exist where women have universal opportunities to use their gifts, a variety of practices are available to women in teaching ministries, through diaconal work, and in public worship. These practices include:

- Teaching both men and women in the Church
Qualified women to teach [both men and women] ... under the session's authority. women ... teaching men at the invitation and under the [authority] of the Session [as are all teachers in the church], the women's gifts will ... enrich the congregation.
- Serving as Deaconesses
A formal role for qualified women to serve in diaconal work... commission qualified women for this work.... given the title ... "deaconess."
- Participating in public worship
roles in ... public worship service [for] ... women, including leading the congregation in singing, taking up offerings, reading Scripture, distributing elements in the Lord's Supper, leading in prayers, making announcements, et cetera.
- Participating in Seminary Training
Women should also be encouraged to grow in their knowledge of God and the church through seminary courses and training sessions....
- Holding paid and unpaid jobs in church ministry and administration
issue invitations to those women ... who can ... assist the session by offering gifts such as communication, financial planning, real estate development, and human resources expertise, to name only a few. Invitations to women filling [non-ordained] staff positions would of course be expected and encouraged... encourage [the practice of] preferring women for non-ordained staff positions, such as director of children's ministry, director of women's ministry, director of adult education/discipleship, treasurer/accountant, administrator, or director of assimilation [among many others].

This [is] desirable for these reasons: it gives qualified women an outlet for their gifts; it encourages PCA women to pursue theological education, knowing that there will be employment options for them to serve; it gives visibility to women who can model mature female leadership; it demonstrates before the watching world that the church is a body that practices biblical inclusion and women are co-heirs of grace.

FOUNDATIONAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS

As a Church Body, We Are Intended to Work Together

The Church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). As it is written later in the chapter,

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

When the congregation limits the role of women or the role of single members in the life and leadership of the church, it prevents the congregation from fulfilling this biblical intention, which is that each member (women and single individuals included) is equipped in unique ways and are made to work together with other parts of Christ's body, the church. All members of the church body are called to serve together so that the Lord can be glorified as fully as possible through the work of our congregation. The diversity that difference in gender and in marital status creates is part of the divine design of the Lord for His church and our practices within the congregation need to allow for the expression of that diversity, as intended.

Here is an additional analogy helpful to the committee as it considered these issues:

...man and woman are like two hands. Your left hand and right hand are in ways the same but also different. You have bones, muscles, veins, skin, nails. And you have fingers and a thumb on each hand. Your left and right hand are the exact opposite of each other, but the one hand is not more important than the other one. One hand might be a little stronger and is your preferred hand, but you can perfectly use each hand on its own. *Together your hands can do more. They are even stronger than your preferred hand. You can get more done with less effort when using both hands together.* Of course this is only going to work when your one hand is the kenegdo to your other hand.⁽²⁾

Understanding the Difference Between Cultural/Church Norms and Traditions as compared to Denominational Positions is Essential

As the committee spoke to diverse voices within our church body, it became clear that a distinction needed to be made between practices that are traditional within the church and/or common culturally and practices that are in keeping with the position of the denomination. Oftentimes, the norms a congregation follows related to women in leadership and the manner in which a congregation loves and serves single people are, at best, not taught within scriptures or the BCO. At worst, a congregation's widely accepted cultural norms or traditions can be in contrast to the teachings of the Word of God (for example, that marriage is the ultimate goal in the Christian life). As a committee, we want to be sure that any widely

accepted cultural norms are rigorously questioned with a scriptural lens and not perpetuated, especially when harmful, just because that is what has always been done within church tradition.

As a member of the PCA, CCC will follow the BCO. However, it is this committee's desire to end practices that are based solely on tradition, particularly when those cultural norms are hurtful to the women and the single members of our church.

To demonstrate the difference between the BCO and norms, below is a non-exhaustive list of cultural norms that Christ Central Church (as well as many other churches) follow at least to some extent but that are not prescribed by Scripture. These norms are at times stated explicitly but in other contexts are implied and observed. Put differently, some are intentional, while many are a consequence of church leadership failing to address them. We should remove these extra-Biblical cultural norms from our practices.

