

May 20, 2008 Press Release Lancaster Mennonite Conference

On May 16, 2008, the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Board of Bishops took action to approve for immediate implementation a credentialing policy that allows for diversity in understandings and convictions regarding gender roles in church leadership. The new policy will lodge all LMC credentialing decisions with the Board of Bishops and a recently formed Conference Credentialing Commission.

This action follows a recent Bishop Board proposal that was tested with all credentialed leaders in March and April. After a careful review of the feedback received, bishops reached a consensus to implement the new policy in the belief that it will respect and honor the variety of ways God's Spirit works in LMC congregations related to the calling and credentialing of persons for leadership roles.

In keeping with a 2006 Bishop Board recommendation, and to most fully respect the differing Scriptural understandings, beliefs, and practices of our congregations, the new policy stipulates that the role of bishop and similar conference oversight roles will be reserved for men.

The board is aware that this decision will be disappointing and painful for some on either side of the issue. However, after much prayerful discussion, bishops concluded that this approach represents the best way for the conference to move forward from a difficult impasse. While it will require all to walk together with humility, the board believes this approach will free congregations to refocus energy on faithfully responding to God's missional calling in very diverse congregational contexts.

Along with taking this action, bishops committed themselves to modeling how to live with this diversity. They also agreed to design a variety of options for facilitating continued conversations for mutual understanding and healing across the conference as a sign of God's healing, reconciling Kingdom.