



**TRINITY
CHURCH**
GREENVILLE

VISION

Making disciples for the glory of God and the good of the world.

MISSION

We exist to glorify God by making disciples of Christ who mature in faith, proclaim the gospel, and join in his mission to renew Greenville and the world.

DOCTRINE

In essential beliefs, we have unity

“There is one Body, and one Spirit ... there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

In non-essential beliefs, we have liberty

“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters ... Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his master he stands or falls ... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God ... So whatever you believe about these things, keep between you and God.” (Romans 14:1,4,12,22)

In all beliefs, we have charity

“... If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all.” (1 Corinthians 13:2)

In addition to the statement below, we affirm the historic teachings of Christian orthodoxy as it is articulated in the Apostle’s Creed and the Nicene Creed.

(Note: Church membership must agree with all **bold** print.)

HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, infallible and without error in the original manuscripts, written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible, comprised of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is Holy Scripture, accessible and sufficient for understanding and believing the message of salvation it discloses, and is absolutely trustworthy with regard to everything it communicates. The Bible is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it commands, trusted in all that it promises, and revered in all that it reveals. History, grammar, and context are the guidelines for proper

interpretation. Ultimately, the standard by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.

(Mk. 13:31; Jn. 5:39, 8:31-32; 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in only one living and true God, eternally existing in three equal persons - God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are identical in essence, equal in power and glory, and possess precisely the same attributes. However, they are distinct in office and activity. God is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. This One God possesses all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

(Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2)

GOD THE FATHER

We believe God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of human history according to His purpose and grace. In His nature He is, among other things, completely holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent, eternal, transcendent, immutable, self-sufficient, self-existent, wrathful, just, gracious, good, merciful and loving. He is totally sovereign in all that has or shall come to pass. This in no way causes Him to be the author and approver of sin, or to abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures. He is the begetter and sender of His only Son, Jesus Christ. As a good Father, He cares for, provides for, nourishes, disciplines, and sustains His Church.

(Ps. 139:1-18, 145:8-9; Is. 40:18-31; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 3:17, 6:30-32; Jn. 3:16; Acts 17:2; Rom. 1:18, 3:26, 11:33-36; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:3-6; Heb. 12:5,13; 1 Jn. 1:5)

GOD THE SON

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal, pre-existent Son of God. He became man without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in order that He might reveal God to man and redeem sinful man. While He was fully human, He had a sinless human nature and lived a perfect life. We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice. Our redemption and salvation is guaranteed by His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted at the right hand of God the Father, where, as High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of intercession and advocacy for His people. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission.

(Matt. 1:23-25; Jn. 1:1, 14, 3:17, 8:58; Rom. 1:3, 3:23-25, 4:25, 15:8; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Heb. 1:3, 3:1, 7:23-25; 1 Tim 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:1-2)

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that God, the Holy Spirit, is that person of the trinity who restrains evil in the world, and convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He also regenerates (brings life to those who are spiritually dead) those who receive Christ as Savior, baptizing them at the moment of salvation into the Church, the Body of Christ. He indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, and bestows on them spiritual gifts. As they are yielded to Him, He overcomes the power of the sin nature, beautifies their character with the fruit of the Spirit, and empowers them for service. He helps believers to pray, interceding for them in time of need. It is the Spirit's ministry to lead, instruct, and fill believers, as they are yielded to Him and steadfast in the study of Scripture and in prayer. He transforms yielded believers into Christ-likeness.

(Jn. 3:8, 7:37-39, 14:12, 16-17, 16:7-11; Rom. 8:1-13, 26-27; 1 Cor. 12:4-13; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:13, 5:18)

CREATION & HUMANITY

We believe that all things in heaven and on earth were created by God and exist by His power and for His glory. We believe the Genesis account of creation is not myth, but a historical account of the direct, immediate, creative acts of God. We believe that humankind was created innocent, and in the image and likeness of the triune God. Because of this, all human life is precious and has worth. Every human being, born and unborn, possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. We affirm that life begins at conception.

(Gen. 1:1; Ex. 21:22-24; Ps. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:1-4; Col. 1:16-17)

God created man and woman equally in the image of God, fully complementing each other in marriage and in the life of the Church. Therefore, marriage is understood as being one man united to one woman, and human sexual expression is understood as a gift reserved for marriage. In marriage, by God's good design, men and women are united as one - for the glory of God and the flourishing of creation - as they seek to fulfill the creation mandate. In the life of the Church, by God's good design, God calls men and women to work and worship together as they seek to fulfill the Great Commission and live according to the Great Commandment.

