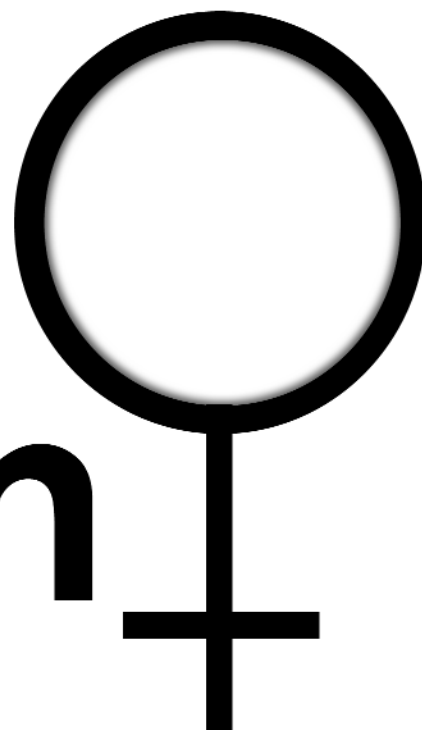


35th Anniversary

Ordination of Women



By Pastor Audree Catalano
Synod Minister

In the late 1960s, Marge Wold and the American Lutheran Church Women (ALCW) petitioned the Church Council to study whether or not women could be ordained. The Biblical theologians concluded that the Bible did not prohibit this. In the summer of 1970,

the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America approved the ordination of women. This year, we of the ELCA are celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in this Church body.

As a woman ordained in this Church, I have always thought that while men bring certain gifts to ministry, women bring other and different gifts to ministry. The ELCA Commission for Women has suggested a list of "Ways to Celebrate the Ordination of Women." The list includes:

- If your pastor is a woman, find a way to celebrate her ministry this year; invite her to share her experiences.
- Identify girls and young women with leadership gifts; give them opportunities to lead in the congregation

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and encourage them to consider a vocation of full-time ministry.

- Provide a scholarship for a woman preparing for ordained ministry.
- Write an article for the local newspaper about your congregation's experience with a woman as pastor.
- Create occasions for men and women, clergy and lay, to reflect on what is different and good because we have had ordained women for 35 years in this Church.
- Accept women as clergy and tell others!

Among other responsibilities, the commission helps the ELCA to realize the full participation of women, to create a safe environment for women and to advocate justice for women in the church and in society. It works to enrich the church by encouraging the theological reflection of women, by identifying women of all cultures for leadership and by fostering ministry partnerships between women and men.

There is a plethora of information on the history of the ordination of women in the ELCA, as well as the present day statistics on ordained women in the ELCA, which can be found at www.elca.org.

Rejoice and celebrate!

Pastors Reflect on Ordination Anniversary

Pastor Karen Grandall of Hosanna, Rochester is celebrating her 25th anniversary of ordination this year.

How were you encouraged to become a pastor?

Grandall: In September of 1975, 26 women began Luther Seminary out of a class of over 230. We were the first sizable class of women, and both professors and students had to get used to a different preaching voice. Included were Mary Sue Dreier (People of Hope, Rochester), Marilyn Hanson (previous synod staff), Lucy Radatz (wife of Jim Radatz in Harmony) and me. Out of the 26, eight were ordained in 1979, three were ordained in 1980, and one was ordained in 1982. Of these 12, most were married to other clergy.

In the late 1960s Marge Wold and the American Lutheran Church Women (ALCW) had petitioned the Church Council to study whether or not women could be ordained. The Biblical theologians concluded that the Bible did not prohibit this. Barbara Andrews was ordained as a chaplain in the ALC in 1971. For more information, you can read *From our Mothers' Arms* by L. DeAne Lagerquist. Thank you to all the church women in ALCW and Women of the ELCA who made this possible.

How did I get to seminary 4 years after women were ordained? I come from a family with many (male) pastors and educated women. I grew up at St. John's in Northfield in a time of vibrant music and youth ministry. At Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, I enjoyed my religion courses so much that I wanted more, so professors encouraged me to go to seminary.

What unique gifts do female pastors have to offer the church?

Grandall: Each of us pastors is different. However, in general, women bring a feminine voice to preaching, a voice that speaks of God's grace and love for all people. Women may speak more about the work of the Spirit and God's ongoing creation. Women pastors may be more accessible to counsel women. Some shorter women may need an extra platform inside the pulpit.

I thank all of you whom I have served for the privilege of proclaiming God's Word to you.

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Elizabeth Backus

Synod and district boundaries have changed greatly since women's ordination was approved in 1970, so it's difficult to say who the first woman ordained in our synod was. Going by present synod boundaries, that title goes to Pastor Elizabeth Backus, who was ordained in 1982 at Bethlehem and Union Prairie in Lanesboro. She is currently serving a congregation in Kansas City, Mo.

How were you encouraged to become a pastor?

Backus: I had been raised and confirmed in a Roman Catholic Church. I was confirmed in the Lutheran Church while in college and after I met my husband-to-be, who was planning to attend seminary. Things seemed to fall into place, although I didn't have much encouragement from others, except from my husband. I am grateful to the Lutheran Church for accepting the gifts of women.

How has serving as a pastor enriched your life?

Backus: When you ask 'how has serving as a pastor enriched my life,' I'm a little embarrassed to admit that it's really been my life. Other than my roles as wife and mother and daughter, the ministry has taken my time, all the talents I have, all the energy I have. First in a rural setting in Southeastern Minnesota, and now in Kansas City, I am challenged to use all my skills to serve as a pastor. I try to serve the synod and the larger church, and the community as well as the congregation. I try to relate to my fellow colleagues as well, and have been privileged to serve them as their pastor from time to time.

What unique gifts do female pastors have to offer the church?

Backus: When I was in a seminary class, we had to list ten things that we loved. I had no problem jotting down things that meant something to me, especially things that had been passed down from my grandparents. Most of the other classmates, all men, had a hard time with this assignment. Maybe women have an easier time loving, and are more vulnerable to loss. This might make us more approachable when parishioners face loss themselves.