

PRISCA TEAM

Overview of Prisca Team

Throughout its history, the church has recognized that women have particular gifts with which to serve the body of Christ. To meet the needs of other women and to use women's unique gifts to bless the body of Christ, the church has formed various official ministry roles particularly for women, including the office of deaconess, an order of widows, and other female religious orders. It is clear the church family needs, and is benefited by, a feminine dimension in its leadership to complement the church's male eldership in its ministry to women.

From the church's earliest days, women were full members of the covenant community (Acts 1:14). They were deaconesses (1 Timothy 3:11; Romans 16:1-2); meaning they served as ministry leaders. Tabitha (Acts 9:30) was a leader of mercy ministry to the poor, while Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3) labored "side by side" with Paul in gospel work. Women spoke and prayed in public worship (1 Corinthians 11:5), and as in the Old Testament (Exodus 15), women were prophets and did prophesy.

To meet this particular need in Reconcile Community Church, a team of spiritually mature, godly women has been formed. They will assist the pastors and elders, particularly in their pastoral care for the women of Reconcile Community Church. This group is called the Prisca Team. Prisca or Priscilla in some translations disciplined Apollos alongside her husband Aquilla as well as led a house church. This name denotes the importance of men and women working together to serve Christ. Also, Titus 2:3-5 points to the special role of more mature women to provide an example in faith and life and to teach younger women in the church.

Function & Organization

The focus of this team is direct and personal pastoral care and nurture. The Prisca Team will operate cooperatively with the Elders, as an extension of their care for the church family. In this, the team will provide a form of visible female leadership for our church that is respected and honored, complementing the role of the Elders.

The Prisca Team will make themselves available for prayer and spiritual counsel, both to women who come to them and to women referred to them by the pastors and elders. The team will meet periodically with the elders to discuss the special needs within the church, particularly of women, and to pray for those needs. The Prisca Team will meet regularly to pray and to consider needs of women and ways to encourage ministry to and for women in our church in four areas:

- 1.** Spiritual nurture (which includes Bible teaching, discipleship, and counseling)
- 2.** Fellowship (building caring relationships among women)
- 3.** Mercy (meeting practical needs—meals, transportation, etc.)
- 4.** Evangelism (ways that women can reach out to other women with the gospel).

Church activities or events that focus particularly on women should be brought to the attention of the Prisca Team. This team will not be primarily responsible for doing this ministry, but for working with the women and men who lead Growth Groups, hold Deaconate roles, and others, to encourage and supplement the care and service that occurs throughout the church.

The Prisca Team will have an Elder-appointed leader who will serve as a liaison to the Elders and will organize itself beyond that as its members deem most appropriate.

The Prisca Team will be formally recognized in visible ways before the congregation.

Qualifications

The women on the Prisca Team should have demonstrated mature and godly character and a concern for pastoral care for women in alignment with the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3.

Appointment & Term of Service

The Prisca Team will be appointed by the elders for two-year terms, to be staggered, with no limit placed on renewal of terms. Recommendations for this team will be brought from the women on the Prisca Team to the Elders.

A Biblical Foundation for Men and Women: Valuing Roles in the Church

Reconcile Community Church holds a high view the authority of scripture as the infallible and inerrant Word of God. The Bible serves as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice as a church. Two areas where the Bible speaks at length, with consistency, are both the roles of all believers, and the unique roles of women and men particularly within the body of Christ.

All members of the church, both men and women, are called to use any and all spiritual gifts in ministry.

- 1.** God, in his wisdom, created human beings in his image as male and female (Gen. 1:27). We believe this distinction in creation is significant and ought to be appreciated, for in some way it reflects who God is.
- 2.** God's gracious provision for Adam's loneliness in the garden was the creation of Eve, who alone among the creatures of the earth was a suitable companion for him (Gen. 2:18-23). The union of these two, as male and female, constitutes God's design for marriage (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6). In God's design the marriage relationship is to be the sole context for sexual activity.
- 3.** The distinction between men and women can have no bearing on their oneness in Christ (Gal. 3:16-19) and of husbands and wives as "fellow heirs of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). Both men and women are equally valuable as persons created in the Image of God and as recipients of the grace of God in Christ, as all believers are co-heirs of this redemption, so that in him there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).
- 4.** The marriage relationship of one man and one woman united for life provides

a model in the Old Testament of the relationship between the Lord and Israel (cf., e.g., Hosea) and in the New Testament of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). The concept of biblical submission is based upon the Trinitarian pattern of submission found in the Godhead, which the church is to emulate (1 Cor. 11:3).

5. Both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home. God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love characterized by Jesus Christ (Col. 3:18-19, Eph. 5:22-25). This principle of male headship, rooted in the example of Jesus' headship over the body of Christ, should not be confused with domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself submitted to the kind and gentle authority of Jesus.

