

The Role of Female Laity in the Church

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2017

One of the most contentious issues in the Church of the 21st Century is the issue of Women's Ordination. The reasons why women cannot be ordained are many, but the two chief verses used in this situation are 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 (LCA: DSTO vol 1.A: Theses of Agreement: *Theses on the office of the ministry*, 1950, .11).

These two verses read:

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (1 Cor. 14:34-35)

Let a woman learn quietly with all subordination. I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (1 Tim 2:11-14)

These two verses teach that women are not to publically preach or teach or to speak with authority in church but are instead to learn in all quietness and subordination, and that they are not to lead or hold positions of authority over men. As pastors are required to preach, teach and lead the congregation in an authoritative role, women cannot be ordained without violating these two Biblical texts, amongst many others (e.g. 1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6). However, these passages do not refer only to the issue of Women's Ordination. For nowhere in these two texts does Paul mention women in the office of the ministry. Instead these passages are much wider and refer to issues beyond the issue of Women's Ordination. These passages deal with the role of women in the church.

While a number of churches have followed Scripture and refused the ordination of women, many of them have allowed women to hold positions of authority and to teach under the guise of laywomen. In this article I seek to respond to a number of situations in the 21st Century Church where laywomen have been allowed to preach, teach, lead and stand in positions of authority.

In this article we are going to look at the issues of:

Women lay-readers (leading lay-reading services)

Women elders

Women preaching and teaching

Women lay-lectors (reading Bible readings)

Women leading prayer

Women lay-distributors and lay-assistants of communion

Women's suffrage

Women ushers

Women Lay-Readers

The first issue that arises in these situations is the issue of women lay-readers/lay-leaders. Many churches have established that in the absence of a pastor a layman can lead a lay-reading service, in which no communion is served, the layman pronounces the forgiveness of sins but does not absolve and the layman reads a sermon prepared by the pastor. Some churches have allowed only men to take the position of lay-reader/lay-leader while some churches have allowed women to take up this position.

The objections to women leading in such a position is firstly, that by leading the worship service the woman is exercising authority over men and standing in an authoritative position in the worship service and is thus violating 1 Timothy 2:12. Secondly, that the woman who is leading is preaching and teaching and speaking publically in the congregation and thus is violating 1 Corinthians 14:34. And thirdly, by leading, preaching and teaching the woman is not learning in all quietness and subordination and is thus violating both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

I think it is clear from Scripture that women cannot lead lay-reading services, for to stand in that authoritative leading position and to preach to the congregation is a violation of Scripture. However, the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has in its doctrinal statements allowed women to serve in the position of leading lay-reading services (LCA: DSTO vol 2.F: Women in the Church: *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?*, 2003). The statement reads that “*The Church has approved the election of women to the office of lay reader.*” (.4) In order to understand the LCA’s position and why they have allowed women to take this position requires us to look at the LCA’s statement on *Female Elders* (LCA: DSTO vol 2.D: Ministries in the Church: *Female Elders*, 2000). I’ll also be including the LCA’s statement *The role of women in the church* (LCA: DSTO vol 1.F: Women in the Church: *The role of women in the church*, 1978) which demonstrates how women are to best serve God within the congregation.

Before looking at the statement on women elders I firstly want to discuss an issue that I have with point 4 of *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?*

Point 4 begins with “*The Church has approved*” the issue I have with this statement is the use of a capital C on the word Church, which is normally reserved for the universal Church. If the LCA was referring to the Lutheran Church of Australia they should have either said “*The church has approved*” or “*The Lutheran Church of Australia has approved*” by using the phrase *The Church* the LCA creates the illusion that they either speak on behalf of all of Christianity or that their decision is the agreed decision of all of Christianity. And since many churches still reject women lay-readers (AELC: Statement of Faith, 1998/2016, pg 65) (Gavin Winter: ELCR: Fellowship Day Essay: *The Position of Women in the Church*, 1999, pg 192) the LCA cannot speak on behalf of the Church. Now to put the best construction on this statement I assume that the LCA was not meaning to appear as if their position was the position of the universal Church, and that the use of the phrase “*The Church*” was meant to stand for the Lutheran Church of Australia synodical body. If this is the case, I would recommend that the LCA edit this statement in order to avoid any confusion.

Now addressing the LCA’s position to allow women to be lay-readers/lay-leaders, the LCA has approved the use of women in these positions because these positions are done under the authority and supervision of the pastor (*Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?*, .1), and that the positions of lay-reader and elder (see below for the discussion on women elders) are assisting and supportive roles that are subordinate to the pastoral office (*Female elders*, .2) and that the office of elder does not have authority, real or implied, over people (*Female elders*, .4).

The argument is that the offices of elder and lay-reader are supportive positions under the pastor’s authority and thus they do not possess any authority in and of themselves. Therefore since they possess no authority they are not in violation of 1 Timothy 2:12. And since women are to be helpers and supporters (Gen. 2:18, *The role of women in the church*, .3) and are to be subordinate to men (1 Cor. 11:3-12, 14:34, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, 1 Tim. 2:11-14, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1-6, *The role of women in the church*, .6, LCA: DSTO vol. 1.F: Women in the church: *Statement on right of women to vote at meeting of the congregations*, 1966, .1) by being subordinate to the pastor and assisting him in these positions they are in fact fulfilling Scripture.

Therefore, my first critic of this statement on women lay-readers requires me to address the issue of authority.

Firstly, this statement that elders do not have any real or implied authority was not the LCA’s original position and appears nowhere in the 1977 statement on *Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia* (LCA: DSTO vol 1.D: Ministries in the Church: *Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia*, 1977). This decision that elders had no authority was only decided at the LCA General Synod of 1987 when the LCA voted to permit women elders on the understanding that the office of elder does not have real or implied authority over people (*Role of women in the church*, .7a editor’s notes) and only appears in the statement on female elders which was prepared in 1989 and only adopted as late as 2000.

Secondly, the decision to allow women to lead in the position of lay-reader was only adopted as of 2003 when the LCA General Synod “*resolved that the use of women lay-readers, using prepared material only, be allowed within the Lutheran Church of Australia.*” The previous position of the

LCA is found in the 1993 edition of *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?* (which the LCA no longer holds to, and is preserved only as a historical document).

This earlier document states that “*when a layman conducts a lay-reading service, he is functioning in the place of the pastor as leader in worship. He serves in this role by appointment by the congregation and under the authorisation and supervision of the pastor. In other words, his function and work falls within the area of service with the word. It is carried out on the authority of the pastor as an extension of the ministry with word and sacrament.*” (.1) And while some have argued that a lay-reader functions under the pastor and the pastor is really responsible for the service, “*however, leading in worship is more than merely a function; it presumes an authoritative role in the worshipping community,*” and that the then position of the LCA was against women serving with this kind of authority and that it would be inappropriate for women to act as leaders in public worship (.2). It is with this previous statement that I find agreement. Basically, this earlier document argued that by possessing a leading role in the worship service, the lay-reader stood in a place of authority over the congregation and even though they were under the pastor’s authority, this did not diminish the lay-reader’s authority. Since the position of lay-reader is a position of authority and women having authority over men is forbidden in 1 Timothy 2:12, therefore, women cannot lead a service as lay-readers.

This position on authority I call the Under-Over Principal of Authority. What I mean by this, is that while a person may be under one person’s authority, that subordination does not mean that they do not possess authority over others, such as a supervisor is under the authority of their boss but they still have authority over the other workers. In this situation the lay-reader is under the authority of the pastor but still has authority over the congregation, as long as they stand in the position of leader. The idea that the lay-reader has no authority simply because they are under the pastor’s authority is nonsensical. We can see the Under-Over Principal in Scripture when the centurion comes to Jesus and declares that he is a man under authority, with soldiers under his authority (Matt. 8:9, Luke 7:8). Thus I, in agreement with this 1993 statement, would argue that women cannot be lay-readers, for to do so would require them to hold a position of authority over men (.2).

In addition to the issue of authority, I’d like to mention the issue of leading and the LCA’s statement on *The Role of women in the church*. The 2003 statement on women lay-leaders mentions that lay-readers lead the worship of the congregation (.2). The original 1993 statement makes this statement even clearer and states that the lay-reader functions in place of the pastor as leader in worship (.1) and that this leading is authoritative (.2). The LCA’s 1978 statement on *The role of women in the church* declares that on the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-10, 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:13-14 women are to be subordinate and reserved in worship and that women are not to take leading, independent or authoritative roles in church (.6).

This 1978 document says that women cannot hold leading or authoritative roles in the church and while the document’s position on women elders was overturned in 1987 (.7a), the statement in point 6 is still the official position of the LCA. While the LCA has determined that women can serve as lay-readers because this position is deemed not to be authoritative, and thus not in contradiction with the 1978 document, the LCA still upholds that lay-readers are working within a leading role in the church. Thus the 2003 document on *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?* is contradicting the 1978 document on *The role of women in the church*, as the LCA still holds to the 1978 position that women should not take leading roles in the church yet the 2003 statements allows women to lead worship.

