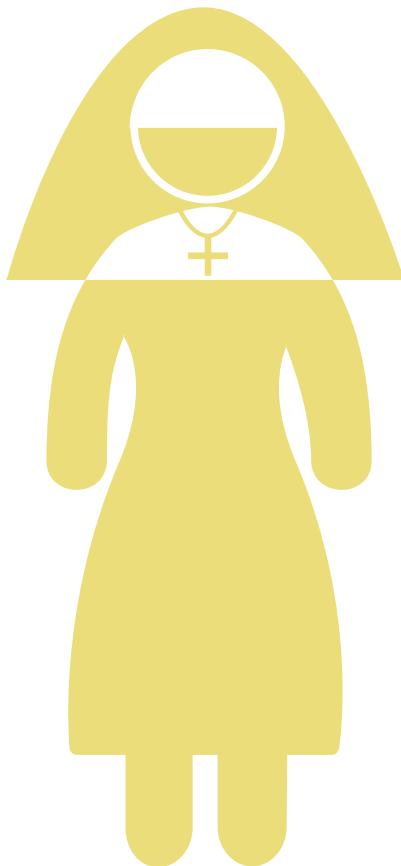


# Be the Change

## Conversation Six



ORDAIN WOMEN

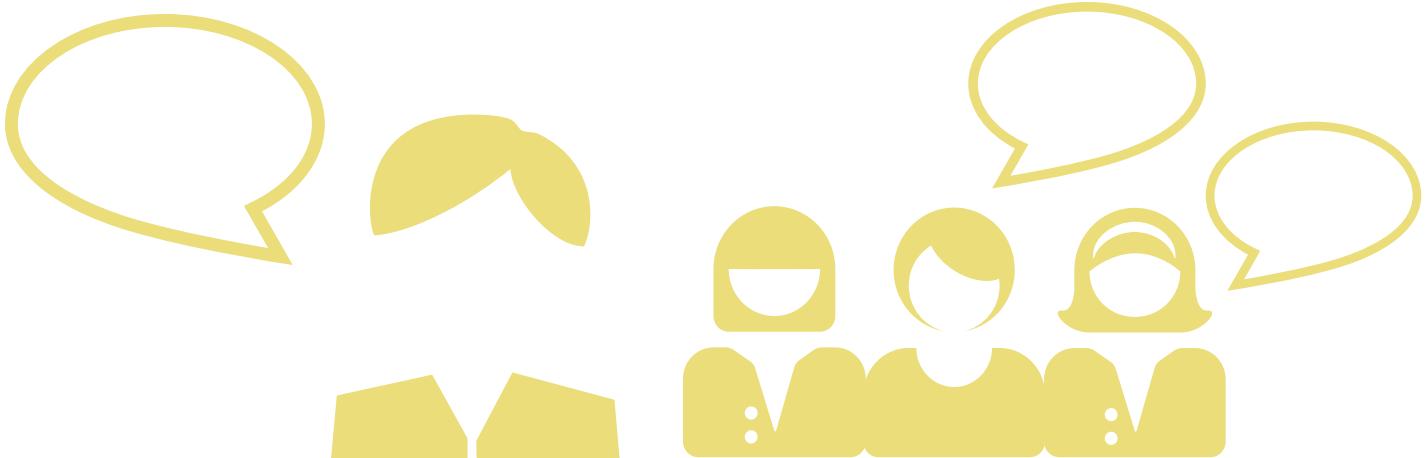


## BE THE CHANGE

### Conversation Six

“I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that he will guide me to do whatever I’m supposed to do, what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I’m praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things.”

-Mother Teresa



## CONVERSATION SIX PREVIEW

In previous conversations, we had an opportunity to discuss the history of women in the LDS Church, some of the doctrines that many believe support women's ordination, and the importance of the revelatory process in the Church. Hopefully, these conversations brought us new insights and strengthened our sense of God's love for all of us. Ordain Women joins many other Mormon feminists in hoping for a more inclusive community of faith. In the end, however, only you can decide for yourself how to move forward for positive change. As President Deiter F. Uchtdorf observed, "If you want to move the world you first have to move yourself."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi once said, "'If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change.' This is your discussion.

