

Addendum to 1995 Convention Workbook Reports

The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices

Dissenting opinion on women in congregational offices

Response to the Dissenting Opinion on The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices

Addendum

At its February 16-18, 1995, meeting the Commission on Theology and Church Relations decided to append to *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* and the documents attached to it the following three items for easy reference: the texts of 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35; 1969 Res. 2-17, "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership"; and 1970 Commission on Constitutional Matters opinion "Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office)" (1971 *Convention Workbook*, p. 244).

1. 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. (1 Tim. 2:8-15 RSV)

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor. 14:33-35 RSV)

2. 1969 Res. 2-17, "To Grant Woman Suffrage and Board Membership"

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in accordance with Resolutions 2-05 and 2-06 of the New York convention, made "a detailed and exhaustive study of the entire question of woman suffrage in the church" and of "the matter of full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees"; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations has submitted its report (CW, pp. 514-522); therefore be it

Resolved, That we express gratitude to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for this study; and be it further

Resolved, That we commend this study, as well as the study of the special committee reported in the *Proceedings*, 1956 (pp. 553-569), to all congregations of the Synod; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod accept the following declarations as guides on this matter:

1. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.

2. The principles set forth in such passages, we believe, prohibit holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if this involves women in a violation of the order of creation. We hold that they do not prohibit full membership of women on synodical boards, commissions, and committees. The manner of filling an office or establishing membership on a board or commission, in congregations or in the Synod, has no prohibitory Scriptural implications.

3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men."; and be it finally

Resolved, That in the implementation of any changes in this area of women's ministry in the church we urge cautious and deliberate action in the spirit of Christian love.

3. 1970 Opinion of Commission on Constitutional Matters, "Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office)"

The President of the Synod and many congregations have requested the Commission on Constitutional Matters to give guidance to those congregations which desire to incorporate in their constitutions or bylaws the provisions adopted by the Denver convention regarding woman suffrage.

The commission recommends that each congregation contemplating changes in this respect study thoroughly again Resolution 2-17 of the Denver convention, especially the following points:

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3. We hold likewise that Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational or synodical assemblies.

4. We therefore conclude that the Synod itself and the congregations of the Synod are at liberty to alter their policies and practices in regard to women's involvement in the work of the church according to these declarations, provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastoral office nor "exercise authority over men."

Some congregations may desire to insert a separate paragraph in their constitution or bylaws. We are proposing such a paragraph below. Other congregations may wish to change present provisions of their constitution and bylaws instead of introducing a separate new article. In any event, the commission would caution each congregation carefully to examine all articles of its constitution, bylaws, and articles of incorporation to make sure that there is agreement among and within these documents. In all probability legal counsel should be secured. All revisions of congregational constitutions must be submitted to the District President for review (*Handbook*, 1.11 b).

In offering the suggestion below to the congregations the Commission on Constitutional Matters is restricting itself to the position which the Synod has taken in this matter (*de iure humano* rather than *de iure divino*, by human right rather than divine right) at this point. It is therefore assumed that the Synod may further define its position in the future, thereby making it necessary perhaps to refine the suggestions being offered herewith.

Privileges of Women

Women who have reached the age of _____¹ may hold voting membership in the congregation and serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men). Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of _____,² as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation, or as chairman of _____.³

The Commission on Constitutional Matters

¹ The age given shall be at least the majority age established by state law.

² Here shall be listed the board of elders or corresponding board directly involved in the functions of the pastoral office.

³ Here the congregation may list at its discretion those major policy and decision-making boards or standing committees, if any, whose chairmanship the congregation might wish to restrict to men.