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US Denominations and Their Stances on Women in Leadership



FIRST INSTALLMENT

- Affirming of Women in Leadership
- Undetermined Stance on Women in Leadership
- Not Affirming of Women in Leadership

Compiled by CBE Staff and Volunteers



US DENOMINATIONS AND THEIR STANCE ON WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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We are excited to publish the first installment of the denominations project! We have been anticipating introducing CBE friends to this updated project for several months. Much staff and volunteer effort went into compiling the list, and the process has been quite illuminating.

Please know that this is an incomplete list. If you feel your denomination is misrepresented, we sincerely apologize and hope you will assist us in clarifying their position more accurately before the final draft is completed. Please also note that this research is based on written statements and does not necessarily reflect what actually happens in practice within any particular denomination listed.

How is this research organized?

Source of Information and Quotes

The majority of our research comes from the particular denomination's website. We made an effort to pull quotes and summarize findings from *official* statements on the issue. In some cases, we use information from phone or email correspondence, again asking for the denomination's *official* stance. You will see the website or source of the information listed across from the denomination name. The quotes are taken directly from the website or correspondence with representatives of the denomination.

Categories

The denominations are organized first under one of three categories: Affirming of Women in Leadership, Undetermined Stance on Women in Leadership, or Not Affirming of Women in Leadership. The affirming category most often refers to the issue of ordination, but the denomination's stance is clarified from the quote listed from the website or correspondence.

The undetermined category could refer to a variety of issues, but most often it means that the information we were looking for was either unclear or unavailable on the website, and we have not yet had contact with representatives from the denomination. In a few other cases, denominations were classified as undetermined if they have decided not to take an official stance.

Finally, the excluding category is comprised of denominations that do not ordain women. These denominations do not necessarily deny women *any* kind of leadership—many allow women to serve as Sunday school teachers, musicians, youth workers, or ministry leaders to women only. A denomination was placed in this category if it does not recognize women as elders, deacons, pastors, ministers, and/or directors.

Within each of the three categories, denominations are listed alphabetically first by their affiliation and then by their name.

What is the next step?

We are committed to exploring, through research and conversation, denominations' stances on women in leadership and advocating a biblical basis for the full equality of women in churches across the country and around the world. We are also committed to exploring denominations' stances on women in the home and are hoping to include this information in the final draft.

You're invited! We are looking for volunteers to continue the first steps of this project. Here are some ways you can help:

Find your denomination on this list: where does your church officially stand on this issue? Do you have a clarification or revision for us? Please contact us with your revisions at cbe@cbeinternational.org with "denominations project" in the subject line.

Volunteer: If your denomination isn't listed, consider volunteering a few hours a week researching your own denomination and others so that we can provide complete information. For more information, please contact cbe@cbeinternational.org with "denominations project" in the subject line.

Interested in what you find? If your experience within your own denomination has been different than their expressed statement, or you are wondering how you can address the issue of gender to your denominational leaders, consider taking these action steps. Here are a few ideas:

- Meet with your pastor or denomination's leaders to discuss how and why the official stance was taken
- Consider forming discussion groups or committees with members of your congregation or denomination to discuss the issue of gender
- Present CBE resources to the decision-making board of your denomination
- Consider assisting other egalitarians in denominations who do not affirm women
- Consider sponsoring someone from your church leadership to attend a CBE conference; http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/events/events_conferences.shtml
- Consider giving your pastor a CBE membership with subscriptions to our journals; <http://www.equalitydepot.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWCATS&Category=59>
- Consider starting a CBE chapter in your area. We can give you help in launching a grass roots chapter that advocates for biblical equality; http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/chapters_main.shtml
- Consider becoming a regular donor to advance biblical equality around the world; http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/help_cbe/contribute.shtml

Denominations that are Affirming of Women in Leadership

Anabaptists

<http://www.mennoniteusa.org>

Mennonite Church USA

The church calls, trains, and appoints gifted men and women to a variety of leadership ministries on its behalf. These may include such offices as pastor, deacon, and elder as well as evangelists, missionaries, teachers, conference ministers, and overseers.

