

Conflict

and

Change:

Responses

to

Women's Ordination

in the

Diocese of Tennessee

1976-2006

Submitted for publication on the occasion of the 30th
anniversary of the decision to ordain women in the
Episcopal Church
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in
The Diocese of Tennessee
1976-2006**

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PREFACE

The Right Reverend William Evan Sanders, D.D.
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Thirty years ago, the 1976 General Convention of the Episcopal Church made the historic decision to approve the ordination of women to the priesthood. While the motion was strongly supported by a majority of the bishops, clergy, and lay deputies, there were many who were still opposed. The vote of approval in the House of Bishops was 95 to 61. Immediately, a group of bishops presented a signed statement that they, in good conscience, could not accept the action of the House. The next day, the House of Deputies, comprised of four clergy and four laity from each diocese, held four hours of solemn debate, concluding with silent prayer, and then concurred. By diocesan deputations, the vote was: clergy: 60 in favor, 39 opposed, and 15 divided; laity: 64 in favor, 35 opposed, and 15 divided. After years of debate, study, and prayer, the General Convention had come to a decision. It would now depend on the experience of the Church with women in the priesthood to discover if this step would be generally accepted and be seen as God's will for the Episcopal Church.

The Thirtieth Anniversary Committee of the Diocese of Tennessee has compiled this booklet to provide clergy and lay leaders of different points of view an opportunity to share their recollections and comments regarding this extremely important development in the life of the Church. The Committee has asked me to write the Preface in order to place their comments in a brief historical context and also share my personal reflections as bishop coadjutor and then diocesan bishop through many of these years.

At a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the approval of the ordination of women, I stated that it was the most significant development in the life of the Episcopal Church in the last half of the 20th century. It is remarkable that in the face of centuries-old tradition against the ordination of women the Episcopal Church opened the door to that possibility. The ordained women have been given widespread acceptance and support in their ministry. Their devotion, unique personal gifts and insights, have profoundly enriched and strengthened the Church in its life and mission in these thirty years.

In spite of the fact that women have been the heart and strength of the Church from the beginning, positions of authority and leadership have often been closed to them. Men and women have assumed it was not only the way it was, but the way it should be. Through the years, women who were more than half of the members could not serve on a parish vestry or be a deputy to General Convention. Happily, we have come a long way since then, but it took a while. From 1949 to 1967, efforts to approve the seating of women as deputies to General Convention failed. Finally, at the 1967 Convention, the Constitution was broadened from "laymen" to "lay persons" in stating qualifications for those who might be elected. The action was ratified by the

1970 Convention and for the first time, women were seated as deputies. The Church does not move in haste! I recall that in one of the subsequent General Conventions, the Diocese of Tennessee had two men and two women as deputies. Surprisingly, the men voted *for* the ordination of women and the women voted *against*.

In the same general period of the 1950's and 1960's, a similar trend was occurring at the local level. I recall early in the period the St. Mary's Cathedral Chapter's taking the bold step of inviting the president of the Episcopal Church Women to its meetings with voice but no vote. By the mid-1960's, women were serving on vestries and as delegates to conventions in many dioceses. One of our long-tenured priests who was slow in accepting this trend was rapidly converted when he became the first priest in Tennessee to have a very able lady elected as his Senior Warden.

The consideration of the ordination of women was a major issue at the 1968 Lambeth Conference, a meeting of the bishops of the Anglican Communion held every ten years at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. While it had no legislative authority over the member Provinces of the Communion, it did wield considerable influence. The bishops were divided by the issue as had been the clergy and laity, and I might add, the Tennessee bishops. Our diocesan bishop was deeply opposed, and as his coadjutor, I was strongly in favor. We were well aware of our differences about this issue and were not surprised to find ourselves voting on different sides as each of us was called to vote in accordance with our own convictions. The fact that we disagreed on such a divisive issue and still held each other in mutual respect and friendship did much to enable the clergy and laity of the diocese to consider the issue in the same open spirit.

While the 1968 Lambeth Conference did not result in a clear endorsement of the ordination of women, it did further its consideration. There was serious debate whether or not there were any essential theological reasons to exclude women from ordination to the priesthood. The Conference took a middle-road position that the theological arguments presented for and against the ordination of women to the priesthood were inconclusive. However, the Conference passed a resolution recommending that member churches make provisions for qualified women to share in the conduct of public worship, to preach, to baptize, to read the Epistle and Gospel, and to help in the distribution of the elements. Later in 1971, the Anglican Consultative Council, a fairly new body of clergy and laity representative of the member churches of the Anglican Communion, declared it was acceptable for a bishop to ordain a woman to the priesthood with the consent of his national church or province.

The trend in the Episcopal Church was toward approval. At the 1973 General Convention, the issue was addressed first in the House of Deputies, came close to passage, but failed because approval required more than a simple majority. There was such disappointment among some of the most ardent advocates that they attempted to take matters into their own hands and proceeded later with a service in which three retired bishops sought to ordain 11 women without the approval of their bishops or dioceses. The House of Bishops was convened immediately and disavowed the so-called ordinations. This irregular service was harmful to the cause they were seeking to advance and very disruptive to orderly consideration of the issue by the

whole Church. In spite of the strong negative reaction, the 1976 General Convention moved ahead and approved the ordination of women to the priesthood. The House of Bishops later voted to permit the women who had been participants in the irregular ordinations to be regularized in a future public event.

