

## **PAOC STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION REGARDING GENDER EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1998 the voting members of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada adopted a resolution in the decades-long process of considering the role and place of women in credentialed and governing ministry. Women had been ordained in the PAOC since 1984. This resolution now anticipated the full and unlimited involvement of women at all levels of our fellowship, simply providing for "...gender inclusivity in all matters relating to the credentialing process and qualifications of candidates for the elected offices of District and General Executives".

Two decades later, we recognize that although our accepted, official position is one of equality between men and women, that position has not translated to reality. Women continue to be vastly underrepresented both as vocational pastors and in governing roles at District and National levels, despite female students consistently attending our Bible Colleges in significant numbers. There is a gap between our official position and our lived reality.

This paper is a Statement of Affirmation of our egalitarian position, in the context of ministry leadership, with a summary of historical and theological considerations. It is intended to provide a beginning reference point for churches and credential holders who seek clarity regarding what we believe, particularly when they are called upon to make decisions regarding who will fill leadership roles in their contexts. Suggested and referenced resources are listed below; further resources will be developed.

### **OUR HISTORY**

In the history of modern Pentecostalism, women have been included from the beginning. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman, a Holiness preacher in Topeka, Kansas, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, ushering in modern Pentecostal history in North America. In 1906, the Pentecostal experience spread to the Azusa Street Mission, which was gender-inclusive. When the Assemblies of God (AOG) officially organized in 1914, women constituted nearly one-third of its clergy.

Ellen Hebden received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in November 1906. By 1910, there were fourteen new congregations in Canada, most associated with Toronto's Hebden Mission. Viewed as a fulfilment of Joel's promise (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18), this new day of Pentecost conferred equal responsibility on all people to step into their callings. The January 1908 edition of the Apostolic Faith declared, "When our Lord poured out

Pentecost, He brought all those faithful women with the other disciples into the upper room, and God baptized them all in the same room and made no difference. All women received the anointed oil of the Holy Ghost and were able to preach the same as men.” Men were encouraged to be supportive of women as ministers: “It is contrary to the Scriptures that women should not have her part in the salvation work to which God has called her. We have no right to lay a straw in her way, but to ... encourage the woman in her work.”

Early Pentecostal periodicals made “matter of fact” reference to women in ministry. In a list of fifteen missionaries compiled shortly before the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) organized in 1919, seven were female. Women were evangelists, pastors, teachers and missionaries. They conducted evangelistic campaigns, planted churches, established schools, and translated Scripture—laying the groundwork for the fellowship’s expansion throughout Canada and overseas.

In our earliest days, the return of Christ seemed imminent, evangelism was paramount, and regulations less important. However, as the return of Christ delayed, order was needed to establish doctrine, missionary efforts, and Bible colleges. As organizations grow and structures are put into place, legislation usually entrenches the dominant group’s beliefs. Although women were present when the PAOC was originally chartered in 1919, the first directors were male, and the Memorandum of Agreement declared that the PAOC was to be controlled by ordained Elders and Pastors, all male.

The pathway to ordination for PAOC women centered on the “authority” conferred by ordination, and the amount women should have. The PAOC Lady Workers credential (later the Ministerial License for Women) required the same preparation as ordination, but did not confer the same status. By 1950, women with this credential could vote at General Conferences, and by 1960, could solemnize weddings.

The post-war years saw the church adopt a similar narrative to society in general: women who moved into the public work sphere in the war years were directed back to home life in the 1950’s. By the early 1970’s there was such concern over the lack of PAOC women in pastoral roles that a commission was struck to study the issue. Women’s ordination was debated in 1978 and 1980; each time the vote did not reach the required two-thirds majority, and additional studies were commissioned. In 1984, Resolution #6 was presented once more. The motion passed with a 90% approval, granting ordination but with limited institutional authority. In the December 1984 Pentecostal Testimony, C. M. Ward declared, “This step of opening the pulpit to women is not only morally correct but morally mandatory.... It is the will of God to reach souls

regardless of the gender employed.” The final constitutional limitation for women was removed at the 1998 General Conference.

As of January 2016, approximately 6% of credentialed lead pastors in the PAOC are female.

## **THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are a range of viewpoints within evangelicalism regarding women in ministry which lean toward either complementarianism or egalitarianism. For the purpose of this statement, we identify the basic distinction between these two as whether women are restricted (complementarian) or unrestricted (egalitarian) when it comes to their role in Christian ministry. The PAOC is egalitarian in its view of men and women in ministry leadership. The following addresses some of the more common discussion points used to support our position.