Anglican

<http://ecusa.anglican.org>; <http://www.episcopalchurch.org>

Episcopal Church in the USA

Supportive of women in all leadership, including ordination, women's ministry and working for gender justice.

Baptists

<http://www.allianceofbaptists.org>

Alliance of Baptists

Affirms women in all forms of leadership; since it's beginning in 1986, they have alternated male and female presidents; one of their six boards deals exclusively with the women's issue.

Baptists

<http://www.abc-usa.org>

American Baptist Churches USA

Supports all forms of leadership for women, and the empowerment of them, and the elimination of sexism in the church (see board resolution at <http://www.abc-usa.org/Resources/resol/empwomen.htm>).

Charismatics

<http://www.vineyardusa.org>

Vineyard Movement

"In response to the message of the kingdom, the leadership of the Vineyard movement will encourage, train, and empower women at all levels of leadership both local and translocal. The movement as a whole welcomes the participation of women in leadership in all areas of ministry.

"We also recognize and understand that some Vineyard pastors have a different understanding of the scriptures. Each local church retains the right to make its own decisions regarding ordination and appointment of senior pastors."

Lutheran

<http://evangelicalcatholicchurch.org>

Evangelical Catholic Church

"For far too long, Catholic Women have been limited in their vocational choices within Catholicism. Despite the cries of dedication to the Theology of Social Justice and Peace, women Catholic remain chained within a caste system with little hope of seeing nor experiencing any opportunities to fully realize the gift of their vocations. ..The Evangelical Catholic Church - a validly consecrated reformed Catholic faith community, wishes to unlock the door of gender prejudice and to permit women their equal opportunity to unconditionally embrace the gift of their vocation to serve the People of God." (Open to all positions of leadership, deaconate, priesthood.)

Lutheran

<http://www.elca.org>

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Women may serve in all positions of leadership, including bishops and pastors.

Lutheran

<http://www.lcmc.net>

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ

Affirms women in all pastoral roles; ordination is allowed.

Methodists

<http://www.ame-church.com>

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Website does not indicate official stance of women in leadership but women are listed as bishops (highest office in denomination) and women began being ordained as ministers in 1948.

Methodists

<http://www.starofzion.org>

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

In 1891, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church became the first black denomination to permit ordination of women.

Methodists

<http://www.salvationarmyusa.org>

Salvation Army

Ordains both men and women. "Operations of The Salvation Army are supervised by trained, commissioned officers. They proclaim the gospel and serve as administrators, teachers, social workers, counselors, youth leaders, and musicians. These men and women have dedicated their lives, skills, and service completely to God. Lay members who subscribe to the doctrines of The Salvation Army are called soldiers. Along with officers, they are known as Salvationists."

Methodists

<http://www.freemethodistchurch.org>

The Free Methodist Church - North America

Women may lead - see this link: <http://www.freemethodistchurch.org/Sections/About%20Us/Beliefs/Where%20we%20stand/Women%20in%20Ministry/Women%20in%20ministry%20-%20main%20page.htm>

Methodists

www.umc.org

United Methodist Church

"In The United Methodist Church, we have two expressions of ordained clergy, who are also ministers: Deacons: Men and women ordained by a bishop to a lifelong ministry of Service and Word—especially in leading and supporting baptized Christians in their varied ministries in the world. Elders: Women and men ordained by a bishop to a lifelong ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament and Order—that is, to serve, preach, teach, administer the sacraments, and order the life of the church for its mission."

Methodists

<http://thewru.com>

Wesleyan Reform Union

"In the Priesthood of all believers, and that we being members one of another, are one body in Christ Jesus, having equality of spiritual opportunities as the sacred right of all."

