

2006 Women in Ministry

Presented by the Commission on Christian Action and the Commission on Biblical Gender Equality, adopted by the delegates to the 121st Covenant Annual Meeting.

Overview

From the mother of Moses to Mary the Mother of Jesus, from Deborah leading the armies of Israel to victory, to Priscilla who worked by the side of the Apostle Paul, from the beginning, women have had a central role in God's plan for the salvation of the world. In 2006, the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) celebrates the 90th anniversary of Women Ministries and the 30th anniversary of the denomination's decision to go on record as affirming the ordination of women. It is the joint recommendation of the ECC Christian Action Commission and the ECC Commission on Biblical Gender Equality to fully affirm Christ's call to all women to present, share, and use all their gifts to further his kingdom.

Biblical Understanding

Whether ordained or not, women are co-laborers for Christ (Romans 16:1-6). Service to Christ presupposes unity and giftedness, and God has been faithful to provide these. All of us as God's children are accountable to God to affirm and use these gifts. Furthermore, God calls us to open ourselves to receive the ministry of women who are gifted and called by God.

1) Unity. We have all been made God's children, and heirs through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). God has united us by making us one body, giving us one Spirit and one Lord. He has called us to keep a peaceful, gentle and humble unity, bearing with one another in love. God has also acted in Jesus Christ to "destroy the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). The barriers that limited the service of some of God's people have been removed. "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16). Therefore, Christ has opened the door for us to live in unity, knit together in his body, affirming and releasing one another to service in Jesus' name.

2) Gifts. "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13). This passage teaches that gifts are not self-generated but received from Christ himself. We are faithful to the Lord when we recognize and use these gifts as he intended.

Declaration

"The Evangelical Covenant Church affirms women in all ministry and leadership positions within the church, both lay and clergy. We believe that the biblical basis for service in the body of Christ is giftedness, a call from God, and godly character—not gender."

We commend women as co-laborers for Christ, and give thanks for those who have faithfully heard, accepted and responded to God's call. Many have shared their God-given gifts with the church and their community at great personal cost. We give thanks as well for those in the body who have encouraged women to share their gifts, and who have received these women and their gifts with joy.

Response

Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has given us a new way of relating to one another, as well as to God. Therefore, we ask each man and woman to listen for God's call, and to accept and act on his and her giftedness, in order to fulfill God's purpose for his or her life. We also ask each congregation to welcome and provide opportunities for the cultivation of each man's and woman's gifts, so that the body might grow into the fullness of Christ.

To this end, we call on all members and friends of the Evangelical Covenant Church to welcome:

- women and men as senior pastors, associate pastors and staff ministers;
- women and men candidates equally by all pastoral search committees;
- women and men to preach;
- women and men lead worship services, including prayer;
- women and men serve communion;
- women and men serve on church councils and boards;
- women and men serve as church chairpersons, elders, overseers, and deacons;
- women and men teach all ages and sexes;
- women and men into opportunities to use their gifts as they explore God's call in their lives.

We call on all members and friends of the Evangelical Covenant Church to affirm the work of Women Ministries in:

- development of leaders who cultivate the spiritual formation of women;
- ministries of compassion, mercy and justice relating to advocacy for women and children at home and abroad;
- regional and denominational inspirational conferences for women in the Covenant;
- Women's History Commission to record contributions of women in the Covenant.

We also call on all members and friends of the Evangelical Covenant Church to support the Association for Covenant Clergy Women in its support and advocacy for women serving God through the Ordered Ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

May we all respond to God's call on our lives to use our gifts to do "kingdom work" together.

1. *Called and Gifted*, (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 2004), 2.

Resources:

Called and Gifted This booklet can be downloaded or ordered online through Covenant Bookstore. Additionally, you can purchase the video through the **bookstore** or watch it online **here**.