# CONVERSATION SIX

## ACTIVITY

### INCLUDING WOMEN

Joseph Smith responded to critics of women performing healing blessings in Nauvoo, as recorded by Eliza R. Snow and published online by the LDS Church: "He [Joseph] ask'd the society if they could not see by this sweeping stroke, that wherein they are ordained, it is the privilege of those set apart to administer in that authority which is confer'd on them—and if the sisters should have faith to heal the sick, let all hold their tongues, and let every thing roll on...Respecting the female laying on hands, he further remark'd, there could be no devils in it if God gave his sanction by healing—that there could be no more sin in any female laying hands on the sick than in wetting the face with water."<sup>2</sup>

What are some of the interim ways women and girls can easily be included more equally at the local, stake and general levels in the Church even without ordination?

Some examples mentioned on other Mormon websites include:

- Lifting the prohibition on women's participation in the blessing of their children
- Young Women (YW) acting as ushers
- Women serving as Sunday School Presidents
- Encouraging partnership in marriage and eliminating the idea that husbands preside over their wives
- Creating parity in the YW and Young Men (YM) organizations through equivalent budgets, educational programs (leadership, career, and spiritual training,) and activities (sports, service, and outdoor events)
- Balancing the stories and images of boys and men in church publications, talks, and other media with stories and images of girls and women
- Inviting women in Church leadership positions to speak and pray during General Conference in numbers equal to the participation of men, including during the Priesthood Session
- Encouraging leaders to use gender-inclusive language
- Recognizing that girls and boys, women and men are equally responsible for appropriate sexual behavior, and avoid reducing morality to sexuality, and modesty to a preoccupation with women's and girls' clothing
- Instructing bishops to refrain from asking Church members, particularly young girls, probing questions about sexual practices and experiences
- Calling women to perform pastoral counseling, particularly for women and girls who have been sexually assaulted or abused
- Choosing a General Relief Society Presidency and General Board that reflect the diversity of viewpoint and circumstance in the Church, and establishing frequent meetings between the First Presidency and the General Relief Society Presidency
- Including the Stake Relief Society President in Stake Presidency meetings, and appointing women to meet with the High Council
- Delegating more expansive supervisory authority to the Stake and Ward Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies, including approval of personnel, programs, and activities
- Including women among stake and ward leaders who hear evidence and offer judgment in Church disciplinary councils
- Including the local Relief Society president in all bishopric meetings, and rotating the planning of Sacrament services among the Relief Society president and members of the bishopric
- Examining all Church positions to determine whether they can be filled without regard to gender
- Appointing women as presidents of Church universities and heads of administrative departments
- Expanding hiring practices in the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion and within the religion departments at Church universities to provide women the same placement, advancement, and tenure opportunities as men
- Affording women the same opportunity as men to function as district leaders, zone leaders, and assistants to the president on their missions
- Changing temple marriage policies so that men and women have equal opportunity to be sealed to their second spouses after they are widowed or divorced
- Consider further wording changes to temple ceremonies and ordinances such that both men and women make the same covenants and enjoy the same promises
- Recognizing women as witnesses for baptisms and marriage sealings
- Restoring the former institutionally-accepted practice of women giving blessings of healing and comfort

#### GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*What changes would you like to see on the local and institutional level to make the Church a more inclusive place for women and girls?*

*Is it appropriate to raise such issues at Church?*

In a RadioWest Interview with Doug Fabrizio on June 17, 2014, Church spokesperson Ally Isom indicated that it is appropriate for men and women to discuss such issues, including women's ordination, in their local congregations. In response to the question, "What if you believe, as some women do, that it's time for the Church to give women the priesthood. Where can this discussion take place?" Sister Isom said, "There are many avenues to express that and discuss that ... in a congregation, in a Sunday School class, in a Relief Society class. ... The conversation is welcome. We've had a similar conversation in my Relief Society in Kaysville, Utah." Isom encouraged all to approach such issues respectfully and prayerfully.

