
Summary of Synodical Decisions

Office Bearer Gender Issue

Preamble

- The first report on women in office, which came to synod in 1973, advised synod that “the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot be conclusively defended on biblical grounds.” With that declaration began the long and arduous journey toward resolving the question. If the synods dealing with this issue had been less concerned with listening to Scripture, a decision could have been reached early on. Because synod and the churches wanted to honor the biblical givens, the journey toward resolution continues to this day. (*Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000*)

Chronological History

- 1978, synod approved opening the office of **deacon** to women
- 1979, decision opening the office of **deacon** to women repealed
- 1984, decision opening the office of **deacon** to women reinstated
- 1990, Women serving as **elders, evangelists, and pastors** was approved

Chronological History

- 1992, instead of ratifying the decision to provide women full access to all offices, decided to “encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders.”

Chronological History

- 1993, synod gave councils and churches “the option to nominate, elect, call, and ordain qualified women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.”
- 1994, Synod reversed that decision, giving as a key reason the belief that “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.”

Chronological History

- 1995, Synod decided to “recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. Since 1995, congregations and classes had been allowed to ordain women as office bearers under a system of local option

Chronological History

- 1998, Synod appointed the present committee with the mandate to solicit responses from congregations and classes to determine the effects of the 1995 decision in various regions of the denomination.

Chronological History

- 2000, Synod Committee recommends “ In keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, a classis may make an exception to Article 3-a and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist”.

Chronological History

- Synod 2007 made a historic decision, voting to remove the word “male” as a requirement for holding ecclesiastical office in the Christian Reformed Church. Synod also decided that women will be allowed as delegates to Synod 2008.

What does this mean to Maranatha?

- Since the Synod 2007 decision removes gender specific roles in church office, the onus is on each church council to decide to not allow women in the offices of Elder, Minister, and Evangelist.
- By not addressing this issue we accept Synod's decision by default.

What does this mean to Maranatha?

- In the coming months Council will solicit feedback from the congregation to be considered when this matter is discussed at a future council meeting.
- Council is determined to deal with this matter and solidify the local policy regarding gender neutral service in church office.
- It is assumed that the role of women as deacons at Maranatha is endorsed by the congregation since this has already been practiced for many years.