Lastly, I would like to deal with points 4 and 5 of the 2003 *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?* regarding the decision to let women preach using prepared material. In the section below on *Women Preaching and Teaching* I will go further into the discussion on women preaching and teaching publically. But for now I would first like to address the issue of women preaching using prepared materials.

The 2003 LCA statement *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?* says in point 4 that “*the Church* [as mentioned above this term refers to the Lutheran Church of Australia and not the Church catholic] *has approved the election of women to the office of lay reader, but only men are eligible to be elected as lay preachers since the office of lay preacher is an extension of the pastoral office.*” And point 5 states that “*lay readers, both men and women, are to use prepared sermons that have been approved by their pastor.*”

Firstly, I would like to point out a supposed contradiction between points 4 and 5. Point 4, while allowing women to be lay-readers, forbids women from being lay-preachers. However, point 5 states that women can preach using prepared materials. This seems to be a contradiction since point 4 says women can't preach, yet point 5 says that they can. This contradiction all depends on what lay-preacher means and to what it is referring. If the term refers to laymen that preach sermons prepared by the pastor, then point 4 contradicts point 5, since point 4 forbids women from being lay-preachers but point 5 allows women to preach prepared sermons. However, if lay-preacher is referring to a layman who writes their own sermon (thus women cannot preach their own written sermons), then point 5 contradicts point 4, since point 5 says lay-readers are only to use prepared sermons. Thus if the term lay-preacher mentioned in point 4 was referring to a layman who wrote his own sermons this would be forbidden by point 5's command that lay-readers use only prepared material.

However, if lay-reader and lay-preacher are two distinct offices then this contradiction can be overcome. If we consider lay-reader to be a subordinate office under the authority of the pastor which uses only prepared materials, and lay-preacher to be an authoritative independent office in which the laymen can preach their own material this does away with the contradiction; as point 5's prohibition on men and women using their material is only addressed to lay-readers. Whereas, the office of lay-preacher in which a laymen prepares their own material is not prohibited by point 5 as point 5 is referring to a different office.

Thus the LCA has established two separate offices of lay-workers; lay-reader, in which both men and women can serve using prepared materials and lay-preacher, in which only men can serve as it is seen as an extension of the pastoral office. Thus according to the LCA women cannot hold the office of lay-preacher, in which they preach their own material, because this is considered an extension of the pastoral office. Thus, because lay-preacher is considered an extension of the pastoral office, the LCA cannot allow women to be lay-preachers without violating their current position which forbids Women's Ordination (*Theses on the office of the ministry* .11). However, the LCA still allows women to preach as part of the office of lay-reader as long as they use prepared material. I will deal with this issue further in the section *Women Preaching and Teaching*, but I'd first like to further discuss the topic of women elders.

Women Elders

The original position of the LCA was that “*the rule of the apostles* [1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14] *excludes the possibility of women acting as pastors and shepherds of congregations. It probably would eliminate the position of elder also,*” (*The role of women in the church*, .7a) and that women were excluded from the office of pastor and church leader (aka elder) (.7b). This statement (1978), however, left the matter open by saying “*although something may depend here on how the office of elder is understood.*” (.7a) Since the matter of women elder was left open, in 1987 the General Synod voted to permit the use of women elders in the LCA (.7a editor's note). The LCA's Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations (CTICR) prepared a statement in 1989 which was later adopted in 2000 by the General Synod (*Female Elders*, preface).

Both the editor's note (*The role of women in the church*, .7a) and the statement on *Female Elders* (.2, .4) declare that women can be permitted to the office of elder in the LCA because the auxiliary office of elder, by virtue of its subordinate and supportive nature, does not have any real or implied authority over people.

As mentioned above, concerning the Under-Over Principle of Authority, an office does not cease to be authoritative simply because it is a subordinate and supportive office (Matt. 8:9, Luke 7:8). I would agree with the LCA's former position that the office of elder is an authoritative, leading role in the

church and thus on the grounds of Scripture (1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14) women cannot hold the office of elder (as it currently exists).

At this point, I would like to clarify what I mean by the bracketed statement “as it currently exists”. What I mean by this statement is, that the office of elder found in many Lutheran churches as it currently exists, is an authoritative role that cannot be held by women. However, if the office of elder was to be reconfigured and exist in such a way that it did not possess any authority then the office could be opened to women. Or if the church was going to make a distinction between the roles of male elders and female elders and establish an auxiliary office of female elder which possessed no authority then women could hold this office.

In order to explain this better I need to discuss the distinction between deacon and deaconess, and the issue of Phoebe the deaconess.

Firstly, I need to establish the point that the current auxiliary office of elder is not the same as the biblical office of elder (presbyter) (*Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia*, .8). The term “elder” in the Bible is interchangeable with the terms “bishop” and “pastor” (Acts 20:17,28, Tit. 1:5,7, 1 Pet. 5:2, *Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia*, .8, *The Word Shall Stand: The Public Ministry*, affirmation 9, pg151) and is a reference to the Office of the Ministry.

Thus, the current office of elder is more akin to the historical auxiliary office of deacon (Acts 6:2-6, Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:8-13). One of the proposed Bible verses for Women’s Ordinations, and women elders, is Romans 16:1-2, which refers to Phoebe as a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae. Phoebe’s status as a deaconess has caused a lot of controversy surrounding the issue of Women’s Ordination. Some have argued that this supports Women’s Ordination. And others have noticed the supposed contradiction between Phoebe’s status in Romans 16:1 and Paul’s command that deacons be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:12). The issue that arises is that how could Phoebe be a deacon if deacons were to be the husband of one wife.

There are three options here:

1. Paul is contradicting himself. This would mean that the Scriptures are not inerrant and are not true and thus not inspired.
2. The term ‘husband of one wife’ is really referring to spouse of spouse. This is the argument proposed by the pro-Women’s Ordination advocates, which teach that Paul’s mandate that pastors and deacons be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2, 12) is not a gender issue but an issue of polygamy and that what Paul is really saying is that pastors should be monogamous. The proponents of Women’s Ordination try to justify this teaching by stating that Phoebe was a deacon and thus Paul’s mandate cannot be an issue of gender. This understanding of Paul’s mandate is illogical, especially, when we consider 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14, which forbids woman to speak, teach and exercise authority over men. Secondly, pastors and deacons are called to manage their household and since husbands are to be the head of the household (1 Cor. 11:3-16, Eph. 5:22-33, 6:1-4, Col. 3:18-21, 1 Pet. 3:1-7) Paul must be referring to husbands of one wife and not generic spouses of one spouse.
3. There is a distinction between the office of deacon and deaconess. This option seems to be the most obvious.

While women can be permitted to hold the office of deaconess (Romans 16:1-2), as many Lutheran churches have historically allowed, the church must make a distinction between the office of deacon and the office of deaconess. Thus if the church was to consider the current office of elder as a parallel to the office of deacon then females could hold this office, so long as there are distinctions made between the roles and functions of elder and elderess. Such distinctions would have to require that the elderess does not lead the divine service, does not preach, teach or speak in church, and does not exercise authority over men. Roles for deaconess may include: teaching and visiting the sick or imprisoned, family counselling, serving in hospitals, prisons, retirement communities or facilities that care for the disabled (LCMS, *Deaconess Ministry*, www.lcms.org/deaconess-ministry).

Women Preaching and Teaching

As mentioned above, in 2003 the LCA adopted a paper entitled *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?*. This paper not only allows women to lead the services (.4) but it also allows the women publically preach (.5).

This is a clear violation of 1 Cor. 14:34 in which Paul teaches that women should keep silent and that women are not permitted to speak in worship, and 1 Tim 2:11-12 which teaches that women are to learn in quietness and subordination and not to teach or exercise authority over men. Women are not to lead or preach or teach in church but are to remain in a position of learning, in quietness and subordination.