Listen here:

<http://radiowest.kuer.org/post/latter-day-saints-and-excommunication-part-ii>

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*If it is appropriate to talk to Church leaders and other members about issues of gender equality, why is it sometimes difficult to do so?*

## ESTHER'S COURAGE

LDS.org's three-minute video tells the Biblical story of Esther and Latter-day Saint women who showed uncommon courage in speaking out:



Please watch this video from lds.org and discuss as a group:  
[https://www\\_lds\\_org/media-library/video/2013-03-004-courage?lang=eng](https://www_lds_org/media-library/video/2013-03-004-courage?lang=eng)

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*Can you recall a time you stood up for your beliefs?  
Are there times when you felt you couldn't? What made the difference?*

## IDEAS FROM ORDAIN WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTORS

A number of those who have contributed profiles to the Ordain Women site submitted ideas, readings, and questions that have in the spirit of mutual understanding helped their families and friends better appreciate their heartfelt desire for women's ordination and a more equitable church. Here are some of their suggestions and insights.

First, Ordain Women Executive Board Member Kristy Money finds the following scriptures inspiring when faced with the decision to speak out or be silent:

*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.*

*D&C 10:5 Pray always, that ye may come off conquerer...*

*D&C 58:26-27 For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;*

*1 Nephi 19:23 ...that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.*

*Matthew 7:7-8 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*Matthew 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

She writes:

We are encouraged as members of the LDS Church to study the scriptures diligently (see Conversation 3), relating the scriptures to our daily lives. I know this is a spiritually uplifting process from my own life. There are many scriptural examples of people who petitioned the Lord for answers to their concerns, such as woman with an issue of blood who touched the Savior's robe, the Brother of Jared, Zelophehad's Daughters, Esther, Hannah, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, and Daniel in the Lion's Den. As we relate the scriptures to our own experiences, we can gain powerful insights and the strength to face challenges. If a sparrow does not fall without God's notice, how much more must our sincerest concerns truly matter to Him. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "God is not a respecter of persons, we all have the same privilege. Come to God weary him until he blesses you & we are entitled to the same blessings"<sup>3</sup>

*"God is not a respecter of persons,  
we all have the same privilege.*

## **COME TO GOD**

*weary him until he blesses you  
& we are entitled to the same blessings."*

- Joseph Smith

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

*What did Joseph Smith mean when he said we all have the same privilege, and we need to “weary God” until he blesses us?*

*Is it appropriate to petition God for answers to our concerns? Church leaders?*

*What insights do these scriptures offer us?*

Danielle Mooney, a member of Ordain Women's Leadership Planning Group with professional expertise in productive conversations, suggests several ways to approach discussions where opinions differ:

Power struggles often arise when opinions vary or emotions are strong. Many have found these Ten Tips helpful in avoiding an intensely emotional confrontation:

1. Foster goodwill and understanding by building relationships.
2. Shift the conversation away from an adversarial one; talk about common ground and shared beliefs.
3. Try to have conversations rather than debates.
4. Work together on problem resolution.
5. Avoid trying to win an argument; seek understanding and cooperation.
6. Set healthy interpersonal boundaries by identifying your needs and setting necessary physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual limits. For example, you may decide not to agree to potentially divisive conversations without an agenda, ask to take a break when emotions are escalated, or set time limits for the duration of difficult conversations.

7. Pay attention to the times you feel resentful—which typically happens when one feels imposed upon or taken advantage of—or uncomfortable. This will enable you to prevent the conversation from escalating into a heated argument or a loss of self-control because you can redirect, reschedule, or end the interaction before reaching such a point.

8. When emotions are escalated, it is not a time for debate, defense, reasoning, teaching, or even problem solving. Instead, focus on lowering the level of emotional arousal before working towards a resolution.

9. Communicate clearly and respectfully, but realize that you can only control and take responsibility for yourself and your responses.

10. Remember that other people must govern themselves.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

*Have you had a productive conversation about a difficult topic?*

*Was it a debate or a conversation? What was the difference?*

*What is difficult for you about setting boundaries?*

*Can you think of a time when you should you have enforced a boundary but didn't?*

*When have you successfully enforced a personal or institutional boundary?*

Ordain Women's Joanna Wallace, Amy Cartwright, Nadine Hansen and Mark Barnes identified some of the questions that often arise in conversations regarding women and the priesthood. A number have been addressed briefly in OW's FAQ, but others haven't.