I give thanks that through this difficult period of controversy the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Tennessee dealt with their differences with openness and civility. One of our Diocesan Conventions provided an opportunity to consider the issue in response to a presentation of the concerns of each side by two of our well-informed and respected lay leaders. There was a straw vote following the full discussion which indicated the majority favored approval. More importantly, everyone felt that their concerns had been fairly presented and considered.

While facing these different concerns, the diocese affirmed respect for the conscientious position of each member. That same spirit was expressed by the House of Bishops. After the approval of the ordination of women, the House stated that no bishop, priest, or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner for opposing or supporting the ordination of women. At the 1978 Lambeth Conference, a similar position was expressed commending respect for those holding different convictions. As we began to ordain women in Tennessee, I made it clear that women priests would not be placed in positions where they would not be fully welcomed and supported. It is sad and destructive when we resort to force and canons to advance our cause rather than patience and persuasiveness.

The experience of the Diocese of Tennessee and most of the Episcopal Church in the thirty years which women have served in the ordained ministry has been remarkably positive. We have been blessed with mature and able applicants who have had a clear sense of vocation and a loving concern for people. They have commended themselves by their presence and pastoral care and skill. They have been welcome partners in the community of clergy in each of the Tennessee dioceses. It is important that we be well aware of the broad impact of ordained women in the life and mission of the Church: as associates in large parishes; as vicars and rectors in rural and urban congregations; as university and institutional chaplains; in community outreach ministries; and as members of diocesan and General Church staff. In light of this experience, it is little wonder that practically all dioceses have women priests, several have women bishops, and at a recent General Convention, a very bright, articulate, and grace-filled woman was elected as our Presiding Bishop.

The long period during which the Church debated the ordination of women was very difficult for the women who felt called to a ministry not open to them. They knew that they could not be considered for candidacy to the priesthood until General Convention approved, and even then, they would not be considered by Bishop Vander Horst. Some had completed the Education for Ministry program primarily for laity, and a few had entered seminary to prepare for lay ministry or, if possible, priesthood. The diaconate had been approved for women at the 1973 General Convention, and one who had been recently ordained deacon in another diocese, moved to Knoxville because of her husband's transfer. She found herself in a diocese in which the bishop would not welcome her as a deacon or encourage her regarding entrance into

the priesthood. It was a painful situation for her, but she handled it gracefully and assisted the University Chaplain as a trained counselor and pastor.

Following the 1976 General Convention's approval of the ordination of women to the priesthood, it was a great joy for me to share with the Commission on Ministry in counseling these women who were considering their sense of vocation and their qualifications for the ordained ministry. Most of them came to us after significant study and service as active lay persons in their parishes and out of conviction that they were called now to a special ministry of priesthood in the Church. Happily, we had many highly-qualified applicants, and it was a privilege to work with them in their preparation and entrance into the ordained ministry.

The opening of the ordained ministry to women has released a flood of new gifts and spirituality for the mission of the Church. It is also a statement about the respect in which women should be held and the place and role of women in the leadership, not only in the Church, but in society. A burning question for our examination and prayer, and perhaps our penitence, is why the Church did not open the doors sooner?

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When I was ordained in 1965 the issue of women in ordained ministry was not in the forefront of theological discussions. The issue that consumed our clergy gatherings was the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. As this discussion became somewhat regularized in the liturgical trial usages the question of ordaining women became more on everyone's radar screen.

I was opposed to this idea in large part because the tradition of male priesthood had stood the test of time so I could see no reason to change. I ran for the position of Deputy for the 1973 General Convention from the Diocese of Atlanta. All candidates had to declare where they stood regarding the prayer book revisions and women's ordination. I was for the former but would vote against the later. I was not elected to the delegation but made the first alternate.

I attended the Louisville Convention and listened intently to the debates on both the prayer book and women's ordination. I had a chance meeting with my former Systematic Theology professor, the Reverend Dr. Charles Winters. I asked him about the issue, certain that he would support me. He responded that he found no theological reason for denying women ordination. I was stunned. His response drove me to begin a process of rethinking this whole issue.

During my Doctor of Ministry study in 1976 I had the opportunity of taking a course in Feminist Theology under Professor Johnson from Union Seminary, New York. I spent a lot of time in debate and discussion over the role of women in the Church. I read deeply and slowly came to the awareness that I had been wrong. There was no theological reason to deny women ordination.

When Eloise Lester, the first woman postulant from Atlanta, was in seminary I asked her to be our Theological Education Sunday speaker. She was a good friend with whom I had shared much about my journey on this question. This was also the Sunday of my daughter's baptism. My in-laws were not at all that keen on a woman in the pulpit but when they met Eloise their hearts were also changed. This has been one of the most amazing discoveries for me: when the idea takes flesh and blood, hearts and minds are often changed.

For me, also, the issue of the leadership of women became important. I appointed the first female Senior Wardens at St. Jude's, Smyrna; St. John's, Tallahassee; and St. George's, Nashville. We have too long overlooked the gifts and talents of women and I have long repented over my earlier position.

When I was looking for a third member of the clergy staff at St. John's, Tallahassee, an unfortunate situation had happened in another parish of comparable size. The rector had called a woman to be an associate. She had accepted and when presented to the vestry she was turned down. It created a huge chasm in the leadership of that parish. I was bound and determined not to face that crisis.

I went to the vestry with the idea of a woman filling this position. I went over the calling process and the search committee that I planned to use with this search. I was clear that I was not asking for an answer that evening but

it would be on the agenda the following month. They were instructed to talk with their families, friends, etc. and come prepared to discuss this. We were not going to go through what the other parish experienced.

When we met the following month there was not a dissenting voice. Clearly, they wanted me to find the best possible candidate, male or female. We rejoiced when the Reverend Mary Margaret Saxon joined the staff.

A story about her is appropriate. One of the matriarchs, who was later elected to the vestry to keep me from renovating the historic church (which is another story for another time), was not in favor of the ordination of women. She also wanted the 1928 Prayer Book together with Morning Prayer. She was stricken with cancer and I was making frequent home visits in her final days. The last evening I dropped by she asked me to sit next to her on the bed. She said, "You know I still don't agree with women being ordained." I nodded. "But, you know, I love Mary Margaret," she added.

When I came to St. George's I raised the same issue over having a female priest on the staff. I approached it the same way that I did with St. John's. I gave them one month to think on this issue and when the time came for that discussion it was much the same outcome: I was to find the best possible person. It made it easy for me to call the Reverend Peggy Adams, for she was already very well known around the parish. Later, when another opening occurred, the Reverend Gene Manning was added to the staff. It was clearly, for me, the most wonderful staff I have ever had the privilege with which to work.

As I reflect now on the whole process of discernment, it has been a great joy in my life. I discovered what had been missing all these years when the first female priest celebrated the Eucharist with me: the fullness of the voice of God. God made us male and female. It is only when both men and women are represented in the clerical order do we have the possibility of hearing God's Word for us today.

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During the late 1960's and early 1970's I gradually began to arrange for education classes for all ages at Christ Church and become the Director of Christian Education officially when the Vestry decided to pay me. During that time I was appointed to the diocesan Christian Education Committee by Bishop Sanders and asked by Bishop Gates to serve on the Department of Youth Work. I coordinated several diocesan Camp Gailor-Maxon summer programs with priests in the diocese.

I have had no experience with the ministry of deaconesses. I guess that is because we never had a deaconess at Christ Church.

I was in favor of the ordination of women from the first time I heard anything about it. Biblically, I always felt that women were very much accepted and involved in Jesus' ministry and teaching. I felt very much accepted in my role as Director of Christian Education by both the Reverend Lane Denson and the Reverend Eric Greenwood who were the rectors with whom I served. They gave me authority and decision-making responsibilities not often given to lay persons, let alone women. Bishop Sanders also gave me considerable responsibility as Secretary of the diocesan Christian Education Committee. Bishop Vander Horst had a very different attitude. When Bishop Sanders asked me to Chair the diocesan Christian Education Committee, Bishop Vander Horst called me to say that Bishop Sanders had made a mistake in asking me to serve in that capacity and that as long as he was bishop, no woman would ever serve as Chair of a diocesan committee. I admired the bishops who were willing to take risks involved in the irregular ordinations of women in Philadelphia. I was very pleased when the 1976 General Convention decided to ordain women to the priesthood.

I feel even more pleased at the present time that women have been ordained because those I know have made admirable contributions, in part, I think, because of their inherent qualities of sensitivity to the needs of people; and their intuition.

I remember that before the decision was made to ordain women, the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) had their own meetings during the diocesan conventions and very seriously made and passed many resolutions even though we realized our resolutions would have no bearing on ultimate diocesan decisions. Perhaps the only resolution made by the Episcopal Church Women that influenced the diocese, was deciding to do away with the existing Episcopal Church Women structure (which was very cumbersome with departments, department chairs, planning for monthly general meetings, yearly elections, workshops, etc.) and urge women to become involved in the ministries and work of the diocese. It was also recommended at that time that the United Thank Offering (UTO) become a family endeavor and not just for women.

A good friend, Mary Jane Levitch, who was Director of Christian Education at St. David's, decided to enter the priesthood and, after ordination, served on the staff at Christ Church for a short time before

becoming a vicar. I'm not sure I played any role in the process of her ordination. I did, however, very sincerely encourage her.

The long-term effects of the ordination of women have been very positive at Christ Church Cathedral. The Reverend Canon Anne Stevenson's ministry is far-reaching. She has taken leadership roles on important diocesan committees; has helped parishes and congregations become familiar with the Catechumenate; never misses visiting hospitalized parishioners; teaches an Education for Ministry class and a weekly Sunday Catechumenate class. She seems especially sensitive to the needs of persons involved in the many weddings at the Cathedral. I could go on and on.

I am really excited about the recent election of Katharine Jefferts Schori as Presiding Bishop.

It seems to me that the Reverend Donna Scott is also doing a super job.

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During the time frame of the 1970's, I served as vicar of a number of churches in the Diocese of Tennessee. As in most small churches, many times the leadership included women. I do not recall any major difficulty with the ordination of women in any of these small mission churches.

Although I did not have any early experience with deaconesses in the Church, my summer training prior to ordination involved two small churches in North Carolina. Due to the past experiences of deaconesses in those two churches, the work of the Church continued. This prevented the closing of two tiny congregations. Stories were told to me of the dedicated work by several deaconesses, and their interaction in the lives in the communities of that area.

Although I began my ministry in 1958, during a time when women were not allowed to be ordained, I had always favored allowing women to be in leadership roles in the Church. In fact, in one of my first churches, there was a woman who served as Treasurer. When we elected her as a delegate to the diocesan convention, I suggested that she register as *L. Miller* rather than *Lib* or *Elizabeth*. This was due to the fact that Bishop Vander Horst would never have allowed this to happen. Lib Miller made a good delegate for St. John's, Martin. We never heard one objection from the Bishop.

My acceptance of women in leadership roles in the Church has to do with the fact that in the sacrament of baptism we make no difference between male and female. Also, God chose a woman to be the bearer of His only begotten Son. Even Paul speaks of several women who apparently ministered in the various communities he visited. In my personal experience within various churches, I have always found women in leadership roles to outnumber the men.

In recollection, I was not opposed to the irregular ordination of women as priests in Philadelphia. I did think it was improper and should have been done through conventional channels, causing less friction. When Barbara Harris was elected and consecrated as Bishop Suffragan I had no problem with it. My feeling was that she must have been qualified or else the Diocese of Massachusetts, a majority of bishops, and standing committees of the Church would not have approved her. Also, if we accept women as priests it would not be appropriate to deny them ordination to the episcopacy.

I have never found strong objection to the ordination of women in any of the churches I have served. That is probably due to the fact that I never allowed it to be a concern in my leadership. There were several members in various churches who were dead-set against women priests. However, I dealt with these individuals in a pastoral relationship.

As for my position now, I was surprised and overjoyed when Katharine Jefferts Schori was elected our Presiding Bishop. After having heard her on several occasions, I felt positive that it was an election by the actions of God, the Holy Spirit.

I was appointed by Bishop Reynolds as the Manager of Missions in the diocese. This position was held during the time we were without a bishop.

I then served a year under Bishop Herlong in the same capacity. During part of that time, I also served on the Standing Committee in the diocese. We had the occasion to approve several women for ordination to the priesthood. Several of these women are still serving in the diocese.

The first woman called to the priesthood, whom I encountered, was a seminarian who did her field work under me. She was a committed Christian and was an asset to the church and the outreach organization I directed. She was well accepted by the small church we served. I was proud to be asked to be one of her presenters at her ordination to the priesthood in the Diocese of Ohio. She has since served her time as a curate and was called several years ago as the rector of a parish in Ohio.

Today we have a number of women priests within the diocese. I can only say that it has enhanced the ministry of our congregations, as well as the diocese. It has had a very positive effect upon the congregations to which they have been called. It did take some time for people to realize that the negative impressions of women priests were wrong. I feel like the same is true within the Communion, as a whole. As people begin to interact with each other they will discover that gender is not a barrier. I thank God that the Church has finally realized that our ministry has become more blessed with women serving as priests and bishops.

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I cannot remember ever having thought about the ordination of women until the Reverend Donna Scott told me that she wanted to be ordained. [I have, and have had, virtually no contact with deaconesses in my life.] I was the Episcopal chaplain at Vanderbilt in those days (1968 to 1971). My conversation with Donna would have occurred about 1969. I told Donna that her idea sounded great to me, but it was not possible at that time. I urged her, however, to talk with Bishop Vander Horst – and if necessary, to wear him out in the fashion of “the importunate widow and the unjust judge.”

She did that to no avail. I left Vanderbilt in 1971 to become a seminary professor. Shortly, after taking up that position at Nashotah House, I was asked to join the Coalition for the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and the Episcopate. (Pat Park and George Regas were the co-chairs.) I did that, and was later asked by the Coalition to line up speakers for “our side” at the up-coming Minneapolis General Convention.

It is my belief that, although we would soon achieve the canonical change that would allow women to be ordained priests and bishops, that we were successful then primarily because of our very well-organized political activity at the grass-roots level in nearly every diocese. That *crucial* grunt work was organized and pursued by Bill Coats. As I consider this now, all of these years later, I think that the people who made up the Coalition were the most amazing collection of people I’ve had anything to do with in this Church: clergy, one bishop, one African-American, a glorious (even glamorous) array of women from everywhere in the United States, from big city sophisticates to farmers. This, I think now, is what the Church ought to be - for everybody and everyone. This association is one of the best things in my life.

I am struggling at this moment to stanch the flood of anecdotal memories. Here, however, is one I do not suppress. During my time at St. Augustine’s (1967-1971), I presented Marie Moorefield for confirmation. She was working for *motive* magazine. Subsequently, she moved to Washington, D.C. and was among the eleven women irregularly ordained in Philadelphia. I wasn’t thrilled by those ordinations. Later, however, while teaching at Nashotah House, I and several other faculty members signed a statement declaring that there are no biblical or theological grounds against the ordination of women. My colleague, Jim Griffiss, (subsequently Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold’s theological consultant) brought it to Dick Grein (subsequently Bishop of New York) and me on the tennis court at Nashotah House. We interrupted our play, knelt on the rough surface and signed (unevenly) the document presented by Jim. (We did, however, read it before signing.)

In the fullness of time, finally, after too many years, Donna Scott was permitted to be ordained (I was teaching then at Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas). I was delighted and honored when she invited me to preach at her ordination.

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I was confirmed in 1958 (or 1959) at Christ Church (now the Cathedral) by the Reverend Ray Ferris, the priest who led me to love the Episcopal Church. Up until that time, I had only been a "church service attendee" at Methodist churches, sometimes singing in choirs, since childhood. I attended Christ Church for a few years and then attended St. Paul's in Franklin. We then purchased a home in Nashville which was located close to St. Matthias. The children were old enough to be acolytes so we moved our letter there. The boys were acolytes and our daughter sang in the children's choir. My husband, Wirt, and I taught Sunday School and sang in the choir.

St. Matthias had the first women on a Vestry, and girl acolytes of all of the Episcopal churches in Nashville. This was sometime after 1960. Also, one of the first women deacons in Tennessee served at St. Matthias. I became very active in women's work in the Church when Tennessee was one diocese. Bishop Sanders was very supportive of our work. I was appointed to the Episcopate Committee to search for a bishop for Tennessee when the Diocese split in to three separate dioceses. I was elected the first Diocese of Tennessee Episcopal Church Women (ECW) President in 1985 after the division of the Diocese. I was appointed as an Epistle reader at the last Diocese of Tennessee Convention opening service by Bishop Sanders. It was humbling, as a woman, to be asked to participate in this manner.

We welcomed Bishop Reynolds to our newly formed Diocese. Our deputation from Tennessee attended the General Convention in Anaheim, California. I was ECW President and a delegate to Triennial at that time. While there, one of our Deputies (Louis Farrell, Chancellor) was called away. Bishop Reynolds called me from the floor of Triennial to act as Deputy for the remaining three days of Convention. It was a very rewarding experience.

While at Convention and Triennial, I learned that the diocesan presidents of ECW were sitting on Bishop and Council in many states, not as elected members but as welcomed guests at all meetings. Bishop Reynolds suggested that I try doing this. I did, and it was voted down at the first meeting I attended. Chancellor Farrell stated that it made the group too large. I was elected at the following Diocesan Convention to serve on Bishop and Council. The following year, I was elected to serve as Deputy to General Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. Women were moving right along in the Church.

There are still communicants who do not wish to take communion from female priests. In the beginning, it was difficult for some women in ECW to consent to female clergy participating in ECW conferences. It was thought by some that ECW had to keep the tradition of having only male clergy participate.

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I was ordained in 1974 into an all-male priesthood in the Episcopal Church. We were more concerned with Vietnam than women's issues at Virginia Theological Seminary in the early 1970's. Things have changed in our Church, and I have certainly changed. My "maturing" in terms of social action came some 25 years ago in New York City. HIV/AIDS was new, and I was getting involved. A patient at Bellevue Hospital, blind and bed-ridden, was subjected to having his food tray left on the floor at the door to his room by hospital staff. He ate only if someone was willing to pick it up, bring it to him, and help him eat.

I realized that if the privileged do not stand with the oppressed, all the prayers in the world won't change things. They cannot be expected to fight their own battles. Since then, I have tried to find ways to stand with and for people with HIV/AIDS, people of color, and women. Pastoral care is my passion, and I define it as "being with people".

In 2003, I was appointed to the National Church's Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). Following one of our first meetings, I came back to the Diocese of Tennessee and invited women clergy to meet. I wanted to pass on the work of the committee and get their ideas and concerns to take back with me. They told me that I was the first person in the diocese to invite them to come together; to listen to them.

I represented the CSW as a liaison with the Commission on Prayer Book, Liturgy, and Music, writing letters, attending meetings, and encouraging them to move forward with more expansive language for worship. These are not just women's issues, and whether it has to do with compensation, deployment, language or leadership, I believe it is vital that women not only work closely with one another, but also for alliances with male clergy and lay people to keep them from feeling "that you are out there all by yourselves." Even in places like Tennessee, we are out there with and for you. We want to work with you, so you can continue to change us, with the qualities and styles of leadership you bring.

I served for six years on the Committee on the Status of Women, the first three as the only male who attended. I believe I was treated far better than a woman priest in a group full of males might be. 2006 was an amazing year. Katharine Jefferts Schori was elected Presiding Bishop. Bonnie Anderson was elected President of the House of Deputies. This Convention was sold-out!

Our Church has come a long way in 30 years – we still have a long way to go. From my perspective, ordained women have significantly helped us broaden our understandings of leadership, pastoral care, structures, decision-making, and the language we use about God and one another in liturgy, publications, and in conversations. I know that for many of you it has seemed a hard, lonely fight getting us just to where we are. We are all better for it, and I hope you know that you aren't alone.

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"So God created humankind in his own image; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1: 27). Let us imagine that it is through imagination that God creates. Being human is who God imagines us to be and to become. Male and female is the way God brings this creative act to pass.

God calls us to be a church so that we can fulfill her purpose for us, that is, to begin being human, to practice being human, and to become human. The ordination of women is a long overdue way to enrich and to lead us in this vocation, for it is consistent with the way God has created us, imagined us to be.

When back in 1976 we churchers first decided the ordination of women was an okay thing to do, there was not a lot of sympathy for the idea in Tennessee. The then diocesan bishop, himself something of a phrase-maker, publicly called the ordination of women "apostolic suicide." The diocese had three bishops then, only one was in favor of ordaining women. I don't remember any having to picket or demonstrate around here as we had done ten years earlier about racism. But the eventuality created its share of discrimination together with grumbles and murmurs at the coffee hour and in vestry meetings.

In 1976, it had only been ten years or so that women could even serve on vestries in Tennessee. My all-male vestry at the time had twenty-one members- -lawyers, bankers, brokers, physicians- -and could take half an hour to spend fifty dollars. When we got our first woman member, ironically herself a banker, our whole meetings didn't last much longer than that.

St. Paul never seemed to me much of a feminist. But he did say, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are..." (1 Cor 1: 27f). You see, God must have been thinking of women and knowing how we men tend to belittle them in this way and how she knew a lot better.

The ordination of women reveals something of this divine comedy that we are all involved in. Something of grace. Like all things that are worth happening, it generally has resulted in our being a little more passionate for our pains, by which I mean a little more alive, a little wiser, a little more beautiful, a little more open and understanding, a little more human. In short, the ordination of women has become an overwhelming apostolic success.

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The people of the Diocese of Tennessee have been important in my life: male and female, clergy and laity, liberal and conservative. It is not my intention to leave anyone out. However, for the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the Episcopal Church, I shall concentrate on the role of women.

I arrived in Nashville on the 22nd of December in 1975. So, I usually consider 1976 as my first year here. Great work was being done by Anne Stevens with the poor in West Nashville; by Sister Lucy Shettters with the needy on the mountain; and by Martha Bennett with children suffering handicapping conditions in Nashville. These women inspired and challenged me to support their efforts.

A bit later, Barbara Reynolds and Phebe Hethcock trained our group to serve as diocesan consultants. Donna Scott and Lynn Huber were important in the training for Stephen Ministry. Lynn Huber did pioneering work on Affirmative Aging. I am indebted to these women for enlarging my vision and showing the way for a lay person to serve God and His Church.

In my "retirement" from age sixty-six to ninety-seven, I have been privileged to associate with a veritable host of women: Episcopal Church Women (ECW) Boards, diocesan committee members, study groups, and Companions in Christ. The service of women in all congregations includes vestry membership, teaching, pastoral care, office reception, social gatherings, and Altar Guild. For example, at St. George's, where I am a member, the Altar Guild gives exquisite care to vessels, linens, and flowers. They supply for eleven Eucharists each week plus weddings and funerals. It is in this climate that a number of women came to be ordained.

A new day arrived when permission was given for women who were called of God to enter the discernment process, meet the educational and psychological requirements and stand for ordination. In more or less chronological order I should like to name a number of priests and one deacon who have inspired me and enlarged my appreciation of the role of women in the Church. There are others, undoubtedly, who are doing great work but I am asked to speak of those with whom I have had close association, or who have, by their presence and example, touched my life, whether or not they were aware of their impact: Lucy Shettters, Donna Scott, Anne Stevenson, Lisa Hunt, Dolores Nicholson, Catharine Regen, Becca Stevens-Hummon, Peggy Adams, Ann Walling, Gene Manning, and Ann Van Dervoort.

It is my belief that these ordained women have vindicated, justified, upheld, confirmed, and maintained the work of the lay women of the Church. Since they have different talents and personalities, they have blessed me in various ways. What they have in common are two concepts difficult to follow these days- - they have embraced the concepts of servant ministry and personal integrity. To God be thanks and praise.

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Because I was not confirmed as a member of the Episcopal Church until 1982, I had no involvement in any part of any early struggles of women in the Church. I had no opportunity to form any opinion, good or bad.

I feel that God calls us all to be servants in some way or another and it is up to us to pray and decide what we feel our calling is. Why should women not have as much right as any man to follow their calling and seek ordination based on the belief that it is what God is calling them to do? Another reason for my feeling this way is that in my early childhood I attended a Pentecostal Holiness church with my grandmother. I have memories of the preacher at the church being a woman. Even though I was scared to death of her because of her manner of preaching and deep voice that would send me to the floor underneath the pew in fright, I remember most that she was a wonderful caring person who worked hard and cared for her flock. I never saw any instances where any member of the congregation, or community, thought any less of her because she was a woman. She performed her duties as well as, and even better, than some of the other preachers in the area.

Having described how I feel about the ordination of women, let me briefly discuss how I have seen the attitude toward women priests change at Christ Church in Tracy City. Shortly after I was confirmed, the priest-in-charge of our congregation retired. We began a long and difficult time of struggle in which we were focused on using the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Up until that time, we had only used it on occasion when the bishop was coming. One Sunday morning an interim priest, performing the service, was accompanied by a deaconess from the seminary. She assisted him with the service. This was so disturbing to certain members of the congregation that they left the service. Following that service, and until now, there has been only one other occasion when a woman performed a service at the church. I say up until now because at the present time the service and care of the congregation is being performed by the Reverend Linda Hutton. She is one of the most capable and caring persons we have ever had at Christ Church. This comment is not just mine but it is the general feeling of the entire congregation. We have been truly blessed by her presence.

Besides this example, I can quote many instances where I have served with women priests and deacons in this diocese, and I can see no reason why their contributions can not be held up as high as, or higher in some cases, than that of their male counterparts. In many cases, a woman may be better suited to comfort, heal and tend to the needs of those who suffer and need help. Some of them may not be able to lead as well but there are many males who are equally not able to lead.

Even though God created woman from the rib of man, he gave both of them equal and individual minds, abilities, and talents. I do not feel that those talents can be controlled by either sex. I may not agree, totally, in cases of dangerous jobs, but who am I to say that a person is not suited for those jobs, as well. As I said in the beginning, God speaks to all of us. How we react to His word is our right and privilege.

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I must admit that, initially, I was somewhat ambivalent to the idea of women clergy. I had just been confirmed, and therefore had no baggage about the tradition and history of male clergy. I frankly didn't care one way or another. Plus, we were living in a small town in the boot heel of Missouri. We were a mission with few communicants and an occasional supply priest. We were fairly removed from the politics and policies of the larger Church.

When we moved to Nashville, I met several women who were laity at the time. I got to know and appreciate them for who they were. They later became priests, after General Convention opened the doors for their ordination. This brought a new dimension to our relationship, taking it to another level and enriching it. It was interesting to witness the special gifts they, as women, brought to ordained ministry.

One pivotal event seems to stand out in my memory. Early on, there was a meeting of the American Anglican Council (AAC) at St. Bartholomew's in Nashville. I had no intention of attending until my rector badgered, cajoled...what is the correct word?...my wife and me into attending. He wanted to ensure that there was representation of more liberal voices at the meeting. While sitting there, surrounded by female clergy whom I admired and respected, I heard the leadership of the American Anglican Council make disparaging remarks about women priests, statements and rationales, that I knew were untrue and inaccurate. It was an abomination to those of us of opposing sensibilities, a truly evil event. We were aghast that this type of ranting could take place in the name of the Church. My wife and I immediately became loudmouth supporters of women in the priesthood and defenders of their right to pursue Holy Orders.

I had been appointed to the Commission on Ministry during a period when several highly qualified females were aspiring to Holy Orders. I was impressed with the talents and passion for ministry these aspirants brought to the process.

I suppose the strongest motivator for my supporting the ordination of women has been personal experience in working with female priests on diocesan activities and committees. At the risk of omitting someone, priests like Lisa Hunt, Anne Stevenson, Catharine Regen, Donna Scott, Ann Walling, Sherrill Page, and Gene Manning have blessed my wife and me personally in our life, in our faith, and in the Church. We thank God for them.

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I graduated from the General Theological Seminary in New York on May 22, 1973, and was ordained to the diaconate June 24, 1973, at Christ Church, Nashville, by the Right Reverend John Vander Horst, Bishop of Tennessee. He assigned me as a deacon-in-training to St. John's Church, Knoxville, to work on staff there and to be supervised by the Reverend Daniel P. Matthews, rector. It was the eve of the 64th General Convention which would meet in the fall of that year in Louisville, Kentucky. As one of the "young Turks," as Bishop Vander Horst used to refer to the just-out-of-seminary men (and in Tennessee, we were all men), I rounded up a busload of folks to head up the road to Louisville to witness the larger Church at work first-hand for a few days. It was not often that the General Convention met in such close proximity. There was an air of expectancy and anticipation on all sorts of fronts....from the election of a new Presiding Bishop (the Right Reverend John Maury Allin, Bishop of Mississippi, would be elected that year), to continued debate on Prayer Book revision, to the "hot topic" of women's ordination in the Episcopal Church.

Women had been very much a part of my seminary experience at General from 1970-1973: faculty, students, and administrators. But none was ordained. It was in 1973 when the door opened wide enough in Louisville to allow women to be ordained to the diaconate. It would take another three years, until 1976, at the 65th General Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to change the canons, paving the way for women's ordination to the priesthood... and ultimately to the episcopate.

I was ordained to the priesthood on May 6, 1974, at St. John's Church, Knoxville, by the Right Reverend William Evan Sanders, Bishop Coadjutor of Tennessee. As was the custom in those days, the three bishops (Vander Horst, Sanders, and the Right Reverend W. Fred Gates, Jr., Suffragan Bishop of Tennessee) would confer in the spring of the year to "decide the fate" of the class of deacons soon to be ordained to the priesthood. I was sent to be the vicar of a small, rural, mission congregation in East Tennessee, St. Francis' Church, Norris. The congregation, although small, welcomed my family and me with open arms. It was a satisfying and rewarding ministry for this "green" priest. The issue of women's ordination at St. Francis' was really a non-issue. I cannot recall more than one or two people who were against it: in fact, most were all for it. There was much more upset over Prayer Book revision....*Services for Trial Use* (the "Green Book"), *Authorized Services* (the "Zebra Book"), and finally the *Proposed Book of Common Prayer*.

In 1976, during the 65th General Convention in Minneapolis, the canons were indeed amended to allow women to be ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests, effective January, 1977. And it was also in January, 1977, at the 145th Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee, held at St. Mary's Cathedral, Memphis, that Bishop Vander Horst retired and Bishop Sanders became

the diocesan bishop. In August, 1977, I accepted a call to become the Assistant to the Rector of Grace & Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, in the Diocese of Virginia. All of which is to say that I left Tennessee within months of the Episcopal Church's decision to ordain women. I remained in Virginia for the next eleven years. So, while things began to change in Tennessee, I was not privy to those changes first-hand.

When I returned to Tennessee to accept a call as Rector of St. David's, Nashville, in July, 1988, some eleven years later, things were indeed mighty different. Not only had the Diocese of Tennessee divided once (in 1983), but once again (in 1985). One of the most notable changes was how many women clergy there were when I came back. The Right Reverend George L. Reynolds, Jr. was the diocesan bishop at the time of my return, and my sense was that he was very supportive of women's ministries. St. David's, which had begun as a parochial mission of St. George's in 1963, had sent seven persons into the ordained ministry in its short history, and *five* of those were women: the Reverend Mary C. Robert, the Reverend Anne B. Bonnyman, the Reverend Mary Jane Francis, the Reverend Donna J. Scott, and the Reverend Kathryn M. Young. All were nurtured, loved, and supported along the way by the clergy and laity of St. David's. Additionally, three women have served as Assistant to the Rector: the Reverend Donna G. Gafford (1984-1987), the Reverend Sherrill L. Page (1991-1993), and the Reverend Ann Boulton Walling (2000-present).

