

Visualize Our Potential!

Conversation Five



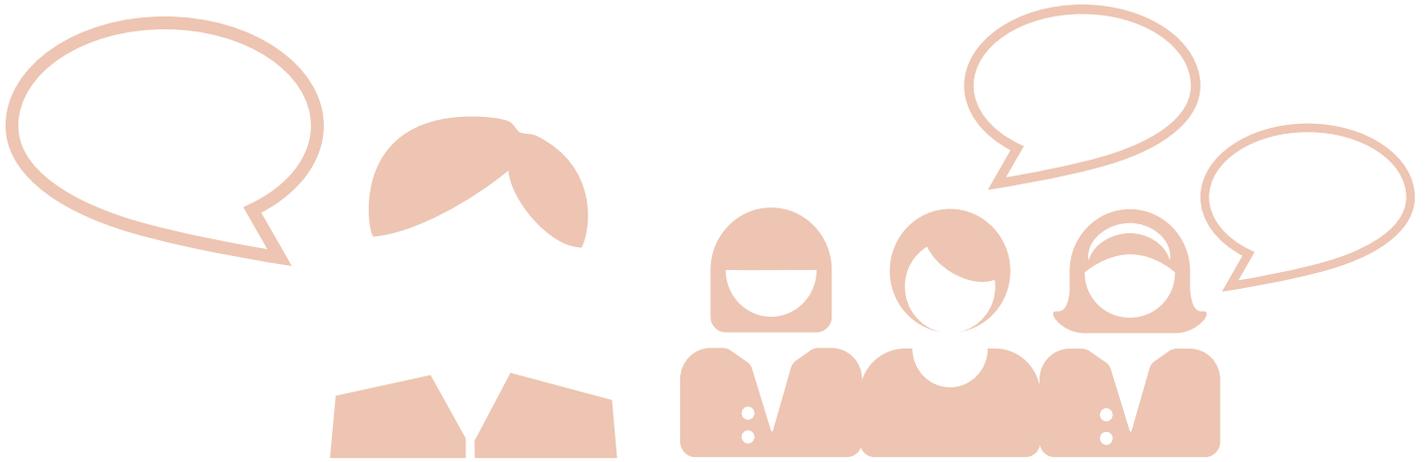
ORDAIN WOMEN



VISUALIZE OUR POTENTIAL!

Conversation Five

Three-year-old Evie sat at the table with her full concentration on the sliced Wonderbread, water and plate she'd gathered in front of her after church. Her family had attended two meetings that day: their home LDS ward and a friend's baby christening conducted by a female pastor. No one noticed as she carefully broke the bread, placed individual pieces on the plate and poured water into little cups. She caught her mom by surprise as she felt a tug on her dress, turned around, and looked down to see her little girl reverently offering her a plate of bread. "Here momma, I made sac-a-ment for you!" she beamed. She swooped Evie up into her arms and hugged her tight. She realized today was the first service Evie had seen with a woman officiating, and her daughter was paying attention.



OW CONVERSATION FIVE READINGS

Participants should prepare beforehand by reading the following talks, articles and scriptures:

Excerpts from “The Infinite Power of Hope,” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Oct. 2008.

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/10/the-infinite-power-of-hope?lang=eng&query=Hope>

Excerpts from “We are the Architects of Our Own Happiness,” Elder Gerald J. Causse, 2012 Devotional address.

<https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2012/01/we-are-the-architects-of-our-own-happiness?lang=eng>

“Of Course: Women Pastors and Bishops”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/norma-cook-everist/of-course-women-pastors-and-bishops_b_4189955.html

“What is it Like to Be a Woman Bishop?”