- Do you have a testimony of God and Jesus Christ?
- Do you have a testimony of the gospel?
- Do you sustain the leaders of the Church?
- Do you keep the commandments?
- Have you been to the temple? If so, didn't you see that women already have the priesthood?
- Have you read Elder Oaks' talk in the April 2014 priesthood session?
- Do you feel worthy to hold a temple recommend?
- Why is ordination necessary for women in the LDS church?

- Men and women have different, but equal roles. Isn't that enough?
- How do you think ordaining women would affect the Church?
- Don't women have enough to do already?
- Won't men be obsolete if women also hold the priesthood?
- Why are you making your concerns and criticisms public instead of handling the issue privately?
- Have you considered the effect your actions might have on the testimony of others?
- What effect will your behavior have on your children? Your parents?
- Are the supporters of Ordain Women active members of the LDS church?
- How do you know that we haven't already been given an answer?
- What will you do if the answer is no?
- Do you think women who don't want the priesthood are less spiritual?
- How can you sustain the prophet and support women's ordination?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*How would you respond to these questions?*

*Which questions were hardest to answer? Why?*

*What is your personal women's ordination narrative?*

Ordain Women profile contributor Sarah Hancock Jones had a productive conversation about OW with a Church leader and shared what happened:

"I recently initiated a meeting with my bishop regarding my support of this movement. My desire was to talk with him about my feelings, my experiences with the Holy Ghost, and also my dedication to the gospel of Jesus Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. I wanted him to understand my need to remain true to personal revelation I've had to be a part of Ordain Women, and also my desire to honor the covenants I've made in the temple, which I take seriously."

My husband and I both fasted and prayed prior to the meeting. We envisioned what a good outcome would be for us. Also, we didn't create a list of talking points; we simply went with an open heart and the desire to have our conversation led by the spirit. My husband had vacillated about not going in with me or staying

outside. Either way, he knew he was walking over to the church with me, he just wasn't sure if he would attend the meeting with me. I had expressed to him that I was completely happy either way. We walked over feeling a little nervous but very hopeful. We knew that many supporters of Ordain Women had experienced bishops taking away their temple recommends, removing them from callings, etc. I felt peace that I was doing the right thing in my support of women's ordination, and I was willing to sacrifice for what I had been asked by the spirit of revelation to do.

My bishop has only been serving for a few months, and we have only lived in the ward for one year, so we didn't have much prior history with him. However, he was so warm and friendly when we met that Thursday evening. We chatted briefly about my current calling, and then I just launched into the reason why I was there. My husband did decide last-minute to come in with me; he mostly just listened but it was so nice to have his support and also to have a witness with me.

The bishop listened so thoroughly to my thoughts and ideas. I explained my rationales for female ordination and some clear points of gender inequality in the church. He wasn't on the defensive and we were able to share back and forth freely. Throughout the conversation, I was able to bear witness to my experiences with the spirit and how my support of female ordination runs right along with my support of the gospel. He shared some interesting experiences he had recently learned about the times prior to the male members of African descent receiving the priesthood, and he showed a knowledge of how the church can change and evolve as we as members open our hearts to more light and truth. I shared with him that I had made a promise to God to talk about the ordination of women whenever I got a chance, and that I had been talking nearly every day since!

*"It was wonderful to feel listened to and understood. I'm very grateful for a bishop who is willing to make room in the ward for those who hold different opinions and may not agree with the status quo."*

We chatted for just over an hour, and we ended very positively. He encouraged me to share my knowledge and feelings when prompted by the Spirit, but to avoid contention. His counsel was that if a conversation becomes an argument, then it is best to end it. Also, he stated that if I encountered hostility or contention in our ward, he'd like to know, because there could be teaching opportunities within the ward to help us all be more Christ-like. He did state that he may get more specific instructions on how to handle situations like mine; I simply said that I was confident he would make any decisions with the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

It was wonderful to feel listened to and understood. I'm very grateful for a bishop who is willing to make room in the ward for those who hold different opinions and may not agree with the status quo. I'm so grateful for my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; I've grown so much spiritually as I've served in challenging callings, striven to have unity with ward members, and shared joys and also sorrows with those in my ward. I recognize the strength that differences can bring, and I'm so grateful that my bishop does also."

