

APPENDIX

**SUMMARY STATEMENT ON OUR ORDINATION PRACTICE
TO THE OFFICE OF ELDER/PASTOR (RULE 804.1.5)
FAITH & DOCTRINE COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 6, 2023**

"The ministry of the gospel is a sacred office and calling, ordained by Christ for the proclamation of His truth in all the world and for the orderly administration of the sacraments, the worship, and the Discipline of the Evangelical Congregational Church. No man may assume this office without the conviction of a divine call thereto and the recognition and ratification of that call by the church." (Discipline of the Evangelical Congregational Church, Article of Faith 120, Part 1, p. 5).

From time to time in the life of our denomination our practice of ordaining only men to the pastoral office of elder has been questioned, evaluated, reviewed, and reaffirmed on several occasions. The Evangelical Congregational Church believes in the full equality of both men and women as made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28), and that redeemed men and women are equally children of God in faith (Galatians 3:25-29). The Holy Spirit has given each person, regardless of gender, gifts to serve the Lord and one another in love (Joel 2:28-29, I Corinthians 12:1-14:40, Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11), and the Evangelical Congregational Church encourages all to flourish in their spiritual giftedness for the benefit of brothers and sisters in Christ within the local church.

The Evangelical Congregational Church has encouraged women to use their gifts and abilities to minister and hold various offices within the church except for the elder/pastoral office. We believe this to be biblically sound. Women were, of course, prophetesses (2 Kings 22:14-20, Acts 21:9, I Corinthians 11:5), deaconesses and co-laborers, (Romans 16:1-2, 6-13), teachers (Titus 2:3-4), church planters with Paul (Philippians 4:2-3), even a judge (Judges 4) and more. But, priests of the Old Testament, apostles (Matthew 10:2-4) and elders in the New Testament church (1 Timothy 3:1-7) were men. There are no examples of women holding the position of elder/pastor in the New Testament.

We recognize many of the Scriptures addressing the roles of men and women in the church are interpreted differently, but it is our understanding they point to male leadership in the pastoral office. These verses would include but are not limited to, Genesis 1-3; I Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33b-36; I Timothy 2:8-15. We, also, acknowledge there are other voices, including exceptional evangelical scholars who disagree with the Evangelical Congregational Church on the interpretation of the above listed verses to the point where totally opposing views are given. The debate continues as there are often rebuttals to rebuttals, etc., etc. However, the Evangelical Congregational Church has historically and continues to understand Scripture to teach the ordination of men only to the elder/pastoral office.

Adopted: National Conference 2024