ChristCommunity
an Evangelical Free Church

MALE & FEMALE IN CHURCH STRUCTURE & POLITY

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Male and Female in Church Structure and Polity
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CHURCH POLITY

INTRODUCTION

In seeking God's design for male and female leadership in the church, we must first acknowledge that this task requires much grace and humility since devoted and biblically faithful Christians hold differing views on this secondary, but very important, matter.

As we have pursued God's design regarding men and women in church leadership, we first reflected upon God's design for male and female throughout the biblical text. (See our position paper: *A Biblical Theology of Male and Female.*) In observing the grand narrative of Scripture, we are convinced that the overriding purpose in the creation of humanity as male and female was for humans to bear the image of God together in order to rule and reign over creation in deep dependent relationship with God and with one another. This dependency is how they were to fulfill the commission to productivity through their work and generation of family.

Further, we understand that our relationships with God and with one another have been deeply fractured because of the fall of humanity into sin, but that through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, we may experience true reconciliation with God and each other. Therefore, in redemption, male and female are to be reunited in order to embody and share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ by which the Holy Spirit reconciles the broken and sinful world to the family (the church) of our loving Heavenly Father. In this way we are already living into our hopeful future of the union of the bride of Christ, the church, with her bridegroom, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which will be fully realized in the new creation.

While some in the evangelical church have seen the leadership dynamic between male and female as one of hierarchy (men leading as women follow), others have seen the dynamic as a quest for equivalent opportunities (men and women leading in ways that are the same in all areas). Since the late 1980s these views have been described as complementarianism and egalitarianism. Both views have legitimate scriptural support and continue to be debated vigorously.

While acknowledging the merit of these views, we are persuaded that the primary emphasis in the text is neither on hierarchy of genders,[1] nor a flattening out of genders, but rather on a united *relationship* of alliance[2] between the genders. If we compare gender to musical notes, and consider males and females as totally other, with distinctions exaggerated, the music produced will be a disjointed cacophony. If, on the other hand, we consider ourselves as identical with no distinctions, our music will be plainsong. However, if we are designed to be distinct and also in a united relationship with one

1 The term *gender* is rapidly evolving in the Western world and particularly in the English language at this time. For clarity, we do not mean either "gender role" or "gender identity" when we use the term in this paper. Rather, we mean "the biological sex assigned at birth."

2 Carolyn Custis James describes this relationship as a blessed alliance, *Lost Women of the Bible,* 37.

another, our music will reveal a beautiful harmony as we relate to one another, complementing one another.[3] Therefore, at Christ Community we describe our view of men and women in the church, in leadership and participation, as one of *complementary alliance*. In this, we humbly advocate for a nuanced view of the leadership dynamic, embracing both genders in leadership as essential to the mission of the church. As members of the church family, men and women serve together in unity and distinction, as allies on mission together. Andrew Wilson summarizes this view:

> *They [the Scriptures] present us with a vision of genuine complementarity in which men need women, and women need men, and the image of God is expressed as both serve together. Remove either, or diminish the value of either, and we are all impoverished. The church is a family, and we will only flourish to the extent that we value, honor and esteem both mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.*[4]

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH: CHURCH AS FAMILY

As God's image-bearers, our view of relationships begins by focusing on the character of God himself rather than human categories.

THE HOLY TRINITY

One of the foremost doctrines in Christian theology is the Trinity. The Trinity is best described as the understanding that God exists as three persons and one substance. Thus, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and still one essence. "God is one, yet self-differentiated."[5] Each person of the Trinity is unique and deserves distinction: the Father (Exodus 4:22-23; 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; John 6:27; 1 Corinthians 8:6), the Son (Matthew 1:13; John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3), and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Nehemiah 11:16-17; Isaiah 11:2, 63:11-13; Acts 5:3-4, 28:25-27; 2 Corinthians 3:7-8). Each person is distinct from the other two, and thus, they are not identical. God is both one and three. God is unity in diversity.

