

ELEMENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Church Membership serves as a witness to the church and their community that a person is a follower of Christ, that they are united with the church, and committed to its faith, values, and mission.

Our Vision

We exist to guide people to experience life to its fullest, connect into meaningful relationships, and make a lasting impact.

Our Mission

To reach more people for Jesus and raise them up to be like Jesus.

Our Strategy

Every church must decide the best route to live out their mission. Here at Element Church, we've decided to spend our time, energy, and resources doing these four things the best way we possibly can:

- Worship Experience (Sunday Services)
- Small Groups
- Student Ministry (E:KIDZ & FUSION)
- Outreach

Our Core Values

- **A place to call "Home"**
 - We will love people for who they are so we can lead them to where they need to be.
 - "Jesus answered them, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent'" (Luke 5:31-32).
 - We will treat, welcome, and value each person the same, regardless of appearance, background, belief, race, or ethnicity. We will promote unity and harmony within our church family as well as the greater Church family, seeking healthy and Biblical conflict resolution as needed.
- **If only for the one**
 - We do all we can to reach as many as we can celebrating every one.
 - "In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!" (Luke 15:7).
 - We will make evangelism a priority in our life, starting with regularly inviting people to experience Jesus through our weekly worship experiences. We will pray for the lost and also pray that God will open doors with those around us to share our faith, telling the story of what Jesus has done for us.

- **Better together**
 - We become the most like Christ when we are connected together through Christ.
 - “Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other” (Romans 12:4-5).
 - We will make corporate worship and small group community a priority in our life, knowing that our connection to the body plays a vital role in the discipleship process. We will be champions for and celebrate every department, ministry, and team in our church, knowing that we can do more together than apart.

- **It matters...**
 - No matter how you serve in the church, it matters for you and it matters for the church.
 - “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people” (Colossians 3:23).
 - We will be committed to serving in God’s Church on a regular volunteer team, and as we can in other outreach events. Using the gifts and abilities God has given us, we will be consistent and loyal to our team and leaders, communicating clearly our needs and availability for serving.

- **Leading the way in generosity**
 - We serve a radically generous God so we will be radically generous people.
 - “The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25).
 - We will pursue to honor God financially through the Church with the best and first part of what He’s given us, making a full tithe (10%) our goal as we seek to honor Him. We will prayerfully consider each act of generosity to the Church and to our community, above and beyond our tithe, desiring to be known as generous people.

- **Obedience is our success**
 - Our success will not be determined by outcome but by our obedience to God.
 - “Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant” (Galatians 1:10).
 - We will seek to model for those around us a life of modesty, decency, and purity when it comes to our speech, dress, substance use, personal health, entertainment, sexuality, and daily living. We will make the daily pursuit of God through His Word and prayer a priority, letting Him guide us into all truth as it pertains to the standard of purity in every aspect of life.

How We Operate:

Every church has a certain structure, a way it operates. We aren't saying that this is the only way to do church, or even the *right* way, but it is the way we operate here at Element.

- We are a part of a denomination called the Evangelical Church.
 - To learn more, visit the website at www.TheEvangelicalChurch.org
- We are a staff-led church, with its primary leader being the **Lead Pastor**.
- The Lead Pastor serves on the **Lead Team**, which is made up of seven pastors and ministry directors on staff.
 - This team meets monthly to make decisions for the church and to keep a pulse on the health and effectiveness of the ministry.
 - Lead Team runs day-to-day operations of the church including, but not limited to:
 - Hiring staff
 - Establishing annual budgets
 - Giving vision to the various ministries of the church
 - Determining program
 - Planning events
 - Expanding ministries
 - The Lead Pastor selects the Lead Team, and the Lead Team is accountable to the Lead Pastor.
- Accountability is very important in making this model work. For that reason, we have a local **Leadership Council**, made up of lay leaders in the church. The Leadership Council:
 - has no less than five (5) and no more than seven (7) volunteer leaders and members in the church, and they serve on a three (3)-year term.
 - is nominated by the Lead Team and voted on by the **members** of Element Church following our annual members meeting each year.
 - receives monthly financial and ministry updates from the church and meets quarterly to provide accountability, insight, and wisdom to the Lead Pastor and Lead Team.
 - approves the annual budget submitted by the Lead Team for the upcoming year.
 - monitors the spiritual, emotional, and physical health and well-being of the Lead Pastor and his family.
- The Lead Pastor and church are also accountable to our **denomination** through the Board of Ministry and the Western Conference of the Evangelical Church.
 - Were there to be any moral, ethical, or theological issues that needed to be addressed, the denomination serves as the umbrella for those needs.
 - In such a case, the Leadership Council would serve as the liaison between the congregation, the pastor in question, and the denomination.
- **Church Members:**
 - are 12-years-old or older
 - profess to be born-again believers in Jesus Christ
 - have been baptized into the faith
 - are those who regularly attend services; serve the church in some capacity; and, contribute of their financial resources to the ministry of the church
 - receive an annual report that shares insights on finances and ministry highlights
 - vote for (or against) the presented leadership counsel
 - meet quarterly for lunch, confirmation of new members, fellowship with other members, and receive teaching with staff

