

## **COMPLEMENTARIANISM IN BELIEF & PRACTICE AT COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**From the opening pages of Scripture, we find that God, in His wisdom and providence, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. In light of His good created order, and the fact that men and women both share in divine image bearing, God intends for men and women to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home.**

**These role distinctions do not arise from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but are an integral part of God's plan for humanity, as revealed in Scripture. We should recognize them as God's grace to men and women, protecting, preserving and practicing them for His glory, our joy and for the sake of human flourishing (Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-35; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Peter 3:1-7).**

**Gender does not merely represent a social construct but, instead, represents a reality present in every human from birth. Men and women are not interchangeable.**

**We at Covenant Community Church want to articulate and embody a theological vision of complementarianism. Specifically, when it comes to the consideration of women in ministry, we want to be obedient to Scripture, honor the Lord and give opportunities for women to flourish in their role(s) at CCC. This position paper seeks to describe that vision by explaining what we believe Scripture teaches about gender complementarity as it relates to women in ministry at CCC.**

### **Gender and the Role of Men and Women in Scripture**

**Our foundation for life and ministry starts with the understanding that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word. As affirmed in our Statement of Faith, "We believe the Scriptures are the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice" (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).**

**Any attempt to understand personhood and gender must begin with divine revelation and God's created order.**

**First, we believe that all Christians are charged with the Great Commission. All Christians, both men and women, participate in the ministry of the church.**

**We believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will be involved in the ministry of the church.**

**Jesus welcomed women among His disciples, teaching them (Luke 10:39) and involving them in His ministry (Luke 8:1-3). Paul's words to Titus teach that older women teaching biblical wisdom to younger women is a noble, beautiful and necessary task (Titus 2:3-5). Phoebe, a member of the church of Cenchreae, is commended by Paul and was likely the courier for Paul's epistle to the Romans, indicating her participation in gospel ministry (Rom. 16:1-2). Euodia and Syntyche labored with Paul "side-by-side" in the gospel (Philippians 4:3).**

**We celebrate the biblical picture of men and women serving the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ together. We rejoice in biblical examples of men and women using their gifts in the Church for the glory of God.**

**The Bible depicts a vision of men and women laboring alongside one another in the world and the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 12:4-31). When we don't empower both sexes to engage and use their gifts, in complementarian partnership, both genders suffer, and the mission of the Church—to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations—suffers.**

- We affirm that men and women are both precious to God and are on equal footing in their relationship to God as believers in Jesus Christ where "there is neither male nor female" (Galatians 3:28).**
- We affirm that all men and women are created in the image of God, whether single or married (1 Corinthians 7:7-8; 1 Peter 3:7).**
- We affirm that complementarian theology rightly practiced leads to the greater good and flourishing for both men and women (Psalm 18:30).**
- We deny that the roles of men and women are culturally determined and are without authoritative biblical definition (Genesis 1:26- 27; Ephesians 5:21-33).**

**Second, in light of the belief that male and female image bearers flourish in partnership, we expect that the primary relationship between Christian men and women is that of brotherly and sisterly love.**

**We note that the Bible upholds the metaphor of family as the primary descriptor for male-female partnering in the Church. The concept that is taught in the New Testament is that the Church ought to have the kind of love for one another that is reserved for blood brothers and sisters. This uniquely Christian disposition reminds us that we ought to see each other as a family in a special sense. Therefore, the primary relationship in the local church between men and women is the relationship of brothers and sisters, united in Christ, not subordinates. We affirm that cultivating an environment of brotherly and sisterly love is at the heart of complementarianism. These relationships should be marked by honor, care and sacrifice for one another.**

- We affirm that the primary relationship between men and women in the church is the biblical picture of brothers and sisters working alongside one another in the world and within the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God (Acts 18:26; 21:8-9; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 12; Philippians 4:2,3).
- We deny that single men and women must be married to be meaningful participants in the corporate life of the church (1 Corinthians 7:7).
- We deny complementarianism that leads to subjugation, abuse, or neglect of any man or woman. We denounce any distorted view of Scripture that contributes to the belief that biblical manhood or womanhood includes or permits practices such as marginalization, intimidation, neglect, or abuse of any man or woman (Psalm 11:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:19, 21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; James 1:19-20, 1 Peter 3:7).

Third, we affirm that equal involvement in the church between men and women does not entail interchangeable involvement. Although men and women are portrayed as equals throughout Scripture, we believe the Bible reserves the office of elder/pastor specifically for qualified men. Scripture calls elders to lead the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2), preach the Word (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9), protect the church from false teaching (Acts 20:17, 28-31; Titus 1:9) pray for and visit the sick (James 5:14; Acts 20:35), equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12) and use proper judgment in theological and doctrinal matters (Acts 15). In shepherding, overseeing, leading, caring for and praying for the local church, elders practice sacrificial servant leadership. Therefore, although we encourage all men and women to actively participate in the life of the church, we reserve the office of elder, and the responsibilities unique to it, for certain qualified men within the church. Apart from the role of pastor/elder, we believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will be involved in the ministry of the church. Of particular importance to the church is how these complementary roles function when the church gathers.

