

# Update on Elders, Deacons and Gender

## Introduction

Ephesians 4:2-6 says, 'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.'

At the March 12 Special Congregational Meeting we promised an update on our progress toward Elders and Deacons. The following update describes recent events, decisions, and near-term plans. It also responds to the scriptural call to unity that Paul gave to the Ephesian church long ago.

## Recent History

Since our Fall Congregational Meeting in November of 2018, the Leadership Board has been in regular dialogue with Eastview staff, members, and the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Manitoba (MBCM), our provincial conference. Our perspective on Elders, Deacons, and specifically the male gender requirement for elders, has been evolving. We deeply thank everyone—every single voice—that has spoken through the Spirit into our conversation. You have become part of our prayers, meditations, and discernments. We also recognize that the last six months have created strain and division among the many members of our body.

Over recent years, the Leadership Board has sought to lead Eastview to become closer to and more consistently submit to the leadership of MBCM and the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC). Working through the independence path for One88, in particular, facilitated a stronger connection to MBCM. In recent weeks, we came to acknowledge that the position on gender that we shared in November was not in submission to the guidance of MBCM and CCMBC as stated in the 2003 Resolution Regarding Women in Ministry (see Appendix A), in tension with our constitution which commits support to our conference (see Appendix B), and also not consistent with our congregation's history, as many of our long-term members made clear.

For these reasons we have agreed to place our position on gender and elders in submission to the guidance of our church conferences. We also affirm, in alignment with MBCM, that gender should not prevent someone from serving where they are called by God to serve.

## Continuation of Leadership in Current Structure

Our current constitution provides for a leadership structure including a Leadership Board, Property and Finance Committee, Missions Committee, and other committees to serve the church. Our search for a biblical structure that would address some of the concerns we see has created many positive outcomes; most importantly, deepening our walk with God. We will continue to lead under this current structure, committing to improve how we serve the Body at Eastview. We encourage all who have received the Holy Spirit's call to leadership to consider joining the Board.

We believe that any further movement toward a change in leadership structure must be made in the spirit of unity that scripture describes in the passage above. Therefore, our priority is to collaborate with staff and lay leaders throughout the church to find alignment on matters of mission and vision. This unity will be the foundation on which a future leadership structure can be built. We would covet your ongoing support in prayer!

In His Name

The Eastview Leadership Board

## Appendix A: The 2003 Manitoba Resolution on Women in Ministry

<https://www.mennonitebrethren.ca/mb-beliefs/women-in-ministry-leadership-mb-resolutions/>

MB Church of Manitoba Resolution  
Leadership and Gender in the MB Church of Manitoba  
MB Church of Manitoba Yearbook, 2003

Resolution:

*"We call our people in the Spirit of Christ to relate to one another in mutual respect as sisters and brothers in Christ." Furthermore, "We invite men and women to exercise leadership on Conference boards, in pastoral staff positions and in our congregations, institutions and agencies. We ask them to minister as gifted, called and affirmed." And finally, "We call the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba to be increasingly alert to the gifts of women and men, and to become more active in calling and blessing them to minister in all areas of church life."*

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27, ESV)*

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, ESV)*

*"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10, ESV)*

*"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;" (Acts 2:17, ESV)*

*"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers," (Ephesians 4:11, ESV)*

*"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:4-8, ESV)*

*"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7, ESV)*

## Appendix B: Eastview Community Church Constitution and Bylaws (2010): Part 1, Clause 3

**AFFILIATION:** *This Church is a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba and is thereby affiliated with the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. As such we affirm the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith and are committed to providing moral and material support to projects and activities of the above named conferences.*