(Gen. 1:27-28, 2:15, 18-25; Matt. 19:4-6, Eph. 5:22-33)

THE FALL

We believe that man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God, but that he sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and to his posterity. We believe that man has inherited a sinful nature, and therefore is alienated from God and under His wrath. All of creation groans under the weight of sin, death, and brokenness. Man is incapable of redeeming himself, and the supreme need of all humanity, and creation, is salvation - to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all humanity is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us and all of creation to himself. (Gen. 1:27, 2:17, 3:19; Rom. 3:10-12, 23, 5:12, 17-19, 6:23, 8:22-23)

THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news that the triune God has poured out his grace in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that through his work we might have peace with God. Every person is lost in sin apart from Christ and in need of a Savior. Christ died in the place of sinners, absorbing the wages of sin, so that those who entrust themselves to him also die with him to the power, penalty, and (eventually) practice of sin. Christ was raised the firstborn of a renewed and restored creation, so that those whom the Spirit unites to him in faith are raised up and created a new humanity in him. One with Christ, and made alive in him who is the only ground of salvation, sinners are reconciled with God – justified, adopted, sanctified, preserved and eventually glorified. The Gospel is personal in its content and cosmic in its scope; together with renewed humanity, the Gospel is God’s promise to one day renew all of creation.

(Jn. 1:12, 3:16; Acts 4:12, 13:38-39; Rom. 1:16-17, 3:23-24, 5:1, 6:23, 8:22-24; 1 Cor. 1:30, 15:1-5, 12-28, 54-56; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Eph. 1:3-14, 2:8-10, 15; Titus 3:5, 1 Jn. 2:2; Rev. 21)

PERSONAL SALVATION

We believe that every person is lost in sin apart from Christ and in need of a Savior. Jesus Christ died as a full and sufficient payment for the sins of the world, and as our substitute. Christ’s shed blood is the only provision by which an individual may be delivered from the wrath of God. We believe that salvation is a gift of God and is received by man only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that all true believers, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever. True faith is more than mental assent. It involves trust, and is evidenced by repentance, newness of life (regeneration), and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that man is justified by grace through faith alone, apart from human merit, works, or ceremonies.

(John 1:12, 3:16, 36, 6:37, 10:27-30; Acts 4:12, 13:38-39, Rom. 3:23-24, 6:23, 8:1, 29-30; Eph. 1:3-14, 2:8-10; Titus 3:5, Phil. 1:6; 1 John 2:2, 5:13)

THE CHURCH

We believe that the universal church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is made up of all true believers. We believe that the church began at Pentecost and that a believer is placed into the church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the local, visible church is an assembly of professing believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purpose of worship, study of the Word of God, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship, and prayer, thereby to be equipped for Christian service and evangelism. Every believer is a priest, and there is no justification for a clergy-laity distinction.

(Matt.28:18-20; Acts 2:1-4, 42-47, 11:16-17; Rom 11; 1 Cor. 10:32, 12:12-13; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:11-16, 5:25-27; 1 Peter 2:5,9)

BAPTISM & THE LORD’S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. They are simultaneously God’s pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to Christ, and they anticipate his return and of the consummation of all things. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper strengthen the faithful by visibly recalling and proclaiming the

gracious promise of forgiveness of sins and communion with God and one another through the peace-making blood of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 1:20)

We believe Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies our union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment and inclusion in Christ's body, the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:36-38, Rom. 6:3-5)

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the celebration of Christ's completed work on the cross. The Lord's Supper looks back in remembrance at Christ's death and resurrection, and it looks forward, with hope, to his promised return. As believers partake of the bread and wine, in obedience to the Scriptures, we commemorate and celebrate our union with Christ. As such the Supper is to be observed regularly, corporately, joyfully, and with self-examination.

(Matt. 26:26-29, 1 Cor. 11:20-34)

SANCTIFICATION

We believe sanctification (holy living), which is a setting apart of an individual unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally, it is already complete, since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since the believer retains his sinful nature, however, there is need for progressive sanctification (or spiritual growth) whereby the Christian matures in grace by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the process of sanctification will be completed when the child of God is brought into fullness in the presence of Christ.

