

1 Corinthians 12:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14

Do these key texts really lock the door to ordaining women?

Introduction

The basic question before us is, “Should the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) ordain both men and women into the office of the ministry?”

To answer this question, we must consider the two key texts which the founding document of the LCA (Theses of Agreement) has quoted as the reason for prohibiting the ordination of women into the office of the ministry. 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 are quoted in Theses of Agreement (Section VI paragraph 11) as the biblical basis for men only ordination. These two texts have been the subject of much debate in our circles, a testimony to the fact that they are significant to the question of ordination of both men and women.

The purpose of this paper is to enquire into these texts with a view to discovering their meaning, context and relationship to ordination in the LCA today.

My starting point on this journey is a deep respect for Scripture as the source and norm of all teaching and practice. Indeed, the 1984 document “A Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture” which appears in the LCA’s collection of Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions clearly outlines how we understand the authority and inerrancy of Scripture in the LCA. This document constitutes part of the public teaching of the LCA in relation to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, and is a valuable reference point for us when seeking common ground on hermeneutical issues. It is important that any discussion of the biblical witness bears this document in mind.

The conclusion I have come to on this journey of enquiry is that these two texts have multiple challenges surrounding their interpretation. To suggest that the language and context of these passages is an easy task for the biblical interpreter is simply not defensible. Furthermore, these difficulties are significant enough that, in my view, these texts cannot be seen as the foundations that support men only ordination in the LCA today. Despite their reference in the Theses of agreement, these key texts do not lock the door to ordaining women.

So let’s investigate these passages in turn.

1 Timothy 2:11-14

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. NIV**

Paul’s letters are already difficult to interpret because they are like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. Those difficulties are further compounded when Greek words are translated using English words that don’t give the proper nuance of the language that Paul is employing. There are a few key words that are worthy of note in this passage.

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. The Greek word ἡσυχία is often translated as “silent”. The NIV translates it as “quietness”, but three other influential translations, GNT, RSV, and KJV* render this as “silence”. In all other places ἡσυχία is translated as “peacefulness” “Peaceable” or “quietness” (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 2 Thessalonians 13:12, 1 Peter 3:4). ἡσυχία does not carry the meaning of literal silence or absence of speech, but of an atmosphere or presence in which learning should take place. Paul had a word at his disposal to communicate absence of speech – which he used in other places – σιγαῶ. It would appear that what Paul had in mind was not silence, but an attitude of mind conducive to learning.

Paul also instructs that women should learn in full submission. This is not a unique request asked only of women, but men are also to learn in submission to the gospel and sound teaching. Paul’s instructions to women about learning in quietness and submission don’t imply that it is okay for men to learn in an unruly, rowdy domineering way. Certainly, submission to sound teaching is a concern of Paul’s in his communications with Timothy (1 Timothy 6:3 and 2 Timothy 1:13). This concern is not limited to women. Perhaps the reason this command is directed toward women here is because teaching women in the same way as men was not a common practice of the synagogue. It could also be that certain women were refusing to submit to apostolic teaching, and disturbing opportunities for others to learn, and Paul addresses that behaviour in those people.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

αυθεντειν is translated as “authority”. Paul typically usually uses εξουσια for “authority”. Here he chooses the word αυθεντειν. It is a *hapax legomena* – that is, the only time this word appears in the New Testament. Εξουσια appears over 100 times. Other uses of αυθεντειν from the same time period show that this word does not simply mean legitimate or routine authority, but carries violent, sexual, and dominating meanings. It cannot be stressed enough how unusual this word is, especially for Paul. Paul writes about authority quite a bit and he never uses αυθεντειν as a synonym for legitimate, godly authority. It is probably best translated as “dominate” or “usurp”.

The unusual use of language raises the question of the context of these words. It could be that Paul had in mind a particular situation in which particular women were behaving particularly badly; in a way that damaged the message and mission of the church.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. Paul then ties in the creation story to draw a correlation between Eve being deceived by the voice of false teaching. It is a salient reminder to the church of the devastating effects of false teaching and deception.

