

# Frequently Asked Questions - Part 1

## 1. When was the decision on women in leadership made? If not recently, why was there a delay?

- The elder board approved the position in January 2023. There were a number of factors at play in the timing of rolling out our position.
  - i. First, a portion of the position statement says, “We will endeavor to change at a pace people can handle, trying our best to stay in step with the Spirit’s leading and guidance.” We take that seriously and rollout is a part of the change-management process.
  - ii. Second, there were several hurdles our church staff and the elder board faced throughout 2023 that reshaped our timeline for rollout. We received those as part of the Spirit’s leading in this process.
  - iii. Third, there is a transition of men serving on the Board every April. We had four board transitions in the course of our study. With each Board transition, it takes time to get new members up to speed on the conversations and get their wisdom. This was true regarding the implementation and rollout of the position as well.
  - iv. Fourth, we had work to do regarding other policies that are related to the policy on Women in Church Leadership. One of them was the aforementioned Pastoral Credentialing document which was created in October 2023.
  - v. Fifth, we rolled out the position to our staff first for feedback. Their feedback helped us better understand some of the questions people might ask and some of the resources we needed to have available. This took time, but was well worth it.
  - vi. Sixth, in early 2024, the Board decided to give Pastor Ryan Paulson a sabbatical over the summer which also delayed our previously planned rollout.
  - vii. Finally, the work was ongoing, but we didn’t feel an impetus to roll this out to the congregation with expediency because there were no concrete plans for implementation. This is the process historically followed by the Board.

- We feel the church body has been brought into the discussion at the appropriate time and their feedback will be considered as we prayerfully discern the implementation of the policy. We do wish that we had mentioned at more than one Quarterly Meeting that this was an item the elders were discussing so that the church could have been praying alongside us.

## **2. What made it necessary to decide on this issue at this time?**

- This conversation has been taking place on the elder board off and on for many years. It was first addressed in a paper Pastor Keating wrote to the board in 2005 and revised in 2015 and 2019. When Ryan Paulson was interviewed, it was agreed upon by the elders that they would be willing to study this issue. The conversation began in 2020 and the study picked up in earnest in 2022.
- There are three primary reasons this discussion needed to happen:
  - i. Our practices and policies were out of alignment. We had women pastoring, but could not call them pastors. In addition, former elder boards decided to allow women to be licensed and qualify for clergy tax deductions. We felt we either needed to reduce their functioning or give them consistent titles. We also had women serving in and leading worship, not “remaining silent.” That had been the case for years. We needed to have a position that clearly outlined and articulated a consistent practice as a church.
  - ii. We had no elder-sanctioned governing policy to follow regarding the roles of men and women. There was an absence that our elders needed to resolve.
  - iii. We continued to have high-caliber women serving and leading at EFCC and needed to have an answer about the limitations of their roles and service at EFCC.

## **3. Why wasn't the church body allowed to vote on the role of women in the church?**

- The items the church body votes on are clearly stated in our Constitution and Bylaws. Since the foundation of EFCC, the issue of women in church leadership has not been a topic elevated to the level of congregational vote.

**4. Women in leadership (Pastor) has been a relatively recent event in church history but scripture is unchanged. Why the change of scripture interpretation?**

- While the terms complementarian and egalitarian are new to church history (In the 1980s, the term “complementarian” was created by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, and the term “egalitarian” appears to have been created in the mid-20th century), women have been serving the church in a variety of different ways since its inception. In our course of study, the Elder Board had the opportunity to learn from Dr. Jim Smith about the impact and roles of women in the church throughout history (one of his areas of focus). This is a teaching that Dr. Smith has agreed to bring to EFCC and we will be coordinating with him on the timing. Dr. Smith has a handle on and will be bringing an overview or a deeper understanding of all sides of the issue

**5. Titus 2:9-11 tells us to avoid controversies, dissensions, & quarrels...they are unprofitable and worthless. Why open us to division?**

- To say that our church was not already “divided” on this issue is not an accurate reflection of the whole church’s conviction about this topic. We have always had people at EFCC who disagree about the roles of men and women. People who held a different conviction about this topic operated respectfully at EFCC for years, setting a good and godly example of how one can disagree, but still find unity through love. It is accurate to state that the discussion of 1 Timothy 2 was not out in the open like it is now.
- We believe the passage intended to be cited was Titus 3:9-11. It reads as follows, “<sup>8</sup> The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. <sup>9</sup> But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”
- We think it’s at least worth asking if this is the kind of topic Paul had in mind and what it looks like to “stir up division”. We don’t feel like addressing an important topic like this is the kind of division Paul had in mind, otherwise, we would avoid all theological topics that have a

divergence of opinion. Paul's admonition doesn't apply to merely discussing a difficult topic, but how we each respond to others who disagree.