(Jn. 17:17; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18, 5:17; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 1 John 3:2-3)

ANGELS & SATAN

We believe that angels are powerful spiritual beings who were created in a sinless state to glorify God and do his work. They presently exist in both fallen (Satan and his demons) and unfallen (angels) states. We believe that God's angels aid his Church and do his work. Satan and his demons seek to rob God of glory and deceive and destroy God's Church. Satan and his demons' defeat began at Christ's resurrection and ascension, and will be brought to completion and fullness when Christ returns.

(Gen. 3:1-19; Is. 14:12-14; Dan. 10:12-14; Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 1:26-28; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:11-12; Heb. 1:13-14, 2:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 2:4, 1 Jn. 5:19; Rev. 7:11-12, 18:1, 2:10)

LAST THINGS

We believe that in God's own time and way, the bodily risen and ascended Christ will visibly return to consummate God's purpose for the whole cosmos through his victory over death and the devil. He will judge the world, consigning any who persist in unbelief to an everlasting fate apart from him, where his life and light are no more. He will prepare his people as a bride for the marriage supper of the Lamb, giving rest to restless hearts and life to glorified bodies. There, they will exult in joyful worship, fellowship, and delight with their Lord in the new heaven and the new earth. They shall reign with him and see him face to face forever immersed in wonder, love, and praise.

(1 Cor. 13:12, 15:26, 42-44; Phil. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:1-5)

[There are 4 main views about the events of the end that evangelical Christians hold to. All viewpoints are welcome at Trinity Church, and we agree not to make this a divisive issue.]

NOTE: Doctrinal statement approved and endorsed by the elders of Grace Fellowship Church (Kinston, NC) on 5/28/1

GOVERNMENT

Elders

A. **Our church will be led by godly, qualified elders**

These men will have final responsibility before the Lord for leading, feeding, and overseeing the flock. (1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-5)

B. **Authority**

Elders have the ultimate and final human authority under Christ for the direction, doctrine, discipleship, and discipline of the body. (Hebrews 13:17) Such authority is to be chiefly characterized by the humility of servanthood rather than acting as a “lord” over those placed in their charge. (1 Peter 5:2-3)

C. **Qualifications**

1. The qualifications for the office of elder are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5. These qualifications have to do with character qualities as they relate to the community at large, the church, family, self, and God. We recognize that there is a higher ethical standard for an elder than for anyone else in the church. Attitudes of weak and immature believers are largely patterned after the acts of those they follow and hold in high esteem. Therefore, with due respect for individual conscience and personal scruples, those who accept the role of elder shall carefully guard themselves, not only from what they feel is worldly, but that they shall ardently withdraw themselves from what might cause others to stumble, and from that which has the appearance of evil.
2. They are to be men who are in full agreement and visibly committed to the vision, core values, doctrines, and by-laws of the church. (Though not required to agree with every belief in the doctrinal statement, a strong compatibility far beyond the membership requirement is a must. This will be left to the discernment of the current elders.)
3. The first qualification, which the Apostle Paul lists, is that one should aspire to the office of elder. This means that an elder desires to assume responsibility for the souls of people, and to one day stand before the Lord to give an account for those souls. (Hebrews 13:17)
4. The biblical principle of the sabbatical is strongly recommended for each elder. For rest, a crisis, a family need, or even a qualification issue, an elder may take a leave of absence from the elder board.

D. **Responsibilities**

1. **Direction:** The elders set the overall philosophy, vision and direction of the church. To seek God’s vision, the elders are to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. (Acts 6:4)
2. **Doctrine:** The elders’ authority covers the matter of doctrine, i.e., what we believe are the major issues. This responsibility includes teaching, exhorting, and refuting. (Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17 -18, Titus 1:9, Hebrews 13:17)
3. **Discipleship:** The elders are responsible for the overall teaching and training of the flock to the end that we may present every man and woman complete in Christ. (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Colossians 1:28, James 5:14) This would involve the following areas:
 - a. Providing oversight to the various ministries of the church.
 - b. Defining and coaching the ministries of the deacons and deaconesses.
 - c. Having the heart and giftedness to lead a housechurch. (It is strongly recommended that this be included in their ministry)

- d. Consistently attend elder meetings (rule well, 1 Timothy 5:17), as well as regular meetings of the church. (Hebrews 10:25)
- 4. **Discipline:** The elders are responsible for the discipline of the believer who will not deal with known sin in their lives. (Matthew 18:15-17) They are to promptly deal with spiritual conflicts and problems that arise in the church before they become scandalous. (Galatians 6:1f)
- 5. **Modeling:** The elders are responsible for modeling Christlike attitudes and behavior. Their lives should demonstrate the following:
 - a. Daily walk with God based on Scripture and prayer.
 - b. Good character (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-5).
 - c. Correctly balanced and prioritized areas of life, such as God, family, ministry, and employment.
 - d. Strong and visible commitment to the vision, core values, doctrinal statement, and by-laws of the church.

