

Island ECC Positional Paper

Men and Women in the Church

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

From the account of Creation in Genesis, Scripture shows us that God created humankind in His own image for relationship, for worship and for His glory. He created man and woman both to bear His image individually and as one. God created these two as essential and indispensable to each other. He gave the cultural mandate to steward the earth to both. We believe that women and men are equal by their unity in Christ (Galatians 3:28), and yet at the same time, men and women were created uniquely to have different roles.

1. We believe that men and women equally bear the image of the Triune God. Neither is more or less the image of God than the other. The fundamental equality of men and women is intrinsic to the Christian faith.
2. We believe that the gospel brings the equality of men and women as equal heirs of salvation – that through union with Christ, both men and women are children of God, equally sharing in the privileges and benefits of salvation in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). As such, we treat both men and women with respect, kindness and compassion, with any form of disrespect resisted and denounced.
3. We believe that both women and men should be actively involved in ministry. We proactively pursue both men and women to serve and lead in our church. We cultivate and champion both women and men in leadership. This is based upon the gospel promise that all believers are priests and prophets, filled with the Holy Spirit, able to serve and build up the body of Christ with the whole array of spiritual gifts available to the church of Jesus Christ (Joel 2:28-29, Ephesians 4:1-16).
4. We also believe that the scriptures teach a principle of male headship in the home and in the church. The husband/father in the home, and the pastors and elders in the church, serve as *primus inter pares* (first among equals). These relationships are analogous to the relation that the Father has with the Son and the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the Trinity – all equal in divinity, but a submission by the Son and Spirit to the Father.
5. Concurring with the majority of confessional Christians now and throughout history, we follow the teaching of the scriptures that the office of pastor (teaching elder) is reserved for men. Likewise, we believe that the office of governing elder is also properly limited to men, for in our tradition the lay elders join with pastors in exercising the teaching and governing authority that in the scriptures (specifically in 1 Timothy 2:12) is reserved for men. Together, the pastors and elders serve over the “household of God” (1 Timothy 3:15). These offices and the ecclesiastical functions limited to those bearing these offices, are reserved for men.

Many evangelical churches and theologians with whom we have a particular affinity have grappled with these issues, and have written extensively on the subject of the common and the distinctive roles of men and women in the church. Their theological vision is basically the same as our own at Island ECC. We have built upon their work without redoing the biblical exegesis that they have done so well. These resources are available by contacting church leaders.

We are often asked our particular view of women in ministry. Island ECC's position on this can be summarised as follows:

Island ECC encourages and supports women to explore and exercise their gifting and believes that a woman with pastoral gifts will find suitable ways to express them here. We affirm that all positions of service and leadership in the church are open to women, however we believe the scriptures reserve the authoritative teaching and disciplinary roles for men (1 Timothy 2:12-14). In our system of governance, these roles are embodied in the offices of pastor and elder. Aside from these functions, women are encouraged to seek out all avenues of leadership and service, including teaching the scriptures, leading small groups, serving in various church leadership groups, exercising appropriate leadership roles in public worship, and using their gifts for the greater benefit of the body of Christ.