

Women at JICC

The purpose of this document is to support teachings that have been given publicly and bring clarity to roles and responsibilities within the life of the church family -- specifically how those apply to the roles of women in our church. Our hope is that clarity brings unity, and that unity brings strength to the ministry that takes place in and through the entire body.

The following four sections from our Statement of Faith give specific support.

The Bible

We believe the Holy Bible to be the inspired, inerrant Word of God and is authoritative and sufficient for faith and practice. We believe it is the standard by which all truth, understanding, knowledge, and counsel is evaluated.

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21

Mankind

God made man – male and female – in His own image as the crown of His creation so that man might have fellowship with Him. But through rebellion and disobedience to God's command, man entered into sin and suffered the just condemnation of physical and spiritual death. As a result, all people are separated from God by their sin and are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Jesus Christ.

Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Samuel 12:15-23; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23, 5:12, 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3; Galatians 3:10

Marriage

Both man and woman were created in God's image, equal as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. These distinctions are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should be honored and celebrated within the Church. Biblical Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime; such uniting serves to fundamentally and profoundly depict the relationship of Christ and His Bride, the Church. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, laboring sacrificially to provide for, protect, and lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:23-32

The Church

We believe the very nature and purpose of God is revealed in His Church. Jesus established the Church as His body in the earth. We believe the universal Church consists of all who submit in faith to Jesus' lordship, while the local church is a body of believing people, gathering regularly, observing baptism and the Lord's Supper, and walking in covenant relationship with each other before God. We believe that Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church, has granted authority and given gifts to His body, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip and mature it to do His work in the earth. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Corinthians 12:14; Ephesians 4:11-16

Affirmations and Denials

We affirm that both men and women have been created in the image of God and are called to reflect his glory in the earth. We deny that either gender has been given priority or is designated greater honor or dignity.

We affirm the purpose in God's design of men and women as distinct and not interchangeable. Gender does not merely represent a social construct but displays the divine design of a Creator. God intends for these distinctions to be displayed through men and women in complementary ways. Role distinctions that are given in Scripture do not come from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but instead reinforce the grace of God over all of creation for the sake of human flourishing.

We affirm that both men and women are necessary for the health of the local church and the spontaneous expansion of the church. We look to Paul and his team of coworkers and the leaders of these churches as examples for this. A healthy church is one where contributions are made by all and where a diversity of gifts are practiced for the building up of the body. This can only be accomplished through healthy brother and sister relationships within a growing church family.

We affirm that the role of elders within the church is reserved for men. This role reflects the call of men to lead within the home and reinforces the call for the local church to operate like a household. We deny that reserving this position for men diminishes the importance of women within the church or limits their ability to use their gifts -- including gifts of teaching, administration, and leadership.

We affirm the call for members of the body of Christ to submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. We deny that the teaching of headship within the Scriptures implies that all women are to be subject to all men. Husbands and wives have been given a special call to reflect Christ and his church in roles of sacrificial service (husband) and submission (wife). Within the church, the call for members of the church family to submit to the elders is given equally to men and women. Outside of the church, we affirm that both men and women are free to exercise gifts of leadership in positions of authority. The wisdom of Scripture calls disciples of Jesus to do this *with and through* their families and not *at the expense of* or *inconsiderate of* their families. This wisdom is to be considered by both men and women alike when making decisions about roles in which they serve both inside and outside of the church.

We affirm singleness as a gift from God and the call for single members of the body of Christ to reflect the glory of God using the gifts God has given to them. We deny that single men and women must be married in order to participate in a meaningful way to the health and expansion of the local church. We also deny any implication that all single women are to be subject to all single men. We believe that singleness provides a unique freedom to practice gifts within the church -- giving undivided attention to the Lord and free from concerns of spouse and children. (1 Corinthians 7:32-35) Because of this, single women in positions of leadership in the church - including unmarried, divorced, and widowed -- have a unique freedom to serve within the body.

Application of these Principles

We recognize that churches -- even churches that we deeply respect and share many common values with -- apply these principles differently. Within our church values of order and freedom, our aim is to be both Biblically faithful and to create as much freedom for growth and ministry as possible.

Deacons within the life of the church

Because the word deacon (διάκονος) literally means to minister or serve, there exists a three-way tension that we want to live within:

The first is that everyone in the church is called to be a servant. So, a healthy church will be filled with people who are serving each other and serving the city.

The second is that we have an example of a woman within the early church (Phoebe) who was called a διάκονος (deaconess) and was given the important responsibility of giving the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome. (Romans 16:1)

The third is that the only place in Scripture where qualifications of a deacon are outlined, they specifically apply to a man or a man and his wife. (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Our application

We have ministry team leaders -- individual men and women as well as couples -- who we consider operating in a role similar to Phoebe, Philip, or Priscilla and Aquila in the New Testament. These roles are for members **exercising responsibility (delegated authority) over a very** specific group of people. We use the term "Ministry Team Leader" to describe them both to emphasize their call to lead and their responsibility over a team of people in a specific area of ministry.

We reserve the title "deacon" for men who serve in a role that exercises oversight over multiple ministry teams. Currently serving in this capacity is, Chris Talbott -- serving as the Director of Operations.

Women in the role of teaching & leading

[The foundation of this topic is outlined in these two teachings.]

Women who are wives and mothers have been given a specific call in Scripture to teach young wives and mothers how to love their families well. (Titus 2:3-5) This ministry happens in formal and non-formal ways across our church and we affirm how vital it is to the health of our church family.

We have women with gifts of administration and leadership who serve in team leadership throughout the church (ie. children's ministry, hospitality, worship). In this role, they give instruction in their particular areas for which they are responsible.

In general, our Sunday morning sermon is reserved for elders. The reason for this is that the sermon is one of the central areas where the elders exercise their call to bring oversight, instruction, and shepherding care to the body. The occasional exceptions to this are guests that are church leaders who we are in close relationship with or elders-in-training.

Outside of Sunday mornings, in events such as workshops, retreats, or conferences, men and women in the church may be called on by the elders to share.

In addition to the preaching of the Word, we believe that officiating the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper is reserved for the elders of the church. Within this elder oversight, women in the church (as well as men who are not elders) are free to assist with baptisms and in serving communion.

Specifics on Roles within Particular Environments

- Same-gender environments are led by someone of that gender.
- Mixed-gender fellowship environments (ie. Home Groups, Alpha, Young Adults) are led by couples
- Mixed-gender teaching environments (ie. Sunday morning classes, Saturday workshops) can be taught by a man or woman or a couple -- with a specific elder or elder representative giving oversight to the class.
- For environments with children, we apply the framework above when the predominant age group is high school age or older.