

IX — THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

The important role of women in ministry is clearly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments (see Judg 4-5; Esth 1-9; Acts 18:18-28, 21:8-9; and Rom 16:1-2) and is a vital part of the heritage of the Missionary Church. We believe that it is consistent with both scripture and our heritage that the Missionary Church clearly affirm her understanding with regard to that role.

As members of the body of Christ, all women have been given spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12). Furthermore, God has uniquely gifted certain women for administrative and leadership roles. We recognize that it is God's will that these women engage in church and para-church ministries, such as serving on boards and committees, teaching Sunday school classes that may include men, speaking in services, and serving on ministerial staffs.

We affirm the essential equality of men and women with regard to their standing before God and the inherited blessings of salvation (1 Cor 11:11; Gal 3:28). At the same time, there is a functional difference reflected in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. This difference does not deny the essential equality of men and women, just as God being the head of Christ does not deny the essential equality of the Father and the Son (1 Cor 11:3).

We believe that the New Testament words "elder," "overseer," and "pastor-teacher" refer, with differing implications, to the same office (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Eph 4:11; compare 1 Tim 2:12). These New Testament references indicate that this office should be filled by men. The position of the pastor in a church with one pastor or the senior pastor in a church with multiple staff is the contemporary equivalent of this New Testament office. In addition, denominational and district executives who serve as overseers of the church generally or local churches specifically shall be men. In situations of need and for the duration of that need, a woman may serve in the role and perform the ministries of a pastor-teacher. In 1 Timothy 2:12 in the Greek, Paul says that a woman should not "continue" as the official teacher of a congregation nor "continue" having authority over men. He does not forbid her doing such altogether.

We believe what the New Testament teaches about the role of women in ministry is God's continuing will for his people in every era.

— Adopted by the 1989 General Conference