God is also love (1 John 4:8). For God to be love, love requires a relationship. God has eternally existed as a being in a loving relationship — a loving community — with himself; each person moves distinctly from the other, but still in concert with the other. Because God himself is love, love also has been woven into the fabric of creation. God is spirit and ultimately transcends gender (though the Son chose to inhabit a gendered body for the rest of eternity), yet we need not look further than the character of God to see the grounds for a unified relationship between genders. Jesus' desire for his people to be in a union reflective of his own trinitarian relationship is expressed in his prayer in John 17:21: "May they all be one, as you Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me."

Our united resemblance to the Trinity is indeed the most compelling witness to the world. And in order to reflect himself, God's desire for the genders is unity in diversity, moving in distinct ways in harmony with each other. The church lives out this resemblance as a newly constituted family.

3 This illustration is adapted from Andrew Wilson

4 Andrew Wilson, *Beautiful Difference: The (Whole-Bible) Complementarity of Male and Female,* The Gospel Coalition, May 20, 2021, *https://thegospelcoalition.org/article/beautiful-complementarity-male-female*

5 Cross, F. L., and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

CHURCH COMPRISED OF FATHERS, MOTHERS, BROTHERS, SISTERS

Those who are found in Christ Jesus belong to a family. They are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, who have been adopted into the family of God. Paul says in Romans 8:15-17:

> *"For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs — coheirs with Christ — if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him."*

A number of things are clear here. First, both sons and daughters (male and female) share in the same Holy Spirit. There are not different spirits for male and female; there is one Holy Spirit, and this Spirit celebrates male and female and their respective distinctiveness. Brothers and sisters are both unique contributors to a family, and thus are distinct from each other while still being unified in one family. Second, there is no priority of one gender over the other in the family of God. Both are equal members, sharing in the Holy Spirit together. Alastair Roberts states:

> *Women can represent God's divine activity in ways that men cannot. Men and women are not interchangeable, but different genres of human persons. Gender is not a hierarchy, but is a constitutive difference.... The two hands of humanity need their full strength to operate together.*[6]

This family imagery is also presented as lived reality in John's letters. "See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children — and we are!"[7] This new family is explored extensively in Pauline theology where it becomes the overriding metaphor in which members of the Lord's church are called to live in the "household of faith." Therefore, whether one is married or single, each one who is in Christ Jesus is enfolded into this new family. Each gender is necessary, and each gender needs the other in order to form the family.

Like the Trinity, there is a priority of inclusion (continuous welcome[8]), unity, and love that exists within the household of God. In a world that often defines family order in terms of hierarchy, primogeniture,[9] and patriarchalism, this model manifests love in relationships, unity in diversity, and inclusion for all who call upon the name of Jesus. God's family is a counter-cultural space; it was counter-cultural in the first century and continues to be today.

6 Alastair Roberts, Lecture "Theology of the Sexes 17 – God Gender and Salvation" *https://wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=30260*

7 1 John 3:1

8 "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). Theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer used this in the context of gendered relationships in his published wedding homily.

9 Primogeniture is the right or custom of a family estate or inheritance is passed solely to a chosen person instead of a shared inheritance. This could be firstborn son or daughter or another relative. Typically, this custom is based on some type of cultural or contextual right.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are given to all members, regardless of gender or status (Romans 12), for the building up of the body in unity.

Within this inclusive, interdependent household of faith, the Holy Spirit distributes his empowering, mission-contributing gifts of grace to all members of the family. In Romans 12:6-8 the Apostle Paul writes:

> *6According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; 7if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; 8if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.*

This means the Holy Spirit pours out gifts on sons and daughters (male and female). Paul writes about how and for what reason these gifts are given. First, these gifts are bestowed as the Lord wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). These gifts of grace are indeed just that; gifts. They are gifts from the Holy Spirit who chooses how and when they are distributed. They may also align with our God-given strengths through birth and learned expertise. Paul makes it clear that these are gifts of grace that have God as the source. Second, the gifts are given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4–8). These gifts are to serve the household of faith, in order to strengthen and build it up by means of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere is there a distinction on gender for receiving these gifts of grace.

AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

In this unique, inclusive family, how are authority and leadership to be understood? We look first to a biblical understanding of authority in the church.

ALL AUTHORITY IS IN CHRIST JESUS

Without question, the foremost authority for anyone in the church is Christ Jesus. We have received this claim of authority from his own lips as well as from the pen of Paul:

> *Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18)*

> *1 Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2since you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him." (John 17:1–2)*

> *20 He [the Father] exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens —21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church." (Ephesians 1:20–22)*

AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

As Jesus ministered on the earth, he often delegated authority to his disciples over unclean spirits, demons, and disease (*e.g.,* Matthew 9:5–6, 10:1; Luke 9:1, 10:19), but the source of the authority remained in him. Similarly, after Jesus' resurrection and bodily return to the heavenly places, his *delegated* authority remained on earth through his apostles — the apostolic witness of those who had been chosen and who had access to firsthand knowledge of him (*e.g.,* Matthew 16:18–19). This apostolic witness included Paul, who encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–6). Paul explained in his second letter to the Corinthians that his letter to them was "in keeping with *the authority the Lord gave me* for building up and not for tearing down" (2 Corinthians 13:10, emphasis added; see also 10:8).

Through these apostolic witnesses, the body of the New Testament was inspired ("God-breathed") and written so that we "may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God" and "may be complete, equipped for every good work" (John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). As time passed, the apostolic witnesses slowly died off and the New Testament texts were recognized as Scripture and canonized with the Hebrew Bible. At this point, Christ's delegated authority for the church shifted from the apostles and the Hebrew Scriptures to the Old and New Testaments. In the here and now, the word of God is how Jesus speaks to and exercises his authority in the church through the Holy Spirit.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

In all times God seems to have given a responsibility to every member of his kingdom. Israel is called to be a "kingdom of priests" and God's "holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), with each person responsible for bearing God's name well and expanding God's kingdom across the earth. Peter reiterates that call for the church: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). But does this responsibility also imply authority, and if so, what kind of authority?

In Acts 15, when the church faced the biggest doctrinal danger since its inception, the apostles and elders, together "with the whole church," decided the doctrinal stance of the church and executed a policy to protect this doctrinal decision. Significantly, no gender distinction is made in the text. The narrator simply states that the whole church participated in the decision process.

This example of collective discernment lines up with the call to be part of a royal priesthood.

Christ Community holds to a congregational polity, whose collective responsibility is to align the church's doctrine and presence with Christ, our authority, and his word. In so doing, we have the responsibility, in submission to the Holy Spirit, to elect our elders from the congregation. Congregational polity does not imply that each individual church member has unilateral authority. Rather, even in congregational churches, doctrinal and governmental oversight are usually exercised by a smaller group of people (the pastor, the elders or deacons, a leadership team, etc.) that is appointed by and accountable to the local congregation.

DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY TO LEADERS

In response to Christ's authority, God has called some individuals and bestowed spiritual gifts "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12) — in other words, to lead the local church and bring her into unity and spiritual maturity. Within the church, these leaders have additional responsibility according to the degree of their calling, gifting, and appointing. These leaders might, for example, shepherd small groups, facilitate hospitality, lead praise and vocal worship, preach, teach, serve, manage property and tithes, promote and protect the gospel, or exercise spiritual and doctrinal oversight. In addition to gifting and calling, this delegated responsibility is often also contingent on demonstrated levels of skill, faith, and good character (see, for instance, the requirements for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1–13).

LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Given this biblical understanding of the church family, we understand God's design for men and women in church leadership to be one of *complementary alliance*.[10] That is, men and women are designed for interdependent union as they humbly offer their good and God-given, unique contributions to all aspects of the cultural mandate and the church's mission—including the leadership of that mission. By leadership, we mean those serving the body by providing guidance, direction, and organization.

