

**AUTUMN
RIDGE
CHURCH**

3611 SALEM ROAD SW
ROCHESTER, MN 55902
AUTUMNRIDGE.CHURCH

**ELDER
BOARD
STATEMENT**

**WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
AT AUTUMN RIDGE
CHURCH**

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

A STATEMENT FROM THE ELDERS OF AUTUMN RIDGE CHURCH

Facing a Difficult Dilemma

In 2018 the Elder Board recognized the need to formally articulate our practice regarding women in church leadership. We were searching for a new lead pastor, which required a definable position that could be given to prospective, pastoral candidates. To that end, the following statement was drafted and adopted by the Elder Board.

Women in Leadership Policy Statement

On Gender and Ministry in the Church

Autumn Ridge affirms that both men and women are created in God's image and entitled to equal dignity in society, the home, and the church; both should use their spiritual gifts for the health and ministry of the church.

It is the practice of Autumn Ridge that

- *Only men serve as elders and as the senior pastor.*
- *Both men and women serve in any other pastoral or church leadership role.*
- *We are committed to approaching this subject with extreme humility, knowing that a variety of biblical views are represented in our congregation, and it is our desire to maintain unity on this issue.*

The Elder board asked the senior pastor to join them in a study regarding women in ministry and as elders in 2021. In December 2023, after more than 1.5 years of deliberate study and discussion, the Elder Board, by majority vote, made the following position statement:

Women may occupy or serve in any position of leadership at Autumn Ridge Church.

When the elder nomination process begins for 2025, women who are nominated will also be fully considered as prospective elders. We recognize that responses to this new practice will range from celebration to concern. Many will simply be curious about the nature of this process and possible implications of this decision.

It is our hope and prayer that we will remain a body of believers with diverse viewpoints and that our church experiences profound peace and unity through our inclusion in Christ. We also desire that each person will take full advantage of the resources and church family meetings that will be available over the coming months.

- 1 Timothy Message Series | January 28-March 17, 2024
- Church Family Meeting 1 – The History of Autumn Ridge and An Old Testament Perspective on Women in Leadership, with Q&A | March 17, 2024
- Church Family Meeting 2 – A New Testament Perspective on Women in Leadership, with Q&A | April 21, 2024

We believe that unity is based on our inclusion in Jesus Christ, not on agreement in every matter. It is possible for a congregation to hold a wide range of conflicting viewpoints that remain within Christian orthodoxy and our church has included members who stridently disagree on many things, but our unity is in Christ. It's not possible for a church to accommodate in practice all viewpoints that it welcomes. This is most clearly seen in the question at hand. Perhaps this is part of the reason behind the recurring New Testament call to mutual submission.

What was the process?

In 2021 the Elder Board recognized the need to revisit this topic in response to mounting questions from the congregation. Pastor Rick was asked by the Elder Board to lead us in a rigorous study. We shared this update with the congregation during the 2022 Annual Meeting. At the 2023 Annual Meeting we announced to the congregation that a decision would be given at the 2024 Annual Meeting. We have studied scripture and prayerfully and thoughtfully discussed this topic, with the intent of honoring Jesus, Scripture, and the congregation of Autumn Ridge.

We lovingly pray that those that are having difficulty with this decision will walk with us with open hearts and minds as we study together during the 1 Timothy series, and for what we'll share during our Church Family Meetings. This was an extraordinarily difficult process for the elders because we were tasked with making a decision on this topic. We pray that God will walk with us in this next season and that our church family will be unified in Him and for Him. We value being able to understand concerns and talk them through as we honor Christ together and move forward building God's kingdom.

Grace and Peace,

The Autumn Ridge Church Elders

elders@autumnridge.church