

Statement on Men and Women in the Home and Church



At Darebin Presbyterian Church we affirm that God has created men and women as equal yet different such that they complement each other in a glorious way. This impacts on how we relate to one another and work together in the home and the church. This position has at times been labelled as 'complementarianism'. While we believe this term is useful, we appreciate that it can be understood and applied in diverse ways. Therefore this document seeks to define our understanding of the Bible's teaching on this topic which then impacts on how we hope to see it implemented. This document will be updated as needed.

- 1. The Bible.** We hold to God's infallible word as the means of determining the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the home and the church. Our position is not determined by pragmatism, culture or tradition although it will be affected by culture in its implementation.
- 2. Created equality.** We believe that God made all people - both male and female - as his image bearers (Gen 1:26, 27). Men and women have inherent and equal worth and dignity in God's good design and they complement each other in unique, distinctive and mutually enriching ways. This is true in marriage where husband and wife are one flesh (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31). This is also true in the church where our common identity as one in Christ means that there is no division in dignity and worth between men and women (Gal 3:26-28).
- 3. Created differences.** We believe that although equal in dignity and worth, God has made two distinct genders. This relates to men and women having different roles and responsibilities within the home and the church.
- 4. Men and women both need the gospel.** We grieve the sinfulness of men and women and sin's ongoing consequences on relationships between people and between people and God (Gen 3). We acknowledge that all men and women are sinful and have fallen short of God's glory (Rom 3:22, 23) and are in need of the salvation secured by Jesus through his perfect life and substitutionary death (Heb 9:26-28). This is received by coming to Jesus as Lord and Saviour through repentance and faith (Rom 10:9-11). Salvation unites believers together in Christ such that they are a body, with him as the head (Eph 4:15-16; 5:23), and they are also members of the household of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15).
- 5. Men and women in the home.** We affirm that in marriage husbands should exercise Christ-like headship in sacrificial love and not harshness and that women should submit to and respect their husbands as fitting to the Lord Jesus (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18,19; 1 Pet 3:7). We affirm that parents are to disciple their under-age children and

to expect obedience from them with fathers having a unique responsibility to oversee discipleship in a way that does not exasperate or embitter their children (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21). We recognise that all of this can be difficult in practice. In the body of Christ in general, men are not to demand that all women submit to them, rather men and women are to relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ with godliness and purity (1 Tim 5:2; Eph 5:21; Phil 2:3-4).

- 6. Men and women in the church.** We affirm that men and women are to share in ministering to one another (e.g. Rom 12:10; Eph 4:32; Col 3:16; Heb 10:24-25; 1 Pet 5:5). This will include serving, teaching and leading according to giftedness and maturity. Suitable men and women can be appointed to lead ministry teams, to serve in public worship services, to serve on the Board of Management or to serve in the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:8-13; Rom 16:1-2). We believe God has established the office of elder as a unique position of authority and teaching within the church and as such it is only open to suitably qualified men (1 Tim 2:11; 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9). The elders form the Session and have spiritual oversight of the church as a whole, shepherding the flock in a loving way (Act 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1-4). Where there is a mixed gathering of men and women, only suitably qualified men are to engage in the authoritative preaching of God's Word (1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15). Women are permitted to preach to women and children. Women may take on a teaching role as Gospel Community leaders but where a group is mixed-sex, there must be at least one male leader. We believe the elders (including ministers) should not only equip and engage women in diverse areas of Christian ministry but should also seek their wisdom and perspective in leadership decisions as the church is built up by the wisdom of godly women.
- 7. Abuse is condemned.** We denounce interpretations of Scripture that are used to justify sinful behaviour expressed in forms of abuse in marriage, family and church life. This abuse may be spiritual, sexual, emotional, financial, verbal or physical. Coercive, controlling and manipulative behaviour does not reflect Christ in any way and does not lead to human flourishing.
- 8. Freedom of conscience.** We acknowledge that Christians can genuinely disagree on the topic of roles and responsibilities for men and women and it is not our intention to bind the conscience of any believer in this regard. It is not required that regular attenders or members of DPC accept this statement on complementarianism but we do ask them to recognise this is the Session's position. We trust that, despite certain differences of opinion, God will help all men and women in our church community to feel welcome and to flourish as we focus on Jesus Christ.