WOMEN AND MEN AS LEADERS

While leadership in a sin-corrupted world is often understood primarily or exclusively as power *over* others, Jesus radically redefined leadership for his followers as the responsibility to serve and sacrifice *for* others. The Gospel of Mark records these words:

> *42 Jesus called them over and said to them, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles*
> *lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you. On the*
> *contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first*
> *among you will be a slave to all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to*
> *give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42–44)*

Leadership in the local church is exercised in humility as an act of service. In the local church, the Holy Spirit gifts and equips men and women for leadership (Romans 12:8).

Though the twelve apostles were male, Jesus had many female disciples (Luke 8:1-3). There is good evidence that women served as deacons (Romans 16:1; 1 Timothy 3:11). Additionally, the book of Acts records not just the contributions of men but of many women as well in the early growth of the Christian movement (Acts 1:12-26, 9:36-43, 12:6-19, 16:11-40, 17:16-34, 18:1-28).

10 John McKinley has coined the phrase "necessary ally" to capture the idea of the Hebrew word *ezer* in Genesis 2:18, a word that is frequently translated as "helper." The Hebrew word intends none of the subordinance that the English idea of "helper" does. The woman is, rather, an "indispensable companion" and a "necessary ally." We lean on this understanding in our term *complementary alliance*. John McKinley, "The Need for a Third Way Between Egalitarianism and Complementarianism," January 27, 2022, *http://fathommag.com/stories/the-need-for-a-third-way-between-egalitarianism-and-complementarianism;* see also NET Genesis 2:18, note 57.

Furthermore, Paul entrusts women with prominent leadership responsibilities. Priscilla (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19) and Nympha (Colossians 4:15) both hosted house churches in their homes. Mary (Romans 16:6), Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Romans 16:12) are all said to work hard for the Lord. Syntyche and Euodia (Philippians 4:2) also apparently shared some prominence in the Philippian church, as Paul identifies them as loyal co-laborers — a title he often associated with such prominent males as Timothy (Romans 16:21), Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23), Apollos (1 Corinthians 3:9), Epaphras and Luke (Philemon 24). It can also be suggested that Chloe was in some position of prominence, as she wrote to Paul to inform him of the Corinthian waywardness (1 Corinthians 1:11). Additionally, in Romans 16:7 Paul refers to someone named Junia (a feminine name) as being "outstanding among the apostles." The implication is that Junia was one of the apostles (though not one of the twelve) who had risen to great prominence.

In light of this, women and men at Christ Community use the gifts of leadership to serve the family in both staff and non-staff capacities.

WOMEN AND MEN AS PASTORS AND PREACHERS

Additionally, Christ Community recognizes that some men and women have been gifted and trained for the work of pastoral leadership and/or pastoral preaching. (Note: in this context the language of "pastor" does not refer to the office of elder but rather to gifts of shepherding. See more in the "Men as Elders" section.)

Not every woman or man with the title of pastor at Christ Community is gifted or trained for the work of pastoral preaching. However, for qualified men and women alike who are gifted and trained in the work of pastoral preaching, Christ Community encourages the exercise of that gifting and training in our gatherings.

We understand the contemporary act of delivering a sermon (*i.e.*, the offering of an explanation and application of an authoritative text) to be much more closely related to the New Testament concepts of "preaching" *(kēryssō),* "exhortation" *(parakaleō)* and "prophecy" *(prophēteuō)* than the "teaching" *(didaskō)*[11] that some understand the Apostle Paul restricting to men only in 1 Timothy 2:12. Nowhere does the Bible restrict "preaching" *(kēryssō),* "exhortation" *(parakaleō)* and "prophecy" *(prophēteuō)* to men only. In fact, we see examples of women prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5.[12]

The work of pastoral leadership and preaching sermons in a church service is open to trained and gifted women and men. What seems to be reserved for a particular group of males is the work of guarding and protecting the church family.

