

Theological statement in support of the resolution passed by St Peter's PCC on Saturday 2nd November 2019.

Our theological convictions have been shaped by our belief in the authority of Scripture and what it teaches. We affirm without qualification that humanity was created as male and female in the image of God, and that all are equal in the sight of God. We also affirm that all are saved in the same manner, without distinction, through faith in Jesus Christ.

On the specific question of the roles of women and men in the church, we believe that the Scriptures teach that these are to be understood differently (the phrase 'equal yet different' is a convenient short-hand, although we acknowledge it is not a fully adequate description of biblical teaching). Furthermore, we believe that denying the equality or differences created by God between women and men can lead not only to a redefinition of our doctrine of the Trinity but also to a redefinition of our doctrine of marriage.

In light of this, and in view of passages such as Ephesian 5.22-33 and 1 Timothy 2.11-15, our understanding is that men should bear primary responsibility for Christ-like leadership and teaching in the church. This is not to deny that women may, and often should, take responsibility at various levels of leadership, but that the weight of scriptural teaching requires men to bear the overall responsibilities for leadership in the church. We believe that such leadership should be servant-hearted rather than dominating, and that both men and women should be engaged in submission to each other, as Ephesians 5.21 teaches. While we acknowledge that life on this side of heaven will be full of tensions and compromises, we believe that the contemporary church's denial of these differences is unbiblical and therefore ultimately detrimental to the health of the church.

We understand that this theological position is very unpopular in parts of the church, and we have no wish to cause unnecessary offence. Furthermore, we acknowledge that this theological position is not universally held within the congregation of St Peter's, and this is one reason why we do not wish to be identified primarily as 'a complementarian church' or 'a resolution parish'. Nonetheless, in discussions and consultation before the resolution was passed, it became evident that the theological convictions expressed above were held by the majority of our clergy and leadership team (including the PCC), and the congregation itself.

We are concerned to maintain our unity, as reflected in the wording of the resolution. Our specific and immediate concern is that any appointment of a female vicar at St Peter's would likely prove divisive within our congregation, and likely lead to schism. We are also aware that the recent appointment of a female Diocesan Bishop, for whom we pray and on whose ministry we seek God's blessing, means that we must ask for special episcopal arrangements to be made. We are grateful to the House of Bishops for their *Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests*, and wish to apply under its terms for pastoral and sacramental provision for the parish of St Peter's in Colchester.