E. Initial selection of elders

The first elders of our church will be appointed by the unanimous vote of the leadership core, and confirmed in their appointment by the elders of Grace Fellowship Church in Kinston, NC.

F. Subsequent elders will then be appointed by the existing elders in the following manner:

- 1. According to Acts 20:28, the Holy Spirit sets these individuals apart to the office of elder. As these individuals are identified by the Spirit, the responsibility of the elders and the body is to confirm His choices.
- 2. The elders will nominate men in the church who apparently meet the above qualifications listed above.
- 3. At least two elders will hold a personal interview with the nominee and his wife (if married), to confirm his qualifications.
- 4. The nominee will then meet with the entire elder board.

G. Details

- 1. The New Testament always speaks of a plurality of elders.
- 2. The New Testament sets no term for the office. The office is a lifetime responsibility unless one is disqualified according to 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Timothy 5:19-20. An elder who is no longer qualified for service may be removed by a unanimous vote of the remaining elders on the board.
- 3. The elders stand as equals. The only potential difference is that those who work hard at preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor, i.e., they serve the body in a vocational capacity and therefore are remunerated. (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

e

Deacons/Deaconesses

A. The position of deacon/deaconess is set apart from any other ministry in our church by the following definition:

Deacons/deaconesses are qualified men and women according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13, who closely assist the elders in the ministry of the church. This implies oversight of whole ministries, and a desire and ability to free the elders to shepherd the church.

B. Deacon/deaconess responsibilities are as follows:

- 1. Daily walk with God based on Scripture and prayer.

2. Good character. (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
3. Correctly balanced and prioritized areas of life, such as God, family, ministry, and employment.
4. Regular attendance at church meetings. (Hebrews 10:25)
5. Faithfulness and diligence in overseeing the assigned area of responsibility. (Romans 12:8)
6. Allowing responsibilities to be defined and coached by an elder.
Deacons/deaconesses will carry out their servant ministry under the authority and discretion of the elders, and the parameters of their responsibilities will be defined by the elders.

C. Deacons/deaconesses will be nominated by the elders in the following manner:

1. The elders will nominate those among the flock who are to be set apart as deacons/deaconesses, who apparently meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and who are in full agreement with the vision, core values, doctrine, and bylaws of the church.
2. Several elders will hold a personal interview with the nominee and his/her spouse (if married), to confirm his/her qualifications.
3. The name of the nominee will be submitted to the congregation for two weeks, so that they might give any pertinent response. This should be given directly to an elder.
4. After this two-week period, final approval or disapproval of the prospective deacon/deaconess will be made by the elders.

D. Deacons/deaconesses who are no longer qualified for service may be removed by a unanimous vote of the elder board.

Brief Position Paper on Spiritual Gifts

“Have some spiritual gifts passed away with the apostolic age?”

The gifts in question are those commonly referred to as speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and healing. Others are miracles, prophecy, and word of knowledge. We are keenly aware that great men and women of our faith have had differing views on this question that have gone on before us. Furthermore, we have noticed that many churches have undergone great division over this issue with great relational fractures. We have seen that the Lord has given us a rich diversity in believers who have chosen Trinity Church as their church home. For the last several years we have co-existed with great love and unity. We have sought to lend liberty to this issue for our body by presenting this position as elders:

We do not take a cessationist view that some of the gifts have passed away with the apostles. However, we do not take the view that every believer must experience speaking in tongues or a “heavenly language” as an indication that they have become “spirit-filled” nor as a measure of their spiritual maturity. We support the view that all spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit primarily for the edification of the body of Christ and for the glory of His kingdom. We recognize that speaking in tongues is the experience of some believers but not all believers. It is the experience of some Christians but not “the” Christian experience. We have chosen to encourage those members who practice speaking in tongues to refrain from expressing themselves in the Sunday worship service because it could be confusing to believers and unbelievers alike, and would therefore not be edifying to the body as a whole.

