

Ordination of Women

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church does not believe that the issue of the ordination of women is an essential of the faith. The historic Reformed position on the scriptural doctrine of government by elders is believed to be that form needed for the perfecting of the order of the visible church, but has never been considered essential to its existence.

The Westminster Confession of Faith makes it clear that the church catholic is sometimes more, sometimes less, visible according to the purity of the church at a particular time. Also, the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error.

Nonetheless, in spite of such failures to be all God wants His church to be, the Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that, "...there shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to His will."

Thus, while some churches may ordain women and some may decline to do so, neither position is essential to the existence of the church. Since people of good faith who equally love the Lord and hold to the infallibility of Scripture differ on this issue, and since uniformity of view and practice is not essential to the existence of the visible church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has chosen to leave this decision to the Spirit-guided consciences of particular congregations concerning the ordination of women as elders and deacons, and to the presbyteries concerning the ordination of women as ministers.

It is in this context that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church states in its Book of Government, Chapter 6, titled "Rights Reserved to a Local Church" that "The local church has the right to elect its own officers" (6-2). This right is guaranteed in perpetuity.

Finally, the motto of our church summarizes our stance: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

Adopted by the 4th General Assembly
June 1984