Now the LCA will try to get around this by saying that 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy are not talking about speaking or teaching in general but individual authoritative leading roles. I would agree with this statement, and I will shortly explain the context of the prohibition on women speaking. However, the LCA then uses this understanding of speaking and teaching to justify their position by stating that lay-readers are under the authorisation and supervisor of a pastor and thus the women are not possessing authority over men, or preaching and teaching in an authoritative role. In addition to this, they teach that since the women are reading a prepared sermon they are not really preaching and teaching with authority, but simply reciting what the pastor taught (hence why women are forbidden to become lay-preachers, but men can preach their own material). Both of these points are foolishness. Firstly, as we already established in *Women Lay-Readers*, just because a woman is under the authority and supervision of the pastor does not mean that she no longer has authority over the congregation (Matt. 8:9, Luke 7:8, *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?*, 1993, .2). Secondly, just because she is speaking the words written by someone else does not mean that she is not preaching and teaching with authority. However, there is some truth to this, in the sense that the authority in the words being preached and taught do not belong to the words themselves but to the one from whom they originate. In the same way that God's Words are authoritative not because each individual word has power but that God is powerful and authoritative, therefore His Word has power and authority because it is His Word. In other words, when God puts His Word in the mouth of the prophet, the authority is not in the prophet's proclamation but in the fact that the words spoken are God's Word (Exod. 4:15, Num. 23:5,12,16, Deut. 18:18, Isa. 51:16, Jer. 1:9, 5:14, Ps. 33:4, 119:160, Isa. 55:11, John 17:17, Heb. 4:12). In the same way Joab put words in the mouth of a woman of Tekoa and sent her to the King (2 Sam. 14:3). The words she spoke were not her own but Joab's. The words were authoritative because they were the words of Joab. We know this from society that an ambassador speaks on behalf of someone and that the ambassador's authority comes from the person they represent. In this same way, when a person is given prepared material and speaks in the place of the absent pastor, they are speaking under his authority as an ambassador of the pastor. However, this does not remove their own authority, for while it is true that an ambassador is under the authority of one who sent them, the ambassador still stands in a place of authority. The position they stand in is an authoritative position because of the one they represent. Just as a pastor's position is authoritative not because the office is authoritative in and of itself, but because he stands as an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) and speaks on His behalf (Luke 10:16). The pastor stands in the place of authority because he stands in the stead of Christ. In the same way when a lay-reader stands in the stead of the pastor they too stand in Christ's stead and in a position of authority. When a lay-reader reads a sermon prepared by a pastor they stand in a place of authority as the ambassador of the pastor. Thus, women cannot publically preach and teach in church using prepared materials for to do so is to preach and teach with authority and is therefore a violation of Scripture (1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim 2:11-12). Even though they use prepared material, under the authority and in the place of the pastor, they are still preaching and teaching in a leading, independent, authoritative role in the church, which is forbidden by Scripture (1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14, *The role of women in the church*, .6)

Now, there are many out there who seek to undermine God's Word and attempt to discredit Paul's prohibitions in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. There are a number of arguments proposed by those who are pro-Woman's Ordination. These arguments have been repeatedly responded to and yet they continue to persist. And while I could spend pages after pages responding to all of them in length, for the sake of this article I'd just like to briefly respond to five common arguments.

1. If women can't speak then how can they sing hymns or pray?
 2. What about the prophetesses in the Bible?
 3. If women can't teach, then why are women allowed to be Sunday School teachers?
 4. What about Priscilla teaching Apollos?
 5. What about 1 Corinthians 11 teaching that women can pray and prophesy?
1. The first argument is often used as a caricature of Paul's prohibition to try and belittle Paul's teaching as foolishness. This is not only disrespectful to Paul but overall to God and His Word, and while I am not surprised to hear this come from the mouth of Atheists, it shocks and disgusts me when I hear it come from the mouth of Christians. While this disrespectful statement has been used by proponents of the Women's Ordination, they do not seriously think that Paul is teaching that women can't sing, pray, or even cough. Instead they use this caricature to try and promote the idea that Paul was not talking about women leading and speaking, but about women chattering and not paying attention. They back up this argument by saying that Paul is referring to disorderly conduct in the service (1 Cor. 14:33,40) and thus he is only condemning those disorderly and distracting women who chatter in church. They will also use the commandment in verse 35 about asking husbands at home, to teach that the women were asking their husbands things during worship and that Paul was rebuking them for their chatter.

Now, while it is not impossible to consider this line of reasoning, this argument is unlikely, especially when you consider this section in view of its parallel in 1 Timothy (Lockwood *1 Corinthians*, pg508). If we look at verses 33-35 in the context of the entire passage we can see what type of speaking Paul is referring to. Firstly, in verse 26 Paul starts off the section by saying that when you come together for a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue and an interpretation. This shows that Paul is referring to a congregational worship setting; this can be seen clearer in verses 33-35 where the context is clearly in the church. In addition this verse also demonstrates the kind of speaking that Paul had in mind. Paul refers to Psalms and a teaching, which would mean Scripture and possibly also an explanation on Scripture, this is the kind of speaking where an individual speaks publicly while the others listen (Priebbenow *Prophetesses and Woman Pastors*, Priebbenow *Woman Pastors, Speaking and Silence*, Grieger *Earthly Images of the Heavenly Bride: Woman and the Church*, pg 73). Verse 26 gives us an insight of what things Paul is forbidding when he commands women not to speak in church.

Another aspect from the context that shows us what Paul is meaning is when he forbids women from speaking in church. In verse 34 Paul says that he does not permit a woman to speak in church. The word used here in the Greek is *lalien* from the root word *laleo* meaning to speak. The way we are to understand "speak" can be shown from how Paul has used *laleo* in this section, when referring to speaking in tongues or prophetic speaking in verses 27-32. Here Paul uses the same term for the speaking done in tongues and prophetically to refer to the speech of the women. This kind of speaking that Paul is referring to is an authoritative teaching position, a leading role of preaching and teaching in the congregation (Lockwood, pg508, Grieger, pg 73, Priebbenow *Women Pastors and Mistaken Appeal to "Prophecy"*). And Paul calls this kind of speaking (*laleo*) by woman shameful and he does not permit a woman to do this kind of speaking.

To demonstrate the point even further, in verse 34 Paul commands the women to remain silent. Here he uses the word *sigatosan* from the root word *sigao* meaning silence. Paul uses

this term in verses 28 and 30 to tell the men who spoke in tongues and prophesied to keep silent (Grieger, pg73). This again shows what kind of speaking Paul is referring to. He is not simply telling chattering women to be silent, but he is referring to the individual authoritative leading speaking in the church.

If this wasn't clear enough, 1 Timothy makes it clear that women are not to speak but are to learn in quietness and subordination and not have authority over men.

Therefore, in response to the first argument, Paul is not referring to coughing, singing or even chattering. Instead, context shows that the speaking Paul is forbidding is individual authoritative leading speaking. This includes all forms of this style of speaking including preaching, teaching, lay-reading, leading prayer and even reading the Scriptural lessons in the public worship (see below the sections on *Women Lay-Lectors* and *Women Leading Prayers*). Also, in response to the "good order" argument from the proponents of Women's Ordination, who argue that Paul was only referring to women being disorderly or talkative during the divine service, context will once again demonstrate to us what Paul means by "order". In 1 Corinthians 14:40 Paul commands that "all things be done decently and in order." This "good order" is not mere organisation, meaning that any order is acceptable, but the divine ordinances and institutions of the Lord (Kleinig *Ordered Community*, pg 4). This includes, but is not limited to, the subordination of women to men (Esth. 1:20,22, 1 Cor. 11:3, 14:34, Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18, 1 Tim. 2:12, Tit. 2:4-5, 1 Pet. 3:1-7) and the upholding of the Order of Creation (Gen. 2:7,18-23, 1 Cor. 11:8-9, 1 Tim. 2:13). This divine Order of Creation can be seen clearer in the text when looking at the Greek. The Greek word *hupotassesthosan* found in 1 Corinthians 14:34, comes from the root word *hupotasso* meaning to subordinate, from the two Greek words *hupo* meaning under and *tasso* meaning order. *Hupotasso* is used repeatedly in Scripture to refer to the subordination of wives to their husbands (Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1,5). The use of *hupotassesthosan* in verse 34 can be directly connected to the use of the Greek word *taxin* (the noun form of *tasso*) used in verse 40.

In addition to this Paul's commands the women to speak to their husbands at home, the Greek word used here is *oikos*, which means household. Scripture tells us that the husband is in the head of the household (Esth. 1:22 *oikia* in the Septuagint) and that men are to manage their own household (*oikos*) (1 Tim 3:4-5,12). The use of both *hupotasso* and *oikos* demonstrates to the reader that Paul is not talking about mere organisation in the service but that he is talking about the God given Order of Creation and the universal principle of the subordination of women to men.

In conclusion to this argument, Paul's prohibition is not to be taken lightly either. For Paul ascribes his prohibition to the Law and states that it is a command of the Lord (v34,37), and whoever does not recognise this commandment will not be recognised (v38). This is a serious judgement, which parallels Matthew 10:33 and Luke 12:9, where Jesus says that whoever denies Him will be denied by Him before the Father. For Paul to declare that a person will not be recognised is a serious statement. He is declaring that whoever does not recognise 1 Corinthians 14:26-37 will not be recognised by the Lord. This is disownment and rejection by the Lord, and speaks of a very serious judgement.

"Any person who does not recognise Christ's command that women are not permitted to speak in church, is, Paul declares, not recognised by God. Anyone who rejects that command does not have God's backing, His approval for what they do. This, of course, also implies that the churches do not, and should not, recognise those who reject this command of the Lord."