Within the context of marriage, the Bible teaches that the husband has a role and responsibility of headship, analogous to that of Christ toward the church. This role calls the husband to selfless and sacrificial love toward his wife, in which he is to seek her welfare, just as Christ gave Himself up for the church. The appropriate response by the wife is the same as the Church's response to Christ, loving submission to her husband (Eph. 5:22-33; cf. also 1 Pet. 3:1; Tit. 2:3-5).

This concept of submission is unique for the Christian, and in some ways is countercultural to the prevailing belief in individualism today. Submission does not detract from the equality or dignity of the individual, for all believers are called to submit to others in various contexts (Eph. 5:21), including to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13,14) and to leaders within the church (Heb. 13:17). Jesus himself was submissive to his earthly parents (Luke 2:51), to the earthly authorities (John 19:10,11), and to his heavenly Father (Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38; Phil. 2:8).

All of this must be understood within the context in the Bible of the goodness and abiding value of the concept of spiritual submission and all believers' submission to Jesus Christ. In fact, submission can be used to characterize the entire relationship of Christians to Christ. Christians are to live in submission upon Jesus Christ at all times. Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon us because his is a delightful burden (Matt. 11:28-30). However, let us not forget that it is "his yoke." Paul boldly asserts that a Christian's life is not their own, but they have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).

It is also important to note the broad role of women in society acknowledged in the Biblical text, and how the concept of Biblical submission does not suggest an all-encompassing subjection of women societally. Even in ancient Israel, Deborah, in particular, became the political leader of the nation of Israel (Judges 4).

- 1.** The local church operates as a community modeled in some sense on the extended family household, a metaphor found throughout 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:1,2,16. The role of

elder/pastor reflects that of the husband/father in the family unit of the church (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17).

- 2.** The biblical prohibition of women from "teaching or having authority over a man" in the context of instructions for Christian worship (1 Tim. 2:11,12) is grounded in the created order (2:13,14), and reflects the notion of male headship in the household.
- 3.** The kind of "teaching" prescribed in 1 Tim. 2:12 refers especially to the authoritative proclamation of apostolic doctrine in the context of the gathered assembly, and does not preclude all forms of teaching that take place in our church. The verb "to teach" or the noun "teaching" refers consistently to the teaching of the core or foundational truths of Christian doctrine (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:14-15; Gal. 1:6-12). What the New Testament designates to elders only, then, is the preaching and teaching ministry of the church in the core truths of the Gospel.
- 4.** The instructions on propriety in worship in 1 Cor. 14:26, in which Paul prohibits women from speaking to the gathered church (v. 35) must be understood within the context of his instructions earlier in the letter, which allow women to pray and prophecy within the congregation (11:5).

This prohibition, then, is understood to refer to a particular form of speech. What Paul has in mind here is not certain, but it seems to relate to the authoritative judgment of the truth of the prophetic utterances given in the gathered assembly of the church.

The Application of These Principles for Reconcile Community Church

- 1.** It is our desire and our responsibility to order our lives and our church life under the authority of the Word of God. We seek to be faithful to what the Bible teaches, with full confidence that God's will for us is good and our obedience to it results in his glory.
- 2.** We desire to unite men and women in one church family in an environment of love and honor. We desire that each person be edified and contribute to the well-being of the whole by the exercise of spiritual gifts to the glory of God.
- 3.** We also desire to recognize that God has created us differently as men and women. This difference ought not to be ignored but appreciated as a gift from God. In the context of the family, we affirm God's intention for husbands to exercise loving, sacrificial headship and for wives to respond in gracious, loving submission. What that will

look like will vary in every home, but we want to encourage both men and women to work this out under the guidance of the Word of God.

- 4.** In the context of our corporate life together as a church, we affirm the clear biblical principle of reserving the office of elder and pastor for men. These men have the primary responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the entire church family, including the proper teaching of the Word of God and protection from false doctrine, and they are called by God to give an account of the souls over which they watch (Heb. 13:17).
- 5.** In line with the instructions in 1 Timothy 2, only men, under the authority of the elders and pastors, will preach in the gathered assembly of the church. This is primarily our Sunday worship service, but could apply to other gatherings of that sort. This is the context in which the Bible is most authoritatively taught in our church life and the context most in view in Paul's instructions.
- 6.** All ministry roles other than elder are open to both men and women, subject to other qualifications applicable (e.g. Titus 2). For example, both men and women can serve as deacons, lead in various aspects of corporate worship, and lead and serve on ministry teams. Both men and women may

teach in contexts other than such gathered assemblies, including Community Groups, Core Classes (electives), seminars, etc.

7. For some, a particular view of women in ministry has become a basis of fellowship. Know that it is the deeply held conviction that Reconcile Community Church sits under the authority of the Word of God and thus orders the church to reflect what is found in scripture. However, if you hold a view that differs from church policy, you should not feel bound to leave. All spheres of leadership and roles in ministry and teaching in our church except one – that of elder – are open and benefit from the participation of women. It is our prayer and explicit goal to foster a climate in which men and women truly work together as equal ministry partners in the church, still recognizing the Biblical principle of eldership as it is laid out in scripture.

***Adapted from Redemption Hill Church Washington D.C.**