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe that all Christian doctrines are important; however, we don't treat all of them the same. Our Core Beliefs are one's in which all of Orthodox Evangelical Christianity adhere. Our Committed Beliefs are one's we have strong opinions on and are committed to a particular position. However, we recognize there is a wide range of understandings on these beliefs, and we seek to respect and extend grace to all who hold to them.

Core Beliefs:

- Jesus is Lord: (Acts 4:12; John 1:14; Matthew 1:23)
 - We believe that Jesus is Lord and that salvation is only given through faith in Him.
- Salvation through Faith: (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 7:26-28)
 - We believe that people are saved by the grace of God through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot save ourselves. Saving faith requires repentance from sin and genuine belief in Jesus as Lord.
- The Holy Trinity: (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1, 14, 18; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 3:14)
 - We believe the Scriptures declare that God is One, yet He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal.
- The Authority of Scripture: (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
 - We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our guide and final authority on Christian living.
- Final judgment: (2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 20:11-15)
 - We believe that mankind is appointed once to die and then to be judged by God. For the believer, eternity will be spent with God in our glorified and perfected bodies. For the unbeliever, eternity will be spent in separation from God, completely cut off from His presence.
- The Return of Christ: (Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Thessalonians 4:15b-17,)
 - We believe Jesus will return again for those who believe in Him and will fulfill all prophecies about His final victory over all evil.

Committed Beliefs:

- The Pre-Destination of the Individual: (John 3:16; Romans 3:23-26; 1 Timothy 2:3-4)
 - We believe God lovingly predestines and desires all people to be saved. However, we also believe God has given humanity the free will to choose or reject this gift of salvation through Christ.

- The Security of the Believer: (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 10:26-31; Galatians 6:1)
 - We believe that the believer is secure in Christ as they walk in in loving obedience to Christ. We do not believe someone can flippantly “lose” their salvation; however, we do believe that someone can forfeit their salvation through continual unrepentance of deliberate sin; or through a willful denial of Christ and the faith.

- The Filling of the Holy Spirit: (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Romans 8:1-4; 1 John 3:3)
 - We believe the primary evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is an indwelling power to live righteously and to love as Jesus did. We believe that God is the giver of all spiritual gifts and we do not practice, pursue, or promote any one particular gift as greater than another.

- The Time of Christ’s Return: (Matthew 24:36)
 - We believe Jesus is returning; however, the timing of His return is unknown by anyone but God the Father. We do not hold to a specific end-times theology as a church.

- The Lord’s Supper: (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
 - We believe communion or the Lord’s Supper is to be received in remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus. The communion elements themselves do not offer forgiveness but point us to Jesus who alone can save. We celebrate communion monthly at Element Church.

- Baptism: (Romans 6:1-4)
 - Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work that Christ has done. It is the public declaration of our faith in and allegiance to Jesus, and is to be celebrated after a personal decision to believe in and follow Jesus.



HERITAGE AND ROOTS

The Evangelical Church of North America was born June 4, 1968, in Portland, Oregon, when forty- six congregations and about eighty ministers met in an organizing session. Within two weeks a group of about twenty churches and thirty Ministers from Montana and North Dakota became a part of the new church. These congregations and Ministers had been a part of The Evangelical United Brethren Church but had declined to enter the newly formed United Methodist Church. The former Holiness Methodist Church became a part of The Evangelical Church of North America in 1969, bringing its local churches, ministry and membership, along with a flourishing mission field in Bolivia, South America. The Wesleyan Covenant Church joined in 1977, along with its missionary work in Mexico and Brownsville, Texas, and its work among the Navajo Indians in New Mexico.

