**What Does Consecration/Ordination Mean in The Alliance?**

**July 2023**

The vote of the delegates of Alliance Council 2023 brought about changes in our polity and practice related to consecration and ordination. From 1996 to 2023, we functioned under a system where our male and female official workers did the same work in their initial years as licensed workers but arrived at two different outcomes. Men have been ordained and received the designation “reverend,” while women have been consecrated and received the designation “consecrated woman in ministry.”

The vote of delegates at Council now means that both male and female workers who have successfully completed the process outlined in the *Manual* will be consecrated and ordained. We chose to retain both of these words, believing that consecration is deeply engrained in Scripture and ordination is highly recognizable in the public sector where much of our ministries are carried out. Both men and women will receive the designation “reverend” from their district’s Credentialing Committee. Women who have previously been consecrated will now be consecrated and ordained, including the designation “reverend.” It will then be up to each local church to determine for which, if any, of its consecrated and ordained official workers the designation “reverend” will be used.

Meanwhile, this designation will help all our workers, both male and female, be able to more easily access critical places where they are called to have ministry, such as in hospitals, behind police lines, in jails and prisons, etc. The designation “reverend” will also help ensure that our female institutional chaplains are able to secure employment in the field to which the Lord has called them. We believe this change will also help us in recruiting more female military chaplains.

While there is some reference to ordination (depending on the English translation you are reading) or laying on of hands in the Bible, including in the New Testament, it would be difficult to develop any kind of biblical defense of ordination that equates to what has developed in church polity over the centuries. We believe that ordination is best seen as a holy process of vetting, certifying, and endorsing those who sense God’s call to vocational ministry; have evidenced that call through character, giftedness, and preparation; and have had that call affirmed by the church. This description of ordination applies regardless of the gender of the person under consideration.

While previous Alliance polity automatically tied ordination to eldership, that idea is not rooted in Scripture. The Alliance continues to affirm our male elder polity. Elders in Alliance churches are the lead pastor, the elected lay elders, and any male members of the pastoral staff that a local church chooses to include. Therefore, it should be understood that ordination in The Alliance does not confer eldership.

In consecrating and ordaining both qualified male and female official workers, as well as making the designation “reverend” available to both genders, we join numerous evangelical denominations, several of which have done so for decades and even more than a century. These are typically but not exclusively denominations that are either Pentecostal or Wesleyan Holiness in nature. While ordaining women, these groups continue to hold to a high view of Scripture and to a biblical view on sexuality and marriage.

As with other issues, we acknowledge that Alliance people and churches will hold different views on this issue. We call everyone to a spirit of humility and mutual respect as brothers and sisters in this Christ-centered, Acts 1:8 family who all love Jesus and hold to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. We continue in strong agreement on the fundamentals of the faith and continue to work together for the completion of Christ’s commission.