- Because marriage is considered more valuable than singleness, single people are not given the same consideration for and encouragement to pursue positions of leadership
- Men are presumed to be the leaders in spiritual practices such as:
 - praying over meetings
 - leading worship
 - distributing the elements of the Lord's Supper.
- Women are presumed to be limited to ministry that focuses on other women and children. For example, there is an observed norm that women only teach and lead women or children and may not teach men or co-ed groups.
- Similarly, married women are presumed to be ineligible for certain leadership roles, such as teaching bible studies to a mixed group of adults or serving on or chairing committees, without the participation of their husbands as well.

We thankfully recognize that there are instances where norms such as those are disregarded. However, the traditions and norms persist. Church leadership must explain and direct that such traditional, cultural norms are not biblical, are not prescribed by the BCO and will not control our practices. As stated in the *Report of the Committee on Women Serving in the Ministry Adopted by the 45th General Assembly*, it is crucial that our congregation "observe faithfully all the biblical teaching about the range of ways in which women may use their gifts, and not to be bound by traditions that may be merely cultural."

This is a Heartfelt Matter to Our Sisters and Requires Deep Levels of Trust

It is the desire of this committee that Christ Central Church engage women and singles in our church leadership to the *greatest extent allowed* by the BCO.

However, it is very important to note that even when that goal is reached, while Christ Central Church is a member of the PCA, there will be significant limitations on the role of women in leadership. And, as demonstrated in the results of the poll of leadership, these limitations do not reflect the majority of opinions of the leadership team. Regardless of title, current guidelines prevent any woman from voting at session meetings. This, in turn, limits the influence women, even women in unordained positions of leadership, have at Christ Central Church. We have

observed evidence that the current session considers and respects the wise counsel of women shepherds, deaconesses and other women within the congregation to inform their votes on session matters. However, it is extremely noteworthy that the elders are *choosing* to seek and accept women's counsel. There is no institutional accountability to ensure that elders continue to make this choice in the future. And while it is encouraging that the session chooses to lead generally by consensus, no amount of discussion or other consensus building can outweigh or overshadow the great divide between those who are permitted to speak and those who not only have the right to speak but also to vote.

As a consequence, it is essential that the session and other male leaders recognize that this is a heartfelt issue of trust and vulnerability to CCC's women leaders and other female members. The session and other male leaders must approach this and related issues with humility and sensitivity. Moreover, those men must exercise their authority and responsibility in the church in a manner that consistently shows an awareness and appreciation of the trust being placed in them. Accordingly, it is imperative that not only current ordained leaders, but also men who aspire to ordained leadership, must value and seek input from their sisters in Christ.

This report is complete. The Gender Committee moves that the Session of Christ Central Church accepts each recommendation as it is written. The Committee recommends that when a recommendation is approved and adopted, it becomes policy of Christ Central Church.

The specific recommendations made in the report will be introduced to the congregation as Christ Central Church adopts and implements policies in line with these committee's recommendations and the Gender Implementation Committee's plans.

Resources Used by the Committee

Citations Within the Report

- (1) <https://engediresourcecenter.com/2015/07/02/ish-isah-together-fully-human/>
- (2) <https://ezerkenegdo.org/ezer-kenegdo/>
- (3) <https://margmowczko.com/kenegdo-meet-subordinate-suitable-or-similar/>
- (4) https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/2017_WIM.pdf
- (5) Josh Kim, CCC sermon, September 25, 2022 Title: For The Church: What is the Purpose of the Church? Text: 1 Timothy 1:18-3:8
- (6) 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
chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcjpcqlclefindmkaj/https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/digest/studies/2017_WIM.pdf

Additional Resources Considered

The Controversial Jesus: Jesus, Women and Leadership, Church of the City, NYC, Suzy Silk

The Complementary Roles of Men and Women in the Life and Ministry of Hope Community Church

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-are-complementarianism-and-egalitarianism-what-s-the-difference.html>

Co-Laborers, Co-Heirs by Brittany Smith and Doug Serven

NT Wright: Women's Service in the Church: the Biblical Basis <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/womens-service-in-the-church-the-biblical-basis/>