The origin of The Evangelical Church can be traced back to the Wesleyan movement in England under John Wesley, the founder of The Methodist Church. It is distinctly a North American Church, having had its beginnings in the great spiritual awakening which visited the early colonists in the new world after the middle of the eighteenth century. Like the early Methodists they preached the pure Word of God, and declared that men can be saved from sin, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and that this experience must be followed by a life of dedication and holiness.

THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

In the eighteenth century it pleased God to raise up men like William Otterbein and Martin Boehm who preached the Gospel of the crucified Christ in its purity. Armed with the spirit and grace of God these men worked among the Germans in America and called sinners unto repentance. Their labors were blessed of God and they organized many places of worship and led many precious souls to Christ. The Lord called others who were willing to devote themselves to His service. The work grew rapidly and in 1789 the first Conference was held in York County, Pennsylvania. At the Conference held in Frederick County, Maryland, on September 25, 1800, they officially united themselves into a Society which bore the name, The United Brethren in Christ, and elected William Otterbein and Martin Boehm as Superintendents or Bishops. The need for a Book of Discipline was deeply felt and in 1815, at the General Conference held in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, a Book of Discipline containing the doctrine and rules of the Church was presented. These brethren believed that God is a God of order, and that where there is no order and no church discipline, the spirit of love and charity will be lost.

THE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Upon the instruction and advice of that godly minister of the Gospel, Jacob Albright, a number of persons in the State of Pennsylvania, who had become deeply convinced of their sinful state through his ministrations, and who earnestly groaned to be delivered from sin, united in the year 1800, and agreed to pray with and for each other, that they might be saved from sin and flee from the wrath to come. In order to accomplish this work properly they agreed mutually to spend each Sunday in prayer and in the exercise of godliness; also to meet each Wednesday evening for prayer; diligently endeavoring to avoid everything evil and sinful, and to do all manner of good as God should give them strength and ability. The number of those disposed to attend these meetings soon increased and grew daily. The first steps of organization were taken in 1800 when Jacob Albright organized three classes, appointing a class leader for each class. The first Council was held on November 3, 1803. The first Conference was held in 1807 in Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. In 1809 a Book of Discipline was adopted and printed. In 1816, at the first General Conference, the name, The Evangelical Association was adopted. In this new church conversion was the central theme, a word which signified a gracious, regenerating experience with God, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. During the nineteenth century the operations of this church enlarged in evangelism, education and publications. In the latter part of the century, differences arose in The Evangelical Association which culminated in a division in 1891. A considerable number of Ministers and laymen withdrew and took the name The United Evangelical Church, which held its first Conference in 1894. Both churches endeavored to carry on the work of the Lord and grew in numbers and missionary enterprise. By 1910 the growing conviction that the two churches should be re-united found articulate expression, and in 1922 The Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church were united under the name The Evangelical Church.

THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

Negotiations, beginning in 1933, were consummated in 1946, at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, when The United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Church united and became The Evangelical United Brethren Church. This church sought to serve its Lord in the proclamation that salvation is available to any upon the free, personal acceptance of God's offer, through Jesus Christ. Conversion, while personal, is not a private matter and finds its consummation in holy living and in serving as an instrument of God for the redemption of the whole world.

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Over the years there were many contacts between The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church and its antecedents, revealing their common heritage. These contacts led to the merger of these two denominations in 1968, forming The United Methodist Church. However, due to a growing difference in theological emphasis and social philosophy, there were those from the former Evangelical United Brethren Church for whom it was deemed best to decline from entering into the newly formed United Methodist Church.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

From the 2014 edition of The Discipline of The Evangelical Church

Article I - The Triune God

The Holy Scriptures declare there is but one true and living God, an eternal being without a body, indivisible, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness. He is the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of all men, to the glory of His name. In this Godhead there is a Trinity of one substance and power, and coeternal, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 6:4; John 8:58; 1 Timothy 1:17; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Article II - Jesus Christ, The Son of God

The Holy Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, in Whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. As ministering Servant, He lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven to be with the Father, from whence He shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, Who intercedes for us, and by Him all men will be judged.