Like Sarah's experience, another productive conversation occurred—this time for an entire Stake—in June 2014. The Cambridge, Massachusetts Stake organized a Q&A with all of its members, specifically to discuss difficult questions including women's roles in the Church. Over 300 members attended, including many OW supporters. We are very excited to hear these conversations are taking place locally. With permission from her Stake presidency, Lisa Hadley wrote about what happened that evening for the blog Feminist Mormon Housewives:

<http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/2014/07/a-stake-that-listens/>

## A STAKE THAT LISTENS

First of all, at the end of the meeting it was requested that what was said in the meeting be kept within our stake boundaries. There was some concern expressed about blogging about the event. I spoke with the facilitator and the Stake President after the meeting and mentioned that I had planned on blogging about the meeting and asked for their input. I told them that I wanted to be respectful of all those who were involved in the meeting but that there are others who don't live within our stake boundaries who are interested in our meeting as a model for creating similar dialogues in their own wards and stakes. The Stake President's one request was that I protect the privacy of all the people who shared personal things in the meetings (which I fully planned on doing anyway. Consequently, this post will be geared toward informing you about the format of the meeting. I'll end with my own thoughts and then we can talk in the comments section about ideas and possible challenges associated with implementing a similar model in other stakes.)

The chapel was packed and the cultural hall overflow was opened up. I was sitting in the second row and couldn't see how far back the rows went, but I've heard reports that there were around 300 people there.

There was an opening hymn, "Our Savior's Love" and an opening prayer. After that, the Stake President spoke, followed by a beautiful choral arrangement of "O Magnum Mysterium" by Lauridsen. Then the Stake Relief Society President spoke. They talked about why this meeting was taking place and set up expectations for what the evening would look like. They expressed deep sadness over all the members of our stake who have been resigning their membership and emphasized their desire to make the church a comfortable place for all members. They said that the sole purpose of this meeting was to figure out what the issues and concerns are in our stake in order to be able to address them and attempt to find solutions (within their sphere of influence) in subsequent meetings. They said

that they were there to listen, to try to understand and to learn. They talked about the potential for this meeting to be very heavy and uncomfortable for some and encouraged everyone to talk openly about both doubts and faith. They said that taking notes was fine but requested that there be no electronic recordings so participants could feel completely comfortable and safe in expressing their opinions. They also said that the meeting was intended for people within our stake boundaries and that, while outsiders were welcome, they should identify themselves before talking.

The stake leaders then sat in the congregation and a professional facilitator who is also a member of our stake took over. A few days ago an email was sent to members of our stake inviting us to submit input about what we would like to talk about at the meeting. The input could be submitted anonymously. The facilitator aggregated that data and came up with some of the main talking points that were represented in the emails. The main headlines were: gender, appropriate outlets for expressing doubt, church discipline, sexual orientation, immigration, and the focus on the issues is the issue (meaning people felt like the elements of the gospel that were most important to them were not being addressed, i.e. service). The facilitator then invited individuals to add any concerns that were not represented by the data collected prior to the meeting. Some of the additional topics brought up were: LGBT discrimination, at what point concerns keep you from getting a temple recommend, segregation (male/female, single/married, English-speaking/ non English-speaking, etc.), ecclesiastical abuse, transparency of tithing funds, the use of social media, and standing up for beliefs without being perceived as a bigot.

After all the talking points were gathered, the facilitator split us up into several small discussion groups. Numbers were assigned in an attempt to make the groups diverse, although there was flexibility in which group one could attend (I think the logistics of the small groups got a little tricky because there were many more people than originally anticipated). I believe we ended up with 16 groups. Five of those groups were dedicated to discussing gender roles. People who specifically wanted to discuss that topic were invited to join one of those five groups, despite what number they had been assigned. The other groups could decide amongst themselves which topic(s) they wanted to discuss. The facilitator emphasized the need for expressing and welcoming a wide spectrum of viewpoints in order to begin to understand one another.