However, we refrain from prohibiting members and believers from speaking in tongues in their homes and have asked that careful sensitivity be exhibited in the housechurch setting. We recognize that the Lord God has given other churches and denominations the freedom to have their members fully express these gifts that have led to wonderful worship experiences resulting in personal renewal and corporate revival. However, in some instances, opponents have reported great excesses.

We desire to be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading and instruction as an elder board and would confess with humility that we don’t have all of the answers to this issue. We believe that the greatest expression of loving our Savior Jesus Christ is in obeying the Great Commission and the Great Commandment in loving God and loving others. In regard to this issue, we seek to make love our chief aim in respecting one another and in applying all of the one another’s of the New Testament at Trinity Church. This, we believe, is the true litmus test of spiritual maturity with evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. Our experiences will vary but the goal and the result is the same: Christlikeness, maturity, and fruit of the Spirit. We feel that the result is the biblical measure and not someone’s experiences. God uses many ways to achieve the same result.

[Adopted from the Grace Fellowship Church Elders]

Brief Position Paper on the Public Ministry of Women at Trinity

It is Trinity's practice to encourage the ministry of someone who is called and gifted and willing to submit to the authority of the elders. Thus, we have men and women Housechurch leaders, men and women worship leaders, men and women speakers, men and women ministry leaders, men and women who pray publicly, teach youth & children, serve communion.

However, we understand Scripture to teach that elders, who stand before God with responsibility to him for this flock, be men. Therefore, the pastor, as one of the elders, is a man.

This is how God has led Trinity since its inception, and we see the Scripture's commendation of this practice in the following:

A) Examples of women in Scripture who exercised public ministry in a godly way:

- Miriam was a prophetess, a leader of Israel, and God spoke to and through her as he spoke to and through Aaron (Exodus 15:20, Numbers 12:1ff). She and Aaron got into trouble for grumbling in Numbers 12. Of the two of them, she is the one stricken with Leprosy; the thinking is that since Aaron was the high priest, his purity was paramount.
- Deborah was the judge of Israel. A judge was a spiritual and political leader of God's people, whom God raised up as a deliverer. The book of Judges puts Deborah on a par with Gideon, Samson, Othniel and the other 8 named judges. Judges 4-5.
- Huldah was a prophet of Yahweh, ministering at the same time as Jeremiah. 2 Kings 22 & 2 Chronicles 34 report how when Hilkiah found the book of the law and took it to King Josiah, the king said, "go inquire of the Lord for me..." They went directly to Huldah, who prophesied, "This is the word of the Lord..." This is the stock Scriptural phrase for a revelation from God. Not only does Huldah bring God's message to God's leaders, she does so at a time when Jeremiah's ministry was ongoing.
- Philip the evangelist had 4 daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

Moreover, Joel 2 announces that in the last days, "your sons and daughters will prophesy". Peter preaches this very text on Pentecost to explain what's happening to the 120 disciples! God definitely includes both men and women in the blessings of the Spirit in these latter days.

B) What about 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35?

These are the 2 passages that appear to hinder public ministry of women. However, upon closer examination, we can see the following:

1 Timothy 2

The topic sentence of this paragraph is in v. 11: "A women should learn in quietness and full submission." This is the imperative verb (ie., the strongest verb). The instructions that follow it, in v.12, are subordinate to and relate to this command. *A woman must learn* (the command)...*and while learning, she ought not teach or have authority* (the subordinate instructions). Paul is talking of a woman's formation process, her spiritual education as it were. That's why he appeals to Adam and Eve. "Adam was formed first." Notice the verb is not "created" first. This is not about the order of creation. The verb for create is *ktizo*, not used here. The verb used here is *plasso* which means to form, to mold. So, Paul is pointing to spiritual education or spiritual formation. Adam learned from God (presumably before Eve was created) about God's ways and wishes, commands and calling. Eve, on the other hand, because she was not fully "formed" was *deceived*. Notice, this is a deficiency in learning or formation.

Summary: Paul gives Timothy guidelines for how a woman ought to learn: she must not teach, nor have authority. As with all the Epistles, we have only one side of the

conversation. Paul is clearly addressing specific concerns raised by Timothy: the concern of women in formation.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

It is clear that women were participating publicly in the Corinthian church's worship. Paul himself helps to regulate it in 1 Cor 11 – "every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered..." (v.6) using the same language as v.5, which speaks of men. Clearly, the women were participating, praying, prophesying just as the men were, and with the full blessing of Paul.

