

## WOMEN IN MINISTRY

### What is your position on Women in Ministry?

We are thankful that the Sanctus Church community has not allowed the role of women in the church to be a contentious issue. Our culture is fighting around us for power, rights, and prominence. Unfortunately, the evangelical community is also fighting over the gender issue. Sometimes both sides seem to be angry and power-hungry to win the argument.

Two main views have emerged among evangelicals. Egalitarians believe that women can qualify for any position in the church. Complementarians (formerly known as hierarchicalists or traditionalists) believe that men and women are equal in worth, but that God has created role differences that limit women from some ministry positions. Neutrality is impossible since every practice reflects one or the other of these two views.

### We are convinced that:

1. The issue of women in ministry is significant and must be addressed.
2. We will not allow this issue to degenerate into divisive behaviour or speech.
3. Both viewpoints have Biblical and reasonable arguments.
4. This issue is one of the debatable issues (Rom. 14) where believers must accept each other with their differing viewpoints. Since this is a debatable issue, our church welcomes believers of both persuasions. We will not condemn either side. We are committed to respectful discussions that edify, and oppose angry arguments that divide.

### Our Position

We believe that both men and women are equally made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and equal partners in Christ (Gal. 3:28). As in the Trinity, there is equality of persons, but diversity in function. There is a relationship between the equal persons of the Trinity that includes leadership and submission. God the Father sends the Son and the Spirit (Isa. 48:16; Jn. 5:23-36, 14:26, 15:26). The Son and the Spirit submit to the Father, but each is equally God. All believers must joyfully submit to the triune God. Sanctus Church's position could best be described as "soft complementarian".

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History has clearly shown that men often use their leadership to oppress. Many Christian men have not sacrificially loved their wives. Great harm has been done to women in the name of church leadership. Our example is Christ, who used His authority to lead with love and empower the Church. In each age, God has designated men to fulfill the primary role of spiritual leadership: Old Testament priests, the twelve Apostles, and elders/overseers in the church. Paul's appeal to creation (1 Tim. 2:12-15; 1 Cor 11:2-4) and God's pattern of choosing men (priest, Apostle, elder), point to male leadership as transcultural. Christ's gifts are equally given to men and women to build up His body (Rom 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:12). Christ's leadership of the Church models and prescribes the role of loving leadership for the husband. Wives are to submit voluntarily to their own husbands (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). Husbands are called to love, be considerate, and love their wives as Jesus loves the church (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7). Both are called to be like Christ and mutually submit to each other (Eph. 5:21).

Because of the Fall, the husband's loving leadership has often been perverted into domination, and the wife's willing submission into improper servitude or a power struggle. Women in general are not required to submit to men in general (1 Cor. 11:2-4).

And yet the Scriptures are also clear that not only are Spiritual gifts given to all, but there are cases in the Scriptures where women are seen in many formal church roles. Romans 16 stands out as an example with Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junais!

Phoebe means pure, bright, radiant. She is called sister, servant, saint, and a great help. But she is called a servant, and it is where we get the idea of Deacon and Deaconess. Now all of us are servants, but this title is connected to a local church. So this is a formal title or office, that of Deacon, as in Acts 6:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Stephen and Philip are examples of deacons. They took care of the financial and material needs of believers. They also evangelized, preached, and did miracles—and so Phoebe is a deaconess. Amazingly, Phoebe was entrusted to bring the world-shattering letter of Romans to the people. Paul says welcome her, put her up, take care of her needs—she loves Jesus, the church, and me – take good care of her.

In verse 3, there is a story of Priscilla and Aquila. They meet Paul in Corinth after they were forced out of Rome because of being Jewish. You can read about them in Acts 18

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and 1 Corinthians 16. Back in Rome, they held a church in their home and many believe they were not only wealthy hosts, but also co-leaders in that church community. Then there is Verse 7: Greet Andronicus and Junais, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

"Outstanding among the apostles" is the key phrase. Some authors and translations say this means they were highly regarded by the 12 Apostles, but we think they missed it here. The NIV, NRSV, NASV, NEW JERUSALEM—to name a few—say "they were outstanding as" or "among the apostles". Beyond the 12, there were many small "a" apostles, which as one wrote means, "people officially sent on church business with authority, evangelist, and missionary". Or it can simply mean, "leading with authority".

Why does this even matter? Well, Junais can be translated male or female, but in this case the linguistic evidence says that this was a woman. Most likely this was a husband-and-wife team. So here we have a woman, as one sent with authority, or as a sent missionary or evangelist.

Now you cannot base your whole view of women in ministry on Romans 16 and examples like Phoebe and Junais. We as Biblical Christians must see this in light of all Scripture. Yet, this shows us three key things. Firstly, more than one third of Paul's greetings are to women, and six of them are commended for their labour in the Lord. This is the same language Paul uses for Timothy and Titus as church leaders. Secondly, this gives us strong examples of women in some formal roles in the church. Thirdly, this affirms that Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women. So while seeing the transcultural view of Scripture, as well as these and other roles of women within the Scriptures, we at Sanctus Church are open to all positions, including pastoral positions to women, but the role of Elder is limited to men. Within our staff, the Pastor Lead Team are both pastors and Elders.

### Our Commitment

Those who hold our position have often overlooked or undervalued the wisdom and gifts of women. We will seek to empower women in ministry and actively listen to their wisdom. We will admonish husbands to lead their families with Godliness and love their wives sacrificially. We will seek to protect our women from abusive husbands. We will

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seek to honour, value, and respect our women as equal heirs of God's grace and gifted partners in the church's ministry. We will seek to use gender language that reflects the equal value of women and men.

### **Our Unity**

To those convinced of a different view, we value our relationship with you. We welcome continuing dialogue within the Sanctus Church community, asking only that no one cause division, but rather love those who differ. We desire to be a church where believers of both views work in harmony. We expect everyone to keep our bond of unity in peace and love. If anyone finds that they cannot do so, we request that another fellowship be sought where those views can better serve the community of Christ. We must all hold our viewpoints humbly and appreciate the Biblical arguments of both egalitarians and complementarians. This issue gives us the opportunity to show the power of living in love while holding different viewpoints.