

# PCA Goes Back to Where It Started: Women's Ordination

---

 [theaquilareport.com/pca-goes-back-to-where-it-started-womens-ordination/](http://theaquilareport.com/pca-goes-back-to-where-it-started-womens-ordination/)

June 29, 2016



*Contention over the PCA's stance against female ordination isn't new. In 2009, the general assembly narrowly voted (446–427) against creating a committee to study women's roles. Even before that, the denomination argued over whether commissioning "deaconesses" to help male deacons is tantamount to ordaining them. (Tim Keller argued for commissioning, and not ordaining, deaconesses.)*

One of the reasons that the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) left the Presbyterian Church in the United States 40 years ago was because the new denomination opposed women in church leadership.

Last week, the PCA General Assembly voted to form a committee to take up the issue again. The seven-person committee will look at the biblical basis and theology of ordination and of the office of deacon, then report back to the General Assembly any changes to consider.

In the meantime, PCA churches are encouraged to promote the participation of women "in appropriate ministries." The denomination currently does not appoint female members as elders or deacons.

Joseph Pipa, president of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, lodged a protest against the committee, according to the PCA's online magazine byFaith.

New Geneva Theological Seminary president Dominic Aquila and PCA pastor Andrew Barnes also opposed it.

"What is being overlooked...in this recommendation is that the 'biblical basis, theology, history, nature, and authority of ordination,' 'the biblical nature and function of the office of deacon,' and 'the ordination or commissioning of deacons/deaconesses' have already been studied, explored and settled," they wrote. "Not only has this been expressed in past General Assemblies, but the PCA's Constitution is already clear on what the PCA believes Scripture teaches on these issues."

Contention over the PCA's stance against female ordination isn't new. In 2009, the general assembly narrowly voted (446–427) against creating a committee to study women's roles. Even before that, the denomination argued over whether commissioning “deaconesses” to help male deacons is tantamount to ordaining them. (Tim Keller argued for commissioning, and not ordaining, deaconesses.)

In 2011, the general assembly clarified that “these assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church and, as such, are not subjects for ordination.” Since then, arguments on the issue have quieted down.

Part of the renewed attention this year may stem from the PCA's steady growth (albeit lower than at first). Over the last five years, the denomination has added 68 churches, 374 ministers, and almost 19,000 members. The PCA now has 370,000 members.

Some of those churches and members come from the country's biggest Presbyterian group, the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA. As today's version of the original Presbyterian denomination the PCA split from, the PCUSA continues to ordain women and has extended church offices to non-celibate gay and lesbian clergy.