11 John Dickson argues convincingly that "teaching" *(didaskō)*, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus), is a technical term that does not mean *"expound* or *explain*…but *transmit words intact."* He adds: "The fact that a 300-word Bible passage usually inspires a 3,000 word sermon is proof enough that far more is going on in an exposition (and far less) than preserving and laying down the apostolic deposit" (John Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Biblical Invitation for Women to Preach*, 32, 68).

12 For a much more detailed discussion of 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, see the "Male and Female in Redemption: Epistles" section of the paper *A Biblical Theology of Male and Female.*

MEN AS ELDERS

The ultimate accountability for protecting the church family — by discerning what accords with sound doctrine[13] and exercising church discipline[14]— is entrusted to elders.[15] We are humbly persuaded that the pattern in Scripture indicates that this particular elder leadership responsibility is uniquely entrusted to qualified, chosen, and called males.

In Genesis 2:15-16 God entrusts the male human with a greater weight of accountability for guarding the garden and keeping the command not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. While one could argue that this situation is simply because the woman has not yet been formed, it is important to observe that even though the female human is the first to eat from the prohibited tree, God addresses the male human first when confronting the humans about their sin. Additionally, the New Testament explains it is through Adam's trespass (not Eve's) that sin enters the world and death comes to all (Romans 5:12-17). Further, the offices of priest and king in Israel's history are held exclusively by men, and when Jesus appoints the unique group of apostles who will be responsible for preserving the doctrine and discipline of the church, they are also men.

In the New Testament church, we believe the office of elder/overseer continues this pattern.[16] They are charged with protecting and caring for the flock of God (Acts 20:28), warding off false teachers (Acts 20:29), directing the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17), and setting a positive example (1 Peter 5:3).

In the early church, it was the elders and apostles who moderated the Jerusalem Council and ultimately decided the sound course of action (Acts 15:2, 4, 22-23). It is the elders who ultimately bless and commission the work of the gospel (1 Timothy 4:14). It is the elders who serve as the conduit for healing (James 5:14). And ultimately, it is this group of people whom "the Chief Shepherd" would hold accountable for the condition of his bride, the church (1 Peter 5:4), which is why Paul made certain that the appointing of elders was a priority in each church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

At Christ Community we make a distinction between the responsibilities of pastor and elder. While the Bible indicates that all elders do the work of shepherding/pastoring, it does not require that all pastors be elders.[17] Therefore, many of our non-elder pastors are females.

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13 The canon of Scripture, the Christian creeds, and our Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) Statement of Faith have established what sound teaching is. Elders are uniquely responsible for protecting the church from that which runs against this body of established teaching.

14 While exercising discipline certainly includes addressing explicit, unrepentant sin, it also encompasses the work of preventing any sort of abuse. That is why elders at Christ Community are closely engaged in the work of financial oversight, discernment of missional direction, and the maintaining of child protection policies, as well as sexual harassment and abuse policies. The goal of this design is (1) to prevent a single leader from exclusively steering the church directionally and financially and (2) to have a group of leaders specifically entrusted with holding leaders (staff and non-staff) or any other congregation member accountable for any form of abuse.

15 It is important to note that while the elders are *ultimately* responsible to protect the church family in these ways, this does not mean they are *exclusively* responsible. Female and male pastoral staff and male and female congregant leaders support and assist the elders in these responsibilities. It is the elders, however, who will ultimately be held to account for the protection of the church family.

16 We understand the Greek terms *episkopoi* (usually translated "overseers" or "bishops") and *presbuteroi* (usually translated "elders") as referring to the same office and responsibility in the early church community. Additionally, we acknowledge the negative connotations the word "overseer" can have in English due to the background of chattel slavery in American history. However, since the vast majority of English versions translate *episkopoi* with "overseer," we have retained it here for clarity rather than using a different term such as "watchman" or "guardian."

17 For some churches the elder responsibilities are solely entrusted to the position of pastor, in which case it seems best to reserve this position for qualified men. Other churches are led by a board of elders, which may or may not include members of the pastoral staff.