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/23928432>

“United Methodist Church marks 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women”

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1021>

SCRIPTURES

Psalms 30:5, 2 Timothy 1:7, Matthew 5:6, Psalms 27:1, Isaiah 40:31, Alma 37:6, 1 Corinthians 13:12, Article of Faith 13, Alma 32:28, Luke 1:37

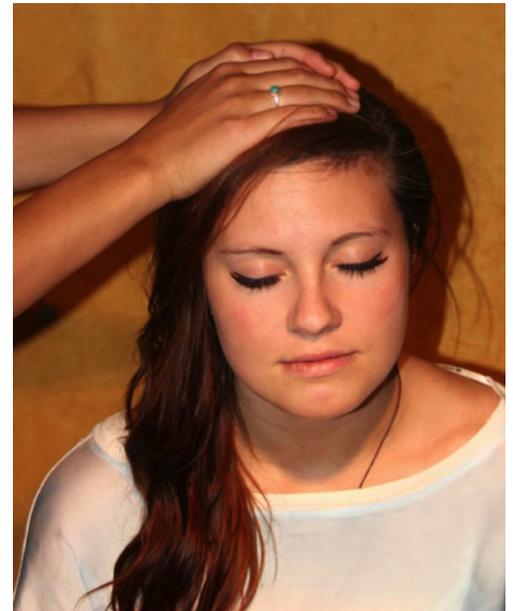
CONVERSATION FOUR REVIEW

In Conversation 2, Know the History, we showed how our Church’s history had many examples of women exercising the priesthood in ways no longer available to them, such as laying on of hands and anointing the sick. Today, the thought of women doing those practices understandably seems strange, though at an earlier time it wasn’t. In Conversation 4, Revel in Revelation, we talked about how revelation in the Church works. It was noted in President Spencer W. Kimball’s biography that he wanted urgently “to find out firsthand what the Lord thought” about the priesthood and temple ban for Black members. “It was not enough just to wait until the Lord saw fit to take the initiative: the scriptures admonished him to ask and to knock if he wanted to know for himself.”¹ We know that revelation can only come from the Lord through the prophet, and so Ordain Women asks that the brethren pray to God about its current all-male priesthood policy. At the same time, we recognize that personal revelation also plays a role in the process, since revelations rarely come without first being invoked. It can be hard for us to even imagine what it would be like for women to be ordained, let alone ask for it. The purpose of Conversation 5 is to help supporters visualize that day if and when women are ordained, with hope that *one day* they can participate in the blessings that come from officiating in priesthood offices and duties currently available only to men..

CONVERSATION FOUR

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION ACTIVITY

The following are a series of staged illustrations of Mormon women officiating in the priesthood. In compliance with current church policy, no ordinances were actually performed when these illustrations were made. The purpose of these photo illustrations is to facilitate conversation about what it could be like in some future day when women are ordained.



DIRECTIONS:

Group members can discuss each photo, pausing between photos to talk about their reactions. After the group leader asks each of the following questions, group members can take turns going around the circle until everyone has had a chance to comment. Keep in mind that this should be a safe space; both positive and negative reactions are welcome.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What did it feel like to view this scene? What do you think made you feel that way?

How would the optics of the Church be different for you if women were ordained?

Has anyone ever wanted to participate in a scene like this before? Please tell us about it, if you feel comfortable.

Are there other scenes in which you can imagine women being involved? What would those look like?

What would it be like for you if the prophet announced that women would be able to participate in blessings, ordinances, and callings like these? How would such an announcement affect your sisters, daughters, or friends?

How would you feel about serving under the direction of female bishops, stake presidents and general authorities? How would you feel about authorized women and girls administering priesthood ordinances for you outside of the temple, such as blessing the sacrament bread and water, setting you apart for callings, giving you blessings or baptizing your children?

CONVERSATION GUIDE

DIVINE NATURE AND INDIVIDUAL WORTH: OUR POTENTIAL

“Imagine what it would mean to you if you could see yourself as God sees you. What if you looked at yourself with the same benevolence, love, and confidence that God does? Imagine the impact it would have on your life to understand your eternal potential as God understands it.”

- Elder Gerald J. Causse

“How many of your wishes will come true? Life is full of uncertainty. Surprises will pop up all along life’s path. Who knows what will happen tomorrow, where you will be in a few years, and what you will be doing? Life is like a suspense novel whose plot is very difficult to guess. ... There will be new opportunities that will present themselves in your lives, such as the recent declaration from President Monson concerning the age of missionary service. ... My brothers and sisters, imagine what it would mean to you if you could see yourself as God sees you. What if you looked at yourself with the same benevolence, love, and confidence that God does? Imagine the impact it would have on your life to understand your eternal potential as God understands it. If you could view yourself through His eyes, what influence would that have on your life?”²

- Elder Gerald J. Causse

“We talk about the gospel in its fullness; yet we realize that a large part is still available to us as we prepare, as we perfect our lives, and as we become more like our God. Are we ready for it?”

