

## Our Journey to Here:

- **1820** – The Plymouth Brethren (as a new Christian movement) was born in England out of a desire to rescue the ministry of the church from the ordained few and return it to the church as the priesthood of all believers. From the early days, this movement, while affirming all men and women as the people of God, taught and practiced very distinct roles for men and women in accordance to their reading of the biblical teaching.
- **1965** – Lambrick Park Church was formed as a church as the result of a missional initiative from Oaklands Chapel (a Brethren church in Victoria). In keeping with Brethren tradition, Lambrick's constitution, specifies that elders are men. At the time, complementarian convictions and practice was common in many churches, and largely echoed in culture. In the early years, women participated exclusively in support roles, while leadership was explicitly for men.
- **Mid-80's and 90's** – Women were increasingly invited into more visible congregational participation and influence – reading scripture, leading prayer, and baptizing new believers.
- **1999** - In the wake of growing conversations within many evangelical denominations and movements regarding the role of women in church leadership, Lambrick established a task-force to study the subject (assessing the biblical texts) and facilitated a series of public meetings to discern the way forward. Tom Cowan, the lead pastor at the time, proposed that Lambrick's female Children's Ministry Director be given the title "Pastor". The decision was made to allow women in all offices *except for the board*, including pastoral staff (and Lisa Stekelenburg, became Pastor of Children's Ministries). The task force strongly recommended that the subject be revisited in no more than 3 years.
- **2000 onward** – In the years since, women have come to participate in the full life of Lambrick's ministry and leadership teams, except for on the Board of Elders. Through the years, our church has been richly benefited by many godly and gifted women leaders, serving on ministry and leadership teams, as well as occasionally teaching and preaching.
- **2011-2013** – The Elders and key pastoral leaders spent 18 months intensely studying the matter together, but due to some significant staff changes and gaps, the decision was made to postpone a congregational engagement.
- **2015** – In response to growing requests from many congregants at both Lambrick and the Place (the young adult congregation that existed under the umbrella of Lambrick at the time), as well as the growing consensus of the Elders, the congregation was invited into a season of learning, prayer and discernment that would conclude with a vote. Three public town hall meetings were provided, with teaching, questions, discussion. Although the teaching gave priority to an egalitarian perspective, the Elders did not give any direction to the congregation, but simply invited all to learn and pray, and vote according to their conviction. The explicit question posed was, "*Do you agree to amend the constitution of the church so as to permit women to serve as members of the Board of Elders?*" Because this is a constitutional matter, any change required a 75% vote.
  - While the majority of the members voted for a change, the vote was just shy of the 75% marker and so no change was made.
  - This was a painful conclusion for many (on both sides of the conversation).

**Now** – Five years have passed since that congregational process and vote, the Elders are united in the conviction this is a matter that needs to be addressed in the life of our church, and that now is the time.