(Acts 17:3; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:16-17; Acts 2:2, 4:10; John 1:14; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:9-11; Acts 2:22-24; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15)

Article III - The Holy Spirit

The Holy Scriptures declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds from and is one Being with the Father and the Son. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men, through faithful response to the Gospel, into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains, empowers and sanctifies the faithful, and guides them into all truth.

(John 15:26-27; John 14:16-17; Acts 5:3-4; John 16:8-11; John 16:7, 12-13; John 14:26)

Article IV - The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures in their entirety are the inspired, inerrant, written Word of God. They alone contain the will of God as far as it is necessary for us to know it for our salvation, so that whatsoever is not contained therein, nor can be proved thereby, is not to be enjoined on any as an article of faith, or as a doctrine essential to salvation. By the Holy Scriptures we understand those sixty six canonical books of the Old and New Testament.

In both the Old as well as the New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, Who being both God and man, is the only Mediator between God and man. Even though Christians are not bound by the ceremonies and rites of the Old Testament they are nevertheless not exempt from the keeping of the moral laws.

(2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:5; Galatians 3:11, 24-25; Galatians 4:9-10; Colossians 2:16; Matthew 22:37-40; James 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:5)

Article V - Depravity and Prevenient Grace

The Holy Scriptures declare that through the transgression of Adam man is fallen from original righteousness and apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only entirely destitute of holiness, but is inclined to evil, and that continually, and except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Man in his own strength, without divine grace, cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God.

The Holy Scriptures further declare that man is a free moral agent and that he is responsible for his eternal destiny, and that, influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit and due to the prevenient grace of God is enabled to exercise his will for good and to the glory of God.

(Ephesians 2:1; Romans 3:10-18, 23; Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; John 3:3-7; Romans 2:4; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 5:15-21; Philippians 2:13; Titus 2:11; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Article VI - Provision for Salvation

The Holy Scriptures declare that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The offering of Christ freely made on the cross through the shedding of His blood is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world, both original and actual, so that no other satisfaction is required.

(John 19:30; Hebrews 7:26-27; 9:26; 10:12)

Article VII - Justification, Regeneration, Adoption

The Holy Scriptures declare that we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that those who fully repent of their sins are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ after the image of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. This is initial sanctification. By this new birth the believer becomes a child of God, receives the spirit of adoption, and is made an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Holy Spirit bears witness to this gracious work and immediately assures the regenerate believer that he has passed from death unto life, that his sins are all forgiven and that he is a child of God.

(Isaiah 64:6; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-2; Romans 4:3-5; Galatians 5:5-6; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 8:14-16; Galatians 4:4-7)

Article VIII - Sanctification

The Holy Scriptures declare that sanctification begins in the new birth and is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Holy Spirit, by which those who have been born again and delivered from the willful practice of sin are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to seek earnestly for holiness without which no one will see God.

There is a clear distinction that must be made between consecration and entire sanctification. Consecration is that more or less gradual process of devoting oneself wholly to God, consummating in the crucifixion of the old self or death to the Adamic nature, by the help of the Holy Spirit which comes to a completion at a point in time.

Total consecration of necessity precedes and prepares the way for that definite act of faith which brings God's instantaneous sanctifying work to the soul.

Entire sanctification is that second definite, instantaneous work of God, wrought in the heart of the believer, subsequent to regeneration, by which God cleanses the heart from all inherited sin and fills the soul and spirit with the person of the Holy Spirit, thus enabling us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This gracious work is conditioned upon total consecration of the whole self to God, total death to all inherited sin, and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Entire sanctification does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibility of further sin. A person is freed so that he may experience a continued growth in divine knowledge, spiritual strength and good works to the glory of God. The Christian must continue to guard against the temptation to spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over this and every temptation to sin. There also follows a life of Christian perfection which consists in a purity such as that of Jesus, resulting in the same mind which was also in Him, and enabling us to walk even as He walked.

(Acts 15:8-9; Romans 8:1-4; Romans 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 22:37; Galatians 5:22- 23; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 1:9; Romans 6:1, 2, 11-14; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:10-15; Philippians 2:1-5; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 John 3:3; Philippians 2:2)

Article IX - Security of the Believer

The Holy Scriptures declare that the believer is secure in Christ as long as he walks in obedience and faith. The Scriptures also declare that it is possible after the experience of regeneration and/or the experience of entire sanctification to depart from grace and fall into sin, and if one remains in this state to be eternally lost. However, by the grace of God, a man may through repentance and faith rise again from a backslidden state and be restored to righteousness and true holiness.

