

## **LETTER FROM THE ELDERS ON CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

We hope you had a meaningful and restful Christmas break. As we wrap up the church leadership discernment process, we want to begin by thanking the congregation for their support and trust in the Elders during this time of leadership review at NLCC. Maintaining the trust of the congregation was one of our top priorities as we went through this process and we hope we have been good stewards of that trust.

In case you missed it and to provide context, for the past number of months the Elders have been conducting a thorough review of the biblical texts relating to church leadership as it relates to women and men. We have reviewed the most salient scriptures regarding God's design for leadership in the church. We sent out a related survey to all NLCC members and have thoroughly reviewed the results. Further, we conducted focus groups with women currently serving in leadership roles at NLCC. Finally, we also conducted a review of Mennonite Brethren perspectives and resources on this important topic.

We want to begin by making a few overarching statements that can provide context for how we move forward and for our hopes for the NLCC community.

We support the Mennonite Brethren denomination's position that this is not an issue that is fundamental to the gospel, therefore it should not be something we are afraid or unwilling to grapple with. Conservative biblical scholars arrive at different perspectives while each maintaining a conservative theological perspective and commitment. The Elder Board also affirms the Mennonite Brethren denomination's call to not make this an issue we divide over. Rather, we call our church to live out the unity of the Spirit and to maintain the bond of peace in the midst of our diversity on this as well as other issues.

We affirm that both positions, complementarian and egalitarian, see women and men as equal, equally gifted, and of equal worth before God with both equally reflecting the image of God. Both men and women are encouraged to exercise their gifts within the church. Historically and presently, we have always sought to honour women as equal in status before God as fully designed in His image. The Elder Board has prayed and processed this question in rigorous detail. We have given extended prayer, study and reflection on the relevant scriptures, trying to the best of our abilities to be faithful to the scriptures towards the best service of our church community.

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In light of this, the Board has come to the conclusion that an egalitarian position would be both true to scripture and would best help us to fulfill our Mission and Vision here in Langley and beyond. As a Board of Elders, our prayer, study, conversation, and listening have led us to the conviction that, interpreted in context, the gospel of Jesus Christ opens the door for women and men to participate equally in all aspects of church life and leadership.

For those who are not aware and to provide context, NCC currently exists under a complementarian leadership structure where a limited number of leadership roles are restricted to men only – namely the role of elder, senior pastor, and campus pastor. Outside of these roles, women are encouraged to serve, lead, preach, and teach in any context. Moving forward, the roles of elder and senior/campus pastor will be open to gifted and qualified women and men.

In making this decision, we are aware some people have expressed apprehension that NLCC may be bowing to contemporary culture or embarking on a slippery slope toward a more liberal approach to biblical interpretation. Let us assure you this is absolutely *not* the case. We are more committed than ever to following the truth of the scriptures. We fully recognize that when we step outside of the will of God, we put our church in a very vulnerable position. We do not believe we are doing this with regard to this decision.

It should be noted that in our study, the vast majority of the books and articles we relied on displayed striking graciousness toward others who hold the opposite view: a willingness not just to “agree to disagree” but to live alongside each other in Christian love and unity. That is our sincere desire as well.

We also want to communicate that NLCC Elder Paul Still, while submitting to fellow elders in our collective decision, has asked it be acknowledged he was not in support of this decision. We are honoured to work alongside Paul and respect him in this request. We hope and pray that this matter will not become a wedge to drive us apart.

We are committed to maintain unity in NLCC. Ephesians 4:3-6, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Our hope is that you will make a commitment to be a part of the next 5-week sermon series and engage in our in-depth study of this important topic. Every blessing to you as we walk through this season together.

#### **NLCC ELDER BOARD**

Matthew, Jeff, Kevin, Rob, Stuart, Jordan, Jon, Andrew, Paul & Chris