

'Best Days Are Ahead': Rick Warren's Saddleback Church Ordains Three Women to Pastorate

California-based megachurch Saddleback broke from the Southern Baptist Convention's deep-seated views on women in leadership and recently ordained three women pastors.

The church, led by founding pastor Rick Warren, made the announcement via Facebook, saying the best days are ahead of the congregation.

Yesterday was a historic night for Saddleback Church in many ways! We ordained our first three women pastors, Liz...

Posted by Saddleback Church on Friday, May 7, 2021

The three newly ordained pastors include Liz Puffer, Cynthia Petty and Katie Edwards, longtime members of the church who had been involved in other ministerial aspects during their time with Saddleback.

The church website lists its 18 "campus pastors," all of whom are male. However, as a writer points out, the full staff directory is not listed online. According to their LinkedIn profiles, Petty has served as a children's minister for 22 years, while Puffer uses "minister" in her bio. Edwards is listed on staff for the junior high ministry at Saddleback's Lake Forest campus for the last 24 years.

Other denominational affiliates approve of and endorse women in leadership, but the SBC holds to complementarian beliefs, which affirm that male leadership in ministry as well as in leading a family is God-ordained. Egalitarian beliefs,

however, hold that roles should be ability-based and not gender-based, with men and women equally able to hold church leadership positions.

Mixed responses sounded on the May 7 Facebook announcement, with many agreeing with and referring to the SBC's guidelines, which prohibit women from operating in pastoral capacities on the basis of the biblical instruction found in 1 Timothy 2:9-15: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man, but to be silent."

Longtime Southern Baptist and bestselling author Beth Moore, who left the SBC earlier this year in part over the issue of women in ministry, did not directly address Saddleback's decision, but her recent reply to her own tweet about "Jesus to our last breath, Sisters" clearly alluded to it, noting that the men and women involved in gospel ministry and greeted by the apostle Paul in Romans 16 "weren't just packing the brothers' lunchkits.' They were fellow servants of Christ Jesus":

Jesus to our last breath, Sisters. Jesus to our last breath.

– Beth Moore (@BethMooreLPM) May 10, 2021