- We affirm that the role of pastor/elder is to be held by qualified men as in keeping with the Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- We affirm that the eldership which consists of qualified, godly men (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) is the office ordained by God to lead Christ's Church as shepherds with authority. All members of the church (men and women) are called to follow this authority as the elders humbly serve God's people through the authoritative preaching of the Word, and the pastoral leadership and the care of the Church and its members (1 Timothy 2:8-15).
- We affirm that in marriage, husbands are to lovingly and sacrificially lead in their home as Christ loved and sacrificed for the church, and wives are to graciously and respectfully submit to the leadership of their own husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22, 25; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1).

- We deny that all women are subject to the leadership and authority of all men (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:4,5; 1 Peter 3:1).
- Whereas, both the mandate to fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:27-28) and the mandate given by Christ to evangelize and disciple others (Matthew 28:18-20) was given to men and women equally, so also the spiritual gifts were given by Christ to his Church for the flourishing of the Church as a whole (1 Corinthians 12).

## **GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE AT COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH**

### **WORSHIP**

Both men and women are encouraged to use their gifts in areas of worship such as Scripture reading, presenting ministry opportunities (i.e. Spotlights), prayer, and musical accompaniment.

All those who serve in worship are under the direct authority of the elder/pastor who oversees this area, including those who serve on the worship-music team and lead the congregation in song.

Examples:

1. Men or women may read Scripture or lead in prayer during the worship service; however, the weekly Elder/Pastoral Prayer is reserved for pastors and elders.

### **TEACHING**

The regular preaching of the Word to the congregation during Sunday worship services (the formal weekly gathering of the church body) is restricted to a pastor/elder (or their designee) and is an example of their teaching authority.

Other mixed gender teaching environments are overseen by pastors/elders, who will seek out, equip, and utilize gifted men and women to help lead, teach, and shape these ministries. Gender-specific teaching environments are taught by a leader of the same gender.

Examples:

1. Pastors/elders will have oversight of all Community Groups and Small Groups. Community Groups and Small Groups are both areas of our church community where the “big church becomes small.” As such, they will function under the Biblical principle of male headship as applied to pastors/elders in the big church setting and will be led by qualified men.

**It is recommended that, when possible, the Community Group or Small Group leader's wife (or if single, a qualified woman) co-lead in the discipleship and care of the women of the group.**

- 2. Because the students in our high school and junior high ministry are still living at home under the authority of their parents the teachers in this setting may be male or female and is under the authority of the pastor/elder leading in this area.**
- 3. The teaching of children through the sixth grade is open to men and women and is under the authority of the pastor/elder leading in this area.**
- 4. Other classes (held on Sunday morning or at other times during the week) may be taught by qualified men or women with pastoral/elder oversight.**

## **SERVING**

**All members of the church body are encouraged to use their gifts as brothers and sisters in Christ within a wide variety of serving opportunities.**

**Examples:**

**Opportunities include one-on-one discipleship, evangelism, ushering, greeters, audio-video, tech team, counseling, etc.**

## **PASTORAL STAFF**

**The body of Covenant Community Church adheres to the complementarian view that the role of pastor/elder is to be reserved for qualified men. All ministries of the church have pastoral/ elder oversight. Women and men are encouraged to use their leadership skills within this pastoral framework as directors, assistant directors, and coordinators.**

**Examples:**

- 1. The senior/teaching pastor has all oversight of the regular authoritative preaching of the Word in the weekly meeting of the congregation. He may assign this responsibility to other pastors/elders of the church, or guest speakers.**
- 2. Both men and women may serve in all non-pastoral hired positions. Gender specific roles will be held by the same gender such as Director of Women's ministry. Each of these roles is under pastoral/ elder authority.**

	<u>Complementarianism</u>	<u>Egalitarianism</u>
<u>Value</u>	Men and women are of equal dignity & worth	Men and women are of equal dignity & worth
<u>Church</u>	Men & women have distinct roles	Men & women have interchangeable roles
<u>Home</u>	Men & women have distinct roles	Men & women have interchangeable roles
<u>Creation</u>	Gender distinctions are the result of Creation	Gender distinctions are the result of the Fall

## Bibliography

### Books:

Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Piper & Grudem

This is sometimes referred to as “the blue book” of complementarianism. It is nearly 600 pages and a great resource.

Evangelical Feminism, Wayne Grudem, Crossway Publishing

Men and Women in the Church, Kevin DeYoung, Crossway

Women in the Church, Kostenberger & Schreiner, Crossway

Openness Unhindered, Rosaria Butterfield (more in relation to human sexuality but speaks to many of the issues involved)

### Articles:

Complementarianism & Preaching – Acts 29 Position Paper\*

The Danvers Statement\*

Nashville Statement\*

Let Us Reason Together About Complementarianism\*

\*These articles are available in the foyer – display racks on the pillars on either side of the Welcome Booth