Other Protestant Denominations

www.covchurch.org

Evangelical Covenant Church of America

"From the mother of Moses to Mary the Mother of Jesus, from Deborah leading the armies of Israel to victory, to Priscilla who worked by the side of the Apostle Paul, from the beginning, women have had a central role in God's plan for the salvation of the world. In 2006, the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) celebrates the 90th anniversary of Women Ministries and the 30th anniversary of the denomination's decision to go on record as affirming the ordination of women. It is the joint recommendation of the ECC Christian Action Commission and the ECC Commission on Biblical Gender Equality to fully affirm Christ's call to all women to present, share, and use all their gifts to further His kingdom."

Pentecostalism

International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

"We prioritize planting and growing local churches as in Acts 9:31 and Ephesians 3:14-19, that believers may be grown, nurtured and equipped for ministry. We cultivate every-member ministry as in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Christ's will being that His church be the living evidence of His love and power to the world. We honor the Holy Spirit's call to and giftings of church leaders under Christ's commission and lordship, irrespective of age, gender or ethnicity (Acts 2:17-18)."

Pentecostalism

<http://info.iphc.org/faqs.html>

International Pentecostal Holiness Church

"The International Pentecostal Holiness Church does ordain women into the ministry. Many serve as missionaries, evangelists, and some serve to pastor local congregations. Also, we do allow women to teach classes that might include men in the class. IPHC does not interpret 1 Timothy 2:12 as an absolute prohibition but rather a statement reflecting particular circumstances in Paul's churches in the first century. The Biblical injunction regarding deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13 provide the framework for the IPHC understanding of deaconate eligibility....IPHC believes that men and women can be deacons."

Presbyterian

<http://www.pcusa.org>

Presbyterian Church (USA)

"Women were prohibited from serving as elders or deacons until the 1930s--or the 1960s in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS). Ordaining women to the gospel ministry took an additional 20-30 years. Today, however, the proportion of women and men serving in ordained offices is nearly 50 percent each, a development that is mirrored in the enrollment figures of the 10 Presbyterian theological institutions."

Reformed/Congregationalists

<http://www.crcna.org/pages/index.cfm>

Christian Reformed Church in North America

"Women may be ordained to all ecclesiastical offices in the Christian Reformed Church. Women may be ordained as deacons in any church and as elders, ministers, and evangelists in churches belonging to classes that have declared the word male inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. "

Society of Friends (Quakers)

mb-soft.com

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

"Quakerism took on certain characteristics such as simplicity in the manner of living, encouraging women to be ministers, spiritual democracy in meeting, absolute adherence to truth, universal peace and brotherhood regardless of sex, class, nation, or race."

United and Uniting Churches

www.ucc.org

United Church of Christ

"We cherish and work to be advocates on behalf of all women, lay and clergy, the young and the not as young! "

Unable to Determine Whether Denomination Affirms Women in Leadership

Anabaptists

<http://www.emmc.ca>

Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. Church leaders are chosen based on godly character, and spiritual gifts. Congregations call and may financially support pastors and ministry leaders. Persons called to the pastoral ministry will be examined on their faith, doctrine, and gifts by the congregation and conference.

Anglican

<http://rechurch.org>

Reformed Episcopal Church

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. The application for clergy form assumes that the applicant is a male. Wording of many documents use non-inclusive language (male pronouns).

Baptists

<http://www.bgcworld.org>

Baptist General Conference

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. Language of ordination assumes men and uses male language. The "Ordination of Ministers" document is a recommendation and is not binding. (Formally Swedish Baptist General Conference.)

Baptists

Baptist General Convention of Texas

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. A woman serves in vice-president position.

Lutheran

<http://www.celc.info>

Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. "[The] CELC [does not identify] its position on women in the Church. [Check] the ELS or WELS website links at our site." (Information received by email.)

Other Protestant Denominations

www.gccweb.org

Greater Grace World Outreach

Unable to clarify gender stance from website.

Other Protestant Denominations

www.one-way.org/jesusbovement/index.html

Jesus Movement

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. Leadership section lists many men and women, however, no one is specified as "minister" and nothing about gender roles is clearly stated.