If Paul is both forbidding dominating and teaching that it’s wrong for all believers to dominate each other, why does Paul only address this to women? Paul is correcting those exhibiting specific behaviours. Earlier in this letter, Paul tells the men, at the exclusion of the women, to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger or disputing. Because he directs the men only, does that mean women shouldn’t lift up holy hands? Does it mean women are free to be angry and constantly disputing in or out of church? Of course not. The men in the church at Ephesus were the ones exhibiting argumentative and angry behaviour, so Paul addresses them, even though it’s inappropriate for all believers to behave that way. Likewise, he only addresses the women about

dominating and seizing authority through false teachings, because they were the ones doing it in this instance.

On the basis of all this, I conclude that 1 Timothy 2:11-14 is addressing a particular problem in the church in Ephesus, and thus can't be used as a "for all time and place" argument that women should be silent and not exercise legitimate authority in the church.

Seen in this light, 1 Timothy 2:11-14 does little to inform us about appropriate theology and practice of ordination in the LCA.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

I have included verse 33-36 to help provide an immediate context to these verses.

³³*For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.*

³⁴*Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? NIV**

The Greek language when first written in the New Testament was written without punctuation marks. No full stops, commas, capitals, quotations marks or paragraph breaks. Linguist Michael Palmer states that "Sentence punctuation was invented several centuries after the time of Christ. The oldest copies of both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament are written with no punctuation." (<http://greek-language.com/grklinguist/?p=657>) Certainly, many of the manuscripts that New Testament scholars work from contain punctuation marks, but these punctuation marks were added for the sake of clarity by scribes, and were not written by Paul or the other writers of the New Testament. Therefore, it is up to translators to assess the text that has been handed down to us, and ascertain how the text is to be construed by analysing the language. In any case, where a manuscript contains punctuation, it is rather rudimentary and doesn't include any form of quotation marks. At times there is ambiguity as to how a sentence ought to be constructed. This passage, 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 has multiple examples of this kind of ambiguity.

One example of this ambiguity is the placement of the words "as in all the congregations (churches) of the Lord's people (saints)." Does it belong to the verse 33?

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. Women should remain silent in the churches.

Or should it belong to verse 34?

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the Lord's people, women should remain silent in the churches.

If this "as in all the congregations of the Lord's people" belongs to v 33, then Paul's main concern in Chapter 14, namely good order, is of universal concern to him.

English translators deal with verse 33b reflecting both of these possibilities. The NIV, GNT and NLT* place v 33b at the end of verse 33, while the RSV and CEV* place it at the beginning of verse 34. There appears to be no definitive translation agreed among scholars.

We will return to examples of ambiguity of text brought about by lack of punctuation in the NT Greek text later. Let's now turn our attention to some other issues in the text.

What is meant by "silence" (σιγαω) in verse 34? If it means the absence of speech (which is the usual meaning), there is a bit of a problem reconciling this verse with 1 Corinthians 11:5 where Paul gives instructions for men and women on how they should pray and prophesy in a worship context. These are certainly activities involving speaking. If these are both Paul's words (in a declarative sense), Paul seems to be contradicting himself. One cannot be silent and be given the instruction "... any woman who prays or proclaims God's message in public worship ...". Praying and prophesying (proclaiming God's message) in public worship are incompatible with silence. If Paul didn't mean silence, but rather quietness, why wouldn't he use ησυχια or ηρεμος; words that carry the meaning of peaceful quiet, and doesn't contradict 1 Corinthians 11:5?

