

A Process for Decision:

ON WOMEN AS ELDERS

October 2018 - February 2019

Preamble

The Board of Elders at Mission Creek Alliance Church, in response to inquiries from among our membership and adherents, has made the decision to lead the church through a process of making a decision on the important matter of women serving as elders in our church.

In the summer of 2000, the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada, the denomination of which we are a part, made the careful and prayerful decision to affirm women in the role of Elder. As such, each local church may, by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a duly called meeting of the membership, choose to have women serve on their Board.

The following process will lead our membership through a season of prayer, study, and discernment as we seek to answer the question: "Should Mission Creek Alliance adjust its policies so that both men and women can be elders?"

1. What question are we looking to answer?

The Board, together, is seeking to discern a God-honouring answer to the question, "*Should MCA Church adjust its policies so that both men and women can serve as elders at Mission Creek Alliance Church?*"

It is worth noting that this decision is focused on the question of women serving as *Elders* at Mission Creek Alliance Church and not women serving as *Pastors*. MCA Church has long supported women serving in the role of pastor in the local church and will continue to do so.

2. Why are we asking this question?

Back in 2000 the Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada made the decision to allow women to serve alongside men in the role of elder at the local church level. At that time they asked each local church to decide if they would implement a change to their local church by-laws to allow this change in governance. To date MCA Church has not gone through a formal process of making a decision on the matter.

Further to this, over the past number of years at various congregational meetings, church members have asked about the status of making a decision on women as elders. Following one of these congregational meetings in April of 2016 the Board of Elders entered into a process lead by Pastor Keith Whitaker that mirrored what it would be like to lead the larger church through making a decision on this matter, knowing full well that our process as the board had no bearing on the final decision, because that is entirely up to the Church membership.

Following this process the Board came to the unanimous decision that the church at large was in a relationally healthy and spiritually strong position to undertake this decision together, acknowledging that these are necessary qualities to preserve unity where there might be theological diversity. The process of discernment the Board is leading you through is similar to the one we undertook together.

3. Who may participate in the process & how will a decision be made?

Everyone who calls Mission Creek Alliance Church their home church is invited to engage in this season of prayer, study and discernment. Because a decision on this matter may result in changes to our bylaws, only members of MCA will be eligible to vote in the final decision. In order to pass a motion affirming that both women and men can serve as elders, approval by 2/3 of the members in attendance at a membership meeting is required.

4. Overview of the Process

In order to make a prayerful, biblically faithful, and informed decision on this important matter we will work through the following timeline:

October

- *Congregational Meeting*, Sunday October 21, 2018, 6-7:30pm

November

- *Seminar 1: How to Read & Understand the Bible + Primary & Secondary Matters in Scripture* by Dr. Ken Radant, Sunday November 18, 12-3pm Lunch Provided

December

- *Self Study* through the Theological Reader (available in print or online)

January

- *Seminar 2: Women in Leadership in the Bible + The Biblical View of Eldership* by Dr. Ken Radant, Sunday January 13th, 12-3pm, Lunch Provided
- *Seminar 3: The Silencing Passages: Timothy 2; 1 Corinthians 11 & 14* by Dr. Ken Radant, Sunday January 27th, 12-3pm, Lunch Provided

February

- *Prayer Meeting* (For worship, prayer, listening and sharing), Thursday February 7, 6-8pm
- *Membership meeting* for the vote. Sunday February 10, 11:30am

5. Our guiding values

The Board of Elders have highlighted a variety of guiding values that we want to bring to the process. The values we have highlighted are:

1. ***Practicing Unity & Speaking Love:*** the Scriptures call us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). We will take seriously this call to practice unity on a matter that has theological diversity. We will guard our speech so as to honour Jesus at every step of the journey.
2. ***Honouring Scripture:*** we will root ourselves in the Scriptures and submit ourselves to the authority God has placed in them.

3. **Listening Prayer:** we will commit to prayer, actively listening to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, the church, and our meetings.
4. **Honesty & Trust:** in order for discernment to work we must be honest with each other and be able to share honestly without fearing any repercussions. We commit to cultivating this environment of honesty and trust.
5. **Others:**
 - Please see the end of this document to see other guiding values
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6. Preparing The Heart

As we embark on the process of making a decision on this matter it is important to prepare our hearts for what lies ahead, as we acknowledge that how we make a decision is as important as the decision itself.

Committing to the Guiding Values: We want to live by the values we've identified above.

Committing to the Process: We ask that you fully engage in the process at every step. Ideally, we would like to see every member of MCA Church engage the entire process diligently. Simply showing up to cast your vote isn't what we have in mind; it does not honour those who believe careful consideration is in order.

Committing to a Posture of Open Hands: We are calling every person to enter this decision with a posture of openness, letting go of the things that might get in the way of God's leading. Do I enter this process with a preconceived position on the matter or am I open to the process of discerning a way forward that I don't yet see? What will I do if the outcome is different than my choice?

Committing to Prayer: We encourage you to pray prayers of:

Surrender (Letting go of our own opinions and letting God's will rule. "...not my will, but yours be done" -Luke 22:42).

Wisdom (James 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.")

Trust (We trust that God will lead us as we honour him in the process, even if we find it difficult. God is with us, leading and we trust he knows the way).

Unity (Ephesians 4:3 - Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of peace.)

7. Questions

GUIDING VALUES

- + PATIENCE w/ EACH OTHER,
- + PRAYER
- + DIVERSITY.
- + No Politics.
- + Scripture
- + RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE.
Slow to speak
- + LOVE
- + GRACE.
- + HUMILITY & RESPECT.
- + SELF-AWARENESS
- + OPEN WILLING TO LISTEN.
- + TEACHABLE. OBEDIENT.
- + TRUST the Timing.
- + SPIRIT OF GOD LEADING.