Other Protestant Denominations

www.newfrontiers-usa.org

New Frontiers

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. (Formerly New Frontiers International.)

Other Protestant Denominations

www.thefamily.org

The Family International

Unable to clarify gender stance from website.

Pentecostalism

Ministers Fellowship International

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. (MFI) is a fellowship of non-denominational charismatic churches with similar beliefs where ministers of those churches can gather together for encouragement. MFI began in the United State. Now there are over 300 churches worldwide part of the fellowship.

Pentecostalism

<http://newtestamentchristianchurches.org/index.html>

New Testament Christian Churches of America, Inc

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. (NTCC) is a Full Gospel, Holiness, Christian denomination. It is a worldwide denomination with it's main headquarters located in Graham, Washington. Each individual church location is called New Testament Christian Church.

Presbyterian

<http://www.epc.org>

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

"While this is a topic about which many Christians feel strongly, the EPC believes that there can be genuine unity amid diversity on the subject. Each congregation has the right to decide whether to have women officers. The local congregation, subject to presbytery approval, determines whether they will have women as pastors. We believe that, whatever a congregation's view of office, women should be encouraged to serve as God has called and gifted them."

Reformed/Congregationalists

<http://www.federationorc.org>

Federation of Reformed Churches

Unable to clarify gender stance from website. It appears presbyters must be male.

Denominations that are Not Affirming of Women in Leadership

Anabaptists

<http://www.emconf.ca>

Evangelical Mennonite Conference

Women serve on most national boards, as council delegates, as missionaries, and within local church activities; while they can be selected locally as ministers, the conference does not provide for the ordination of women.

Anabaptists

<http://www.febcministries.org>

Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches

To qualify for membership a church must have: Duly appointed elders (at least two apart from the pastor) who are genuinely qualified for that office according to scriptural norms. Following the biblical pattern of male leadership in the home and the church, and due to the spiritual nature of the leadership role of the Executive, the chairmen of the Commissions must be elder-qualified men with the exception of the Commission on Women's Ministries which will be represented by the vice-president (see IX.F.7.d.). (Formerly Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.)

Anabaptists

<http://www.gameo.org>

Mennonite Brethren Churches

Resolution: That women be encouraged to minister in the church in every function other than the lead pastorate. The church is to invite women to exercise leadership on Conference boards, in pastoral staff positions and in our congregations, institutions, and agencies. We ask women to minister as gifted, called and affirmed. We call the church to be increasingly alert to the gifts of women and to become more active in calling women to minister. We further call people in the Spirit of Christ to relate to one another in mutual respect as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Anglican

<http://www.anglican catholic.org>

Anglican Catholic Church

"We hold that the Holy Orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons consist exclusively of men in accordance with Christ's Will and institution."

Anglican

<http://anglicanpck.org>

Anglican Province of Christ the King

"The Province of Christ the King is a body of Anglican churches which was formed in 1977 to ensure the continuation of historic Anglican Christianity in America. The need for the new Province arose because of changes in the fundamental faith and practices of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA). This radical restructuring of the Episcopal Church was completed at the 1976 Episcopal Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At this meeting sweeping changes were adopted to accommodate new beliefs and practices...The 1976 General Convention forced an ever-increasing secularization of the church. The unilateral "ordination" of women to the priesthood contradicted apostolic authority as established by Christ Himself.

Anglican

<http://christianepiscopalchurch.org>

Christian Episcopal Church

"Following the centuries-old traditions of the Anglican Church, the XnEC upholds a male-only clergy, and requires that its clergy affirm lifestyles that are consistent with Holy Scripture. The XnEC upholds the ancient practice of setting apart deaconesses for ministry."

Anglican

<http://www.angelfire.com/biz/Southern/index.html>

Southern Episcopal Church

"We accept as binding and unalterable the received Faith and Traditions of the Church, and its teachings. These include the historic, three-fold male, Ordained ministry of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures; the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds; and the writings of the bishops and doctors of the ancient Church, especially as defined by the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church."