- Spencer W. Kimball

“Can you realize even slightly how relatively little we know? As Paul said, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’ (1 Cor. 2:9.) We talk about the gospel in its fullness; yet we realize that a large part is still available to us as we prepare, as we perfect our lives, and as we become more like our God. Are we ready for it? In the Doctrine and Covenants we read of Abraham, who has already attained godhood. He has received many powers, undoubtedly, that we would like to have and will eventually get if we continue faithful and perfect our lives.”³ - Spencer W. Kimball

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What do these quotes suggest to us about our potential?

How do our divine natures relate to the doctrine of continuing revelation and the priesthood?

HOPE IN FUTURE BLESSINGS

From Elder Uchtdorf, we learn about the principle of hope: “Hope is not knowledge, but rather the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God’s laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future. It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance. In the language of the gospel, this hope is sure, unwavering, and active. The prophets of old speak of a ‘firm hope’ and a ‘lively hope.’ It is a hope glorifying God through good works. With hope comes joy and happiness. With hope, we can ‘have patience, and bear ... [our] afflictions.’”⁴

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In what ways can hope help us in our daily lives?

What do you think of President Uchtdorf’s assertion that hope is active? What, if any, are its implications for faithful agitation?

How do President Uchtdorf’s words relate to visualizing what our future could be like if the prophet declares that women are to be ordained?

RIVER OF LIFE ART: GROUP ACTIVITY

MATERIALS NEEDED (PROVIDED BY FACILITATOR):

- 1 sheet of blank white paper for each member
- Enough colored pencils and markers for all to use (2-4 sets)
- [Optional] Friend, New Era and Ensign magazines and enough glue and scissors.

DESCRIPTION:

The River of Life is a visual narrative method that helps people tell the stories of their past, present and future. Its purpose in this group is for everyone to understand and reflect on their past and imagine a future when women are ordained. The activity can also help to build a shared view compiled of all participants' perspectives. The River of Life focuses on drawing rather than text. The facilitator keeps time during the drawing and explanations, announcing when to start drawing, sharing, drawing again, sharing again and when to stop.

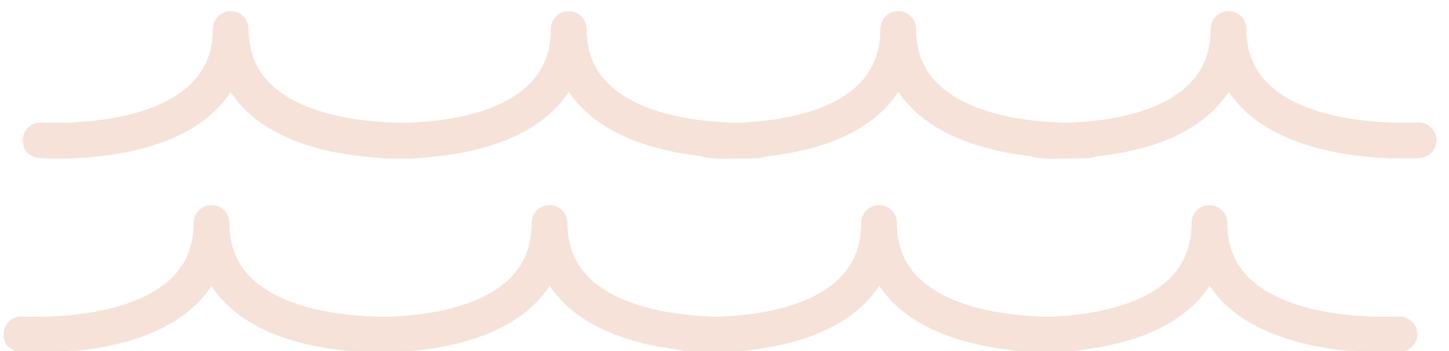
INSTRUCTIONS:

1. The group leader may first draw an example river on her sheet of paper to help people visualize what it might look like.
2. Pass out 1 sheet of paper each and make markers available to group members.
3. Ask participants to draw a river taking up half of the page. Ask them to use the bigger part of the river to represent where they come from (growing up in their families, what the Church was like for them, defining moments they experienced as a woman in the Church, instances where they noticed inequality and what led them to find out more about Ordain Women.) Spend 5 minutes drawing specific moments individually. For example, at the start of the river, someone might draw herself in her baptismal outfit at age 8, the daughter of a single mother, wishing her mother could have baptized her instead of her home teacher. Later on down the river timeline, she might draw herself holding her baby daughter for the first time, with a notch on the river timeline and the date, because becoming the parent of a daughter made her think even more deeply about what messages young women receive in the Church. Share the drawings with the group. Spend 10 minutes sharing.
4. Participants then return to their drawings and use the second half of the page to represent the possibilities they imagine for themselves and their family (children, grandchildren) when women are ordained. Spend 5 minutes drawing individually again.
5. Participants share their hopes for the future, as represented by their most recent drawings, and also how this activity made them feel. Spend 10 minutes sharing.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What events do you remember in your life that contributed to your interest in Ordain Women?

1. *What was it like for you growing up as a woman in the Church?*
2. *What do you imagine your life and the lives of your family would look like if women were ordained?*
3. *How do you feel after participating in this group activity?*
4. *How have you used the priesthood in your callings, past and present?*



THOUGHT EXERCISES:

SACRAMENT MEETINGS AND OFFICIAL DECLARATION 3

Picture a typical future Sacrament meeting when women are ordained. Sitting in the pews, you look up on the stand, and you see both men and women sitting together on the front row by the pulpit. The bishop is a woman, surrounded by her two counselors, one male and one female, all in their Sunday best. The bishop stands up to give the opening announcements, and at the pulpit she welcomes the visiting stake high counselor and thanks her for being there today.

As you look to your left, you notice your ward's youth, both the Young Men and the Young Women, sitting in the first two rows by the sacrament table, ready and willing to pass the sacrament. After the sacrament hymn, a Young Woman you teach blesses the bread and reverently hands trays to her peers below along with the young man standing next to her. One young woman, a deacon, walks to your row and, with utmost reverence, holds the bread tray out to you.

When the sacrament is finished, the bishop thanks the Young Men and Women for passing the sacrament and the sons and daughters of ward members return to sit with their families. She then says it is her privilege to announce that the newest member of their ward will receive a name and a blessing today and asks those participating to please come up to the front. A proud father and mother bring their son up to the stand together, along with the baby's aunts, uncles, grandmother and grandfather. The bishop and her counselors also participate in the blessing circle. Both mom and dad cradle their baby in their arms, and by the power of the priesthood which they hold, they give their baby a name and a blessing together.

As the meeting concludes, the bishop stands up to finish conducting. She thanks all those who have participated that day, and she announces the closing hymn and who will give the closing prayer.

Picture a bright Spring General Conference morning, on April 4th, 20**. Tulips on Temple Square are in full bloom as church members and families enjoy the Spirit there as they walk to the Conference Center to hear the prophet speak. After the opening prayer, President Thomas S. Monson walks to the pulpit beaming with his signature smile, and the crowd hushes. Everyone in attendance feels the Spirit as he begins to speak:

"My Dear Brothers and Sisters, how pleased I am to see your smiling faces as we gather together in this great Conference Center today. On this lovely spring morning, like the one in which a young Joseph knelt in the Sacred Grove with a question and there appeared to him the Father and the Son, I have a joyous announcement to make. For many years, I have prayed with humble heart to seek the Lord's will on a very matter of importance to all members of this wonderful Church, but especially to His Daughters. Prayers were said, years passed, and yet I wearied the Lord with my beseeching on behalf of

you, my dear Sisters. I know many of you have likewise been searching, pondering and praying for many years for an answer concerning the righteous desires of your hearts. But today, it is my sincerest pleasure to announce to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints worldwide that the Lord has, indeed, spoken, and it is His desire to reveal that women henceforth are to be ordained to the holy priesthood. It is my testimony as a servant of the Lord that the heavens are truly open, and that Heavenly Father desires to bless all of His children with priesthood ordination. I pray that all who are within the reach of my voice, and also those reading these words, will receive witness that this is Christ's true Church restored on the earth today, and that He continues to lead and reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Today is an historic day, and I can testify that this revelation will bless the lives of men, women, and families from all the ends of the earth, for generations to come, henceforth and forever.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How did these thought experiments make you feel?

