

Frequently Asked Questions

The Christian and Missionary Alliance – 2023

Statement of Faith

1. How is the Statement of Faith being impacted by the changes made at Council?

The reworded Statement of Faith continues to hold tightly to the fundamentals of the faith, such as the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the lostness of man, Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation, the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, eternal life with God for believers, eternal punishment for those who have refused to believe, etc.

The changes to our Statement of Faith have sought to update the language from what was adopted by Council almost 60 years ago. The meanings of words have changed, as has the way we express certain concepts. As an example, in the 1960s, it was still common to use the word “man” to refer to both genders. It is common today to express what is actually meant, “men and women.” The reworded Statement of Faith, parts of which must still be ratified by Council 2025, is more understandable to people in the 2020s and beyond. The current Statement of Faith, including the sections ratified by Council 2023, can be read here: <https://cmalliance.org/who-we-are/our-faith-and-mission/statement-of-faith/>. The sections that Council 2023 approved that must still be ratified in 2025 can be read here: (Attached – See blue print.)

While it is not in our Statement of Faith, it should also be noted that Council 2019 unanimously and without debate passed a reworded and strongly biblical Statement on Sexuality that appears in our *Manual* and can be found here: https://cdn.cmalliance.org/wordpress/cmalliance/Statement-on-Sexuality_Jan-2023.pdf.

2. What are some specific examples of our Statement of Faith being strengthened?

- In Section 1.1, we’ve added that God is “the creator of all things.” This is an important declaration in an era when the predominant view of the origin of the universe completely leaves out God.
- In Section 1.3, we’ve now included both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.
- In Section 1.6, we’ve added the fundamental Protestant truth that we “are justified by grace through faith.”
- In Section 1.8, we now state that the healing work of Christ is for “the whole person,” not just for “the mortal body,” as previously stated. While physical healing is still included, this change helps us to understand the broader scope of Christ’s healing work.

3. Why do the changes to the Statement of Faith not use the words “heaven” and “hell”?

You will notice that our original Statement of Faith passed by Council in 1965 and 1966 did not use these two terms either. Like those who have gone before us in The Alliance, we have chosen to speak conceptually and descriptively of both eternal punishment and eternal joy rather than using the words heaven and hell. Some have suggested that the word “anguish” refers only to an emotional state. However, the dictionary defines the word as “excruciating or acute distress, suffering, or pain.” We believe the terminology used in this statement is strong, biblical, and leaves no doubt about what we believe. This is one of the statements (1.10) that must still be ratified by Council 2025.

4. What happened to the judgment language that used to be in 1.5?

For reasons that we don’t fully know, the writers of the original Statement of Faith chose to have judgment language in both 1.5 (our statement on salvation) and 1.10 (our statement on judgment). Uniting the language all in one place (1.10) strengthens the statement and reduces confusion. This does not in any way represent a change in what we believe. Both statements require ratification by Council 2025.

5. Is it still acceptable to hold to and teach a premillennial position in The Alliance?

Absolutely! In fact, that’s one of the reasons we chose to leave the word “premillennial” in statement 1.11 while adding the preamble that paraphrases the words of our founder, Dr. A. B. Simpson, from a preamble to the original constitution of The Alliance penned in 1887. Dr. Simpson allowed for those who didn’t hold to a premillennial position to be workers in The Alliance so long as they would prayerfully consider it. We have always been, and remain to this day, a predominantly premillennial movement/denomination while keeping the door open for others to come in as workers under certain circumstances, such as subscribing to the rest of our Statement of Faith. We still acknowledge premillennialism as a biblical position for understanding prophecy and the end times. We encourage the teaching and preaching of premillennialism by Alliance workers. Statement 1.11 also still requires ratification by Council 2025.

6. By adding the preamble to our Statement of Faith, aren’t we opening the door to all kinds of positions related to Jesus’ Second Coming?

It is a helpful reminder to know that everyone who desires to be an official worker in The Alliance will still have to embrace every other area of our Statement of Faith, including the other elements presented in 1.11. Being an Alliance worker will still require a person to believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ and to see His return as one of our motivations for missional engagement.

7. By adding the preamble, aren’t we abandoning the idea of Christ Our Coming King?

Those who believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ as King on this earth still also believe in His eternal reign as King in the new heavens and new earth. Regardless of our end-times beliefs, we should not think of Christ's Kingdom as being confined only to His millennial reign. His reign will never end!

