

1 **OVERTURE 41** from Heritage Presbytery (to MTW)

2 “Direct CMTW to Amend its Guidelines to Implement CMTW’s ‘Statement
3 on Valuing Women in MTW,’ so that only Ordained Elders Will Be Allowed
4 to Serve in the Roles of Team Leader, Regional Director, and International
5 Director within MTW.”

6
7 **Whereas** on January 9, 2019, the Committee on Mission To the World (CMTW) adopted a
8 “Statement on Valuing Women in MTW”; and

9
10 **Whereas** MTW subsequently proposed guidelines to implement the “Statement on Valuing
11 Women in MTW” that were distributed to missionaries on January 11, 2019; and

12
13 **Whereas** the MTW guidelines affirm “that women may serve in leadership roles within
14 MTW, recognizing that only ordained elders exercise ecclesiastical authority over
15 church plants or churches” [See the attached Statement with Guidelines, page 3,
16 paragraph 3.]; and

17
18 **Whereas** the MTW guidelines also affirm “there has been no MTW policy regarding
19 women serving in these leadership roles...” [See the attached Statement with
20 Guidelines, page 4, paragraph 1.]; and

21
22 **Whereas** the MTW guidelines initiate a new policy that allows women to serve in authority
23 over men within MTW in the roles of team leader, regional director, and
24 international director [See the attached Statement with Guidelines, page 8, #3.]; and

25
26 **Whereas** Heritage Presbytery and other presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America
27 (PCA) are charged to provide spiritual oversight for ordained elders who come from
28 within our bounds, but who serve under MTW [See *BCO* 8-3 & 13-2.];

29
30 **Therefore be it resolved** that Heritage Presbytery hereby overture the 47th General
31 Assembly of the PCA to direct CMTW to ensure that MTW amend its guidelines to
32 implement CMTW’s “Statement on Valuing Women in MTW,” so that only
33 ordained elders will be allowed to serve in the roles of team leader, regional director,
34 and international director within MTW.

35
36 **Rationale:**

37 While CMTW’s intention of “supporting and equipping our sisters in Christ as they exercise
38 their gifts and abilities throughout MTW’s global ministry...” [See the attached Statement
39 with Guidelines, page 3, paragraph 2.] is commendable, the MTW guidelines actually hinder
40 some of our women from serving in MTW by creating an untenable crisis of conscience for
41 them. Therefore, the MTW guidelines discourage some of the very sisters in Christ that
42 CMTW’s “Statement on Valuing Women in MTW” intends to support in their missionary
43 service.

1 Secondly, the MTW guidelines allow a woman to hold a position of authority within MTW
2 in which she cannot exercise ecclesiastical authority over a man. And the MTW guidelines
3 concede this would require an ordained man to fulfill some of her position's responsibilities.
4 [See the attached Statement with Guidelines, page 8, #3.] But an obvious consequence of
5 such an awkward arrangement would be questions about what a woman in such a position is
6 and is not allowed to do. For example, MTW's Policy Manual currently indicates the team
7 leader position has very broad authority, including "spiritual care" over those on the
8 missionary team. Yet the MTW guidelines leave the team leader position potentially open to
9 non-elders. Therefore, the MTW guidelines are unwise because they can lead to placing
10 women in difficult positions, while causing unnecessary confusion and conflict within a
11 missionary team.

12
13 Lastly, the MTW guidelines cite the Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Women
14 Serving in the Ministry of the Church to the 45th General Assembly of the PCA, as a
15 primary reason MTW is allowing women to have authority over men within MTW – even
16 potentially over ordained elders. [See the attached Statement with Guidelines, page 4,
17 paragraph 5.] But the 46th General Assembly rejected two overtures that would have
18 allowed women to serve on PCA agency boards. [See Overtures 13 and 26.]

19
20 *Adopted by Heritage Presbytery at its stated meeting, May 14, 2019*

21 *Attested by /s/ RE Conrad W Judy Jr., Stated Clerk*

22

1 **Attachment**

2
3
4 **Statement on Valuing Women in MTW**
5 Adopted by the Committee on Mission to the World
6 January 9, 2019
7

8
9 Statement Adopted by Committee on Mission to the World:

10
11 MTW values all women as created in the image of God. Under Scripture's authority and in
12 our doctrinal view of ordination, we affirm that female disciples of Christ are co-heirs of the
13 kingdom, co-laborers in the work of the gospel, gifted by the Spirit as members of the body
14 of Christ and called to use these gifts for the building up of the Church and for the extension
15 of the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

16
17 Furthermore, the MTW community deeply needs the gifts and glory of God uniquely
18 expressed in women. Therefore, MTW is committed to supporting and equipping our sisters
19 in Christ as they exercise their gifts and abilities throughout MTW's global ministry as
20 together we show and tell the gospel of God's grace.