(Philippians 1:6; 2:12; Hebrews 6:1-6; 10:26-31; Matthew 18:15-35; Galatians 5:4; 6:1)

Article X - Good Works

The Holy Scriptures declare that good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration, but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith for through and by them faith is made evident even as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

(Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 2:16; James 3:10-13; 2:17-18; Philippians 1:10-11; John 15:1-8)

Article XI - The Church

The Holy Scriptures declare that the church is the community of (born again) believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the fellowship of the redeemed in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

(Acts 2:47; 2:41-47; 1 John 1:7; Romans 1:18, 21)

Article XII - The Sacraments

The Holy Scriptures declare that the sacraments, ordained by Christ, are not only pledges and symbols of the Christian's profession, but they are also signs of God's love and grace toward us, by which He works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in Him. Two sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism - Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship, and is to be administered to those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Children are under the atonement of Christ, and as heirs of the Kingdom of God, are acceptable subjects for Christian baptism. The promise of God is "unto you and unto your children" (Acts 2:39). Children of believing parents through baptism become a special responsibility of the Church. They must, however, be nurtured and led to a personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their baptism.

Every adult person being baptized and the parents of every child to be baptized should have the privilege of choosing the mode of baptism, namely sprinkling, pouring or immersion.

The Lord's Supper - The Lord's Supper² is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until He comes.

(Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-39; 16:30-33; Luke 22:19-22; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

Article XIII - Healing

The Holy Scriptures declare that God is able to heal and that we ought to pray for the sick. Although healing cannot be demanded of God, it may be sought in accordance with the instructions in James. God heals in three ways: (1) through the natural processes of the human body which may be aided by medical help, (2) through the instantaneous intervention of God bringing healing to the body, and (3) through the death and resurrection of the body to a glorified state.

(James 5:13-16)

Article XIV - The Lord's Day

The Holy Scriptures declare that the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.

(Matthew 28:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:10)

Article XV - Public Worship

The Holy Scriptures declare that divine worship is the duty and privilege of man, who in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. It is essential to the life of the Church, and the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

The Scriptures further reveal that the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the Church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and The Discipline of The Evangelical Church.

Whosoever willingly and purposely breaks the ordinances, ceremonies and rites of the Church to which he belongs ought to be rebuked openly, as one that offends against the order of the Church and wounds the consciences of the weaker brethren, in order that others may be deterred from similar neglect.

(Psalm 95:1, 2, 6; Ephesians 5:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7)

Article XVI - The Second Coming of Christ

The Holy Scriptures declare the coming of Christ to be a bodily return to the earth and that He will cause the fulfillment of all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over all evil. Faith in the imminence of Christ's return is a rational and inspiring hope to the people of God.

(Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Titus 2:11-13)

MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

WE BELIEVE that God unconditionally loves lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and SSA (LGBTQ+) people right where they are.¹

WE BELIEVE that God created sex as blessed and good, solely for expression between one (biological) man and one (biological) woman within the lifelong covenant of marriage. Any sexual activity outside of this framework—lust, pornography, adultery, masturbation, fornication, homosexual sex—is sin.² We do not affirm, endorse, encourage, or perform same-sex marriages.

WE BELIEVE that as a result of the Fall, all human sexuality is broken and in need of redemption. Whether heterosexual or homosexual, our desires are bent toward ourselves and away from God's holy purpose and design for sex. Original sin not only hampers our ability to go good; it distorts our perception of goodness itself, making what is sinful seem desirable. All propensities toward sin, including sexual sin, are rooted in this state of original sin.³ While traumas in life may play a role in exacerbating or creating our brokenness, the "why" behind same sex attractions or any part of our human brokenness may not always be traced to a specific event or trauma.

WE BELIEVE that mere attraction, including same-sex attraction, while a result of human fallenness, is not a willful act of sin. This attraction may produce temptation that, if acted upon, leads to sins of word, thought, and deed, which the Bible unequivocally condemns.⁴

WE BELIEVE that God is calling LGBTQ+ people to experience the benefits of salvation and sanctification but that neither of these works of grace guarantees the eradication of same-sex attractions. Healing and wholeness does not necessary equal "straightness," or a removal of same sex attractions. Healing and wholeness is first and foremost a heart that is fully surrendered to Jesus, resulting in love of God, and love of neighbor as ourselves.

