

Background on the Female Deacon Amendment Proposal.

(From the original notification of the amendment proposal that went out to the church in March of 2017)

On Elders and Deacons

In the Bible we see two main offices for the church today. First is the office of elder. As stated in the “Elder” section (section VII) in the Constitution, we believe the Bible uses three different words, “elder”, “pastor” (lit. shepherd), and “overseer” to refer to this same office, (e.g., Eph 4:11-14; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Acts 14:23; Heb 13:17; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-7); traditionally known as elder or pastor in churches today. This role serves churches through authoritative leadership in teaching and governing.

The second office is the office of “deacon”. This word literally means "servant." The office of deacon is different than elder in that it is not an authoritative office but it is explicitly commended in the Bible in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

While there is limited information in Scripture regarding this office, in our best understanding deacons support the elders of the church with additional service that's tested, mature, and Spirit-filled.

Once evaluated according to Biblical qualifications and appointed, deacons fulfill the responsibilities delegated to them by the elders for the good of the church by caring for the temporal and administrative needs of members. From church history and perhaps from your own experience in churches, deacons can be found caring for the sick and the poor, supporting budget committees & mission committees, running a worship teams, and any number of non-elder roles.

Female Deacon Question

Despite this conception however, one big question that we were facing after the Constitution ended last year was this: Is the office of deacon open to women?

The question has been answered differently by godly theologians for centuries and the Biblical data is not explicitly conclusive to our minds. Ultimately, we found we could not resolve this question through our initial Polity Study Group (PSG) that led to the Constitution.

And so, similar to the polity group study that led to the Constitution, the leadership team gathered together a group of members for several months, including some of the women in our church, to study this question further and make a recommendation to the elders.

Conclusion and recommendation.

At the conclusion of our time; through studying various papers and articles on the subject and engaging in lively discussion, the study group came to a majority conclusion that female deacons were permissible.

The general consensus seemed to be:

- 1) There is nothing clear in Scripture to warrant prohibiting this office being conferred on women and it is possible Scripture positively commends women deacons.
- 2) Church history and current practice among churches and pastors we respect (e.g. Dever, Piper, McArthur) express support for women in the role of deacon.
- 3) There are opportunities to clarify and invest in more pathways for women serving in the church that could be afforded through appointing women as deacons.

Therefore, there seems to be freedom for us at LHCC to do likewise.

Finally, after further consideration, the elders, who had been part of the study, agreed with this conclusion and brought it to the church last Sunday, March 25.

Honoring God's design for Biblical manhood and womanhood.

One very important qualification noted both in the study and among the elders: There is a need to pay special attention to God's heart for Biblical manhood and womanhood in the church and in the home by making sure women deacon roles are considered for how they function with regard to God's design for leadership.

As we've historically affirmed in our life as a church, we see in the Bible God's design for the church and the home that leadership is consistently male. Husbands and fathers are to lead their home with loving sacrificial leadership of their wives and children. And men are to lead the church with servant leadership. Reciprocally, women are called to submit to their husbands in the home and are prohibited from having authoritative teaching or governing leadership over men in the church, (e.g., 1 Tim 2:9-15; Eph 5:22-33; Titus 2:1-5; 1 Cor 11:1-16).

These truths are not necessarily easy to parse out in our practical lives together, but they represent God's commands and His good will for His people. And so, in the context of a world that is increasingly in hostile rejection of, and literally inverting, God's created order concerning men and women, we want to be careful to walk out this office of "deacon" in such a way that we preserve and embrace what it means to be a man and a woman in God's image and according to His design.

We have more work to do in this regard and part of that work is going to be looking at other churches that we respect; seeing not only how they unpack this role of deacon, but how they pursue Biblical manhood and womanhood in its functioning.