

# Centering on Ministry



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## WOMEN IN MINISTRY An Introduction to this Issue

*Jerry C. Grubbs*

Commenting on the role of women in the early years of the Church of God Reformation Movement, Dr. John W. V. Smith wrote:

"...it is probably safe to say that no other movement either religious or secular in this period of American history, except the suffrage movement itself, had such a high percentage of women leaders whose contribution was so outstanding."<sup>1</sup>

Few of us would question the validity of that statement made by our church's premier historian. Supporting statistics were gathered by Sharon Sawyer.<sup>2</sup> Sawyer's research revealed the following:

Year	Congregations	% Congregations with	
		Women Pastors	Women Pastors
1905	353	50	14%
1925	685	220	32%
1945	1572	112	7%
1965	2276	100	4%
1975	2905	100	3%

Although reaching a peak of 32 percent of our congregations being pastored in 1925 by women, the next fifty years saw a steady decline to a low of 3 per cent in 1975.

It is equally important to note that only some 10 percent of the leadership positions in the national church are held by women although

women make up some 55 percent of the church's constituency. The Church of God has made some efforts towards a sensitive resolution to this problem. In 1974 a resolution was passed calling for more equal representation of women in national leadership. However, concrete evidence of any significant increase is yet to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

Ministerial preparation is an important issue to be considered. Are women being encouraged to pursue training for the pastoral ministry? On the surface, the picture looks pretty good. Presently there are thirty-six female students (20 percent of students enrolled) at the School of Theology. This is up from the twenty-three (15.2 percent) in 1976. However, these figures become more realistic when it is seen that only seven of the thirty-six women are presently enrolled in the Master of Divinity program (the basic degree for pastoral ministry). Or, to be precise, 7 percent of the Master of Divinity students are women while 93 percent are men.

Are we actively encouraging women in our congregations to enter the pastoral ministry? Do we support them emotionally as they move into seminary for preparation? Will there be a place for women when they complete their theological training? Are congregations open to the potential that women bring to pastoral leadership? These and other questions are dealt with in this issue.

*Dr. D. Elton Trueblood* has written a significant essay on "The Place of Women in the Christian Cause." *Dr. Harold Phillips* offers some guidance to ministers as they look at biblical texts and the role of women in ministry. *Dr. Lillie McCutcheon* brings years of experience to her very sensitively written article on "Lady in the Pulpit." She raises some very crucial questions and offers some pointed guidance for the Church of God. *Rev. Marilyn Henry*, in her first pastorate, reflects on her personal call and present involvement in pastoral ministry. She shows keen insight into the placement of women in pastoral ministry. *Ms. Jan Erickson-Pearson* writes from the perspective of a seminary student. Her openness in sharing her personal journey is both refreshing and challenging. *Ms.*

*Helen Newell* gives a suggested reading list for ministers. Don't miss these resources!

This issue of *Centering on Ministry* will hopefully challenge many of you. It might even upset some persons. So be it! The outcome could be creative dialogue on many levels in the church on the issue of "Women in Ministry."

<sup>1</sup>John W. V. Smith, *Herald of a Brighter Day*. (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1955). p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Sharon Sawyer, "Women Pastors in the Church of God", *Colloquium*, vol. 8. no. 4. July/August 1976, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>See Kay Shively, "Still Unequal—After All These Years?", *Vital Christianity*. May 7, 1978, pp. 16-17.

## The Place of Women in the Christian Cause

*D. Elton Trueblood*

The place of women in the Christian Cause is so much in people's minds today that it is incumbent upon each of us to be able to provide reasonable answers to the questions which are asked insistently. Of the persons who read this, I doubt if there is one who has failed to think seriously on the question of what the right place of women is, so far as the Church is concerned. This is why we must try to help one another.

The importance of women in the historical development of Christianity is very great. Indeed, the Christian Faith stands in sharp contrast to most religions in this regard. To this day there are religions in which women have almost no means of participation. In visiting the great Mosques of Istanbul I have never seen a woman participating in public prayer. At first women had no part in Buddhism, though later they were included, particularly as nuns. By sharp contrast, Christ included women from the start. The evidence of this is abundant, an especially significant sentence being, "The twelve were with him and also some women" (Luke 8:1,2).

Sensitive readers of the accounts of the crucifixion have long noticed how, standing by the cross, were three brave women, including Mary Magdalene. This same woman came early to the tomb of Jesus and saw that the stone which sealed the entrance had been removed. Likewise she went to the disciples and reported, "I have seen the Lord." In short, without the participation of women the drama of the death and resurrection of Christ would have been strikingly different. The fact that women were not included in the Twelve is not as significant as is the way in which they were included in other fellowships.

So important were women in the infant churches, that we are driven to the conclusion

that, without their assistance, survival would not have occurred. In the Church at Philippi, the first on the continent of Europe, it seems evident that the majority were women. In any case one woman, Lydia, was the first member, and others are mentioned in the eloquent Letter which the Apostle Paul wrote to the little group. When the term "Yokefellow," an apparent synonym for a practicing Christian, is employed by the author, he actually gives the names of some of the women members. These were Euodia and Syntyche. The words which mean a great deal to many readers of this Letter, words which have given meaning to Christian discipleship, are as follows: "I ask you also, true Yokefellow, help these women for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel" (Philippians 4:3). When we take these words seriously, as we do, we cannot suppose that the earliest Christian women were mere observers; they were involved in the glorious enterprise as teammates. The words of Christ, "Take my yoke upon you," applied to all Christians, irrespective of sex. The word "Yokefellow" has no gender.

The highest point of the New Testament, in regard to this question, comes in the remarkable realization that, so far as the Christian faith is concerned, sex is not a crucial factor at all. Sex is, of course, important in many other ways, but when it comes to being committed to Jesus Christ, it is absolutely nothing. This is the revolutionary significance of the words, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," (Gal. 3:28). The Apostle Paul put us in his debt in many ways, but never more radically so than in this particular vision of greatness.

When the Church was young and fighting for its very life the women and the men fought side by side. Priscilla, whose name appears in three books of the New Testament, seems to have been involved as thoroughly as was Aquila. They had the good fortune to live before anyone had imposed upon the Church a priestly system, with its inevitable hierarchy. In those glorious days before the ecclesiastical system had become stereotyped, distinctions which later became important did not even exist. Women were in the total ministry, because all were needed. Otherwise survival was not possible.

There have been many ups and downs in the intervening years, but today we are again in a situation in which, because survival is at stake, the involvement of women is a necessary element. We know that Christians are a minority of any population, in any part of the world, and that their enemies are strong. On every side we are surrounded by people who believe that God does not exist. Many of our neighbors believe that anything is permitted because they deny the existence, not only of the Living God, but of any objective moral order. They think all values are matters of personal choice or preference. This is the real basis of the breakdown of sexual morality. If there is no objective moral order, why is not promiscuity as reasonable as chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage?

If we face our situation honestly we know that we are in deep trouble. If help does not come through the Church it is hard to see where it may appear.

The Church is the one means of renewal on which it is most reasonable to depend, and this is true in spite of the fact that the Church has so often failed to rise to its potential greatness. The very fact that the Church is based upon Christ, rather than upon human opinions, makes a radi-

cal difference. We have something solid in bad times, as well as good ones, and consequently we can weather serious storms. This is not a matter of speculation, but, being a matter of history, is likely to be repeated.

If, in our contemporary thinking, we combine our beginnings, our history and our present predicament, we come out with a clear conclusion. Women belong to the Christian faith and we need to take the fullest possible advantage of their potential contribution now! It is not enough to expect women to teach some classes of children, important as that work may be and is. We must encourage women to take real leadership in the growth of Christian thought.

Often I am asked where there is emerging a new Christian thinker comparable in stature to the late C. S. Lewis. Sorrowfully I admit that I find an answer difficult. I really do not see such a thinker on the horizon now. Has it occurred to you that the answer to the felt need may come from some women? Why not? Never once in forty years of teaching have I been able to guess correctly the sex of the writer of a paper if no name has been attached. I recognize no difference at all at this important level. Once we take down the barriers of false expectations, amazing results may come. In the words of I Corinthians 16:9, we can truly say, that, though there are many adversaries, "a wide door for effective service has opened." The intellectual emancipation of women may actually be the crucial step in ushering in one of the noblest chapters in the history of the Christian faith. There are many grounds of hope, but this is one of the most convincing.

*Quarterly Yoke Letter*, volume XVII, No. 2, June, 1976. Dr. Elton Trueblood. Reprinted by Permission.

## Wives, Submit? Three Interpretations . . .

*Harold L. Phillips*

Much of the current debate concerning the roles of women in both home and church has revolved around the interpretation of certain passages in the epistles of the New Testament, such as Colossians 3:18-4:1 with specific focus on the first verse: "Wives, submit to your husbands . . ." Similar passages are to be found in Ephesians 5:22-6:9; I Timothy 2:8-15; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10; and I Peter 2:13-3:7.

Always a question is whether or not the passages actually form the basis of the views held or whether the views are held for cultural reasons and then an interpretation is sought that fits the view held. That aspect of the problem will be passed by as likely too complex to set-

tle. But it is possible to delineate three types of interpretations of passages such as those referred to in the first paragraph. Interestingly enough, the interpretations do parallel analyses of family role models in current sociological textbooks.<sup>1</sup>

**1. The Hierarchical Model.** Here, passages such as Colossians 3:18 (often considered pretty much in isolation and out of context) are offered as proof-texts for the concept that the relationships of men and women in the family are permanently and normatively fixed with the husband as the head of the house and the wife assigned to a complementary but definitely submissive role.

Associated with other New Testament



passages this approach reaches over into church-related as well as family-related roles. In varying degrees women are assigned the "submissive" role in the church as well as in the home—not eligible for ordination, not to conduct public worship, not to hold office, not to teach men, etc. All shades of positions and combinations emerge. For example, there are those who permit ordination of women but still insist on the "submission" model in the family.

A current example of this type of interpretation is to be found in *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* by George W. Knight III (Baker, 1977). In the preface the author refers to the role relationships in terms of "authority," "headship," and "leadership" and states that "I do regard this role relationship not as one that is assigned in the drama of life by our culture or society, but as one that is ordained by God for all cultures, societies and times" (p. 9). In essence this book espouses the "headship of men" and "the submission of women, both in the marriage relationship and in the church" (from the cover blurb).

After examining some key passages in the New Testament the author concludes:

"Paul laid down a universally normative regulation which prohibits women from ruling and teaching men in the church. These passages are not illustrations but commands; these commands are not grounded in time-bound, historically and culturally relative arguments that apply only in Paul's day and age, but in the way God created man and woman to relate to each other as male and female" (p. 39).

In considering the extended passage in Colossians this writer does acknowledge that the slave-related injunctions were culturally oriented and now have been superseded by different attitudes, but he insists that the man-woman relationship is permanent, God-ordained, and not culturally conditioned.

In terms of orientation, this is the basic approach that underlies much of the writing, teaching, and preaching of our times that continues to stress the male headship and the female submission roles in both family and church.

## 2. The Mutual Submission Model.

Typically, in this interpretive approach more attention is given to the whole Scriptural passages in context of the times and with stress on the key concept that Christ is the head of the church, that both men and women submit to his headship and in turn to each other. This approach still makes use of the "submission" terminology but in quite a different and less rigid framework.

Here is an example of this approach:

"When Paul speaks of wives' submitting themselves to their husbands, he is building

upon the concept that every Christian is intended to submit to every other Christian, to serve every other Christian, to defer lovingly to every other Christian. Women are to be subject to their husbands in everything; and Paul establishes the fact that because of reverence to God, because of subjection to God, every Christian is to be submissively concerned about the welfare of every other Christian" (Virginia Mollenkott, in *Women, Men and the Bible*, p. 23).

Here an effort is made to take the "sting" out of the "submission" word, to broaden its application to both men and women and to stress mutuality in submission rather than the idea of one-way submission.

A further example of such an approach is the following:

"It is important to note that the verb *submit* in the Greek middle voice, meaning literally 'place yourselves in submission.' It indicates a voluntary act of the will rather than a legal requirement, as we shall see further in the Ephesians passage. The reason Paul gives for this act is that it is 'befitting' or 'convenient' rather than that it is divinely commanded." (Dorothy Pape, in *In Search of God's Ideal Woman*, p. 286).

This approach stresses the "wholeness" of the passages involved, typically pointing out that the emphasis is on relationships rather than rules, on mutual responsibilities rather than rights, and that if all concerned operate from this stance the woman is not demeaned. The idea of mutual deferring is also derived by this interpretation. Submission varies from situation to situation, decision to decision. Submission is voluntary, situational, loving—not dictated, or one-sided or a "role" applying to only women.

3. **The Full-Equality Model.** Here, the whole idea of "submission" is put aside with first stress being placed on full partnership in marriage and full participation in all aspects of the life and work of the church. Here are some of the interpretive principles as related to these passages such as Colossians 3:18-4:1.

Paul's views are partly colored by the times, and in such a passage as this are not to be regarded as statements of permanent principle but rather as guidance in a given situation that then obtained. Actually, when studied in the setting of the times, we have a sort of "Christianized" upgrading of typical Greek "house-rules," samples of which can be found in the writings of Greek philosophers. Paul took the typical "house-rules" of his times and put them in a new kind of setting that actually upgraded the situation for all concerned—new dignity for wives, new responsibilities for husbands and fathers, new attitudes for those caught in the condition of slavery, etc.

This approach differentiates between statements of Paul that are judged to be statements of permanent principle and statements that recognized conditions in society that at the moment were not fully remediable. As an example of the first: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). The seeds of full equality and liberation from any sense of an inferiority-role are seen here. This is the permanent principle emphasis in Paul. Other suggestions he made can be read as culturally conditioned, suitable to the times, but not binding for all time in the sense of legal requirement or commandment.

This type of approach has been made in *Man as Male and Female* by Paul K. Jewett (Eerdmans, 1975) and also underlies *The Bible and the Role of*

*Woman* by Krister Stendahl, (Fortress, 1966).

Paul K. Jewett interprets the totality of the biblical thrust, when understood properly, as in the direction of male-female equality under God and asks that the church "press on to the full implementation" of Paul's vision concerning "the equality of the sexes in Christ" (p. 147). He believes that theories of "male superiority and domination" are a hindrance to "genuine partnership of mind and spirit between man and woman" (p. 148) and that the Bible rightly interpreted does not support the hierarchical model in the family or the restriction of women from leadership positions in the church.

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<sup>1</sup>See *Men, Women, and Change* by Letha and John Scanzoni.

## Lady in the Pulpit

Lillie S. McCutcheon

Allegedly a lady speaker with increased volume and great emphasis exclaimed, "Where would men be if it were not for women?" From the rear of the auditorium an unexpected male voice responded, "In the garden of Eden." Thus, the battle of the sexes continues to rage.

The matter of equality in the Church of God has been well defined since its inception. Christ designed His church to be universal throughout the world. It must be unrestricted by human barriers of nationality, race, social or economic status, tradition, or sex discrimination. Dual standards for male and female are not a part of the gospel. Every person must meet the same requirements to be saved, baptized, sanctified, or healed. Qualifications for service and leadership are synonymous for all. Spiritual gifts are not in two listings designating some for men and the inferior gifts for women. It is written, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

God is an Equal Rights Employer granting equal remuneration. God is no respecter of persons. It is worthy of note that a "soul" is neither male nor female. Gender refers only to the physical body.

The biblical account gives evidence of God's approval upon women in public worship and ministry. Miriam served with her brothers, Moses and Aaron. Deborah served as a prophetess, is listed with the judges of Israel, and was a political-military leader. Anna blest the Christ-child. Peter quoted Joel saying, "... your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17). Phillip had four daughters who were preachers. In

Romans 16, Paul lists twenty-eight individuals who labored with him in the gospel. Nine of these were women. Numerous other examples may be given.

The term "ministry" is quite ambiguous. When referring to Christian service of the laity it is a woman's duty to serve in religious work, fund raising, volunteer activities, etc. However, when "ministry" refers to pulpit and pastoral ordination, some people insist only men can qualify. It is common for a church to accept a male pastor in preference to a female whose abilities and qualifications may far exceed those of the male under consideration. It is inconsistent when there is little controversy over women who are commissioned to difficult mission fields but are not on the other hand esteemed eligible for ordination in the homeland. To literally obey Paul's command, "Let your women keep silent in the churches" (I Cor. 14:34) would prohibit females from singing, teaching, praying in public, and testifying. Evidence that this is not Paul's intent is the fact he also gave instruction how a woman should dress when speaking in public.

Our recorded heritage reveals that there have always been women preachers in the Church of God. They are accepted without debate. We have had decades when our culture influenced our movement to discourage women in pastoral ministry. Efforts have been made to channel female religious careers into Christian Education, Music Ministry, Literature, etc. However, since women are involved in all professions of the world arena, there is now a trend to encourage women to prepare for the ordained ministry. It is

disappointing that the church continues to remain with male domination when it should have pioneered the equal status for women.

It has been my happy privilege to serve as a Church of God pastor with a broad acceptance of the church at large and the blessing of God upon the ministry. Being a lady is not at all a liability. Both men and women have roles in God's service and must complement each other, rather than compete against each other. Several things needful for the lady in the pulpit to remember are as follows:

1. Be faithful first to God in responding to His call.
2. Keep priorities in order; the gospel and the church are much more important than women's rights. Let your work be evidence of a divine calling.
3. Cooperate in a humble spirit with men or women in the ministry. (I sure need my brothers, they can do some things much better than I can.)
4. Remember our heritage, keep up with the contemporary, create new designs for the future.

5. Always be feminine.

6. Refuse to be inferior.

"Never underestimate the power of a woman" is more than a cliché. Woman power in the ministry must be God's power through a human resource. To engage this source of strength in a greater capacity these steps are necessary:

1. Educate the church to understand the true biblical concept of the place for women in the ministry.
2. Grant equal opportunity for all qualified persons in Christian service.
3. Challenge our culture to rise above the barrier of sex discrimination.

I am deeply indebted to many persons for a fruitful ministry. God has highly honored my feeble abilities. My devoted husband, understanding family, and loyal congregation provide essential support. My colleagues in the ministry are indispensable. The church-at-large has been exceptionally kind.

Speaking about "putting a woman in her place"—God has placed woman in His world with a place in the home, society, the church, and also a place as *the lady in the pulpit*.

## "But YOU Can't be a Pastor ..."

Jan Erickson-Pearson

When I first started thinking about pastoral ministry as a vocation for myself, I saw no need to be a part of the feminist movement. So what if I am a woman? That shouldn't make any difference. I want to be a pastor, not a *woman-pastor*. If this is what God wants me to do, I don't need a movement to respond obediently.

I was wrong.

As soon as I began to tell people of my plans to enter seminary and prepare for pastoral ministry, I began to hear what many of you have likely heard. "Pastor? You can't be a pastor. You're a *woman!*" "A lady minister, eh? Well, you certainly don't intend to preach do you?" "I guess it's okay for gals to be pastors. But not in my church." "I suppose there is one good thing about lady ministers—they're prettier."

I knew that what I planned to do was new and different. I knew that some people would need time to adjust to it. But I had no idea that resistance and hostility would be so strong. I supposed that only tradition prevented women from involvement in the pastoral ministry.

I needed the support of other women and men in order to deal both with questions of understanding and with the emotional stress that always seems to accompany the challenging of the status quo. When a man announces to family and friends that he plans to "enter the minis-

try," there is much rejoicing and praising God. When a woman makes a similar announcement, there is a lot of muttering. Regardless of how I perceived myself, others saw me as a potential *woman-pastor*. Not quite the same caliber as a *pastor*. I began to understand the need for a feminist movement and my involvement in it.

Of all the responses to my plans, one was particularly haunting. "So you are going to be a minister? You need to be awfully strong and talented to be a woman minister these days. You'll have to be *great* in order to prove that women can do it!"

I didn't know I was called to be great. God was calling me to be faithful and obedient, to use my talents as best I could. But to be great? I'm not great, so maybe I had better not continue. I would hate to blow it for those who follow. I'm no Superwoman.

I thought about the few women I knew in places of authority and leadership. They were superior women. Strong; extraordinarily talented; very confident; generally far more capable than the men they worked with. They had to be. With all the odds of tradition and prejudice against them, they had fought for a place with the male-dominated system—and won. They had been important models for me. They were the exceptions that proved that



women could make it in the professional world.

What about me? I was not one of those extraordinary women. Yet I firmly believed I was gifted by God for service as a pastor. Should I try to be Superwoman and fight to prove my value? Or get out because I simply was not exceptional?

I wondered if there were other women like me? Women who were gifted but not necessarily “great”, and who were also called to ministries in the Church. What were they doing?

Many of them were feminists—Christian feminists. They were concerned not just with women having access to the system; they wanted to transform it. They believed that *all* women, not just a few exceptions, should have the freedom to choose where and how they would live and work. They were not only interested in getting a share of power; they wanted to re-define it. They were aware that the world is full of gifted, but not extraordinary women who, because of their unwillingness or inability to win a place in the structure, have been consigned to roles where they could not exercise those gifts to full capacity.

I began to identify as a Christian feminist because I believed that *all* women should be free to respond to God’s call. Feminism was no longer a dirty word for me, but a Christian one. It implied unselfish sisterhood. *My becoming a biblical feminist set me on a course of concern not only for my own career, my own freedom, but of concern for the freedom and wholeness of other women as well.*

My Pilgrimage toward pastoral ministry and feminism began early, but was not without detours. I grew up (almost literally) in a small, evangelical church in the midwest. As early as I can remember, I heard from my parents and the women who taught me in Sunday School that Jesus loved me and wanted me to follow him.

There was no distinction made between the way Jesus loved and called boys and girls. We were all invited to have a personal relationship with Jesus and to be obedient to his teaching. So far as I knew it then, his teaching did not have different implications for boys and girls. As I grew older, I came to experience and understand Jesus’ love, and made a commitment to follow him. That early commitment proved to be a strong foundation upon which a more mature faith developed. Also from this foundation grew my expectation that any career I later pursued would be related to the Church.

The swing set in our back yard was my first choir loft. Our living room staircase was the scene of my first sermons. Every Saturday morning I would assemble all of my dolls and stuffed animals in rows on the stairs, lead them in singing my favorite choruses, and then preach to them. I am told that my sermons were very enthusiastic and evangelistic; especially for a 5-year-old. I like to think of that as valuable early

training for life as a pastor!

Cousin Sharyl and I also liked to play church together. She was usually the preacher because she didn’t mind being a “boy,” and by that time we had learned, of course, that *our preacher had to be a boy.* (Detour number one.)

By age seven I had decided to be a minister’s wife. At that point I did not care at all who the minister was; I just wanted to be the woman who got to live in the parsonage, have people over for coffee, direct the choir, and teach Bible classes. The reason for that choice likely had something to do with the example set by the minister’s wife in my church. She had an important and strong ministry in our community. I wanted to do what she did. Besides, it sounded exciting. (Detour number two.)

While in junior high I began browsing in the occupation handbooks in the library. Such books had one section for girls and a separate one for boys. I was interested in education and social services. There were not many full-time options which covered all of those interests. (Ministers were not listed in the girls’ section.)

I remember flipping through the boys’ section and stopping at the entry on ministers. What a tidy way to combine all of my career ideas! But I was a girl and that was not an option for me. I all but forgot about it. (Detour number three.)

I left for college with vague and unenthusiastic intentions of becoming a counselor or teacher. I was interested in both, but alone each seemed lacking. The call to some kind of church work would not be still. Thus I chose North Park College (Chicago) because of its immediate proximity to a seminary.

But deep inside of me was a sense that God’s call to me to serve could not be dependent on who, or if, I married. Through periods of doubt and questioning, this sense of calling grew. God used my participation in a small singing group to awaken my specific interests in pastoral ministry. A summer spent traveling from church to church gave me a clearer picture of the frustrations and opportunities which are a part of pastoral ministry. But it had not yet dawned on me that I could be a pastor. So I told people I met that I was interested in Christian Education. They were thrilled.

Meanwhile, my thoughts of marrying a minister were fading fast. The fellow I was dating had no such intentions, and dreamed of being a mail carrier or urban planner. As we moved toward marriage, I began to realize that if anyone in our family was going to be a minister, it would have to be me. When the thought crossed my mind, I was at once awed and at home with it. It was the perfect synthesis of all my other career plans.

I realized that while all along I thought I wanted to be a minister’s wife, I had actually wanted to be a minister. I never recognized it because it wasn’t on the list of options. I hadn’t

known of any women serving as pastors, and no one had ever asked me to consider it. Now for the first time my desired vocation had a name—pastor.

I suddenly became aware of women who were serving as pastors. They helped make my new career seem like a realistic possibility. God also provided a number of women friends to encourage me and give support as I planned to attend seminary. Together we studied scripture, as well as church history, and found numerous though obscured, examples of women as ministers, sharing authority with men. I was especially struck by the way Jesus treated women. In a day when the teaching of Torah to women was strictly forbidden, Jesus took time to teach them the truths of the Kingdom, praising their interest and participation in his ministry.

I found Priscilla and Aquila quite by accident. Sometime after I decided to attend seminary, my husband-to-be also decided to prepare for pastoral ministry. These friends of the Apostle Paul were exciting to discover in the pages of Acts. They were a precedent for the husband-wife team ministry we have begun to prepare for.

My family and friends were getting used to the idea that I really did plan to go to seminary and become a pastor. It wasn't a passing fancy. They expressed various degrees of enthusiasm, but were at least interested.

Unfortunately, much of the interest previously expressed in my plans shifted to those of my husband. "How is Dave doing? How much school does he have left? What kind of ministry is he planning on?" People who knew that both of us were in school would instead ask me about my part-time typing job. When we went out for dinner, Dave was asked to pray because *he* was going to be a minister. *He* was given ideas for sermon illustrations. *I* was asked if I enjoyed cooking.

This is not all in the past. As time goes on, reactions have become more subtle. I have

preached several times in local churches. Each time comments expressed to me afterwards have concerned my appearance, not the content of my sermon.

I have a hard time knowing how to deal with these reactions. Should I express honest anger and hurt or be patient and gracious? People are not exactly rejecting *me*; they simply cannot fully accept the *idea* of women as pastors. But I am not an idea; I am a woman. By making these comments, people do inhibit me from being the person I could and should be.

I find it very exciting to see women not only moving into pastoral ministry, but helping transform it. I do not expect to be an "answer woman" or a perfect example to be revered and placed on a pedestal. I see my ministry more in terms of service than authority. The respect accorded a pastor is not something to be hoarded, but a tool for enabling the faith and ministry of others.

At the very heart of my pilgrimage has been the promise of Christian freedom. The abundant life which Christ offers has freed me from having to fit a role prepared for me by society. It has freed me from trying to meet all of the expectations of others. I am free to be myself—a woman gifted by God and called to service in the Church. Not a superwoman, with extraordinary talents and strengths, but one who struggles to be faithful and obedient. And one who needs the strong arms of supportive sisters and brothers when I get discouraged.

I have learned that this freedom is not a point at which I arrive, but a process and journey towards God's future. It is the awareness of hope and wholeness, and the confidence of finding meaning in each new day. Freedom is not something I possess. It is always ahead of me, luring me forward. Yet it has already broken in upon me. I experience and celebrate it as I choose to be *God's woman*.

## A Personal Perspective on Women in Ministry

Marilyn K. Henry

As I sat down to begin this article, the phone rang. On the other end of the wire was a reporter from a local paper requesting to interview me for an article she was writing on women in ministry. I consented and the questions began.

It interests me that such articles abound these days. While the furor continues within some denominations and congregations as to whether or not women can, may, will or should be involved in ministry, the fact is that a growing

number of women are involved. The abundance of such articles is a sign to me that a growing segment of society is seeking to accept and adjust to what has already become fact.

In my telephone interview I was asked why I entered the ministry. With smooth tactfulness the question was put to me which, paraphrased, would read, "Did you, a female, enter a male-dominated profession because you were trying to prove something?"



My response was that I entered the pastoral ministry because it was a personal calling by the God I serve. I did not choose to enter the ministry because I was a woman, nor did I back away from it for that reason.

Questions were asked about how I have been received by the congregation in which I serve and the community in which I live. Basically, I have been well accepted, although there are persons in or on the fringe of my congregation who have difficulty with the concept of a woman serving as pastor. One such person has verbalized his feelings, "She's doing a good job; I just can't cope with women in the ministry." Some persons in the community do a "double take" when I am introduced to them. But this reaction is one of surprise rather than rejection.

I was asked to speak at the Community Thanksgiving service four months after my arrival here. I had a certain degree of reservation about accepting. The hesitation came not from the service itself but from the fact that it was being held at the Roman Catholic Church. I accepted the invitation, however, and all went well. The attendance was not the largest on record for such an event, nor was it the smallest.

Generally, the acceptance of my ministry by fellow ministers seems to be good. Such acceptance is objectively evidenced in two ways. I am presently serving as president of the local ministerial association and I serve as president of the Anderson School of Theology Alumni Council. In neither case do I feel like a "token" or figurehead.

Perhaps I have not taken a large enough sampling to make the next statement. In fact, I haven't taken a survey at all. But in my own experience I have found the segment of society to offer the most resistance to my ministry to be *other women in ministry*. These have offered more resistance than even my extended family members who belong to a denomination that does not approve of female clergy.

During my seminary experience I was somewhat frustrated by the fact that the professor who was in charge of placing interns twice apologized to churches for sending a woman to serve them. Overall, however, I found the seminary community to be supportive of my ministry. The majority of both students and professors who were there during my four years at the School of Theology accepted me on the basis of my competence for ministry rather than my sex, eye color or shoe size.

Resistance, or the lack of it, on the basis of my sex has not been a problem in ministry about which I have ever worried very much. From the very beginning I have felt that if God called me into ministry, there would be a place for me to serve. Idealistic? Simplistic? Maybe so. But the fact is, I haven't worried much about it.

Yet, the process of placement for women ministers can be a difficult one. The first problem to overcome is that most congregations have simply never thought of having a female minister. The prejudice against the idea cannot be dealt with in a church until the idea has been raised. Such was the case in my first full-time placement. It took time for the idea initially to be considered and then internalized. Had it not been for a series of respected persons continuing to recommend me while that internalizing took place, the outcome of my placement would have been very different.

As I consider my own ministry, I seldom think consciously of myself as a woman minister. I consider myself simply as a minister. I am relatively new at it and I have much growing to do. The mistakes I make have nothing to do with the fact that I am a woman. The successes I have are not attributable to the fact that I am a woman. I look forward to the day that interviews stop coming merely because I am a woman involved in ministry. That will be the day that society will have accepted what is already fact, and ministers—both men and women—can get on with doing the job at hand.

## Quotes Worth Pondering

"What has the Church of God taught about the status of women? The pioneers of the Church of God, such as D. S. Warner, considered women equal to men. Women were a part of the evangelizing teams. They served as exhorters and counselors. Somewhat later they also served as evangelists and pastors. They have been highly successful, too. The Church of God teaches that the words of Paul which agree with the teachings of Jesus are to be the guide for today. Paul said some things relative to women that were called for because of local conditions in his time . . . The Church teaches that every dedicated person is called to exercise the gifts God has

given him or her . . . What might happen if every person in the Church were to identify his or her gifts, and then go to work according to the gifts? What if everyone were to be supportive of others in their God-given roles?"

Anna E. Koglin, "The Status of Women in the Church," *Vital Christianity*, May 1, 1977.

Speaking of the decreasing percentage of women pastors—"We have not been true to our heritage."

Robert Nicholson, Workshop,  
February 26, 1977.

# Recommended Reading for Ministers

Helen Newell

The following sources are recommended as basic reading for understanding the role of Women in Ministry:

Demarest, Victoria Booth. *God, Woman and Ministry*. St. Petersburg, FL: Valkyrie Press, 1978, 182 pp.

The author, granddaughter of the founders of the Salvation Army, shares insight and wisdom gained from more than seventy years of experiences as an evangelist and minister. In this book Virginia Booth Demarest offers encouragement to women who believe God has called them to the ministry and suggestions to those seeking solutions to the dilemma of women's rights. This easy to read book is inspirational yet provocative for both women and men.

Jewett, Paul. *Man as Male and Female*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975, 200 pp., \$2.95.

An exegetical and theological work on the relationships between men and women. The author differentiates between Paul's statement of principles and the cultural conditions of his times. His approach is that biblical principles studied suggest full-equality between men and women under God and asks that the church recognize this in the marriage relationship and in the equal participation in the work of the church.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *Women, Men, and the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977, 142 pp., \$3.95.

This provocative Bible study attempts to free persons from the mythical stereotypes that value

women only as wives, mothers, and servants. Christian equality is the result of mutual submission and voluntary loving service between persons. Mollenkott gives some principles to enable one to learn to interpret the scripture more accurately. The book represents an important corrective of much of the feminist and anti-feminist literature available today. A study kit is available with leaders guide, three 60-minute cassette tapes, and this book for group study.

Russell, Letty M. *The Liberating Word*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976, 121 pp., \$3.95.

The purpose of the four Biblical scholars and theologians, all women who have contributed to this book, is to eliminate sex bias in Bible interpretation. The book is a useful resource for study and action in church groups that seek to understand the roots of Bible language in relation to our contemporary society and to overcome sex bias and stereotyping. Suggestions for study and action are given for each chapter.

Williams, Don. *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church*. Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1977, 157 pp., \$3.25.

The author presents a cursory examination of six widely read books dealing with the role of women in the church and/or family. He then attempts to define Paul's understanding of the woman's role, theologically, historically, and practically. This book will encourage biblical feminists and yet challenge others to seriously reevaluate their thinking about Paul and his view of women in the church.

## Church of God Heritage: Reformation Reflections

### WORKSHOP REPORT

- February 5-8, Anderson School of Theology
- 85 Registered Participants
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Here's what *they* said about the experience:

We have a great heritage and it is a great privilege to be alive to celebrate our 100th birthday as a Movement. Thanks for your efforts in organizing a great workshop.

V. Ward Jackson

Once again, I have been reminded and rejoice in the rich heritage we have in the Church of God.

Jenny Schwieger

How can a heritage be appreciated and passed on if little is known about it? My, what an eye-opener this workshop has been.

Hardy Steinke

It was a tremendous joy to be a part of the Centennial Workshop. The resource leaders were full of information and shared very warmly.

Omer Blevins

It was a most humbling experience to review the glorious heritage of the Church of the living God reformation movement. The fellowship, love and kindness of the staff and students at the college was very much appreciated.

James H. Rainey

This type of program should be made available to a wider audience. Our deep appreciation to those who made this program available and to the speakers for their work and sharing.

C. W. Baldwin

The heritage seminar stimulated a fresh interest, and pride in the rich background that is mine in the Church of God.

Paul Hutchins

I was impressed with the ability of the speakers to communicate information that would otherwise be lost to a great majority of the Church.

G. Bruce Queen

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#### WORKSHOP TAPES AVAILABLE

Did you miss the workshop? You can still hear the presentations! Eight Heritage Workshop tapes in a vinyl cassette album are available. They are excellent for personal use or for your church library.

Order sets now by sending cash, check, or money order for \$24.25 (includes postage and handling) to the Center for Pastoral Studies.

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## Contributors To This Issue

**Dr. D. Elton Trueblood** is a well known educator and theologian. For many years he was on the faculty of Earlham College School of Religion. Known as the "Quaker Philosopher" he has written many books. He is presently Professor-at-Large of Earlham School of Religion. This essay is taken from the *Quarterly Yoke Letter*, June 1976 and is used by permission.

**Dr. Harold L. Phillips** was long time Editor-in-Chief at Warner Press, and since his retirement has been serving in the Anderson School of Theology as Professor of New Testament Studies. A popular teacher and preacher, he is called to all parts of this country and elsewhere for leadership in seminars, ministers meetings, and local congregations. He is author of many books and articles.

**Dr. Lillie McCutcheon** has been pastor of the First Church of God in Newton Falls, Ohio since the mid 1940's. She has held numerous leadership positions on both local and national levels. She is in constant demand as lecturer and preacher.

**Rev. Marilyn K. Henry** is pastor of the First Church of God in Hoopston, Illinois. She is a 1978 graduate of the Anderson School of Theology and is President of the School of Theology Alumni Council. She serves the local community as President of the Ministerial Association.

**Ms. Helen Newell** is a student at Anderson School of Theology. She is presently preparing for wider ministry in Christian Education and brings many rich experiences to her concern for women in ministry.

**Ms. Jan Erickson-Pearson** is a student at North Park Seminary in Chicago. She hopes to be ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America. This article is taken from the January/February 1979 issue of *Daughters of Sarah*, 4011 North Avers, Chicago, Illinois 60618, and is used by permission.

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### Centering on Ministry

**Jerry Grubbs, Editor**  
**Nancy B. Smith, Admin. Assistant**

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*Centering on Ministry* is published by the Center for Pastoral Studies and sent without charge to all graduates of the School of Theology and to all persons enrolled in Continuing Education through the Center for Pastoral Studies, and on occasion is sent also to all Church of God pastors and a limited number of other persons. Jerry C. Grubbs is Editor of *Centering on Ministry* and Director of the Center for Pastoral Studies of the Anderson School of Theology. He is Director of Continuing Education in Ministry, an opportunity made available to all persons in the Church of God engaged in ministry, regardless of their educational background. Information will be sent to you if you request it from the Center for Pastoral Studies. The General Assembly has officially asked the Center for Pastoral Studies to carry leadership initiative and responsibility for Continuing Education in Ministry in the Church of God. Our service is just a postage stamp away — why not use it?

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