(Kleinig *Why I Changed My Mind*)

2. The second argument commonly used for Women's Ordination is the argument about the prophetesses in Scripture, usually initiated by the line "but what about Deborah?" Deborah is not the only prophetess of God but is usually the most famous one and primary example used in this argument. The list of prophetesses of the LORD our God in Scripture include: Miriam (Exod. 15:20, Micah 6:4), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14, 2 Chron. 34:22), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36) and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). Some also include in this list Rachel (Gen. 30:24), Hannah (1 Sam.2:1-10), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:28-31), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45) and Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46-55), who were not called prophetesses but supposedly performed acts of prophecy. In Joel 2:28 we are told that when God poured out His Spirit (fulfilled in the Book of Acts 2:1-4,16-21, 8:14-17 10:44-46, 11:15) both our sons and our daughters would prophesy. 1 Corinthians 11 also refers to women prophesying (which I will discuss further in argument 5). It is clear from Scripture that women have prophesied. No one would say that what they did was wrong or improper. For when God seized a person and bade them to speak, they did so following His command, as even Balaam's donkey did (Priebbenow *Prophetesses and Woman Pastors*). But just because God used prophetesses in Scripture does not mean that we may have women pastors today. Three things need to be considered here:
 - A. the difference between the prophetic and pastoral office
 - B. the difference between prescription and description
 - C. the role in which these women prophesied
- A. The difference between the office of prophet and the office of pastor is an importance distinction that must be made when discussing the role of women in the Church. Unlike pastors, prophets spoke on the basis of special, divine revelation (Lockwood *The Ordination of Women*, pg 163). The prophets were a special office, in which God called individual directly, without mediation, by His Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). The prophets proclaimed the Word of God which was revealed directly to them (Exod. 4:15, Num. 23:5,12,16, Deut. 18:18, 34:9, 1 Kings 13:1, 17:2, 19:9, 21:17, 22:19, Jer. 1:9,11, Ezek. 1:3, Hos. 1:1, Joel 1:1, Amos 3:7, Jon. 1:1, Mic. 1:1, Zeph. 1:1, Hag. 1:1, Zech. 1:1, Mal. 1:1, etc.). The prophets spoke as God called them. When you consider the number of prophets in both the Old and New Testament they were few and far between, speaking only in special circumstances when God chose to reveal His Word to them.
- As for the office of priest (OT) and pastor (NT), their office is very different. In both Testaments these offices were regular daily offices, restricted to males (Exod. 28:1, Num. 18:1-2, 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:6)(Lockwood, pg 139) and both entered their office through the means of a mediated call, the Levitical priests by virtue of their birth and the New Testament pastors by virtue of call or appointment (Acts 14:23, 20:28, Tit 1:5). We cannot draw a straight line from the office of prophet to the office of pastor (Lockwood, pg 163). The office of prophet is a special office in which the person is called directly by God's Spirit. This office can be filled by whomever God chooses, whether that be male, female or even animal (e.g. Balaam's donkey). However, the pastoral office is a regular daily office in which a person is called through a mediated call of the Church. This office is restricted to males only.
- It is simplistic and ridiculous to attempt to equate the office prophets and prophetesses with office of pastors. Passages like 1 Corinthian 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 make a clear distinction between the office of prophet and the office of pastor. (Lockwood *The Women's Ordination Debate in the Lutheran Church of Australia*, pg 365)
- Thus when women attempt to use Deborah or the prophetesses as an excuse for Women's Ordination, the response should be "but you are not Deborah." We do not deny that God has called certain women into the special office of prophet, but when He instituted the regular office of pastor, He restricted it to males only. Therefore, the pastoral office is closed to females. As for the office of prophet, if God desires to call females into this

office, that is His divine will and choosing. However, “we do not expect prophets or prophetesses any more, because God’s revelation is closed. There are no prophets or prophetesses any more, just as there are no apostles any more.” (Priebbenow *Prophetesses and Women Pastors*).

- B. Another important point is knowing the difference between prescription, that which God prescribes or commands us to do, and description, simply describing what happened. For example, God prescribes baptism in Matthew 28:19 but in Genesis Abraham is described as having slept with Hagar (Gen. 16:1-4) but Scripture did not prescribe that he do that nor does it prescribe us to go and do likewise (Gen.17:16,17,19,21, 18:10,14, Gen. 2:24, Exod. 20:14, Deut. 5:18, Matt. 5:27-28, 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-8, 1 Cor. 7:2-5, Eph. 5:31, Heb. 13:4).

Female prophetesses are descriptive events that happened, just like the case of Balaam’s donkey (Num. 22:28-30). They are not prescriptive, instead, God has prescribed that only males be pastors (Acts 1:21, 1 Cor. 14:33-36, 1 Tim 2:11-14, 3:2, Tit. 1:6). Just because something is described in Scripture does not mean that we are prescribed to do the same. Just because God called female prophetesses does not give us the right or mandate to ordain women. Just as God speaking through Balaam’s donkey does not give us the right or mandate to ordain donkeys.

- C. As we will discuss further in argument 3, there is also a way in which women prophesied, the same way in which women are allowed to teach. For we see that Paul does not condemn the prophesying of women (1 Cor. 11:5) but he does forbid the speaking and teaching by women in public worship (1 Cor. 14:33-36, 1 Tim 2:11-12). Paul even gives permission for women to teach in certain circumstances (2 Tim. 1:5, Tit. 2:4). Therefore, since Paul does allow women to prophesy and teach but forbids it in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, and we know that Paul is not contradicting himself. Logic would dictate that women can prophesy and teach in certain circumstances. In arguments 3 and 4, I will discuss the circumstances in which women can teach, but as an introduction to that, let us first analyse the cases of prophesy done by women in Scripture:

- Miriam is said to have lead women.
- Deborah spoke to men (e.g. Barak), but in individual, personal, private circumstances.
- Huldah did not speak publically to the people, but only privately to those men that came to see her (Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, Asaiah).
- Noadiah is mentioned only in name and there are no details concerning her prophesy.
- Isaiah’s wife, like Noadiah, is only mentioned in passing to be a prophetess and there are no details concerning her prophecy.
- Anna is said to have spoken of Jesus to everyone awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. It would seem like she prophesied to a great number. However, nowhere does it say she spoke publically. In fact, she is said to have never left the Temple. Most likely Anna spoke privately to the individuals that came and went to the Temple.
- The daughters of Philip, like Noadiah, are mentioned only in passing. The daughters are never said to have prophesied publically, in fact Luke mentions that he and his companions only came across the daughters of Philip when they had entered the house. The Church Father Origen stated that while the daughters did prophesy, they did not speak in the churches (quoted in Priebbenow *Prophetesses and Women Pastors*). According to Origen none of these women preached, taught, or led the church in public worship (Lockwood *The Ordination of Women*, pg 163).

While these next five were not specifically prophetesses, some have included them in the list attributing to them prophecies:

- Rachel’s proposed prophecy is spoken at the birth of Joseph as a personal statement concerning the name of Joseph.
- Hannah’s proposed prophecy is not a prophecy but a personal prayer.

- Abigail's proposed prophecy was a statement which she spoke personally to David. The statement isn't a prophecy but a pious statement concerning David's future.
- Elizabeth's proposed prophecy is not a prophecy either but a personal statement concerning Jesus based on the leaping of John in her womb.
- Mary's proposed prophecy is not a prophecy either but a prayer/song (the same as Hannah's song) concerning her joy. Compare Mary's song with Zechariah's prophecy; here Zechariah is said to have prophesied and his prophecy makes real predictions concerning John and Jesus.

None of these five women could be considered prophetesses in the slightest.

Concerning the other women who were declared to be prophetesses, "note that in these passages we are not told that these women publically taught the assemblies of Christians, nor that they were public teachers of male adults." (Winter: 195) While many of the male prophets were called to proclaim God's Word publically (e.g. Jonah 1:2, 3:1-5), none of the women were called into this position. The examples of women prophets would have prophesied to women or to men in private settings.

Scripture does not condemn women prophesying or teaching (1 Cor. 11:5), as long as they don't have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-12) or speak in the public worship (1 Cor. 14:33-35).

3. Concerning the issue of women teaching, some have attempted to justify Women's Ordination (and women's preaching and teaching in the public worship) by claiming that we allow women to lead Sunday School. 1 Timothy 2:12 states that Paul does not permit women to teach or have authority over men. Many will take that statement to say that Paul says women can't teach at all and that the church is contradicting itself when it allows women to teach in Sunday School.

Firstly, context is important. Verses 1-9 refers to prayer and that men were to pray "in every place", this is an indication that Paul's context is public worship. In addition to that, this is a pastoral epistle, a letter written to a pastor concerning the running of the church, this too would indicate that Paul's intention is public worship. The phrase "in every place", like the phrase "as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33), shows that this command is universally binding on all Christian churches.

Secondly, Paul does not say that women cannot teach, he says that they are not to teach men or to have authority over men. Again this is concerning the public worship, where women are not to have individual, independent, authoritative, leading roles, but are meant to be in subordinate, quiet, learning roles. The women's position in the church is learner, not teacher. Thirdly, Paul does not say that women cannot teach under any circumstance, instead, he allows women to teach children (2 Tim. 1:5) and other women (Tit. 2:4). While a woman may not be permitted to speak or teach in the liturgical assembly, she may question her husband at home (1 Cor. 14:33-35) and teach younger women (Tit. 2:3-5). (Kleinig *Ordered Community*, pg 7)

In addition to Paul's statements we also have the example of Miriam who lead other women (Exod. 15:20), and it is mostly likely that Naomi taught Ruth concerning the LORD, God of Israel (Ruth 1:16).