21
22 In keeping with this statement, we affirm that women may serve in leadership roles within
23 MTW, recognizing that only ordained elders exercise ecclesiastical authority over church
24 plants or churches.

25
26 **Reasons for Creation of the Statement:**

27 First, the growing desire from our denomination to encourage women to use their gifts for
28 the service of the church are reflected in the recommendation passed at the 45th General
29 Assembly of the PCA, stating “that sessions, presbyteries, and the General Assembly strive
30 to develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge and wisdom of godly women
31 in the local, regional, and national church ...” The spirit of this recommendation is to
32 actively look for ways in which women can utilize their gifts in the local and larger church
33 context.

34
35 Second, women have been serving in various leadership capacities in MTW on different
36 fields, in the home office, and in specific roles. In each of these contexts, those who made
37 these appointments ensured that their leadership is in accord with our complementarian view
38 of men and women’s roles in the church. The problem that emerged, however, was when
39

1 women leaders were invited to global leadership meetings, questions arose from other MTW
2 leaders and missionaries as to whether women should attend those meetings, and about the
3 legitimacy of female leadership roles in light of passages such as 1 Timothy 2:12. What has
4 complicated the matter is the fact that there has been no MTW policy regarding women
5 serving in these leadership roles, nor has there been an organization-wide discussion on
6 these issues. What has resulted is that faithful women serving in leadership are put in
7 difficult positions, having to defend their leadership positions and presence at leadership
8 meetings.

9
10 It is in this context that we have initiated a discussion on women serving in leadership in
11 MTW, and on deploying the God-given gifting of our MTW women, for the service of the
12 Church. Field leadership has participated in this discussion in various ways, including
13 writing of papers expressing a variety of opinion submitted to Committee on Mission to the
14 World (CMTW). These discussions and papers were used by CMTW in their deliberations
15 as they sought how to best articulate a policy for MTW on women serving in MTW.

16
17 **Purpose of the Statement:**

18 *“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and*
19 *female he created them. And God blessed them.” Genesis 1:27-28a*

20
21 *“In accordance with Scripture and the Reformed Confession, (is) the idea that a human*
22 *being does not bear or have the image of God, but that he or she is the image of God” –*
23 *Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*

24
25
26 CMTW’s statement calls our missional community to value all women, and to recognize and
27 deploy women’s gifting in building the Church and extending the Kingdom of Jesus Christ
28 around the world. In addition, our General Assembly through the Ad Interim Committee
29 report has encouraged us to consider applicable recommendations from their report on
30 “Women Serving in the Ministry of the Church,” amended and adopted by the 45th General
31 Assembly of the PCA.

32
33 One aspect of the CMTW statement focuses on women in leadership roles in MTW. This
34 leadership affirmation is part of CMTW’s encouragement to our missionary community to
35 be “supporting and equipping our sisters in Christ as they exercise their gifts and abilities
36 throughout MTW’s global ministry.” As part of any discussion on leadership, we also affirm
37 that all MTW leadership roles are based on a biblical model of servant leadership that does
38 not seek to wield power over others, whether leadership is exercised by a man or a woman.
39 MTW further recognizes that application of this portion of the statement regarding women
40 serving in leadership roles in MTW may lead to specific and local questions of
41 implementation, because of our shared desire to ensure that ecclesiastical authority over
42 churches or church plants is reserved for men. Therefore, the Senior Leadership of MTW
43 has endeavored to provide a list of considerations as a framework for thinking through
44 application of this portion of the statement.

1 **Recommendations from the 45th PCA General Assembly¹:**

2
3 These three recommendations from the adopted Recommendations from the Ad Interim
4 Committee report are those that have particular applicability to our work in Mission to the
5 World.