- The reasons we addressed the topic now are outlined below.

**6. If this change has already been decided what other cultural issues should we expect in relation such as gay marriage, gay pastors/elders, etc?**

- To answer this question directly, you should expect no movement theologically or in practice on the issue of gay marriage or gay pastors/elders. In addition, we have a very strong statement about marriage and human sexuality in our church Constitution. It would take a church vote to amend any of those views.

**7. Jesus chose only men to preach and grow the church. Women were never chosen for this. Why would we change this?**

- Women were the first "announcers" of the Good News in each Gospel account. 3 of 4 gospels plainly state that either Jesus (Mt. 28, Jn. 20) or the angels guarding the tomb (Mk. 16) instruct women to go tell the disciples. Luke's account of the resurrection records that the women told the 11, but not that they were instructed to do so.
- Women were very prominent in Jesus' ministry. They were considered "disciples." See Luke 8:1-3.
- The Great Commission given by Jesus is almost universally applied to all believers, not just men, and in it, Jesus clearly tells His disciples to "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Were we to restrict this command to men, we would be obligated to remove every female missionary from the field who is in a teaching role.

**8. Where in the Bible can you justify women in the pulpit?**

- This concept is written about at length in the handout we created, but since the term "in the pulpit" was not, we answered below.
- While there is not a passage that directly allows men or women to preach "in the pulpit", we find principles that would show women have been actively participating in the gathered assembly since the time of the New Testament:
  - i. To the Corinthian body of believers addressing the gathering of their "church service": "But every wife/woman (same Greek

word) who prays or prophesies" (1 Cor. 11:5) assumes that women will be speaking publicly to the gathered assembly. This direction is the same for men in verse 4: "every man/husband (same Greek word) who prays or prophesies".

- ii. When addressing the orderliness of their "church service": "When you come together, each one (also translated anyone or every one) has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. (1 Cor. 14:26) There is no gender distinction given in each one.
  - iii. When addressing the church in Ephesus, Paul, addressing our unity in Christ, says to the Ephesians: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. " (Eph. 4:11-12). The list does not distinguish that some of the gifts are given to men and some to women.
- It is important to note that we can find no verses that support men "teaching from the pulpit," nor can we find any verses that support only men "teaching from the pulpit."

**9. Can you explain the word "brothers" in 1 Cor 14:26? Does this imply that only male believers are being addressed?**

- For context, 1 Corinthians 14:26 reads, "What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up."
- The word used for brothers is the Greek word *adelphos*. It can either be masculine or gender-neutral - similar to the way "mankind" is used. Strong's Concordance defines its usage as: "a brother, a member of the same religious community, especially a fellow Christian." Context determines how the author is using the word. Since Paul is using the word in a discussion about people participating in public worship and we already know that men and women were full participants, the word appears to be being used to refer to "members of the same religious community." The NIV translates it, "What then shall we say, brothers and sisters?" This seems to be accurate given the context.

## **10. Why so secretive in your deliberations? Why exclude members from the dialog?**

- We do not believe that our deliberations were secretive, they were private as are most matters the elders discuss. The congregation is not made privy to the deliberations of the board on many topics. Members were represented in the dialogue by the elders who were nominated and elected by the members of the church. We have 25 elders who serve in various ways and in various groups within the church.
- The chairman of the board did announce at a Quarterly Meeting that we were discussing the topic of women in church leadership.
- We have several team members taking every call, keeping every coffee appointment, visiting every ABF, and meeting with anyone who wants to talk. This work is ongoing and will continue to be part of our approach moving forward.

## **11. 1 Timothy 2:13 Paul says, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." If this was just a cultural thing he wouldn't have gone back to the order that God created.**

- This statement assumes that what Paul means when he says "Adam was created first" is that Adam was created with authority over Eve. However, there is nothing in the verse explicitly about Adam's headship or authority. One must make an interpretive leap to identify the point Paul is making. The leap is *either* to state that Paul's using the argument to state men have headship over women and are to be leaders within the church (which has no Biblical grounding that we're aware of), or as a way to lead into his point about Eve being deceived (then the point is about false teaching rather than gender roles). The context of the illustration should dictate the way it's interpreted - even when the illustration is from creation. The fact that we have no Scripture that backs up women being subservient to men, we believe the latter of the two interpretive leaps is more in line with the teaching Scripture as a whole as well as being more in alignment with what Paul states as his reason for writing the letter - addressing false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-4). For a more complete discussion of Genesis 2:18 (*ezer*) and Genesis 3:16, please see the handout.