Do you think greater gender equality could strengthen members of your ward and the Church as a whole? If so, how?

CONCLUSION THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

The Church of England (England's National Church) is expected to ordain the first female bishop in 2014. The General Synod voted in 2013 to approve proposals for the measure, and in February 2014, leadership voted again to fast-track the decision by cutting the waiting period in half:

"Christina Rees, a member of the archbishops' council and veteran campaigner for female bishops, said she could scarcely believe how far the synod had come in 12 months. 'If anyone had told me that one year on from last November we would be where we are, I would have said: 'That's impossible,'" she said. "But by the grace of God it has been possible and here we are."⁵

"If anyone had told me that one year on from last November we would be where we are, I would have said: 'That's impossible...But by the grace of God it has been possible and here we are.'" - Christina Rees

READINGS

OF COURSE: WOMEN PASTORS AND BISHOPS

By *Norma Cook Everist, 11/2013*

November 1 the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton assumed the office of presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). When people gathered a few weeks ago for the installation of the first woman to lead this 4 million-member church body, it was an historic day, but it felt more like a joyful, "Of course."

The bells of the great chapel at the University of Chicago pealed. The time was now. Choirs, grand piano and drums. Everyone sang.

Former Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson said, "We have come together from many places to mark a new season of ministry in the life of this church... We pray that this servant may fulfill God's purpose in her life and in her ministry among the whole people of God."

Of course!

I heard those churchwide words of welcome and remembered my pastor saying one day in confirmation class years ago when I was a youth, "Of course women cannot be pastors," adding in a hushed tone, "They have babies." But that same pastor helped me go to college.

Less than a decade after that first "of course," while attending Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, one of two women among 800 men, I heard from my preaching professor, "Of course you cannot preach. You are a woman. Your assignment will be an 'inspirational address'." But I did receive an "A" in the course and graduated with a Master of Arts in Religion in 1964. I served in deaconess ministry in St. Louis, and then for over a dozen years with our family in inner city ministry in Detroit (I preached one day at Concordia College, Ann Arbor ~ while pregnant) and New Haven, Conn. I later received a Masters of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, (and still later a Ph.D.) and an invitation to teach at Yale.

The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America began ordaining women in 1970 and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches would follow a few years later, but I still was told, "Can't you wait a few years?" Women kept responding to God's call, even when churches through the ages said, "Can't you wait a few more years, decades, centuries?"

There were all kinds of fears and barriers in the 1970s in reaction to women being ordained as pastors in Lutheran and other church bodies: "Jesus was a man; women cannot represent Jesus." "If we ordain women, all the men will leave the church." "What will happen to your children?" (They turned out fine, thank you.) "These women are Communists."

Of course there were fears, but they were unfounded. Women did not want to take over the church or push out men. Women's goal was inclusion and partnership, not hierarchical power.

This fall at the installation, with the welcoming words of the ELCA, with brass horns, a procession with candles and cross made its way up the center aisle to welcome Bishop Elizabeth Eaton at the door of the chapel. Red banner ribbons furled overhead. There were tears in my eyes.

The First Lesson, Isaiah 42:5-9, was read by Rev. Chienyu Jade Li in Chinese: "I have given you as a covenant to the people... To bring out from the prison those who sit in darkness ..."

The soloist led in chanting Psalm 121, "My help comes from the Lord."

Of course, of course.

"The lord will watch over you... from this time forth forever more."

The Second Lesson, 2 Corinthians 4:1-12 was read by Dina Tannous Vega in Arabic. "Since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart ..."

In the Gospel procession and acclamation, "Halle, Halle, Hallelujah," global women's voices sang, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation."

Of course, of course.