- 6
7 **1. That sessions, presbyteries, and the General Assembly recognize that, from the**
8 **founding of the PCA, there has been a variety of views and practices regarding the**
9 **ways in which women may serve the Lord and the church within scriptural and**
10 **constitutional parameters, without ordination, and that such mutual respect for**
11 **said views and practices continues.**

12
13 Rationale: The Scriptures and the constitution of the PCA state that offices of the church
14 are only open to qualified and ordained men. But the committee also recognizes that the
15 Scriptures and the constitution of the PCA give freedom to its churches with regard to
16 varying views and practices by its churches in the ways in which women may serve the
17 Lord and the church. This freedom of view and practice has also been part of the PCA's
18 history...

19
20 Therefore, the committee recommends that ruling and teaching elders continue this
21 recognition of freedom within PCA churches to utilize women's gifts within the
22 scriptural and constitutional parameters, without ordination. ... this freedom of views
23 and practices within PCA churches where Scripture and the constitution allow for
24 freedom is a strength of the denomination and should be valued by the whole church.

- 25
26 **2. That sessions, presbyteries and the General Assembly strive to develop, recognize,**
27 **and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge, and wisdom of godly women in the local,**
28 **regional, and national church, and particularly consider overtures that would allow**
29 **qualified women to serve on appropriate committees and agencies within the**
30 **church.**

31
32 Rationale: The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit has given gifts to the church for the
33 glory of God and the edification of the church (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:11-
34 16). Churches should strive to identify, develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills,
35 knowledge, and wisdom of all our members. ... The committee further encourages PCA
36 churches to utilize the gifts, skills, and knowledge of women by particularly and
37 especially promoting and recruiting qualified women to serve.

38

¹ From the *Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Women serving in the Ministry of the Church, to the 45th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America*, as amended and adopted.

1 **3. That sessions, presbyteries and the General Assembly consider how they can affirm**
2 **and include underprivileged and underrepresented women in the PCA.**
3

4 Rationale: After Jesus rose from the dead, He commanded His apostles: “Therefore, go
5 make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18). Jesus, our great King, prescribes the
6 mission of His church, which, in part, is to ensure the nations become His disciples (cf.
7 WCF 7.6). The overflow of the Great Commission is revealed in Acts. The names in
8 Acts 13:1 demonstrate that Jesus’ disciples took His commission seriously. Indeed,
9 people from different ethnic backgrounds were coming to faith in Christ. Unfortunately,
10 the PCA, though it upholds the mandate to make disciples of the nations, has yet to see
11 the demographics in diverse communities reflected in Mission to the World. Therefore,
12 as the MTW considers the Great Commission afresh, we should affirm that intentionally
13 reaching the nations in their communities is not an addition to the church’s ministry. It is
14 a demand, even command, by Jesus as a principal part of their church’s ministry. Acts
15 6:1-7 sets precedent for affirming the underprivileged. Whether male or female,
16 everyone deserved equal treatment in Christ’s church (cf. Jas. 2:1-13).
17

18 **Application of Recommendations:**
19

20 Each of these recommendations made by the Report and adopted by the 45th General
21 Assembly applies to Mission to the World, in that each of recommendation is made to PCA
22 presbyteries and to General Assembly. Mission to the World, as a committee of the General
23 Assembly, is thereby encouraged to adopt these recommendations. We believe these
24 recommendations are commended by CMTW to every member of MTW, as summed up in
25 the Statement: “Therefore, MTW is committed to supporting and equipping our sisters in
26 Christ as they exercise their gifts and abilities throughout MTW's global ministry as together
27 we show and tell the gospel of God's grace.”
28

29 Specifically, these recommendations encourage Mission to the World to:
30

- 31 1. Recognize various views and practices in the PCA within “scriptural and
32 constitutional parameters,” and to respect and support those various views and
33 practices;
- 34 2. Strive to develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge, and wisdom of
35 godly women, and promoting and recruiting them to serve.
- 36 3. Consider how to affirm and include underprivileged and underrepresented women in
37 Mission to the World.
38

39 The CMTW-adopted Statement on Valuing Women seeks to encourage everyone in Mission to
40 the World to consider and embrace these recommendations from the General Assembly. There
41 are various ways field teams and leadership may go about following these recommendations.
42

1 For example: spending a season in prayer about how to implement these recommendations;
2 inviting women to attend leadership development events in order to identify and increase
3 their skills and gifts; including the voices of women in brainstorming, vision casting, or
4 other future-oriented planning sessions; conducting a “gifts survey” of a field
5 team, including all members of the team; asking with intentionality if there might be a
6 woman who could serve in open or new leadership positions. Any of these and more would
7 be helpful starting points that lead to intentionally looking for opportunities to deploy gifts
8 not currently being used.

10 **Considerations for MTW Field Operations:**

11
12 The concluding paragraph in the CMTW-adopted Statement on Valuing Women may be a
13 challenging portion for regions and teams to implement, and may lead to questions of
14 application. That portion of the statement reads: “In keeping with this statement, we affirm
15 that women may serve in leadership roles within MTW, recognizing that only ordained
16 elders exercise ecclesiastical authority over church plants or churches.” In order to assist
17 teams and regions in making decisions, this list of considerations is provided as a guide to
18 assist in thinking through specific application.

19
20 First, however, is what is meant by “ecclesiastical authority over church plants or
21 churches?” Helpful here are two paragraphs from the PCA *Book of Church Order*, chapter 3:

22
23 **3-2.** Ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is twofold. The officers
24 exercise it sometimes severally, as in preaching the Gospel, administering the
25 Sacraments, reproofing the erring, visiting the sick, and comforting the
26 afflicted, which is the power of order; and they exercise it sometimes jointly
27 in Church courts, after the form of judgment, which is the power of
28 jurisdiction.

29
30 **3-6.** The exercise of ecclesiastical power, whether joint or several, has the
31 divine sanction when in conformity with the statutes enacted by Christ, the
32 Lawgiver, and when put forth by courts or by officers appointed thereunto in
33 His Word.

34
35 Ecclesiastical power, as defined by the *BCO*, means that power that is exercised by a church
36 officer when serving in the role of his office, or by a Church court, such as a Session,
37 Presbytery, or General Assembly. Therefore, this portion of the statement indicates a woman
38 can serve in leadership, other than in roles that would exercise (ecclesiastical) authority over
39 church plants or churches.

40
41 With this understanding, here is a list of considerations that could help in thinking through
42 MTW leadership appointments and clarifying when the person in those positions would
43 exercise ecclesiastical authority over church or church plants:

44

- 1 1. If a leader has no direct authority over ordained elders serving in a church or church
2 planting context, appointment of a woman as leader should be considered.
3
- 4 2. Would a leader have direct authority over an elder in the elder's exercise of his
5 ecclesiastical responsibilities? If so, then an ordained elder is necessary.
6
- 7 3. Would a leader have direct leadership authority for one or more ordained elders serving
8 in a church or in a church planting context? If so, then:
9
 - 10 a. Would that leader have leadership responsibilities apart from those
11 responsibilities which are ordinarily the responsibility of ordained elders or
12 church courts? AND
 - 13 b. Is there another ordained elder in the region in line authority to whom church
14 matters (apart from applicable church court) can be deferred, in consultation with
15 the leader?
16
- 17 If so, appointment of a woman or other non-ordained leader is possible in that leadership
18 role.
19
- 20 4. Does a specific national context or partnership only welcome ordained elders as partners
21 in leadership roles? We commend discussion with national partners and local leaders
22 when considering these appointments so that the local context is well understood. We
23 propose there are situations in which the degree of the exclusion of women or non-
24 ordained men from participation in a culture must be challenged in healthy ways. At the
25 same time, there may be situations in which teaching and biblical education of partners
26 might need to precede appointment of non-ordained leaders in contexts that are
27 culturally (but not biblically) exclusive, so as not to offend national partners in such
28 contexts. However a biblical "critical contextualization²" should encourage us, and our
29 partners, in a direction that embraces men and women serving in appropriate roles in the
30 church when the leadership roles are not exercising ecclesiastical authority over
31 churches or church plants.
32

33 **Conclusion**

34 Our desire is to see our missionary community value our women colleagues throughout our
35 organization, seeking to deploy the gifts that God has given His Church through every one
36 of our members. At the same time, we seek to affirm and uphold the ecclesiastical authority
37 of the Church through qualified ordained men. MTW, the Committee on Mission to the
38 World, and the 44th General Assembly of the PCA recognize we can, and must, seek to
39 further encourage and challenge ourselves to pursue these recommendations, that the Church
40 may be strengthened with all of the gifts of the Giver, for His glory.

² Dr. Paul Heibert, Critical Contextualization. *International Bulletin* 11:3:104-112. July. Reprinted in *The Best in Theology: Volume Two*, J. I. Packer, General Editor. Wheaton: Christianity Today. pp. 387-400.