WE BELIEVE that the indwelling Holy Spirit enables all believers, including same-sex attracted believers, to submit their sexuality to Christ and walk in holiness in the godly vocation of celibacy or, should it be God's will, a Biblical, opposite-sex marriage.⁵

WE BELIEVE same-sex attracted believers who walk such a path of holiness should be allowed to minister, lead, and serve in the church to the capacity that God has called and gifted them, and according to the moral standards we call all leaders to follow.

WE BELIEVE that theologies which affirm same-sex sexual activity and marriage, as well as theologies which inspire believers to fear, mock, ostracize, marginalize and otherwise hate LGBTQ+ people are inconsistent with Jesus' heart, Scripture, and the historic tradition of the church.

WE BELIEVE God is calling every local church, and the global Church, to love LGBTQ+ people like Christ, sharing with them the Good News of salvation and inviting them to a life of holiness and full membership in the Body of Christ.

WE BELIEVE the primary purpose of any local church or ministry in this arena is to walk with LGBTQ+ people, loving them where they are, while also leading them toward Jesus and His ways as expressed in His Word. It is not the role of the Church to push or promote orientation change or reparative ("conversion") therapy upon believers who have same-sex attractions.

¹ John 3:16

² Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5

³ Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1

⁴ Matthew 5:28; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; James 1:14-15

⁵ Romans 8:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

WOMEN IN MINISTRY AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

(Written by founding Pastor Jeff Maness)

Introduction:

Currently, our denomination, The Evangelical Church, does not ordain women. They do allow women to preach and even serve as senior pastors of a local church, but they don't ordain them. As a replacement, they offer "commissioning" to women. This means they can serve in leadership in the Local Church but cannot hold any official office at the denominational level.

I'm a strong proponent for the ordination of women, enabling them to use their gifts without limit in the Church. There are many great resources out there on this subject written by people far smarter than me. However, despite my limited knowledge, I wanted to present a brief explanation of where I stand and why.

Defense:

Two of the most familiar passages of Scripture used in defense of women not holding leadership or preaching roles in the Church are 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Whenever we come across passages like this that appear to state one thing clearly, we must hold it up to the authority of Scripture as a whole.

When you look at both passages, they seem to indicate that women should not be preaching to men or leading them. 1 Corinthians 14:34 says, "Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says."

1 Timothy 2:11-12 says, "Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly."

Those seem cut and dry on the surface, but with a little bit of study and when compared to all of Scripture, I believe the answer isn't nearly as clear. Here are a few of the problems I see with using these verses, and others, as a prohibition of women preaching or holding spiritual authority in the Church.

Problem #1:

In 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul recognizes women speaking, even prophesying in the church as a regular thing. It says, "But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head."

I'll leave the head covering piece alone for now and focus on the prophecy piece.

Prophecy is the proclamation of God's Word. It's not just the "foretelling of the future" it is the "forth-telling of the Truth." Paul assumed that women would be prophesying in the church. So how does this reconcile with being silent in the church in chapter 14?

Paul's reference to women remaining silent in 1 Corinthians 14 was directly related to women who were asking their husbands questions during the "sermon" in their public gatherings. We know this from v. 35. It says, "If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings."

The improper speaking wasn't a command against teaching or prophesying, but a command against interrupting the "sermon" to ask their husband a question. This was especially problematic in this culture because many church gatherings had men sitting on one side of the church and women on the other.

Can you imagine a person asking their spouse a question across the aisle or the room during a sermon? As a pastor, I would probably command the women to be silent in the church as well if that were happening.

Problem #2:

While the 1 Timothy 2 passage is problematic to my position on women in ministry, I do think we must view it through the lens of the entire New Testament. Starting with the ministry of Jesus and throughout the ministry of Paul and others, we see women not only in leadership but being the mouthpiece for God to other men.

The first people Jesus gave the message of His Good News to proclaim were women. Standing outside of the empty tomb, Jesus told the women to go and tell His disciples that He was alive. This was scandalous to a first-century mindset and culture that didn't even allow the testimony of women as being admissible in court. Jesus was establishing a trajectory which elevated the status and position of women in His Kingdom, thus His Church.

In Romans 16, Junia was called an Apostle. As an Apostle, she would have undoubtedly preached to the Church. Phoebe was called "Deacon" and was most likely the one who carried the letter to those in Rome. As the one entrusted to carry the letter, she also was probably the first person ever to read (preach) the letter of Romans to the Church.