Conrad Selnick, an Episcopal priest and husband of Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, read the Gospel, Mark 4:1-9.

At my ordination in 1977 in the chapel of Yale Divinity School, my husband, Burton Everist, a pastor, preached.

Just a few years earlier, July 29, 1974, Burton and I had attended the service where 11 women were "irregularly" ordained priests in The Episcopal Church. The ordinations were considered "invalid." The service was interrupted by those who stood in opposition.

One of those 11 women participated in solidarity at my ordination at Yale three years later.

Two years after that Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, called me to teach, the first woman seminary professor in the American Lutheran Church. In 1979, although one by one women were becoming pastors, other people were still using the Bible to claim that women could not be teaching theologians "over" men and could not assume any headship role because "Eve had tempted Adam into sin" and, "It is clear in the Bible that women can never rule or lead." And, "We cannot use 'inclusive language' because God is male." Of course!

But one young woman at the 1979 fall Wartburg alumni convocation came up to me after I spoke and said, "I've been waiting years for you to come." Her name was Andrea DeGroot

Nesdahl. Now, 35 years later, I continue to teach at Wartburg Seminary. Challenges remain for us all to be the church God is calling us to be.

In 1988 three Lutheran church bodies came together to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Representational principles adopted at the time assured equal representation of women and men on boards and commissions and at church assemblies. Beyond the more threatening token stage, overnight our ELCA gatherings looked, well, normal, just as God created us to be together.

Leadership is about partnership, and about the liberation of men as well as women. At the time, there were worries that women might gain too much power. Whenever two of three of us sat together, almost always a man would come up and say, "We'll have to break this up." But what was the fear? Inclusivity was not about breaking things, even "stained-glass ceilings," but about new, healthy ways of being partners together.

Full partnership would come slowly, but it would come.

Spring of 1992, Maria Jesper in Hamburg, Germany, became the first woman Lutheran bishop in the world.

April Ulring Larson was installed October, 1992, as bishop of the La Crosse (Wisconsin) Area Synod of the ELCA, first in the United States. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl became the second as bishop of the South Dakota Synod.

Susan Johnson was elected the national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in 2007.

Fall, 2013: "Elizabeth Amy Eaton has been elected and called by the church, for installation into the office of presiding bishop."

No objections voiced. No interruptions to the service. Nothing called irregular or invalid. No impediments. Historically speaking, this was much more than, "Of course."

She was asked, "Will you assume the office of presiding bishop?" She responded: "I will, and I ask God to help me."

More questions of her and then of us: "People of God, will you receive Elizabeth as a servant of God and a shepherd in the church of Jesus Christ?"

"We will."

And after hearing, "The office of presiding bishop is now committed to you," all were invited to extend their hands in blessing. People across the miles, via the internet, extended their hands too, seeing what few could have imagined not many years. Women had been there all along, from the time of Christ's empty tomb, even if at first, their words were not believed.

As the assembly went forth, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton was smiling, looking calm and confident. People waved. Applause. Full organ. "Now Thank We All Our God." Of course!

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A WOMAN BISHOP?

With the Church in Wales having voted to allow women to be bishops, the Right Reverend Mary Glasspool talks about her role as assistant bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles since 2010.

Her diocese is part of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the country's Anglican Church.

She started by describing her day-to-day job and went on to explain what she believes women can bring to leadership positions in the Church.

It's been wonderful. I've been a bishop for a little over three years in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. I carry out the functions of a bishop suffragan, which is a position assisting the bishop diocesan.

...Each Sunday I'm at a different parish or mission. I preach; I celebrate the Eucharist; I support the mission and ministry of that particular parish or mission; and very often I meet with a youth group. That happens on just about every Sunday with the exception of holiday time.

During the course of the week I work with 44 different parochial schools. I am the bishop in Los Angeles responsible for ecumenical and interfaith activities, so I have quite a few meetings with our partners in different churches and among our Jewish sisters and brothers, our Muslim sisters and brothers, the Sikhs, the Baha'is, etc.

...So it's a very interesting job and there's a lot of variety in what I do. It's a wonderful opportunity and privilege to be able to serve the people of God in this particular place.

