

A letter from the Elders

winter 2020

After more than a year of biblical study, prayer, honest discussion, and listening to our congregation, as elders, we are inviting Scott Anderson, our lead pastor, to take a few Sundays in the coming months to teach on what the Bible says about women and leadership in the church.

We recognize that our church has come from a tradition that has always sought to honour women as equal in status before God and fully made in God's image. But this tradition has also interpreted the Bible's teaching to put limits on the role of women when it comes to ministry and leadership. Over the years, our church and leadership have made changes in our belief and practice in relation to women's role, inviting and affirming women as full participants in the whole life of the church, ministry and leadership, with the only exception being participation on the board of elders. These changes have come about as a result of reading scripture with fresh eyes and allowing the whole counsel of God, not just a few isolated texts, to guide our convictions and practice.

As a church that is committed to Orthodoxy, our passion and calling is to know and be guided by the Truth that is Jesus, and we do this through humble dependence upon the Spirit, and faithful attentiveness to the Christian scriptures as the revelation of God, seeking to understand them in their original context that they might speak with authority into our context. This is our commitment and desire, which we embrace with an honest awareness that we always "*see through a glass darkly*", much because of the influence of our culture, traditions, self-interest and experience. Rather than dissuading us from rigorous biblical engagement, this awareness simply invites us to keep at it and to do so *on our knees, in community*, inviting the Spirit of Truth to help us see where our previous understanding has been limited by cultural or self-interested blinders, to open God's Word to us, and to turn our hearts to see, celebrate and live in greater alignment with the truth of God's revelation and will.

With this in mind, we have invited Scott to take a few Sundays over the next few months to come again to what the bible teaches regarding the role of women in the life and leadership of the church, and specifically, to help us gain greater clarity and unity in regard to some of Paul's teaching.

As a community of elders, our study, prayer, conversation and listening have led us to a unity of conviction that, interpreted in context, the gospel of Jesus Christ (as revealed in the Old and New Testament) opens the door for women and men to participate together as equal partners in life and leadership. It is our desire and prayer that this season of congregational teaching, prayer and discussion will lead to greater clarity on the biblical invitation and unity as a congregation that we anticipate will then be affirmed by a vote* and worked out in our shared life.

Although we recognize that this conversation may cause anxiety for some, we are convinced that our responsibility as leaders is to facilitate *needed* conversations with hope and faith that the grace of God meets us in these places of increased dependence. However you feel about the questions before us, we ask that you would lean into this conversation with a spirit of humility, love for each other, and faith for God to teach and lead us through His Word - for His glory in, among and through us.

serving Jesus with you,
The Board of Elders

** Our constitution, written in the 1960's, specifies that elders are men. Changing this to allow women to serve on the board of elders requires a 75% vote by our membership. For more information on the history of this topic in the life of our church, read the "Our Journey to Here" document.*