We went into different classrooms to discuss our concerns with one another in more detail. I was in one of the groups designated to talk about gender roles. A timekeeper, group leader and note taker were assigned. We went around the room and introduced ourselves, stated why we came to the meeting and then we each had a chance to talk about our concerns. I was impressed by the openness of both those who shared their concerns and those who were trying to understand the concerns being expressed. The discussion lasted about 30 minutes and then all of the groups returned to the chapel. Once we reconvened, a member from each group gave a quick 45-second summary to the entire congregation of what was talked about in their group.

People were then invited to submit their notes of what happened in their small discussions to the facilitator who will put them into a summary for members of the stake at a later date. The facilitator, Stake President and Stake Relief Society President each spoke briefly at the end of the meeting. They talked about how grateful they were for how competent and respectful all of the participants had been during the meeting and then talked about next steps. They said that after synthesizing all the notes from this meeting that there will another meeting (possibly more) to discuss suggestions for moving forward. We sang, "The Lord is My Shepherd" and had a closing prayer and the meeting ended. The entire meeting last about two hours and fifteen minutes.

Now for my thoughts on the meeting: I thought it went really well. I believe the meeting did a great job of fulfilling its intention, which was to articulate questions and concerns without offering solutions. I felt that it was done in a very respectful, professional way. I think this will have positive implications for our stake. My only wish is that we could have had more meetings like this sooner.

I'm curious to hear what other people thought of the meeting who were there. I also wonder, for those who weren't there, whether you think a similar model could work in your own wards and stakes and how we could push for more open dialogue in the church.

Ordain Woman profile contributor Jessica Duckett Finnegan wrote the following for the blog Rational Faiths. Like Kristy Money, she sees the scriptures as revelatory, applies them to her daily life, and therein finds hope:

<http://rationalfaiths.com/holeroof/>

## MAKING A HOLE IN THE ROOF

After my kids had gone to bed and all the cleaning was done, I curled up on the couch. In preparation for Stake Conference, my husband had been gone all day, and I was emotionally and physically exhausted. All I wanted to do was drink hot chocolate and go to bed. But I felt pulled towards the scriptures, not out of duty or habit, because I had already read that day, but because I felt that God had something to show me that night in the scriptures, a healing balm I didn't yet know I needed.

I came to Mark 2. This is the chapter that recounts the story of the paralyzed man who was lowered into the house so that he could be healed. I have read this story many times over the years. But that night the story came to life, it healed my heart, and the heavens bent and took my hand and led me to a place of peace. I realized that this story was about me, and it was bigger than me, it was about seeking and asking and sometimes doing things a different way.

The spirit washed over me and sitting on my couch, I knew I had found the story I was supposed to understand and fill a hole in my heart. As I sat and pondered an answer to a question that I had buried deep, pushing it down because it seems so hopeless. At school I study innovation within the LDS Church. My research analyzes the impact and the negotiation processes

within the Church from the printing press to the Internet, and while this seems like a rather mundane topic it takes me into texts and stories that are beautiful and powerful and subsequently into stories that make my heart hurt for the loss of potential progress.

In the story- these men knew that they could not get their friend through the doors – the doors were blocked. But they knew the blessings that were held inside, and they needed to find a way in. One of the parts of my research that makes me the most depressed is how over the last 50/60 years the path of bottom-up innovation within the church has been all but removed. We have forgotten to tell and retell the beautiful and complicated narratives of how we came to have programs such as Sunday School, Family Home Evening, Young Women's, Relief Society, the LDS scriptures, and really any revelation. I often feel that the doors of the church have been cemented over, and the windows have titanium storm shutters bolted over them. Most members will say this is ridiculous but I think it is because most have never tried to enter or walked by at such a distance that they do not see the lack of access. And so many unknowingly ridicule and mock movements like Ordain Women. As I sit day after day collecting and writing this research, I think: How will change ever happen in the church? How do we get back what we once had? And how will we go forward into the future? How do we open the windows of heaven when they are boarded up? How do you walk through a blocked door? But year after year I find the courage to carry on, studying, writing, praying, and waiting on the Lord.