These cases (2 Tim. 1:5, Tit. 2:4, Exod. 15:20, Ruth 1:16) show that women are not forbidden to teach. They also demonstrate how women are to teach. Women are never to preach, teach or speak with authority in the church and public worship, but outside of this women are allowed to publically teach women and children. Also, as I will mention in argument 4, women are allowed to teach men in private settings.

4. As mentioned above, Paul forbids women from preaching or teaching in church or having authority over men. However, in opposition to this teaching, some will raise the circumstance of Priscilla teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26) and claim that this contradicts Paul's prohibition on women teaching and having authority over men.

Firstly, Priscilla did not teach Apollos on her own, but her and her husband, Aquila, taught Apollos. This means that Priscilla did not teach Apollos by herself, and she did not teach him in an independent, authoritative way.

Secondly, Paul's prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14 is referring to women not speaking or leading in public worship, and the context would imply the same for 1 Timothy 2 (although, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 11:3,5,11, Ephesians 5:22-24,32, Colossians 3:18 and 1 Peter 3:1-6 the subordination of women to men is not restricted to worship).

Aquila and Priscilla take Apollos aside and explain to him the way of God (Acts 18:26). Thus they are not teaching him in public worship but in a private setting. In this way they are not teaching him from a position of authority but are conversing with him personally on the same level. Therefore, even if Priscilla had taught Apollos without her husband, this would not be a violation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-36, because it was not in the public worship, or 1 Timothy 2:12 because she would be speaking to him on an equal level and thus not exercising authority over him.

Thirdly, Deborah and Huldah both demonstrate the role in which women are permitted to teach men, which is privately in a personal setting. While it is true that these women were prophets, and thus they had a special calling, and their teaching is different to that of an ordinary laywoman, they still demonstrate to us the way in which women are to teach. We know that what Deborah and Huldah did was not wrong to do, for God would not send a prophet to do evil. We also know from Paul that the spirit of prophets are subordinate to the prophets (1 Cor. 14:32) and that prophets have the ability to be silent when it would be inappropriate to speak (1 Cor. 14:30). Therefore, we know that the spirit of the prophetesses was subordinate to them and that they would only speak when it was right for them to do so. This included teaching men in private. This shows us, then, that women can teach men in private settings. When *"the Scriptures refer to prophetesses and to teaching by women, they functioned in private situations, in other words, in "non-church" situations... What Priscilla did was not proclamation in a church assembly, but teaching in private."* (Priebbenow *Women Pastors and the Distinction between Home and Church*).
5. The final argumentation that I'd like to respond to is, the argument that 1 Corinthians 11:5 allows women to speak in church. 1 Corinthians 11:5 teaches that women are to cover their heads when they pray and prophesy as a symbol of Christ's headship over man and man's headship over women (thus a symbol of the subordination of women in worship).

Some have argued, that based on this statement women can prophesy in worship as long as they have their heads covered.

Firstly, this passage in 1 Corinthians 11 is not solely restricted to worship, and therefore does not imply that women were prophesying in public worship (Priebbenow *Women Pastors and Mistaken Appeal to "Prophesying"*).

Secondly, to say that Paul allowed women to prophesy in worship in 1 Corinthians 11 would then mean that he was contradicting himself when he forbade a woman from speaking in worship in 1 Corinthians 14.

Therefore, there is nothing in the text of 1 Corinthians 11 to suggest that women prophesied in public worship. As for women prophesying, as we have already discussed in argument 3, if God desired to call a woman to prophesy, that is God's will. There is nothing in Scripture that would prohibit a woman from prophesying, as long as it was not done in public worship.

Women lay-lectors

The next issue that I'd like to address, concerning the role of women in the church, is the situation of women lay-lectors (lay people who read the Bible readings during the divine service).

Now, some have argued that women cannot do the Scripture readings on Sunday because this is a form of teaching and would therefore be a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12.

However, this may not necessarily be the case, and can be presented as a poor argument against female lay-lectors. The lay-lector is simply reading the Word of God, they are not teaching concerning it or about it. In this sense they are not necessarily using God's Word to teach but they are simply proclaiming it. Luke 4 would even seem to imply a distinction between proclamation and teaching, where we see a separation between the reading of Jesus (17-19) and the teaching of Jesus (21).

Now, do not get me wrong, I am not supporting the practice of female lay-lectors and I am not disqualifying the argument that Scripture reading is the same as teaching. I am simply stating that it is not clear whether Scripture reading should be considered teaching or not, and thus I do not think that women should be disqualified from Scripture reading in the public worship service purely on account of that argument.

However, I do not support the practice of female lay-lectors in the public worship service because of three reasons:

1. Whether or not Scripture reading in the public worship service is to be considered teaching is a debated topic, however, no one can deny that the reading of God's Word is proclamation. And proclamation is a form of independent, authoritative speaking that women are forbidden from doing in public worship (1 Cor. 11:33-35).
2. While the female lay-lector may not be teaching, she is still speaking with authority in a place of teaching and leadership, and Scripture forbids women from taking a leading, independent, authoritative role in the church (1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14, *The role of women in the church*, .6).
3. Women are called to a position of learner in the worship service (1 Tim. 2:11). By standing up in front of the congregation to read, the woman has left her position of learner, as she is no longer sitting in the congregation in a position of learning. Even if she can still learn from what she reads, she is not learning in quietness and subordination, as the Word commands (1 Tim 2:11, 1 Cor. 14:35).

Women Leading Prayer

The next topic I'd like to discuss in this paper is women and prayer. As mentioned above, some proponents of Women's Ordination have dismissed Paul's prohibition of women speaking in church; by claiming that if women can't speak in church then how can they join in prayers, particularly the Lord's Prayer. As I mentioned above, such comments are ridiculous and disrespectful to the Word of God.

We know from 1 Corinthians 11:5 that Paul does not forbid women from praying. Also, in Acts 1:14 we hear how the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were praying with the disciples. Therefore, we can learn from the Scriptures that women are not forbidden from praying aloud in public worship. However, there needs to be a clarification on how women are to pray during public worship.

Firstly, women are not to speak in public worship in an authoritative way (1 Cor. 14:34), this would preclude the leading of public prayers.

Secondly, Paul says in Timothy that "*I desire then that in every place the men should pray.*" (1 Tim. 2:8) This verse would clearly show that Paul desires for the men to pray in all places. Now this is not to say that women are forbidden from joining in prayer, for 1 Corinthians 1:5 and Acts 1:14 have already shown us that the women joined in the public prayer. However, the context of 1 Timothy 2 shows us that Paul is referring to speaking, teaching, and in this sense, praying in positions of leadership and authority. Therefore, 1 Timothy 2:8 is referring to Paul's desire that men lead prayers.

Thirdly, in Acts 1:14, when the women joined in praying aloud with the apostles, it says that they were praying with one accord. This verse demonstrates how women are to pray in the congregation, not in positions of leadership, but in one accord with the rest of the congregation.

What we can learn from the Scriptures is this; women are not to lead prayers in the public worship for this would be a violation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 and 1 Timothy 2:8. However, women are not forbidden from praying in the public worship (Acts 1:14, 1 Cor. 11:5), so long as they pray in one accord with the congregation (Acts 1:14) and not in positions of leadership or authority (1 Cor. 14:33-36, 1 Tim. 2:8,12).

Women Lay-Distributors and Lay-Assistants of Communion

The next controversial topic is the involvement of women in the distribution of Holy Communion. Before I address this topic directly I wish to explain the difference between lay-distributor and lay-assistant. Readers may have noticed that I have placed two terms here. This is my own personal distinction, which I think needs to be made. The use of these two terms are fluid and interchangeable, however, for my own purposes I wish to draw a distinction between the two. I repeat that the division of these terms and the definitions, which I will now provide, are my own.

Lay-distributors are those who assist the pastor in the distribution of the sacrament by handling and distributing the sacraments. These laymen will hand out either the bread or the wine (depending on congregational practice) and will speak the words “take and eat” or “take and drink” (depending on congregational practice). These laity may also commune the pastor before or after the congregation (depending on congregational practice).

Lay-assistants are those who assist the pastor in the distribution of the sacrament by carrying the sacrament, either the plate or individual cups. For example, the pastor may distribute the sacraments to each individual consecutively. In this case the pastor would hold the cup in one hand and the layperson would carry the plate alongside the pastor. The pastor would then use his free hand to take the wafer off the plate and distribute it to the communicant, then use both hands to distribute the wine. In this sense the lay person acts merely as a third hand. In this case the layperson does not distribute the elements nor speak the words. In this case the layman would not commune the pastor, for that would be distribution of the sacrament and thus make them a lay-distributor.