8. Can someone who holds an amillennial position still believe in the imminent return of Christ?

- “Some amillennialists say that Christ could return at any time, while others argue that certain signs have yet to be fulfilled” (Wayne Grudem in *Systematic Theology*, page 1,110).
- Sam Storms, retired pastor at Bridgeway Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, takes an amillennial position. Here's an article he has written: <https://www.samstorms.org/all-articles/post/are-you-eagerly-awaiting-the-second-coming-of-christ-hebrews-927-28>. In it he writes, “I’m asking you: Is your heart oriented in anxious expectation of seeing your Savior, Jesus Christ, face to face? Do you awaken each day with the hope that this day might be THE day of His return?”
- Dr. Philip Ryken, president of Wheaton College and former pastor at Tenth Presbyterian Church, writes, “The Bible is remarkably consistent in what it tells us about the Second Coming and specifically the timing of the return of Jesus Christ, His glorious, visible return to make all things new. And the Bible consistently tells us that His return will be very sudden and unexpected; just whatever we’re doing, whatever work we’re doing, whatever relationships we happen to have, Jesus will return just right in the middle of that, and it’ll be very unexpected and very sudden. And, the Bible consistently says—and this is true of the apostles who spoke about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and it’s also true about the testimony that Jesus Himself gave—that His return is coming very soon. It could be at any moment. And there’s a sense of constant expectancy that we’re encouraged to have for the coming of Jesus Christ. And I think we can draw a practical lesson from that. One is just to be always busy about the Lord’s work. Whatever He’s given us to do in the world, He wants us to be focused on that until the very moment when Jesus comes again. And I think the other lesson is that we should live with a sense of expectancy and hopefulness. Even today could be the day when Jesus comes again.”

9. Won’t those who embrace an amillennial position lose their motivation to complete the Great Commission?

There are many amillennial people who hold a strong missionary passion and are fully committed to Great Commission completion.

- Barry Cooper, associate teaching pastor at Christ Community Church in Daytona Beach, Florida, affirms his amillennial position on the Ligonier Ministries website and writes: “Until then, the promise that the end is coming really ought to motivate us to go into the world with urgency and make disciples, telling our

friends that there is freedom and joy and safety in Christ alone. As Jesus said Himself, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses . . . to the end of the earth.'"

(<https://www.ligonier.org/podcasts/simply-put/amillennialism>)

- The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in a description of amillennialism on its website, says, "The spread of Christ's Kingdom includes the deepening of His rule within the hearts of His elect, as He subdues us increasingly to Himself. It also includes the spread of that Kingdom through the work of the church—especially missions and evangelism. As the church makes disciples, baptizing and teaching them to obey everything that Christ has commanded, the Kingdom of Jesus is advancing."

Additional Resources—Millennial Positions:

- Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994 (See pages 1109–1139.)
- Ludwigson, Raymond, *A Survey of Bible Prophecy*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973

Polity Related to Men and Women in Leadership

10. Could you please provide a succinct summary of what was decided at Council 2023 regarding our polity related to men and women in ministry as delegates sought to discern the will of God together?

We've summarized the changes on this one-page document (Attached).

11. What was the motivation of Alliance leaders in initiating the changes in our polity related to men and women in leadership?

There had been dissatisfaction of a majority of the Alliance family regarding our ordination and consecration system where men and women did the same work and arrived at two different outcomes. Additionally, there was a level of confusion that had been created by inconsistent statements in our own governing documents and over what previous Councils had decided. Clarity was needed.

Finally, the desire of Alliance leaders is to grant women as much ministry access as possible while always seeking to be guided by Scripture. As one of God's end-times families raised up to complete the Great Commission, we desire to mobilize as many people as possible, both men and women, for as much ministry as possible in order to advance Christ's Kingdom. We are committed to obeying and honoring Scripture. Where something that acts as a barrier to women is based on church tradition rather than Scripture, it seems appropriate to make the needed changes to remove the barrier.

12. Why don't all Alliance people hold to the same position of women in ministry?

From its inception, The Alliance has been made up of people from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Those who come from backgrounds like Baptist or Presbyterian are likely to hold more strongly to a complementarian position that places more restrictions on women in ministry. Those who come from Wesleyan Holiness or Pentecostal backgrounds are likely to hold either a softer complementarian or somewhat of an egalitarian position, granting more freedom to women in ministry. People from both backgrounds derive their views from their understanding of Scripture. However, passages like those in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 are variably interpreted by evangelical Christians who all hold to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. There is a variety of reading on this subject for those who are interested in learning more. See questions #24 and #25 for suggested reading.