Does he contradict himself 3 chapters later, in 14:34-35, when he appears to say women should not speak? No. The point of the passage (14:26-40) is order in the church (v.26, 27, 33, 40).

The verb that occurs 3 times – *sigao* – refers to "being silent, even though one usually speaks."

IN all three cases, the reason is given why the speaker should stop:

v.28 – if there's no interpreter, the speaker in tongues should *sigao*.

Action: speaker in tongues stops his speaking... why? Because there is no interpreter.

v.30 – if a new person has a revelation, the one speaking should *sigao* someone speaking a revelation stops... why? Because a new person is ready to share.

v.34 – a woman should *sigao* in the churches... but no reason is given. Until the second half of the verse: "FOR they do not have permission to speak, but must be properly ordered" (or, "they do not have permission to speak, they must be in submission.")

The NIV omits the "for", which shows the reason for this piece of instruction. Moreover, in this passage about order in the churches, the "for" statement is clear: they've got to participate in their proper order. The Greek verb *hupotasso* (end of v.34) can be translated "submit" or "ordered". In other words, women do not have permission as long as they speak out of turn; they must stop speaking (*sigao*) until it's their proper order. This is doing things in a "fitting and orderly way." (v.40)

Verse 35 takes up the same teaching that Paul gave to Timothy above (1 Tim 2:11-12), about how women should learn and not speak until they have learned.

Summary: These two passages do not prohibit a woman ministering publicly, as long as she is adequately taught, and as long as she is under the authority of that church, ie., "in the proper order".

C) Other Considerations

1) Is there an ontological difference? Some argue that women, being created second, have some inherent inability to bring God's message to men who were created first. It is a difficult position to maintain considering the unmistakably God-ordained ministries of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Philip's daughters in particular.

2) We note that there is a difference in role between men and women. It is important to recognize the following distinctions:

- Jesus only appointed men as the Twelve.
- The relevant passages on elders point to male eldership, 1 Tim 3, Titus 1.
- None of the bible books were written by women. Possible exceptions are Esther, Ruth, and (at a stretch) Hebrews.

3) The role of women in the home and in the church are two separate issues. From Ephesians 5, there is no doubt that the husband is the head of the house, and must love his wife and family with sacrificial, giving-up-all-rights love. (Brothers, do we even begin to live up to this?) The wife must respect her husband, and remember his role as the Christ figure. This does not mean that men are in the

first place and women are in the second place. It simply shows God's ordering of the home.

Can a woman, then, teach in public in a way to be "over" her husband? Yes, because she is still under her husband's authority (because anyone who exercises a spiritual gift at Trinity must have the support of his/her spouse), and because she is under the authority of the elders. Anyone who teaches at Trinity is under the elders' authority, including the pastor when he preaches. He ministers with the covering of the elders, and he answers to the elders. So too with any and all who minister at Trinity. We are all under the authority of the elders.

- 4) In the years of practice, we have also seen that Trinity's position has an added benefit: it makes the most sense of the reality that we see in God's people around us.
- At Trinity, women lead the congregation as members of the Worship team. They lead in special music, they read Scripture, they lead in prayer, they welcome and make announcements. All of these, by virtue of their inclusion in the one weekly meeting of the church, are done in Jesus' Name for his glory and the edification of his church. They do all of this under the authority of the elders. The same is true when Trinity invites a Spirit-gifted woman to teach or preach.
 - Many of our housechurches use teaching DVD series or bible study materials from Jen Wilkin, Hannah Anderson, Beth Moore, Jackie Hill Perry. These are servants that God has raised up, and we rejoice that he will feed us through them.
 - Where do we start drawing the lines on when a woman can no longer teach males? Is it High School? College? Middle School? Younger? Is it just Bible teaching that should be precluded?

D. Conclusion

As we look at Scripture, we see the evidence of God's grace and gifting throughout the body: "in fact, God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Cor 12:18). With respect to the question of women's public ministry, we see God's open door at Trinity in all areas of ministry, with the exception of the calling to being an elder.

Moreover, we recognize that in the evangelical movement (those with a high view of Scripture, a central focus on the atonement for salvation, and the need for a personal work by the Spirit) there is a breadth of conviction on this matter. Many respected leaders fall on both sides of this position taken by Trinity. Therefore, where we disagree with a brother or sister, we do so with the gentleness that is called for in Christ. Having unity on the essentials, we have liberty in this and other areas that are non-essential, and we have charity on every level.

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[Adopted & Adapted from Grace Fellowship Church]