Those entrusted with these elder responsibilities at Christ Community consist of the Elder Leadership Team, the Lead Senior Pastor who serves as a perpetual member of that team, and Campus Pastors. For this reason these particular leadership offices at Christ Community are entrusted to males who meet the rigorous biblical qualifications to bear the added weight of responsibility of serving the family in this way. The office of the elder is not one of "privilege" and "prestige" but one of costly self-sacrifice, additional accountability to God and the congregation, and humble service (1 Peter 5:1-5).

While the Elder Leadership Team and Campus Pastors work closely together in providing oversight, Campus Pastors do not serve on our Elder Leadership Team. In our congregational church polity, we've chosen to separate these groups to provide inherent structures of accountability — to keep these staff and primarily non-staff teams as separate branches of government, so to speak. Therefore, we only have one paid staff member who serves perpetually on the Elder Leadership Team (the Lead Senior Pastor). Campus Pastors are, considered non-voting elders, but function as elders, with their responsibilities being most like a Lead Senior Pastor. They are entrusted with the elder responsibilities for spiritual and doctrinal oversight of their campus congregations and the church as a whole.

ADDITIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In addition, Christ Community Church is affiliated with and accountable to the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), a movement of churches descended from the Free Church tradition (free from governmental or political control or connection) of Scandinavia. Historically, the EFCA has included women in a variety of leadership positions such as missionaries, evangelists, and ministry directors.[18]

Today women serve in leadership in the National Office, in Reach Global (missions), on the EFCA Board of Directors, as well as Trinity International University's Board of Regents. In 1988, the EFCA Conference specified that ordination in the EFCA is available only to men whose primary responsibility is preaching the word, and is focused on the office of Senior Pastor.

While the EFCA does not ordain women, EFCA President Kevin Kompelien states, "Local churches have the right and the responsibility to determine their understanding of the biblical texts related to women in leadership in their church and how to live that out in their local ministry context. This means that EFCA churches will have varying understandings and applications. It is vital that we exercise grace and humility toward one another and not make 'right and wrong' judgements related to how congregations determine their local leadership structure and practices."[19]

By and large, the EFCA is a "complementarian" association of churches, seeing distinct responsibilities for men and women in the church, but recognizing that there are a multitude of nuanced positions that any individual church may hold. Kompelien says, "However, it is important to note, one must not necessarily personally hold a complementarian position to be in an EFCA church or even to be credentialed by the EFCA."

18 Gustafson, David and Strand, Gregory, *Ordination and Women: A Case Study in the Historiography of The Evangelical Free Church of America,* Theofilos, vol. 11 nr 2, 2019.

19 Kompelein, Kevin, "Women and Leadership in the EFCA," Evangelical Free Church of America, January 2020.

While ordination in the EFCA is reserved for qualified men only, a permanent Certificate of Christian Ministry is available to both men and women by the EFCA, which provides them with a professional credential to perform the duties of those who serve as ministers.

Kompelien continues,

> *It is significant that no matter where a local church lands on this issue that leadership be intentional to open and create opportunities for women to use their leadership and teaching gifts within the church's understanding of Scriptures.... Honoring and affirming each other's gifts, respecting and listening to each other's perspectives, and championing biblically appropriate ways to serve together will strengthen the church and increase our effectiveness in fulfilling God's mission for the EFCA.*

Our prayer is that this paper reflects the seriousness with which we have received the right and responsibility that the denomination requires as we've reflected on God's design for male and female in church leadership.

CONCLUSION

Christ Community is persuaded that God's design for male and female leadership in the church is best described as a relationship of *complementary alliance*. We believe that church leadership should model the healthy dynamics of brotherly and sisterly devotion and unity as we serve the church together through the love of Christ Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our church embraces male and female congregational leaders who minister through a variety of gifts to edify the family of God, as well as male and female pastors, directors, and staff who equip and shepherd the church family. In addition, Christ Community, in accordance with a pattern displayed throughout Scripture, bestows an extra responsibility on male elders as the representative guardians of the church until Jesus, our bridegroom, returns for his beloved bride, the church.