13. I've heard Alliance leaders talk about national uniformity versus local autonomy. Why is this relevant to the conversation about the polity related men and women in leadership?

National uniformity involves the things that all Alliance churches are required to do. Local autonomy speaks to areas where local churches can express their own freedom. A simple illustration of this is the Constitution for Accredited Churches (national uniformity) and the local church bylaws (local autonomy).

In relation to the polity decisions at Council 2023, national uniformity will continue to be expressed in the requirement for the lead pastor and elders of each Alliance church to be male members of the church. Local autonomy will be allowed regarding how female ministry staff members are titled, specifically whether they will be called “pastor” and/or “reverend.” (<https://vimeo.com/834177244/e620b81fa7?share=copy>)

14. Isn't it only mainline liberal denominations that ordain women?

No. Listed below are a sampling of denominations that ordain women.

List #1

United Methodist
Presbyterian USA
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
United Church of Christ

List #2

Free Methodist
Wesleyan
Nazarene
Assemblies of God
Open Bible Churches
Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)

The variable in these two groups is not the ordination of women but their divergent view of Scripture. The Alliance would categorize the denominations in List #1 as being

theologically liberal. In other words, somewhere along the line they ceased to cling to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. Meanwhile, the denominations in List #2 continue to hold to theologically conservative positions as well as a high view of Scripture. The denominations in List #1 have a compromised view of Scripture and have therefore compromised the biblical view on human sexuality. However, since the denominations in List #2 still hold to a high view of Scripture, they also hold tightly to the biblical view on human sexuality. Here are two examples:

- Assemblies of God – <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Homosexuality-Marriage-and-Sexual-Identity>.
- Church of the Nazarene – <https://2017.manual.nazarene.org/section/human-sexuality-and-marriage/>.

Rather than altering their view on ordination under pressure from a changing culture, these denominations established their current policies decades ago, some a century ago, and others at the inception of their denomination.

15. What does consecrated and ordained mean and not mean in The Alliance?

Previously, while men and women completed the same process to be consecrated or ordained (at least two years of licensed ministry, books to read, papers to write, and an exam), there were two different outcomes. Men were ordained, receiving the designation reverend, and women were consecrated, receiving the designation CWM (consecrated woman in ministry). The first round of the National Conversation in 2019–2020 revealed a high level of dissatisfaction with the same process yielding two different outcomes. Through the vote of Council 2023, both qualified men and women will now be consecrated and ordained, receiving the designation reverend. It is important to understand that consecration and ordination does not confer eldership. To help explain what it does and does not mean, here's a link to a new Alliance Statement on Consecration and Ordination. (Attached)

16. What will my local Alliance church be required to do differently as a result of these changes?

Your church won't need to do anything differently. These changes come with a strong value on local church autonomy or freedom, which isn't at all unusual for The Alliance. It is left up to each local church, according to its biblical understanding, whether or not they use the title pastor for women. If your church believes that pastor and elder are synonymous from an Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1–2 perspective, you are not required to call your female official workers "pastor." If your church sees the title pastor more as a gifting and function through an Ephesians 4:11 lens and not automatically connected to eldership, you may feel free to allow your female official workers to use that title.

While each consecrated and ordained official worker will receive the designation reverend, it will be left up to the local church whether they choose to use this

designation in the way they refer to their male and female consecrated and ordained ministry staff members.

While churches are not required to do anything differently, we do hope that church leaders will take the opportunity to review the issue and prayerfully consider the role of women in their local church context.

17. With the decision made by Council for the title “pastor” and the designation “ordained” to be decoupled from automatic eldership, what can a church do if it understands pastor and elder to be synonymous in terms of practicing this belief?

A church can address this through its bylaws, stating that all male members of their pastoral staff are members ex-officio of the elder team.

18. Now that these changes have been approved, are Alliance churches allowed to have female elders and lead pastors?

No. We have not changed our position on male eldership and continue to see the lead pastor functioning as an elder. The Uniform Constitution for Accredited Churches continues to state that elders are male members of the local church. Churches are expected to continue carrying out their polity in a manner that is consistent with the denomination’s governing documents on this issue.