Yes. I have to respond theologically to this question, and I base [my answer] on the creation narrative in the book of Genesis, which is that it is not an individual man or an individual woman or even a dyad that is created in the image of God - it is community that is created in the image of God and you need male and female both to comprise community.

So, if you have exclusively male or exclusively female you're not quite getting a whole picture of what the image of God looks like. For that reason alone, I would say it's very important to have a balance of men and women in all roles, at every level, particularly in the Church, which is meant to present to the world an image of God.

I think in the world there is a gender gap. Women, it seems to me, throughout the world, no matter what country we're in, get treated as second class citizens. And yet when women and men work together they are absolutely better, they can accomplish more than women or men working alone.

I'm interested in bridging gaps and I think that women bring a different style of leadership to the world, which is more collegial, more nurturing, more collaborative than the type of leadership we've seen historically in the past from largely men, which seems to be more competitive.

I have many male colleagues who are genuinely in their own way nurturing, but I do think that women bring a different leadership style. I think that's essential for the life of the Church.

I just would encourage interaction with women bishops. In the early 1980s I was one of four female priests in Philadelphia, in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. We had then Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa visiting us and speaking to us to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Diocese.

The four women had the opportunity to speak with Archbishop Tutu, and we asked why South Africa, which is so liberal, didn't ordain women priests, even if the archbishop himself was favourable. He said: "It's very simple. They can't quite imagine it and they can't do what they can't imagine".

I always use this example to say, try using your imagination a little bit. Try to imagine what it would be like. If you can't challenge your imagination in that way, come and have the experience.

Remember that the Church is here to serve the world and we need to do that in the best, most effective way possible. One of my male colleagues likes to remember that it's not our mission, the Church's mission, but it's God's mission and we are participants in God's mission to the world.

And certainly we can articulate that in a variety of different ways: feeding the hungry, fighting poverty, trying to bring reconciliation and peace and justice to the world - there's a variety of ways to articulate God's mission.

We need to get beyond this gender difference which is, in my view, prejudicial if not oppressive against women.

WOMEN CLERGY: CHURCH MARKS 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FULL CLERGY RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

A UMNS Feature By Vicki Brown⁶

On May 4, 1956, in Minneapolis, the General Conference of the Methodist Church approved full clergy rights for women. Half a century later, the fruits of that action are the nearly 12,000 United Methodist clergywomen who serve the church at every level, from bishops to local pastors.

A yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary includes worship services, books celebrating the lives of pioneering clergywomen and writings of other clergywomen, special observances at annual conferences, and a banquet and concert on Aug. 15 during the International United Methodist Clergywomen's Consultation in Chicago, Aug. 13-17.

"The decision forever changed the face of ordained clergy. Because of the General Conference action, bishops were required to appoint every pastor in good standing within the conference. The effect was that any woman in full connection and in good standing would receive an appointment," said the Rev. Mary Ann Moman, associate general secretary of the Division of Ordained Ministry of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

"That was the first step in a long journey of acceptance for many clergywomen. The church's celebration of this anniversary is a reminder to all of us of both the joys and heartaches

clergywomen experience in the journey toward full acceptance in the church," Moman said.

Bishop Susan Morrison of the Albany (N.Y.) Area, episcopal liaison to the task force planning the celebrations, says that while the conference action opened an official door that was embarrassing to have closed, change was slow. And the anniversary is a reminder of that, as well as a celebration of the leadership and gifts of women clergy.

"In one way it reminds us that throughout history the church has not always been open to diversity and inclusiveness," Morrison said.

"I didn't know I was a foremother. I never dreamed I'd see women like this in the ministry. I only thought I was doing what God wanted me to do with my life," -Marion Kline, 94.

The Revs. Grace Eloise Huck and Marion Kline, two of the first 27 women accepted on probationary status in 1956, plan to be at the August clergywomen's gathering. Both women were received into full connection in 1958. Both recalled simply following God's call.

Kline, Huck, the Rev. Grace Weaver, and the Rev. Jane Ann Stoneburner Moore - the only surviving women of those first 27 - all faced discrimination and resistance in varying degrees.