The reason I have made this distinction is so that I can not only discuss the topic of female lay-distributors, but also discuss whether or not it would be appropriate for a woman to be a lay-assistant (as defined above). The discussion on lay-assistants will also lay down some foundational content for the discussion on women ushers (see below the section on *Women Ushers*).

Firstly, we shall address the issue of female lay-distribution of the elements of Holy Communion. There are two main reasons why women should not be allowed to distribute the elements. The first is that the position of lay-distributors is an independent, leading, authoritative position and both Scriptures and the LCA DSTO statements teach that women are not to take leading, independent or authoritative roles in the church (1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14, *The role of women in the church*, 6). Now many do not see the position of lay-distributor as a position of leadership or an independent or authoritative role, for the woman is assisting the pastor who is leading the distribution of Communion. However, I would argue that the position of lay-distributor is an independent, leading, authoritative position in the church.

Firstly, just because the layperson is assisting the pastor does not mean that the position is not a position of leadership. By removing the layperson from the congregation and placing them in a position in front of the congregation, we are in fact placing them in a position of leadership. The lay-distributor functions under the leadership of the pastor but they are also standing in a position of leadership as a part of a leadership team. The same as the wife is meant to assist the husband in running the household (1 Tim. 5:14), for the husband in the head of the household (Esth. 1:22, 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23, 1 Tim. 4-5,12, Tit. 1:6) and the wife is his helper (Gen 2:18, 1 Cor. 11:9). However, just because the wife is the helper and is under the authority of the husband (Gen. 3:16, Esth. 1:22, 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1-6) does not mean that she isn't a leader in the

household. For while the husband may be the head of the wife, the wife is still a leader over her children (Exod. 20:12, Deut. 5:16, Eph. 6:1-3, Col. 3:20, Prov. 1:8, 20:20, 23:22, 30:17, 1 Tim. 5:1-2). As parents the husband and wife form a leadership team, even though the wife is called to be subordinate to the husband. In the same way the lay-distributor, while they are under the leadership and authority of the pastor, is still part of the leadership team and stands in a place of leadership to the congregation.

Secondly, just because the lay distributor is under the pastor's authority does not necessarily mean that this is not in a position of authority. As I discussed earlier, the Under-Over Principle of Authority (Matt. 8:9, Luke 7:8) demonstrates that just because a person is under authority does not diminish their authority over others. Thus, a lay-distributor's authority does not cease simply because they are under the authority of a pastor. All those who handle the holy things of God in this way possess authority, and women are forbidden to possess authority in the church over the men of the congregation (1 Tim. 2:12). Thus any woman who gives the elements to a man is in violation of Scripture (1 Tim. 2:12) and any man who receives communion from a woman is being subordinate to her and violating Scripture (Gen. 3:16, Esth. 1:22, 1 Tim. 2:12, 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

And thirdly, the position of lay-distributor is an independent or individual role in the congregation. Some may ask "How? The lay-distributor is standing up there with the pastor." True, the role of lay-distributor is not independent in the sense that they are alone, but independent in the sense that the layperson has been separated from the flock. By being removed from the congregation in order to distribute the elements the layperson has become independent from the rest of the laity. Since women are called to be learners in the congregation (1 Tim. 2:11), removing them from the congregation to place them in an independent position is removing them from their God-given, God-pleasing position in the congregation.

Thus the position of lay-distributor is an independent, leading and authoritative position in the congregation which women are forbidden by the Scriptures to possess (1 Cor. 11:2-10, 14:33b-36, 1 Tim. 2:13-14) and any congregation in the LCA which allows women to hold this position are contradicting the teachings of the LCA (*The role of women in the church*, .6).

The second reason women are not to distribute the elements is because, distribution of the elements requires speaking with authority.

There are two practices which have occurred in Lutheran churches regarding the speaking aspect of the distribution of the Lord's Supper. The first practice, which is the more traditional practice, is that the lay-distributor recites the words "this is the body of Christ, given for you" and "this is the blood of Christ, shed for you [for the forgiveness of sins]" (the bracketed words may be omitted depending on the congregational practice). In doing this the layperson merely speaks words of proclamation as they announce to you the good news given to you in the Sacrament. This is done so that the lay-distributor does not appear to exercise the office of the keys. The words "take and eat" and "take and drink" are commands that grant admission to Sacrament and presuppose the office of the keys. Therefore, these words "take and eat" and "take and drink" should not be used by the lay-distributor (male or female). However, there is a second practice which has begun to emerge in Lutheran congregations where the lay-distributors do speak the words "take and eat" and "take and drink". The LCA in their statement *The distribution of the sacrament of the altar* correctly retains the traditional first practice (LCA: DSTO vol 2. E: The Sacraments, *The distribution of the sacrament of the altar*, 1995, section 4 *The ritual function and use of the formulas for distribution*).

In regards to these two practices, the question arises, "does this speaking prohibit women from distributing communion?"

Regarding the second practice, no lay-distributor (male or female) should speak the words "take and eat" and "take and drink" thus women should not be speaking these words if they distributed communion. In addition to this, these words are authoritative commands that grant admission to the Sacrament. These words presuppose the office of the keys and are thus authoritative speaking which women are prohibited from speaking (1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim. 2:12).

In regards to the first practice where the lay-distributors speaks the words “this is the body of Christ, given for you” and “this is the blood of Christ, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words are not authoritative in the same sense as the other words. Yet, these words are words of proclamation, which I already discussed in *Women Lay-Lectors* and are a form of authoritative speaking that women are forbidden to do in public worship (1 Cor. 11:33-35).

Therefore, distribution of the Sacrament of Altar is an authoritative role in the church with authoritative speaking which women are prohibited from doing (1 Cor. 14:34, 1 Tim. 2:12).

Just as *The Word Shall Stand* teaches “*Since distribution of the Lord’s Supper involves speaking in a leading role in the public service (1 Corinthians 14:33-37, 1 Timothy 2:11-14), we reject and condemn the conclusion that women may assist in the distribution of the Lord’s Supper.*” (Art. 18: *Public Ministry*, negative 9, pg155)

Before moving on to lay communion assistants, I first wish to talk a little more about the LCA statement *The distribution of the sacrament of the altar* and the use of female lay-distributors.

Nowhere in this paper does the statement mention the use of women for the distribution of the elements. Therefore, the statement is neutral of this discussion; one person could claim that since it does not prohibit women from being lay-distributors therefore we can have them, while others could claim that since it does not permit women to be lay-distributors therefore we cannot have them. However, the statement teaches that elders (or any layperson in the absence of an elder) are permitted to be lay-distributors (section 3 *The function and status of servers at Holy Communion*, .a.,b.1-2), and the LCA does allow women to be elders (*Female Elders*), therefore, the LCA permits the use of women as lay-distributors.

The reasoning behind this is, because the pastors are responsible for the whole service of communion (section 2 *theological presuppositions*, .b.1-3, .c.1) and the lay-distributors are under the pastor’s authority and supervision (.c.2) they therefore do not possess any authority and therefore women can distribute communion without violating 1 Timothy 2:12. However, the position of lay-distributor is a leading role in worship which is more than merely a function; it presumes an authoritative role in the worshipping community (compare with *Should women serve as lay readers in public worship?* 1993, .2).

The AELC (Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church), on the other hand, in their Statement of Faith teaches that “*We reject leading, individual roles by women in the worship of the congregation, such as the reading of Scripture, the reading of sermons, though written by pastors, prayers, and the distribution of the body and blood of the Lord to communicants. These are clearly contrary to God’s command (1 Cor. 14:33-37).*” (pg. 65)

Now concerning the issue of female lay-assistants. As I defined above, lay-assistants are those who operate as spare hands for the pastor and do not speak. Thus the prohibition on women speaking and teaching in the church (1 Cor. 14:33-35, 1 Tim. 2:12) do not apply in this situation. Therefore, do the Scriptures prohibit the use of female lay-assistants (as defined above)?

The first question is determining whether or not the position of lay-assistant (as defined above) is an authoritative and leading position which women are prohibited from holding (1 Tim. 2:12). In this position the layperson does not speak, thus they do not speak in an authoritative position. They also do not distribute the elements and are thus not possessing authority over their fellow layperson in this role. They are not leading the congregation, since they are not distributing the elements. One could argue that by holding the elements they are in a position of authority, however, they are not handling them but simply holding them, thus I would not say that the position of lay-assistant (as defined above) is a position of authority or leadership. Therefore, this position is not a violation of 1 Timothy 2:12.

Therefore, the question can be asked, “if this position does not violate 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 or 1 Timothy 2:12, can women hold the position of lay-assistant (as defined above)?”

I would still say “no”. And this is why. Even though the position is not one of leadership or authority it is still an independent role which removes the layperson from the congregation and thus removes

the woman from her God-given, God-pleasing position of learner (1 Tim. 2:11). Women are not meant to hold independent positions in the congregational worship, but instead women are called to sit as a part of the congregation and learn in quietness and subordination. Any role that takes them out of their position of learner is a violation of Scripture.