19. Don’t these changes eliminate male headship and gender distinctions?

As already noted, The Alliance is maintaining its position on male elders and lead pastors. While both genders are equally created in God’s image, we continue to distinguish between males and females in terms of certain leadership roles.

20. Aren’t these changes creating a much different Alliance than we have been historically?

To draw these conclusions would require seeing only the last couple of decades of Alliance history. The Alliance has a long, rich history of giving women considerable freedom in carrying out their ministries. While it doesn’t occur in every church and doesn’t have to, there has always been freedom in The Alliance for women to preach and teach in public worship settings. Nearly 400 women served as church planters and pastors in Alliance churches from the early years up into recent decades. While it is a bit challenging to nail down the precise circumstances under which this occurred, women have even served as elders in Alliance churches in past decades. Women have served, and continue to serve, on the Board of Directors; District Executive Committees; Licensing, Ordination, and Consecration Committees in some districts; and Governing Boards in many local churches.

It wasn’t until 1999 that Council made decisions that brought more emphasis to elder leadership and clearly stated that elders are to be male members of the local church.

This opened the way for an elder-only governance authority to be one of three optional ways that a church can choose to govern itself. This also opened the door for our governing documents to begin to tie together the title pastor to the office of elder, although we cannot find any official ruling of Council on this issue.

Considering these observations about the entire history of The Alliance, some would say that the decisions of Council 2023 actually take us back to some, but not all, elements of our historical roots.

21. What can we expect to come to Council 2025 regarding these polity issues?

Council 2023 empowered the Board of Directors, in consultation with the District Leadership Forum (district superintendents and association presidents), to make the changes in the *Manual* that are consistent with the decisions made at Council. These changes will be reported back to Council 2025.

22. I was previously a consecrated woman in ministry. Will I receive a new certificate, and when will my new license arrive?

We are working on new Consecration and Ordination Certificates. You will receive yours in the next couple of months. You will receive a new Consecrated and Ordained Official Worker License when licenses are reissued at the beginning of 2024.

23. Is there a way to access some of President Stumbo's thoughts on these changes?

- We encourage you to listen to John Stumbo's vlog for July 12, 2023. Here's the link: <https://cmalliance.org/video/moving-forward-john-stumbo-video-blog-no-120/>
- John will be interviewed for a special edition of the EquippingU Podcast to be released on July 30, 2023. Watch or listen to the postcast here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgrOEJpDWq5xhB0zZv9INym6o_kHFLjwZ Learn more about EquippingU here: <https://cmalliance.org/our-work/church-ministries/church-advance/equippingu/>.

24. Can you recommend resources that will help me understand Alliance history on the issue of women in ministry?

Here's a video that will help you understand some of the historical dynamics of The Alliance as a centrist movement on this and other issues:
<https://vimeo.com/834177244/e620b81fa7?share=copy>

Retired Alliance pastor Paul King has written two books about the history of women in ministry in The Alliance. Both are available on Amazon.

- King, Paul L. *Anointed Women: The Rich Heritage of Women in Ministry in The Christian and Missionary Alliance*. Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2009

- King, Paul L. *Anointed Women 2: Current Issues of Women in Ministry in The Christian and Missionary Alliance—And How to Be Unified in Loving Liberty*, 2023

25. Can you recommend a resource or two that would help me understand the biblical interpretation behind various view on this subject?

The Alliance published a booklet written by our own official workers called *Two Views on the Title Pastor*. You can find that here: (Link).

For a book that is broader in scope and more detailed, we recommend the following one that is available on Amazon:

- Gundry, Stanley N. and James R. Beck, eds. *Two Views on Women in Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005

If you prefer to listen to a podcast, here's a link to one with Alliance pastors Mark Ashton (Christ Community Church in Omaha, Nebraska) and Doug Stevens (Citylight Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa) discussing two views on women in ministry:

<https://www.cccomaha.org/uncomfortable?sapurl=LythNWE4L21lc3NhZ2VzL21pLys3d3p3azRzP2VtYmVkPXRydWUmcmVjZW50Um91dGU9YXBwLndIYi1hcHAubGlicmFyeS5tZWpYS1zZXJpZXMmcmVjZW50Um91dGVtbHVnPSUyQnRyN3Rza3c=>