

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

The Role of Women in the Local Church

1. What was the motivation for addressing this issue now?

The topic of women in the local church rightly strikes a deeply personal chord in our churches and broader culture. As it should because the issue touches on our core longings and identities as men and women. The Elders of Woodside deeply desire to affirm women's value, importance, and worth to the local church while upholding sound doctrine.

Gender-related issues have dominated the societal landscape for decades. If we do not provide robust, biblically informed answers to our church family on how to engage our culture and communities on these matters, we know that culture certainly will continue to do so. Therefore, our motivation for drafting this statement is to demonstrate that the Scriptures provide the foundation and template for human flourishing.

We hope this statement will combat the widespread confusion and deception surrounding the ontological differences between men and women. Furthermore, we desire to remove all unnecessary barriers to our growth and unity in Christ and deepen our collective understanding of the Word of God. Finally, while our historic theological position has not changed, our goal is to properly define and humbly correct misunderstandings of the terms and practices within our church associated with this issue as we journey together toward maturity in Christ.

2. What are the most significant implications of the theological paper?

While many important aspects within the paper will allow us to practice and express our theology more faithfully, three areas are most significant. The first is our affirmation of mutually held values regarding the role of women in the local church. We needed to start by stating our common values built upon the authority of God's Word that serves as the basis for our teaching and practice. Second is a clearly stated summary of the theological framework that guides our polity (church governance) and practice. This summary includes definitions of key terms such as Elder, Deacon, Ordinance, etc. Thirdly, we provide guidance for how our values and convictions will be expressed through various practices within our church, such as preaching and teaching, and how communion and baptism will be administered.

3. Has Woodside's theology changed?

The short answer to this question is no. While broad labels certainly have their shortcomings, the intent of our church has always been to help people grasp the beauty and purpose in God's design in creating male and female as coequal image bearers who uniquely and together reflect the glory of God. We also believe that God has endowed both men and women with equal dignity and capacity while maintaining different and complementary functional roles within the local church. Women are called to model biblical womanhood, disciple, spread the Gospel, and teach God's word in many capacities within the local church, primarily to other women. Men are called to model biblical manhood by demonstrating humble Christlike leadership and serving, discerning, and spreading the Gospel. Woodside has historically and continues to affirm that the position of the office of Pastor/Elder was to be held by qualified godly men. However, we acknowledge that, at times,

unnecessary and unintended barriers to flourishing have existed. We sincerely desire to remove these hindrances for both men and women to ensure that we can more faithfully live out our theological convictions in the spirit of Christian unity. Therefore, we felt that now was the time to restate our belief that Christ has called both men and women to exercise their spiritual gifts in service to the Great Commission. Furthermore, we are convinced that our mission as a church can never be fulfilled unless both men and women are disciplined, equipped with the Gospel, and released to serve in the church and the world by calling people to Christ and making disciples.

4. What process was undertaken for creating this paper?

The drafting of this paper involved an extensive multi-year process, which included the Elders of our church, all of our Campus Pastors, and key women from our staff and ministry leadership team. All of these stakeholder groups were in continuous dialogue throughout the shaping of this paper. After much listening and extensive evaluation of our current and historic practices, five purposes for the paper were identified. These are as follows:

- Empower our spiritual community to fulfill the great commission of disciple-making to the glory of God.
- Affirm a clear statement of our mutually held values regarding the role of women in the local church.
- Communicate the internal and external factors that led to our need to address the topic with greater clarification.
- Provide an agreed-upon summative theological framework that guides our polity and practices.
- State our unified counsel on how our aligned values and convictions will be expressed within the church family.

The paper is a living document that does not change our statement of faith or constitution but does inform our practices and allows us to more faithfully express our convictions, which are grounded in scripture.

5. What is the rollout and implementation plan for the paper?

Since the intended outcome of this paper is to improve our practices and strengthen our unity in Christ, the primary focus of our rollout plan will be to empower our Campus Pastors to train our ministry leaders and staff on how to best equip, empower, and mobilize the women and men of our church. We also realize that questions about Woodside's beliefs frequently come in many settings, such as Next Steps classes, New Employee orientation, and from members of our Church family who sincerely want to know how to use their time, talents, and treasure best to serve God. In light of this, we will summarize the paper in several formats, including videos, electronically on our website, and our employee handbook. We hope that our broader congregation will experience the rich benefits of this added clarity over time.