"At one of my early churches, when the district superintendent told them he was appointing a woman pastor, one of the men pounded the pew and shouted, 'There will be no skirts in this pulpit while I'm alive!'" Huck recalled. She added that the man became one of her staunchest supporters.

Huck, 89, said the first clergywomen were women ministers, instead of ministers who happened to be women. "You go in just as a person now. It's not so unusual," she said.

Weaver, 96, did not consider where the church stood when she answered her call. "I felt eventually the church will grow up. I just thought a woman had a perfect right to be there," she said.

The Rev. Patricia Thompson...noted the path of clergywomen has been complex.

"Although women in the United Methodist tradition have been called to preach since the early days of Methodism in England, and both the Methodist Protestants and the United Brethren in Christ began ordaining women as elders and granting them full clergy rights at the end of the 19th century, full clergy rights for women in the Methodist Church did not come without a bitter struggle and often tremendous personal sacrifice on the part of both women and men," Thompson said.

The struggle did not end in 1956, she said. "Many churches were still not open to women, and women of color have had an even more difficult time."

“Women had to fight so hard to be accepted as clergy, and there are still places where they are not accepted,” said the Rev. Susan Ruach, co-chair of the 50th Anniversary Task Force that is coordinating celebrations. “We hope to celebrate the gains of clergywomen and recognize the contribution they’ve made, while hopefully encouraging women to see ministry as a possibility for themselves.”

Moore, 74, who had just finished seminary when the conference voted, decided to apply for full clergy rights immediately. “When I went to annual conference, I was sitting there with my colleagues, and they could all vote, and I couldn’t. I thought, I want to be a full participant,” Moore said..

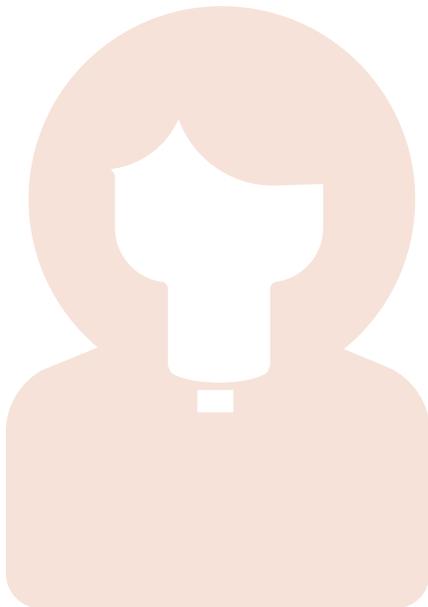
Now a United Church of Christ minister, Moore believes women must still enlarge their understanding of power and expand their vision with the confidence that they can take on more.

“Not to take away from others,” she said, “but to make the church truer to the gospel.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

From the readings, we hear stories from women in the United Methodist, Episcopalian, Anglican, and Evangelical Lutheran Churches who experienced ordination after faithfully awaiting the day when their prayers could be answered. How does learning about happy endings to these women in other religions make you feel?

What surprised you in learning about these other religions’ paths to women’s ordinations?



SCRIPTURES

Psalm 30:5 *...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Joshua 1:9 *...Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*

Isaiah 40:31 *But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

Alma 37:6 *Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.*

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

Articles of Faith 1:13 *We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.*

Alma 32:28 *Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.*

Luke 1:37 *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

NOTES

- ¹ Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on the Priesthood, Edward Kimball. *BYU Studies*, 2008. (referenced in Ordain Women's Conversation 4).
- ² Elder Gerald J. Causse, "We Are the Architects of Our Own Happiness," Jan. 2012. Available at: <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2012/01/we-are-the-architects-of-our-own-happiness?lang=eng>
- ³ Spencer W. Kimball, April 1977. "Our Great Potential." Available at: <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1977/04/our-great-potential?lang=eng>
- ⁴ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Infinite Power of Hope" October 2008, available at <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/10/the-infinite-power-of-hope?lang=eng>
- ⁵ Sam Jones, *The Guardian*, 2013, "Church of England approves female bishops plan," available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/20/church-england-approves-female-bishops-plan>.
- ⁶ Brown is an associate editor and writer in the Office of Interpretation, United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. This feature was originally published Oct. 17, 2005.