Even if a word other than σιγαω is used, the insistence on silence is underlined in the words *They are not allowed to speak* in verse 34, and *it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church* in verse 35. Clearly these verses seem to contradict 1 Corinthians 11:5 if they are interpreted as a declarative statement by Paul. It is nonsensical for Paul to allow women to speak in worship in 1 Corinthians 11:5, and forbid it in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

The phrase "as the Law says" in verse 34 is certainly not typical Pauline phraseology or theology. Nowhere else in his letters does Paul appeal to the Law as an authority for the church's teaching or practice. Incidentally, there is no reference to women being silent and in submission in the Old Testament Law anyway, making the reference even more strange. It is unclear as to what "law" is being referred to. Furthermore, the phrase, "just as the Law also says," stands in stark contrast to Paul's known teaching that we have been liberated from the law (Romans 3:28; 6:14, 7:16, 8:2; Galatians 3:11, 13, 4:5, 5:18, etc.).

The Greek particle "η" at the beginning of verse 36 is a disjunctive particle. This means that in this context, the first word of the translation should read as a horrified or shocked response, "What?!" The most natural reading of this Greek text is that Paul is disagreeing with the statement that precedes it. Interestingly, it is only the RSV and the KJV* of the major influential translations that are rendered this way. "*What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?*" RSV. In many translations, this is somewhat missed or ignored. Nevertheless, the language indicates some kind of disagreement or rebuke.

Another unusual attribute of this passage that Scholars have noted is a rather abrupt change in subject matter - from discussion about church order, tongues and prophecy, to discussion about the silence of women, and then back to tongues prophecy and order.

So, how do we make sense of a text which apparently contradicts content from just a few chapters earlier, contains an untypical Pauline treatment of a central theological concept (law), jars considerably in its immediate context and contains a rather curious disjunctive particle?

In response to these challenges in making sense of the text, there are a significant number of biblical scholars who have questioned if these words were indeed words that Paul wrote as a declarative statement. One interpretation dating back in the literature of biblical scholarship to 1889 (quoted in *Katharine Bushnell, God's Word to Women (Oakland, CA: K. Bushnell, 1930), para.201-202*) is the interpretation that this passage is not to be interpreted as a declarative statement from St Paul, but rather a quotation from an unknown letter to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians contains a number of slogan-like quotes that Paul goes on to argue against (see 1 Corinthians 6:13, 7:1, 8:1, 15:12,14 for examples). Most translations place these in quotation marks. Some scholars believe that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 may also be a quotation (some are listed in *Katharine Bushnell, God's Word to Women (Oakland, CA: K. Bushnell, 1930), para.201-202* quoted in <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/Preato2.htm>)

Here is another example of the difficulty of interpreting a text without the benefit of punctuation marks. The original readers/hearers of 1 Corinthians would have known if this was quoted from the letter they had written, but for us who don't have the benefit of that communication, we can't be certain if this is indeed a quotation or not. However, it remains a possibility, and in view of the issues in the text, it remains in my opinion the most probable translation.

The possibility that verses 34-35 are a quotation from an unknown letter from the Corinthians may seem fanciful to some, but it remains a possible meaning of the Greek text as it has been handed down to us, and is consistent with internal evidence from the rest of 1 Corinthians (see 7:1 and 11:5). This interpretation certainly accounts for the way it does not seem to fit with what Paul is saying in the surrounding verses, the un-Pauline reference to the law, and the contradiction with Paul's declarative statement in 1 Corinthians 11:5. Furthermore, if Paul is responding to a quoted slogan of some in the Corinthian church, the particle "ἢ" makes sense as a rejection and a rebuke of the previous statement.

Another small detail from the text that we see in Greek but goes unnoticed in the English translation is that the word used for "only" in verse 36 is a masculine plural accusative adjective (μόνους). This makes sense as a statement addressed to either a male only audience or a male and female audience (in its inclusive masculine usage), but not to an exclusively female audience. The masculine form does not follow logically after 14:34-35 if its instructions are directed exclusively to women. If Paul was rebuking women for not keeping silent, he would have more likely used the female form (μόνας).

Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939), Professor at Oxford and Aberdeen, was an authority on Paul in the early 1900's. He writes: "we should be ready to suspect Paul is making a quotation from the letter addressed to him by the Corinthians whenever he alludes to their knowledge, or when any statement stands in marked contrast either with the immediate context or with Paul's known views." (quoted on <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/Preato2.htm>) Ramsey's point is clearly applicable to vv.34-35.