**12. It feels like you are trying to interpret Scripture to fit your desires, not to seek God's will on this matter. How have you prayed and seen God answer?**

- This question is best answered in a one-to-one conversation where discussion can be had about specific passages and interpretations of the passages can be discussed. Our elders are willing to meet with any of our members who have questions about the interpretation of passages from Scripture. We look forward to those discussions as we believe that they're mutually edifying.

**13. Are you considering ordaining women pastors?**

- The church would consider ordaining women pastors. The elders are currently looking at our ordination policy to bring clarity to our process. It has been a long time (Chico Goff on 1-23-96) since EFCC has ordained anyone.

**14. Women have special talents for different ways of influencing people than men do. Wouldn't be it ineffective for women to use gifts and tools given to men?**

- This would be the true nature of the traditional complementarian position on this issue. However, in our church, there were no limitations to the roles of men in the church based on a theological conviction, only roles that women were not able to hold. In the various lists of gifts of the Holy Spirit, there is never a distinction made between the way men and women are gifted. Additionally, as we read about the Spirit falling on the church at Pentecost, we see the Spirit doing the same things in males and females (Acts 2:17-18).

**15. What is the criteria at Emmanuel Faith for someone getting the title of Pastor, whether they are a man or woman?**

- We have copies available for people interested in seeing the Elder Board's 2023 Pastoral Credentialing document. For those reading an electronic version of the document, [here is a link](#).

**16. John McArthur uses Gen 3 to justify that women should not lead in the church, as listed in references. Why did the elder board decide John's view was incorrect?**

- John McArthur was one of many scholars we reviewed during our time of study on the topic. In the updated version of the handout, we cite MacArthur's work extensively (it was included at least in part as a response to this question and others similar). It should be noted that volumes have been written on the created order implication to the discussion of women in church leadership. Our elders and pastors are available to discuss the varying scholars, passages, and positions we reviewed during our deliberations.
- To answer the above question directly, we do not interpret Genesis 3 as a "justification that women should not lead in church" for 3 reasons. First, that's not the context of Genesis 3. It has nothing to do with polity or leadership in the church. Second, the context of Genesis 3 is the Fall (vv. 1-13) and subsequently the curses associated with sin. MacArthur and others point to Genesis 3:16 as reasoning for male headship, however, we believe it's unwise to create systems (polity in this case) of the curses of sin rather than God's original design.

**17. In the 20th century, 4 protestant churches started ordaining women. In the 21st, all 4 ordain LGBT. How do you redefine gender roles and not sexual roles?**

- While there have been four denominations that ordained women and then ordained LGBT men and women, there are also churches and denominations that have not gone in that direction. There are numerous denominations right now that allow women to serve in pastoral roles, but maintain a historic Christian view on sexuality: Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Covenant Church, Foursquare Church, Assemblies of God, and others. There are other very conservative denominations such as Converge Baptists, (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference) which do not have a strict, denomination-wide prohibition on women serving as pastors. The decision is left to local churches to determine their own policies based on their interpretation of Scripture. The Evangelical Free Church in America (EFCA) functions similarly where local assemblies can make their own decisions about the roles of women while their official policy limits the role of Senior Pastor to men.



**18. If Bible passages are up for interpretation in light of culture, is divorce up for interpretation too?**

- Anytime we determine what a passage of Scripture means, we are participating in the act of interpretation. All Bible passages must be interpreted - to suggest that some passages are up for interpretation and others are not, is inaccurate. There are principles of good hermeneutics that are used to ensure that interpretation and application are done soundly. Old Testament scholar John Walton accurately stated, "It's not a document that was written to us. We believe the Bible was written for us, that it's for everyone of all times and places because it's God's Word. But it wasn't written to us. It wasn't written in our language, it wasn't written with our culture in mind or our culture in view. Therefore, if we want to get the best benefit from the communication, we need to try to enter their world, hear it as the audience would have heard it and as the author would have meant it, and read it in those terms." Trying to understand the world in the Scripture were written is an important part of sound Biblical interpretation.
- We have taught about divorce two times in the last few years. You can find sermons on 1 Corinthians 11 and Matthew 5 online.

**19. Elders must be men. Pastors may be men or women. Does the head or lead pastor need to be an elder?**

- Yes. Section 2:B:1 of the Constitution and By-laws reads, "Pastoral Elders consist of the Lead Pastor and all Associate Pastor(s). Pastoral Elders may also include Assistant Pastor(s) and other key staff as appointed by the Board of Elders upon recommendation of the Lead Pastor."

**20. Deacons and deaconesses were roles in the early church. Why don't we have those roles in our church? Will we have deacons/deaconesses in the near future?**

- EFCC has had deacons/deaconesses in the past. The elders have not had any official conversations about adding the role again. We'd want to research why the role was eliminated at EFCC so that we could learn from previous Board decisions.