Therefore, even though she does not speak with authority or distribute the holy things, the position of lay-assistant (as defined above) should be withheld from women because it removes them from their God-given, God-pleasing position in the congregation. This is another reason why women shouldn't be lay-distributors, lay-readers, lay-preachers, lay-lectors, lead the prayers or be pastors.

Women's Suffrage

Another contentious issue of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries is the issue of women's suffrage (voting). Regarding the voting of women in society is an issue of the State and is a topic for another time. However, women's suffrage in the Church is a theological matter that needs to be addressed.

When it comes to women's suffrage in the Church there are three issues that must be discussed; the role of women on church committees, female synodical delegates, and women voting in congregational matters.

On these three matters the LCA has three documents that deal with this issue, *Statement on rights of women to vote at meeting of the congregation* (1966), *The service of women on boards and committees of the church* (1978), *The role of women in the church* (1978).

The first paper deals with the issue of women voting in congregational settings. The first paper in points 1 and 2 upholds the Order of Creation, and the subordinate position of women in the Church (1 Cor. 11:7-10, 1 Tim. 2:13, Gen. 2:18). Point 4 of the statement teaches that Paul's prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 is in regards to the divine service and thus not binding on women in all congregational, business and social meetings. Point 5 adds that a woman's vote as a congregational member is not necessarily authority over a man, as some have claimed. Here in point 5, the paper acknowledges that there is disagreement on this issue, where some believe that a woman's right to vote at congregational meetings compromises man's authority. Despite any disagreement the LCA in point 6 of this document affirmed the right of women to vote at congregational meetings and that such rights that apply to male voting members should be granted to women. However, later in 1968 the General Synod added a resolution to this document. This resolution added that the principle that the woman is in subordination to the man must be safeguarded. Therefore, the General Synod resolved that the men reserve the right to make the final decision on any matter by holding a male only vote whenever the men of the congregation desire to invoke this right. Henceforth, the LCA has granted women the right to vote at congregational meetings, but have also granted men the right to call a male only vote to make the final decision whenever they so choose.

The second paper deals with the issue of women serving on church committees. In this paper the LCA permits the service of women on boards and committees of the church (.7). Point 8 of the paper, however, clarifies this permission by declaring that women are not to serve on the College of Presidents (now Bishops) or in any position involving the pastoral office. Henceforth, the LCA allows women to serve on any board or committee as long as that position on the committee does not assume the office of the ministry. In other words, a laywoman can hold any position that a layman can.

The third paper, which deals broadly with the role of women in the Church, makes two statements regarding women's suffrage. In point 7b under the list of activities women can do in the church the paper includes "*taking part in congregational meetings*". Then in point 7c the paper deals with the issue of female synodical delegates. The paper acknowledges disagreement on the issue and proposes the two viewpoints.

The first viewpoint teaches that it is improper for women to function as synodical delegates because "*1. Delegates represent the congregations; and 2. Synodical convention, as the highest constitutional authority of the church with power to direct and control, clearly exercise church government.*" In other words, the first view teaches that synodical convention is the highest constitutional authority of

the church and by representing the whole congregation the delegates hold a high position of authority. In addition to this, the delegate speaks on behalf of the entire congregation and therefore any female that represents the congregation is speaking on behalf of all the men in the congregation and thus having authority over men.

The second viewpoint teaches that women can be synodical delegates because “1. *Women have equal status with men in carrying out Christ’s commission in the local congregation. They cannot logically be deprived of that right in conventions of the church; and 2. Voting at synodical convention is a means of reaching a consensus rather than an exercise of authority.*” In other words, the second view teaches that men and women are equal in regards to Christ’s commission and that voting is not an exercise of authority but a reaching of consensus among equals.

The paper then concludes that “*since no clear case can be made for the view that for women to act as delegates at conventions involves an unbiblical exercise of authority, we conclude that the right to act as delegates at convention of the church may be granted to men and women alike.*”

This conclusion is interesting as it follows that since there is no clear rejection of female synodical delegates in Scripture then therefore women should be permitted to be synodical delegates. That conclusion is most interesting because the two viewpoints showed that the LCA was divided on the issue with the first view point regarding the practice as unbiblical.

In the book *The Word Shall Stand* the authors acknowledged this disagreement stating that “*it was argued that women’s voting in congregational meetings, and at church conventions, could not be shown to be an exercise of authority such as is condemned by St. Paul, and therefore women should be given the right to vote in congregational meetings and as synodsmen. Others denied this, pointing out that the highest, constitutional authority in the church is vested in synodsmen.*” (pg 201)

Reflecting on this disagreement later the authors stated that “*as long as it is conscientiously held by some that it is an exercise of authority for women to act and vote as synodsmen, we believe that it would be a sin of offence for the church to encourage such activity for women (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:9-13).*” (pg 211) Here the authors are acknowledging that there are a number in the LCA synod who believe the practice of female synodical delegates to be unbiblical and therefore we should not burden their conscience and create offence by encouraging such a practice. The same could be said for Women’s Ordination. For some, Scripture clearly condemns Women’s Ordination, while others believe that female pastors are not clearly condemned in Scripture.

With the issue of female synodical delegates, for some Scripture was clear, while for others Scripture did not clearly forbid it, thus the LCA voted to allow the practice. If the synod follows the rule that, “since the majority does not believe that Scripture is clear then we should allow X”, then it will not be long before Women’s Ordination, Gay Marriage and other issues infiltrate the church just because the majority does not see the Scriptural prohibitions as clearly as the minority.

Now when it comes to determining the issue of women’s suffrage in the Church we must remember to look to the Word of God. In theological issues concerning gender, people can too quickly turn to cultural or personal opinion. As Vernon Grieger wrote in his book *Earthly Images of the Heavenly Bride: Women and the Church*:

*In considering such questions as the right of women to vote in the congregation, to act as delegates to convention of the church, to hold membership on standing committees of the church, or to hold executive offices within the church including that of president, moderator, bishop etc., or to function in the congregation as an elder or pastor, it is not appropriate for the church to be guided **in any way** by what is the prevailing opinion in the world. (pg 65)*

He goes on to add that we should not be guided by pragmatic considerations like a shortage of males willing to be congregational delegates at synod, instead we should be guided by Scripture alone. To be guided by reasons of cultural opinion, lack of male delegates, or accusations of sexism, is to be guided by humanism rather than the Word of God. None of these reasons should be used to guide how the church decides the theological matter of women’s suffrage in the church. The Church should not be guided by culture for we are not of this world (John 15:19, 17:6,9,14,16), instead we are to trust in God’s Word alone (John 17:17). We should also not be guided by the lack of men willing to be

delegates or to sit on committees. Just because the men in our churches are lacking the courage to stand up and be responsible does not mean that we look elsewhere. Instead, we should encourage and build-up the men in our midst so that they can find the courage to take upon these responsibilities. In the same way, when pastors are lacking we should not look elsewhere and replace them with laity but instead we should encourage more men in our churches to stand up and take on the role of the ministry (Acts 14:23, 1 Tim. 1:3, Tit. 4:5). And thirdly, we should not be bullied into woman's suffrage by those who accuse us of sexism. This is not an issue of gender discrimination. We are not saying that women are inferior or any less valuable than men. Instead, this is an issue of doctrine and holding to the God-given gender roles and distinctions. This is not about making men superior and women inferior, this is about glorifying both genders by upholding the God-given, God-pleasing roles and distinctions of males and females. In regards to salvation and civil rights men and women are equal (Mark 12:25, Gal. 3:28) but in regards to gender roles men and women are different (1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18-19, 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Upholding the God-given, God-pleasing gender roles and distinctions is not gender-discrimination but gender-glorification (1 Cor. 11:7).

Therefore, if we are not to be guided by human thought and cultural opinion, but God's Word alone, what then do the Scriptures say concerning women's suffrage in Church?

Some have argued against women's suffrage due to 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 forbidding women speaking in church. The two objections to this view are: 1. Women can vote in silence and thus without speaking; 2. 1 Corinthians 14 is speaking in regards to congregational worship and not congregational business or social meetings (see *Statement on rights of women to vote at meetings of the congregations*, 4)

The response to objection 2 is normally something along the lines of "*it cannot be shown that St. Paul had only the worship service in mind.*" (*The Word Shall Stand*, pg 210) Personally, I would agree with objection 2, as I believe context shows that 1 Corinthians 14 is referring to worship. Thus I do not believe that 1 Corinthians 14 would prohibit women's suffrage.