So if we accept that verses 34 and 35 are a quotation from an unknown letter from the Corinthian church, the translation looks like this.

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.
(Paul then quotes from an unknown letter from the Corinthians, possibly the one alluded to in 1 Corinthians 7:1)

“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

(And Paul responds to this quotation with a rebuke)

What! Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?

If this translation is right, then Paul is not arguing that women are to keep silent. On the contrary, he is rebuking those Corinthians who are trying to silence women through a bogus appeal to the “law” as their authority.

I understand that this is a translation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-40 that has not been given a lot of “air” in our circles, and is a minority view of scholars. However, I encourage you to consider the possibility that this is the preferred translation, consistent both with the text and the context of these verses. I would be interested to hear arguments from the text that this translation is not tenable. To date, I haven’t heard an argument that this is not a permissible or possible translation of the text.

The major argument I have heard against this interpretation is that the quotation contained in verse 34,35 is much longer than the other quotations in 1 Corinthians, which have slogan-like quality. Furthermore, the particle “η” is not used elsewhere as a disjunctive response to a quotation. I accept these objections. However, it may be that Paul here is deliberately quoting a longer section in order to expose those who are seeking to suppress the involvement of women in the worship life of the church. Without the communication from the Corinthians that 1 Corinthians alludes to, it is impossible to check. We are left to make a “best guess” on how this passage relates to a lost letter from the Corinthian church (the one referred to within 1 Corinthians itself – 1 Corinthians 7:1). The most conclusive one can be is to suggest that “on balance” this translation fits the evidence before us.

For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that this is the most probably the correct translation, namely that the command for women to keep silent is not Paul’s declaration, but rather a quotation that Paul reacts to with a clear rebuke. The rest of Chapter 14 makes sense in this light.

So let’s have a look at the rest of Chapter 14.

37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized. 39 So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; 40 but all things should be done decently and in order.

Critical to the interpretation of this passage is the question, “What is the ‘command of the Lord’ that Paul is talking about?”

Those who understand 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as a declarative statement by Paul forbidding women to speak would conclude that it is a reference to “Women should keep silent...”. However, there are other possibilities.

Interestingly, the RSV editors have placed this verse at the beginning of a new paragraph, indicating a new thought. Both the GNT and NIV* have a paragraph break at verse 39. Again, New Testament Greek contains no punctuation or paragraph breaks, so it is up to the editor to decide where these belong. Having the paragraph break at verse 39 makes the text look like verse 37 refers to the immediate context, verse 33-36. Having a paragraph break at verse 37 is suggestive of verses 37-40 referring to the context of the whole chapter, or even the whole section of 1 Corinthians that begins at Chapter 12.

The “command of the Lord” need not refer to vv34-35, but to the whole of Chapter 14, or indeed Paul’s instruction from the beginning of Chapter 12, with its direction about tongues, interpreting, teaching, etc. Paul seems to be wanting to communicate that good order in the church’s worship life is not simply a matter of “being nice and getting on”, but that there are bigger things at stake, such as how the people of God relate to those around them (“unbelievers” v 22-24), and harmony and peace in the body (v 33), and the primacy of love in the Christian life (chapter 13 and 14:1).

The language that Paul uses in verse 37 indicates that Paul is addressing those who are claiming to be spiritually gifted, but who believe that their spiritual gifts mean that they need not come under the authority of the church, or of Paul as an apostle, or ultimately the Lord himself. It seems that they are using their gift as a means of promoting a personal agenda. Paul could be reacting to these “prophets” who are claiming to speak for the Lord by excluding women and invoking the Law as an authority that justifies their position. Paul’s response is effectively “command of the Lord” trumps your bogus appeal to “the law”. Jesus wants order in his church as Paul has outlined it, not women keeping silent as Corinthian false prophets demand by their appeal to the Law.