It was my research that took me to the Ordain Women launch in 2013, and it was my research that convinced me to write a profile. This scripture story is not a story of one person. It is a story of group of dedicated souls who against all odds found a way in. The blessing of their courage did not stop with the friend they helped, their story of enduring faith and creativity will continue to bless the lives of all those who read it. Religious innovation will happen. Mormon feminists, and religious feminists everywhere, will find a way in. And while we will continue to knock at the door, chances are change will come through a hole in the roof. I believe that one day LDS Church manuals will tell our story- that a long time ago a group of faithful, devoted, and brave people- who against all odds, found a way in, and created space for all who wished to enter to receive all the blessings of the Lord.

*"I believe that one day LDS Church manuals will tell our story- that a long time ago a group of faithful, devoted, and brave people- who against all odds, found a way in, and created space for all who wished to enter to receive all the blessings of the Lord."*

Ordain Women's Executive Board member Nancy Ross utilized art to be the change she wished to see in the world when she walked reverently onto Temple Square with 500 of her brothers and sisters on April 5, 2014. Her poem was published on the blog Feminist Mormon Housewives:

<http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/2014/04/i-left-my-fear-on-temple-square/>

## I LEFT MY FEAR ON TEMPLE SQUARE

I was terrified of making the wrong choice  
I tried to make the ones they said were best for me,  
The ones they said would lead to happiness.  
My life was ruled by my fear.

I made their choices.  
I tried hard not to question openly their judgment.  
Fearful obedience left me timid,  
Scared of God's rejection.

Last Saturday in the park,  
I prayed that my fear, through faith,  
Would be transformed into courage.

I walked and was shouted at, rained on, hailed on.  
I walked through a gate that was supposed to be locked.  
I arrived at the Tabernacle.  
I asked a question no one wanted me to ask.

In those moments of cultural disobedience,  
My fear tried to strangle me.  
It demanded that I listen to it but I would not, did not.  
I held my fear at arm's length and dropped it.

I examined that ugly millstone.  
It was not mine but was given to me  
By others who had strengthened it,  
Nourished it, taught me the same.

For a moment I was lost,  
Grieving this seemingly sacred baggage.  
Through the confusion my courage took root.  
I walked away and it grew and grew.

My courage grew recklessly and shamelessly that day.  
My courage blessed me with purpose.  
My courage showed me God's love.  
My courage filled me with peace  
My courage magnified my strength.

I am different now  
Because I left my fear on Temple Square.



On June 28, 2014 The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve released a statement saying, "We understand that from time to time Church members will have questions about Church doctrine, history, or practice. Members are always free to ask such questions and earnestly seek greater understanding."<sup>4</sup> We are grateful that our leaders have begun to respond to the faithful agitation of so many women and men, who are praying for a dialogue on this topic. This statement described current church policy on priesthood, as follows: "Only men are ordained to serve in priesthood offices." However, there is no mention of why women cannot be ordained, nor is there an assertion that women will not be ordained in the future. This most recent statement from our prophet and apostles could be an excellent springboard for local conversations on the future role of women. We trust each individual's judgment concerning what she can do personally to advance these conversations in the faith community to which we belong and love: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

## CONCLUSION

*What questions would you ask the First Presidency of the Church, if given the chance?*

*How can we all contribute equally to the creation of Zion on earth? What is our place in that transformative process?*

# SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES:

The following are recommended for participants who would like to follow up the conversation with continued personal study.

Linda Burton, *Sisterhood: Oh How We Need Each Other*, from 2014 Women's Conference. Video available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZV4PI8ezKt8>

Mark 2

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing For Something*. Harmony Press, 2001.

Prince, Gregory, & Robert Wright. *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*. University of Utah Press, SLC, 2005.

McBaine, Neylan. *Women at Church: Magnifying Women's Local Impact*. Greg Kofford Books, 2014.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> November 11, 2003. BYU Devotional, *The Wind Beneath Your Wings*.

<sup>2</sup> Nauvoo Relief society Minute Book, Eliza R. Snow, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book>

<sup>3</sup> Recorded in Willard Richards Pocket Companion, 78–79, cited in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 15.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/june-first-presidency-statement?lang=eng>