At Pentecost, both men and women were filled with the Spirit and began to prophesy and preach in other languages. In Acts 2:16-18, Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel: "No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy.'"

In Acts 21, we see the four daughters of Philip the evangelist. All four daughters were said to have the gift of prophecy. Again, prophecy is the forth-telling of God's Truth to His people. If they had the gift of prophecy, and God is the giver of all spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12), why would God then prohibit them from using that gift?

There is some evidence that the 1 Timothy passage from Paul could have been dealing with a specific false teaching that was happening in the Ephesian Church concerning women, but I cannot dive into that here. Even so, in light of the whole of Scripture, I'm not confident enough to hold the 1 Timothy passage as a reason why a woman shouldn't preach or lead in the church. Upon investigation, it just doesn't seem to fit the rest of the New Testament.

And, this doesn't even account for the many Old Testament references of women prophets, teachers, and leaders who not only taught but held authority over men.

Problem #3:

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul uses the creation order to say that women should not have authority over a man. I believe if we are truly going to use Scripture as the reason women shouldn't preach or lead men in the Church then we should be consistent and use that same logic for all leadership.

If we use the creation order (Adam created first and Eve from Adam) to mean women shouldn't have authority over a man in the Church, then they shouldn't have authority over a man anywhere: no women bosses, managers, business owners, politicians, etc. If taken literally for a rule inside the Church, it seems to be the only logical and wise application for Christians outside of the Church as well. Let's at least be consistent if we're going to use that as our foundation. Not to mention, we don't use the creation order to teach that animals have authority over humans, or plants over animals.

Problem #4: (Free of charge)

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives the qualifications for elder or overseer in the Church. Verse 2a says, "So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife." Literally, "the husband of but one wife." This command for elders and overseers to be the "husband of but one wife" does not mean that only men can be elders and overseers.

First of all, women couldn't legally have more than one spouse in that culture while men could. The command "husband of but one wife" was not to prohibit women from leading, it was to forbid polygamy on behalf of the men as polygamy was a common practice in the Greco-Roman world.

If being the husband of but one wife was a qualification for Church leadership and thus excluded women, then single men should be excluded as well, right? We know this isn't the case, though, because it would be in direct contradiction to the elevation of singleness by both Jesus in Matthew 19 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. If marriage is a requirement for leadership then even Jesus and Paul didn't qualify.

Paul also says in 1 Timothy 3 that an elder or overseer must have children who respect and obey him. Does this mean that a Church leader is required to have kids? No. It's speaking to those who do have children that they should be parents who raise their children in the ways of the Lord.

Again, let's at least be consistent. If we're going to use this passage to exclude women from positions of leadership in the Church, let's also exclude single people and those who don't have kids.

Also, the qualifications for elder or overseer found in 1 Timothy 3 are for anyone who desires to be a Church leader. In the Greek language that this was written, 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "If *anyone* desires to be a church leader...". Some translations incorrectly replace the word "anyone" or "someone" with "a man."

The King James version reads, "If a man desires to the office of..." then lists all the qualifications for an overseer. I believe the translation that most accurately portrays the spirit of the original text is the New Living Translation which reads, "This is a trustworthy saying: 'If *someone* aspires to be a church leader..."

If Paul wanted to clearly state that a Church leader must be a "male", there were ways in the Greek language he could have done that, and I believe that he chose not to. Further, in the Greek language, the masculine gender is the default grammatical gender when speaking about groups consisting of both men and women.

So, if we begin to cite Scriptures that use grammatically masculine language to exclude women from leadership, then being consistent, we should also exclude women from many of the other New Testament Scriptures which speak about salvation using masculine language, including John 3:16.

For those reasons and more, I lean strongly towards the full inclusion of women in ministry and leadership. Many great Christians and theologians have and still do disagree on this. It doesn't appear to be as black and white as some passages make it out to be.

I'll end with this: I do think we should remember that this is not a moral command or moral issue in the Church. This is a structural issue. This does not mean we shouldn't take it seriously or approach the conversation with much prayer and study. However, I do believe it's a bit different than a moral command against sexual immorality, drunkenness, lying, stealing, etc. That's helpful to remember. This is a theology of Church structure written to a culture that is vastly different from the one we live in. Much discernment is required.