He further warns in verse 38, (*If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized*) that those who refuse to let their spiritual gift come under authority ought not be recognised by the church. The goal is that they might use their spiritual gifts appropriately and in keeping with good order, and have their gift “recognised” by the people of God so that it can be a blessing to the church and to the world.

Verses 39 and 40 (*So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order*) are concluding statements underlining the importance of properly using spiritual gifts in worship. This is the topic under discussion in chapter 14, and in one way or another from the beginning of chapter 12 where Paul introduces the topic of spiritual gifts. (*Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.* NIV)

There are other scholars who have resolved problems with the text in a variety of ways. One solution is to accept these words as a declarative statement from Paul, and then go to enormous lengths to resolve an “apparent” contradiction with 1 Corinthians 11:5, and explain other anomalies in the text such as the un-Pauline reference to the law and the jarring change of subject matter. There are also supporters of the ordination of both men and women who are not convinced by the quotation argument and interpret vv34,35 as a declarative statement by Paul. Their view in general

terms is that the context of the early church was largely that of the synagogue, and most disciples came from either the Jewish people or gentile “God fearers” who were familiar with the customs of synagogue worship. It is in this context that women should keep silent, and that speaking is shameful, reflecting the practices of the synagogue. Other interpreters have noted the textual issues and, employing what is often maligned as “higher critical” methods, have concluded that these verses are an interpolation or a gloss. It may not be a simple matter to dismiss these arguments without a much fuller investigation than is possible here. The NRSV* has verses 33b-36 in brackets, indicating that the translators regard this passage as a later addition to the text; an interpolation or gloss that was not written by Paul.

In my view, none of these explanations are entirely satisfactory to resolve all the difficulties this text presents us with, or are true to hermeneutical principles agreed among us in the aforementioned document, “A Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture”. I therefore conclude that the translation proposed above is the simplest explanation of the text, bearing in mind the dictum that “Scripture interprets Scripture”.

In any case, this text remains disputed among scholars regarding its meaning to those who first heard these words. As such, its value to support the case for the ordination of men only must be seriously insecure.

Do 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:35-36 Prohibit the Ordination of Women?

So we have taken a look at these two verses on which the LCA bases its prohibition to ordain women. Can these verses bear that burden? In my view they cannot.

There are significant challenges in interpreting Paul’s words (assuming we translate them correctly) in 1 Timothy 2:11-14. In the light of what has been discussed above, it is difficult to justify the claim that this *must* be a universal command which excludes women from aspects of church life which are the sole domain of men. On balance, it is best viewed as a direction from Paul in a particular situation that has caused a problem for both church unity and the mission of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:33-40 can be legitimately translated so that rather than prohibiting women from speaking in church, Paul rebukes those who would want to limit women’s involvement in the worship life of congregation. If this translation is correct, this verse could be viewed as Paul’s endorsement of women involved in ministry at every level of the church’s life.

These passages present challenges for the biblical interpreter. It would be easy to pretend that they carry no baggage in use of language, cultural setting or literary context (the immediate context, the context of the Pauline corpus and the context of Scripture as a whole). There are challenges and difficulties in this text that demand our attention.

Luther says, “I certainly grant that many passages in the Scriptures are obscure and hard to elucidate, but that is due, not to the exalted nature of their subject, but to our own linguistic and grammatical ignorance; and it does not in any way prevent our knowing all the contents of Scripture.” (*Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will (Translated by J.I. Packer & O.R. Johnston), (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), p 71ff*). Luther hints that when a passage of scripture

presents problems, further research into the meaning of the text can bring clarity that wasn't there to begin with. Sometimes this takes a bit of work.

These two key texts in their "plain reading in an English translation" present huge difficulties in allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. However, they make perfect sense in the light of an effort to understand more completely the nuances of language that are employed by Paul. The translations suggested above in my view present the simplest reading of the text taking into account the language used in them and the witness of the rest of Scripture.