However, I believe that 1 Timothy 2:12 would provide a stronger case against women's suffrage in the Church. While it is not entirely clear whether Paul meant for 1 Corinthians to refer only to public worship, I do believe it is clear that 1 Timothy 2:12 is broader than just worship. This can be seen in verses 13 and 14 which are referring to Adam and Eve and the Order of Creation, as the reasoning for why women are not to possess authority over men. This shows us that the section is not restricted to public worship only but to the universal principle of the subordination of women to men (Gen. 3:16, 1 Cor. 14:34, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, 1 Tim. 2:11-14, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Therefore, I would argue, 1 Timothy 2:12 is relevant in the discussion on women's suffrage in the Church. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 teaches that women should not possess authority over men but that the headship of men and the subordination of women (1 Cor. 11:3-12, Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18-19, 1 Pet. 3:1-7) should be evident everywhere, especially in the worship. This would also include congregational voting, committees and synodical delegates (*The Word Shall Stand*, pg 210). For this reason, women should be prohibited from these positions unless it can be clearly shown that they are not exercising authority over men.

In regards to the exercise of authority over men I believe that these three issues need to be dealt with separately:

1. Synodical delegates: It was mentioned above that some rejected the practice of female synodical delegates because "*1. Delegates represent the congregations; and 2. Synodical convention, as the highest constitutional authority of the church with power to direct and control, clearly exercise church government.*" (*The role of women in the church*, .7c) I would agree with this position. Synodical delegates represent the whole congregation and the delegate votes with the authority granted to them by their congregation. The position of synodical delegate is an authoritative role and any woman who holds it would be possessing authority over the men in her congregation thus violating the mandate of 1 Timothy 2:12.
2. Committees: In regards to committees, as women are not permitted to possess authority over men I would say that women should be prohibited from any position of leadership on the

committee such as chairperson, as this is a position of leadership and authority over the committee. As for positions like secretary or treasurer I would argue that they too are positions of leadership and authority, as committees seek to determine the will and direct of the congregation. Therefore, any member on the committee, whether chairperson, treasurer, secretary, or even just a voting member, would possess authority over the congregation. Thus, if any women were to be a part of that committee they would possess authority over the men in congregation and would be in violation of 1 Timothy 2:12 (and all the other verses that call for the subordination of women, 1 Cor. 14:34, Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1-6). In that case, I would not permit a woman to sit on that committee.

However, this depends on the type of committee we are discussing. If we are referring to a congregational or synodical committee, then women are prohibited from being a part of this committee as it is a leading, authoritative committee that seeks to determine the will of the congregation or synod. However, if there was a committee that was responsible for the church flowers, or catering, etc. such as a women's guide or a catering committee, then I see no problem with women being a part of such a committee.

3. Congregational voting: This is the most difficult situation to discuss, as congregational voting is not as clearly an exercise of authority as synodical delegate.

Some argue that congregational voting is not an exercise of authority:

LCA: *"By giving a woman as a member of the congregation the right to vote she is not necessarily given authority over the man, as has sometimes been claimed."* (Statement on rights of women to vote at meetings of the congregations, .5)

While others would argue that congregational voting is an exercise of authority:

AELC: *"We reject the voting of women in congregational meetings when such voting is an exercise of authority in that it seeks to determine the will of the congregation."* (Statement of Faith, pg 65)

ELCR: *"The casting of a vote is an act of power and authority, whereby a person expresses his will on a certain matter. If there were no voting in matters not decided by Scripture, there would be no authority, no means of determining what the will of the congregation is. However voting is the means whereby decisions are made. If the woman were to cast a vote in the congregational meeting, she would be pitting her will against that of the man, at the least placing it on equal authority with that of the man. If a number of women in the congregation were to exercise their vote, they could influence the decision of the congregation, therefore exercising authority over the man. It is this which is forbidden by these passages of the Scripture."* *"The woman is not to vote or speak in the congregational meeting."* (The Position of Women in the Church, pg 192)

The next Scriptural passage to consider is Acts chapter 15, which contains the only Biblical account of the Early Church voting. *"When the congregation at Jerusalem met to discuss the question concerning circumcision, it was the "men and brethren" who were addressed and passed a resolution on the matter (Acts 15:4,7,22)."* (The Position of Women in the Church, pg 193) When the Early Church had to hold the Jerusalem Council, they chose only men for this council, demonstrating for the Church a precedent on how the later Church was to hold councils, meetings, conferences, etc. As a matter of fact, the only Christians present at this council were the Apostles and elders (presbyters) (Acts 15:6,22). Thus, only clergy were present at this council.

In addition to this when the Early Church needed to appoint people for the organisation and running of the church (similar to a committee) they chose men for these roles (Acts 6:3, Acts 15:2,22), again providing the later Church with a precedent on how they were to appoint men for the organisation and running of the congregations.

The final biblical reason for why I do not think women should be allowed vote at congregational meetings is the One Flesh principle of marriage (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6, Mark 10:7-9, 1 Cor. 6:16, Eph. 5:31). Husbands and wives are meant to be in one accord and work together as a single unit. Therefore, the couple should vote as a single unit, and the husband, being the head of household (Esth. 1:22, 1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23, 1 Tim. 3:4-5,12, Tit. 1:6), is the representative of the family and

should be the one to vote on behalf of the household. If the wife wishes to have her input in the congregational vote then she should speak about it with her husband at home (1 Cor. 14:35).

If an unmarried woman wishes to have her input in the congregational vote, she may speak with either a pastor or elder, or a male family member who will be present at the meeting, before the meeting. As it is both the responsibility of the Church, in this case the men of the Church, and the woman's family, in this case the male members, to take care of the unmarried women in their midst (Exod. 14:28-29, 22:22-23, Deut. 24:17-21, Acts 6:1, 1 Tim. 5:3-5,16, James 1:27).

Finally some may ask about whether or not women can sit in on voters' meetings as observers. I am not aware of any Australian Lutheran synod which forbids women to sit in on meetings as observers. Even those synods which do not allow women to vote at congregational meetings, such as the AELC or ELCR, do not forbid women from being present at congregational meetings as observers. In Gavin Winter's paper, *The Position of Women in the Church*, he gives the position of the ELCR (Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Reformation):

Sometime the question is asked, "May a woman be present at voters' meetings of the congregation?" To this we reply that nowhere does Scripture forbid this, provided she does not break the principles previously stated. In fact, if there is a matter which is of particular interest to the women in the congregation, it may be of benefit to them to hear the actual discussion and decisions taken. However if women are present, they must be especially careful not in any way to influence discussion through words, gestures, facial expressions, or any other means. In connection with this, we state the following points for congregations to remember:

- a. The voting members should explain to the other members of the congregation the happenings in congregational meetings. The pastor or elders should take it in hand to inform the lady members who do not have a husband who is a voting member, so that they are aware of decisions of the congregation.*
- b. If a woman has a matter she wishes to present to the meeting, this may be done either through a male member (her husband, the Pastor or an elder), or in writing. According to the Law of love, these views should be given consideration by the congregation.*
- c. It is of value if an agenda is drawn up for the meeting, so that the matters coming up for discussion can be seen by the women, and they can discuss the matters and express their opinions to their husbands.*
- d. The woman has a right to express her valid objection to the calling of a Pastor, a discipline case or a doctrinal position taken by the congregation. But this matter must be expressed outside the congregational meeting. (pg 193)*

Women Ushers

Scripture does not explicitly forbid or prohibit the use of female ushers, however, I would discourage this practice for a number of reasons. Ushering is a serving role and not a leading role, nor is it a speaking role in the congregation, therefore, female ushers would not be forbidden by 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 or 1 Timothy 2:11-14. On the other hand, I have observed two reasons for why this practice should be discouraged:

1. Female ushers places women in an independent role separate from the congregation. A position that women are not meant to hold (*The role of women in the church*, .6). By removing women from the congregation to hold the position of usher removes them from their God-given, God-pleasing position of learner in the congregation (1 Tim. 2:11). By holding the position of usher the women are not learning in all quietness and subordination. Many women seek this role in the church because they wish to serve the congregation during the divine service, however, God does not call women to be servers but to be learners (1 Tim. 2:11). As we learn from the account of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), it is more God-pleasing for women to be in the position of learner than server (v42).

2. There are men in our congregations who can serve as ushers. Therefore, there is no need for women to hold this position. Women only desire the position of usher because they want to be “equal” to men and desire to hold any position that a man holds. It is this attitude, which seeks to usurp the authority of men which is a violation of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and it is for this reason that I would discourage the practice of female ushers in the divine service.

Conclusion

Women’s Ordination is one of the most debated topics in the Church of the 21st Century, but any church which seeks to promote Women’s Ordination has already strayed from the Scriptures by allowing female laity to hold independent, leading, authoritative positions in the church. While a number of churches in the world have followed the Scriptures by refusing to ordain women, many of them have allowed laywomen to teach and hold positions of authority over men. Those churches which support the practices of female lay-readers, elders, lay-lectors, lay distributors and lay-assistants of communion, women’s suffrage and female ushers have removed women from their God-given and God-pleasing role of learning in quietness and subordination and have placed them into positions of authority. These churches, seeking to avoid accusations of gender-discrimination have placed women in positions in the church which they were never intended to hold.

Even though these churches do not yet ordain women, they have already sacrificed the core principle of the matter.

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