Anglican

<http://www.united-episcopal.org>

United Episcopal Church

"THE UNITED EPISCOPAL CHURCH of NORTH AMERICA is looking for men interested in becoming an Anglican Priest in both the United States and Canada. We have a immediate need for clergy in the South and the Mid-West. We need dedicated men who wish to serve the LORD as clergy in Pastoral situations. We are willing to discuss transfers and ordination in Apostolic Succession to those who meet our standards." and "The ordination of women to the priesthood by ECUSA in violation of Scriptural Authority and in contravention of two thousand years of Church belief, practice and teaching. "

Baptists

<http://www.abaptist.org/>

American Baptist Association

"We believe that there are two divinely appointed offices in a church, pastors and deacons, to be filled by men whose qualifications are set forth in Titus and 1 Timothy."

Baptists

<http://www.pbpage.org/>

Primitive Baptists

"This is a requirement which is very clearly stated in the scriptures (1 Cor 14:35-36, 1 Tim 2:11-12, 1 Tim 3:2). Accordingly, there is no scriptural precedent for female elders. Churches placing women in ministerial offices appear to regard the authority of the scriptures to be subordinate to current social fashions."

Lutheran

<http://www.apostolic-lutheran.org>

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

Women are not permitted to serve in the pulpit, as deacons, or board. Teaching Sunday School is allowed. (Information received by telephone.)

Lutheran

<http://www.clclutheran.org>

Church of the Lutheran Confession

"We do not ordain women into the ministry nor do they serve on church councils. Women are involved in our Sunday Schools and in teaching in Christian Day Schools of our church. Many are organists. They are very involved in activities that do not violate the principles set forth by Scripture." (Information received by email.)

Lutheran

<http://www.concordialutheranconf.com/clc/index.cfm>

Concordia Lutheran Conference

"We teach that, according to God's ordinance, women are not publicly to teach in the church, nor even to speak in the public assembly where such speaking may usurp the authority of the men. Consequently women are not to have the right of suffrage in the voters' assembly, since their vote may indeed cancel out the vote of a man to whom Christ committed the decision-making power in the local congregation. Neither may women hold offices in the congregation since these involve the leadership which Christ has given only to men. It goes without saying, therefore, that women may not serve in the pastoral office..."

Lutheran

<http://www.ecclnet.org>

Evangelical Community Church-Lutheran

"The [ECCL] does not have and never has had any female clergy. While it does recognize the pastoral and leadership abilities of both men and women, and welcomes their service in those leadership positions open to laymen, the [ECCL] has imposed a moratorium on the admission of women as Postulants for Holy Orders and their ordination into any Order of the Priesthood of the Church. The moratorium also forbids the incardination into any Order of the Priesthood of this Church of women already ordained into the Priesthood by other Churches. Nor may women ordained by other Churches be given a License to Officiate in our parishes."

Lutheran

<http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org>

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Our Lord has revealed that He wants the headship principle to be upheld in the church. It is for this reason that the Lord has restricted the pastoral office to men. (cf. I Timothy 2:11-14 and I Corinthians 24:34ff). The same principle applies to woman suffrage in the church. Scripture forbids the women "to have authority over a man," (I Timothy 2:12.)"

Lutheran

<http://www.lcms.org>

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

"The LCMS believes that those Scripture passages which say that women should not "teach" or "have authority" in the church (see, for example, 1 Cor. 11 and 14; 1 Timothy 2) mean that women ought not hold the authoritative teaching office in the church--that is, the office of pastor. Women are allowed to hold other offices in the church, as long as these offices do not involve the one holding them in carrying out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office. The involvement of women in non-pastoral aspects of the worship service (for example, reading the lessons, etc.), is left to the judgment of individual congregations.

Lutheran

<http://www.lmsusa.org/index.htm>

Lutheran Ministerium and Synod

"Regarding Ordination: We currently have only a male clergy. (This is an area in which we have not yet had opportunity to develop a consensus Statement)...Regarding the involvement of Women in the leadership of our congregations: We encourage and affirm women in leadership roles within our congregations. Women exercise the right to vote on all matters of business before the assembly of believers and are eligible for election to positions of leadership."

Other Protestant Denominations

www.ecfa.org

Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA)

Women may not serve as pastors, elders, or deacons. Men who are not ordained and women who would like to be involved in ministry may be granted the "Christian Ministry License."

Other Protestant Denominations

Great Commission Association

Gender-Neutral Paraphrases Resolution: "We urge our people to see the danger of this undermining of the authority of Scripture and reject those "paraphrases" which make use of it, regardless of how "easy" they claim these perversions of Gods Word are to read." No specific statements on women were found.

Pentecostalism

www.cgmahdq.org

Church of God Mountain Assembly

"On leadership in the church Offices; Women Ministers shall be licensed, but not allowed to baptize, pastor Churches, or administer the Lord's Supper. We do not ordain women. (Information received by email.)"

Pentecostalism

<http://www.pcg.org>

Pentecostal Church of God

"The place of women in the Church: The gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and the Holy Spirit divideth upon each as He will. "In the last days our sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:17, 18). When called of God and anointed by the Spirit, our women may freely serve as helpers, pastors and evangelists, but in order to fulfill the admonition of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12, all corporate positions in the district and the national movement shall be occupied by men."

Pietists and Holiness Churches

<http://www.apostolicchristianchurch.org>

Apostolic Christian Church of America

"Should Women Be Pastors and Elders? In a social climate of complete equality in all things, the biblical teaching of only allowing men to be pastors and elders is not popular. Many feminist organizations denounce this position as antiquated and chauvinistic. In addition, many Christian churches have adopted the "politically correct" social standard and have allowed women pastors and elders in the church. But the question remains, is this biblical? My answer to this question is, "No, women are not to be pastors and elders." Many may not like that answer, but it is, I believe, an accurate representation of the biblical standard." From <http://www.carm.org/questions/womenpastors.htm>.

Pietists and Holiness Churches

<http://www.cmalliance.org>

Christian & Missionary Alliance

Women and men's ministries are equally divided in their CMA manual. Gender is not mentioned under the requirements of pastor. Canadian Web site: "Only men may be ordained to serve as pastors. Women may be consecrated to perform other ministries in the church, including preaching the Gospel and service in missions." http://www.dnd.ca/hr/religions/engraph/religions07_e.asp.

Presbyterian

<http://www.arpsynod.org>

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Women are not permitted as elders, deacons, or ministers. "We have already seen that the arguments for women's ordination to all offices tend to undermine, both explicitly and implicitly, the doctrine of the full authority of Scripture, and that a persistent connection has been drawn between the gender issue and the doctrine of the Trinity. These factors compel us to recognize that the theological integrity of the church is at stake."

Presbyterian

<http://www.bpc.org>

Bible Presbyterian Church

"Their confusion is demonstrated by the fact that both sides of the issue claimed to "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God." However, the apostle Paul stated, 'Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.' I Timothy 2:12. The entrance of women into the offices of the church is strictly forbidden by Scripture."

Presbyterian

<http://www.crechurche.org>

Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches

"The pattern established in the scriptures (2 Tim. 2:1-2) is that Timothy was to commit the things that he had learned to those faithful men who would be able to teach others. Having established elders in every city, it further was the pattern that this process of succession was perpetuated by those already established in the office. This task clearly requires that a determination be made as to whether a man is characterized by a faithful life and whether he is skilled in teaching others."

Presbyterian

<http://www.opc.org>

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Positions of elders, deacons, pastors can only be filled by men.

Presbyterian

<http://www.pcanet.org>

Presbyterian Church in America

Candidates for ordination must be men.

Presbyterian

<http://www.presbyterianreformed.org>

Presbyterian Reformed Church

Candidates for ordination must be men.

Presbyterian

<http://www.reformedpresbyterian.org>

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

Leaders must be male.