1. God uses people for positions based on ability and call, not gender (Gal. 3:28). We re-affirm that the Day of Pentecost established a “prophethood” of Spirit-empowered believers, with no restrictions on race, social position, or gender (Act 2:16-18; cf. Joel 2:28-29).
2. The creation story indicates mutuality, not hierarchy, of Adam and Eve. Both are called to bear God’s image and rule creation. The word *ezer*, translated “helper” (Gen. 2:18, 20) does not indicate submission, but rather mutual partnership. It is used repeatedly of God helping others, including Israel (Ex. 18:4, Ps. 124:8). Hierarchy is introduced only post-fall.
3. Women in OT and NT serve in leadership positions. Examples include Miriam (Ex. 15:20) and Deborah (Jud 4:4) in the OT; Anna (Lk 2:36, 38), Phoebe (Romans 16:1,2), Priscilla (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3), and the chosen lady who appears to be a pastor (2 John 1) in the NT. Special note should be given to Junia (Rom. 16:7) who held the office of an apostle.
4. Paul’s determination was to help churches maintain peace, truth and reputation with the culture in which it found itself. In doing so the cultural issues appear to restrict women’s roles in ministry but they were clearly situational rather than universal.
  - a) 1 Corinthians 11:3 – The word “head,” used in this text is often interpreted as authority, when in reality the Greek word *Kephale* literally means the part of the body that is attached to the neck and figuratively means “source of being, origin of being”.

This text simply means that man is the source of woman's existence (referencing the Creation account, Gen. 2:23), not someone of superior rank. If it was intended otherwise, the Greek word used for "head" would have been *Rosh* (chief, ruler, boss, commander) or Archon (ruler or boss).

b) 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 – Paul is instructing the church on maintaining order in corporate worship. Among the multitudes of problems in the Corinthian church, one issue was that women were causing disruptions with public questions. Since 1 Cor. 11 teaches that women can pray and prophesy publicly, the "be silent" instruction cannot be universal. Paul's point was that public worship should be conducted in an orderly, profitable way.

c) 1 Timothy 2:9-12 – In the context of false teaching and negative cultural influences, five issues were raised for women, one of which was an instruction to learn quietly. The other four issues were wearing expensive clothes, braided hair, gold and pearls. This list of issues clearly points to a specific cultural situation; to call four of them "cultural" and one "universal" is not defensible.

d) 1 Timothy 2:13-14 - The nature of the issues Timothy was dealing with in Ephesus were the matriarchal Ephesian culture that promoted female superiority and taught that the original human was woman. The goddess Artemis was thought to bring new life and to take life away if needed; often during childbirth women called upon Artemis for preservation and relief. Instead of the false pagan teaching that Adam was deceived and Eve was a heroine, Paul writes, "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression."

Being created, made, or born second does not disqualify anyone from ministry leadership, but being in a deceived state or easily susceptible to false teaching does. Yet Eve didn't stay deceived, and she was not the only transgressor. Adam ate the forbidden fruit too. They were both transgressors. The Bible nowhere states or implies that women are more easily deceived or deceptive than men. That Paul did not believe this is demonstrated through the great value he placed on his female ministry colleagues.

## **CHURCH EXPERIENCE**

Experience is not the primary or sole resource for knowing God and his will, but it is one that God has provided. Experience has taught us that women in ministry have been effective and fruitful from the beginning of the Church until now, even in times when opportunities were limited.

## CONCLUSION

We recognize that other fellowships and denominations may hold a differing position regarding the role of women, and it is not our intention to cause division in the larger Body of Christ. Nevertheless, while respecting these differences, and while continuing to respond with kindness and grace, we unequivocally affirm that within our fellowship, we hold to an egalitarian position.

In light of the position of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada that women may indeed be fully credentialed and equipped to lead in any capacity, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

- We will encourage local churches and members of our fellowship to intentionally teach and implement a fully egalitarian position at the local church level.
- We will intentionally recommend and develop resources as needed to assist our local churches in teaching and implementing an egalitarian position.
- We will intentionally celebrate and welcome the anointing and call of God to vocational ministry on both women and men, at all levels of leadership.

## REFERENCED RESOURCES

Boyd, Gregory A. and Paul R. Eddy. *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Keener, Craig S. "Head Coverings." In *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, 442-47. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Stackhouse, John G. *Partners in Christ : A Conservative Case for Egalitarianism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

## **FOR FURTHER REFERENCE**

These resources are offered as suggestions for further understanding. However, they have not been created by nor are they under the purview of the PAOC.

### **Books:**

Beck, James R. *Two Views on Women in Ministry (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005.

McKnight, Scot. *Junia Is Not Alone*. Englewood, CO: Patheos Press, 2011. Kindle.

McKnight, Scot. *The Blue Parakeet*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

Spencer, Aida Besançon. *Beyond the Curse*. Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 1989.

### **Online Resources:**

[www.juniaproject.com](http://www.juniaproject.com)

[www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org)

[www.margmowczko.com](http://www.margmowczko.com)