The Role of Women and the Ordination of both Men and Women

It is one thing to talk about the "role of women" in some nebulous sense. It is quite another to ask, "Can women function as pastors in the LCA?" To engage with this question, we must first understand what ordination means in the LCA?

The Theses of Agreement has some eleven paragraphs outlining what the LCA sees as pertinent to ordination – the last of which is the prohibition of women from the office of the ministry. It affirms that the office of the ministry is "instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, preaching the gospel and administering of the sacraments". There is evidence within the document of a "from above" approach to ordination; that it is instituted by Christ, and a "from below" approach to ordination; that while ordination is not the same thing as the priesthood of all believers, it necessarily exists within it and comes from it. This both "from above" and "from below" approach to ordination is consistent with both Luther's writings and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as contained in the book of Concord, none of which is gender dependant. In fact, Luther and the confessions encourage us to look at the efficacy of the Word of God rather than the person delivering it.

The marks of the church according to the confessions are "word and sacrament". Insistence on a male only pastorate has the effect of rewriting the Lutheran Confessions to include a male only pastorate as a mark of the church. I'm not sure that this could be defended scripturally.

We could conduct an analysis of the activity of certain women in the New Testament, such as Phoebe, Euodia and Syntyche, Priscilla, Junia (notable among the apostles) and others. Indeed, it is Chloe who sends a delegation to Paul from Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11). The way Paul refers to this delegation indicates that Chloe is their leader, and he responds positively to the concerns that she has for the strife affecting the Corinthian church. There is significant evidence from the New Testament that women were legitimately involved (with apostolic approval) in the types of ministries that belong to ordination today.

There is much more that could be said about the broad sweep of Scripture and its inclusivity, including biblical texts such as Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Some object to this being relevant as it addresses our standing as baptised people, however, there could be more fruitful reflection to be done on this passage.

I have not touched on the broader issues of what has been described as “orders of creation”, and the relationship between the created order and the redeemed order in Christ. This is a huge area of study that lies beyond the context of the two texts under discussion here. It is enough to say that there is robust discussion about these issues in the literature.

We could also have a fruitful discussion about the missional implications of retaining men only ordination in the world in which God has placed us. Note well that this is a different discussion to the argument that we should get with the times and keep up with society.

Conclusion

My conclusion is that the two texts that have been used by the LCA in the Theses of Agreement to exclude women from the office of the ministry cannot continue to be used in this way. The key texts simply don't work to lock the door which excludes women from the office of the ministry in the LCA. Or to use a building analogy; these two verses can provide neither the foundation nor the scaffolding to support men only ordination in the LCA. The case for men only ordination therefore crumbles.

I was once challenged that unless Scripture commands the ordination of women, we should not ordain women. My response to that challenge was to humbly suggest that this is a poor way to do theology. If we operate only with the Lord's command, then we would not baptise infants, as there is no specific command to baptise infants in the New Testament. Rather, we have looked at the New Testament and asked “What is baptism?” Based on our investigation of the nature of baptism, we then ask, “Should infants be excluded from this sacrament?” We have concluded that infants should not be excluded from the sacrament of baptism, and our practice reflects that conclusion.

The theology of ministry that we see clearly outlined in the Augsburg Confession Article V is that the office of the ministry is established by God to proclaim and teach the gospel and administer the sacraments so that the Holy Spirit may work through them to create saving faith. It is therefore the gospel, not precedent (even precedent in New Testament practice) or tradition that determines the shape of this office.

If these texts cannot legitimately bear the burden that the Theses of Agreement places on them to exclude women from the office of the ministry, then the question becomes; on what basis can the LCA continue to exclude women from the office of the ministry?

Respectfully submitted by

Pastor Rob Schubert

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**English Translations of the Bible referred to in this paper are*

CEV- Contemporary English Translation of the Bible

GNT – Good News Translation of the Bible

KJV – King James Version (or Authorised Version) of the Bible

NLT – New Living Translation of the Bible

NIV – New International Version of the Bible

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version of the Bible

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible