

STATEMENT ON INCLUSIVITY

The Presbyterian Church (USA) ordains both women and men as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The church believes in and is committed to supporting the call to this ministry for women and minorities. The *Book of Order* has provided guidelines for the inclusive nature of the body of Christ. It has been and continues to be necessary to raise these guidelines to our consciousness in order to promote justice and fairness for all in the call process.

Procedures exist for fair representation and inclusiveness in the search process for ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The *Book of Order* G11.0502g states, “[The Committee on Ministry] shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for ministers and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origins, sex, age, or marital status. In the case of each call, it shall report to the Presbytery its steps in this implementation taken by the calling group.” Each search committee reports to the Presbytery its compliance with the requirements of this provision, as well as the number of women and ethnic candidates interviewed. This reporting is done to provide accountability for each particular church as we as a denomination strive for righteousness and justice.

The Presbytery of St. Augustine takes both women and men under its care as candidates prepare for ministry. We read and are instructed again by the *Book of Order* G-6.0105, “Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God’s providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the church.”

We are called to openness as a church. “The church is called to undertake this mission when at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ. The church is called to a new openness to the presence of God in the church and in the world, to more fundamental obedience and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work; to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity” (G-3.0400, G-3.0401).

We are given a diversity of gifts, a diversity of opportunity and ministry. We are given guidelines for more fully bringing about Christ’s reign. This requires the Presbytery of St. Augustine to take the lead, to provide the vision for change and to support each congregation with education and information.