Ordained ministry is such a privilege, and my own ministry has been deeply enriched by many, many women clergy colleagues and friends. I am grateful, thankful, and blessed.

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In the 1970's, I was active in three dioceses: Montana, Florida, and Olympia as Vicar, Assistant Rector, and Rector.

I had experience with a deaconess in the Diocese of South Florida in the 1950's and early 1960's. I had no problem accepting her, although there was no official contact between us.

I was initially in favor of women's ordination. I knew of no biblical, theological, moral, personal, or other reasons to oppose it. God calls whomsoever God chooses to call, and I cannot abrogate to myself the right to decide who is and who isn't called.

As to my response to the "irregular ordinations," I set them against my experience in the civil rights movement in which many of us "broke laws" that were racist, and with no constitutional basis, and were simply wrong. So, I couldn't be so obvious a hypocrite and condemn women who were "irregularly ordained" when the Church believed that it was wrong. Wasn't it once believed that the earth was the center of the solar system? Bad laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, etc. have to be challenged if they are to be changed.

I was, of course, in support of the General Convention's decision in favor of the ordination of women in 1976. I had voted for it as a deputy in 1973.

My position has not changed. The main reason for my position is very simple: if a woman can do the job that has to be done, then let her do it. It's simple pragmatism and a belief in equality of opportunity.

I do not recall having to deal with any responses to my decision-making, and I saw little reaction, positive or negative, in congregations that I was serving when the change was ratified. My congregations did what churches were supposed to be doing, instead of engaging in fights that I saw as having little or nothing to do with bringing in the Kingdom of God.

The first woman priest that I knew, and had contact with, was in the Diocese of Olympia. She was a good priest. I played no role in her process, nor did I resist it.

As for the long term effects of the ordination of women, for one thing, it has moved the Church into the world where it lives, moves, and has its being instead of presenting to the world a 2,000 year old museum artifact. As I am retired, I don't have a congregation but am enrolled as a parishioner in a parish in the Diocese of Tennessee that has had a woman seminarian as an assistant. As far as I can tell, she has been highly praised by everyone in the congregation.

I do believe that the ordination of women has caused some relationships to sour, as did the coming of Jesus. He said Himself that it would be so. This is part of the story of the human race. So what else is new?

Opposition to the ordination of women is part of the general prejudice against women in all cultures, whether we think of them as first, second or third world, "primitive" or "advanced," regardless of race or religion. You are perhaps aware that some of the Church Fathers, et al., see women as the

devil's entryway into the world. This sort of barbaric thinking has held sway for perhaps more than 2,000 years. So, it is not going to be erased from human thought for some time yet. Let's keep hope alive.

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When thinking about the development of women's roles in our Church, I realized that my own concerns for liturgy and justice in the Church (and society), were strongly influenced by women during the time I was the Episcopal Chaplain at Vanderbilt University. As much as my concerns were developed in a gradual process during my life, it was during 1971 to 1986 that my serious concerns were honed.

There were many, many women who come to mind, but I have chosen three to write about.

The first one, Cindy Davenport, worked with me one year as a "seminarian". She was a student at Scarritt College and a Methodist Christian educator. She wanted to decide whether to remain an educator in the Methodist Church or be ordained in the Episcopal Church.

One of the assignments I gave her was to work with St. Augustine's women groups. I think that often personal material can be more comfortably shared by undergraduates with a woman leader than with a man.

Cindy was part Native American, and believed that because of that fact her instincts for the value of things natural were strong. I think she was right. At any rate, she taught me about liturgy. She showed how there are human aspects to liturgy, and when they are joined to the more sacred, people experience the power of liturgy more fully. She was right.

Maundy Thursday foot washing comes to mind. She taught me that when washing people's feet, there is a true and deep human respect often missing in the rote way that some churches approach the service. She told me that she believed the service should be designed to take into account the intimate connection one has in that moment, as there are connections to human and very personal zones in the feet. She taught me how to create an emotionally satisfying service where people responded by saying that they were glad they had come. Often, they said that for the first time in their lives, it mattered to them that they had been touched both spiritually and physically. They even reported that they had experienced more of the dual nature of Christ in that moment of foot washing.

Cindy taught me how to help liturgy make a difference to people. She decided not to be ordained but to remain in the Methodist Church. She is still in the Methodist Church as a national leader and administrator.

The second woman, Kitty Smith, is another female who helped shape my thinking. She was also a Methodist and a civil rights' activist in Nashville. While we men were in a professional support group for men, as part of the men's movement, she was leading the way for liberation of blacks and women by speaking out as an activist organizer. She experienced discrimination, being called "that uppity black female." She taught me that black prejudice was, indeed, a serious problem, but that she had experienced a prejudice against women that was even stronger than that in our society.

From Kitty, I learned to be serious about justice. I realized my own emotional connection for gender concerns came from my own situation as a child when my mother was paid only half of what a man was paid for the same work. It was hard for her to make ends meet. I understood those social justice issues when there was not enough money when my mother needed a car for work. I dredged up the memory, that at nine years of age, I had to work for some of my school supplies because I was raised by a poorly paid woman. Kitty helped me learn from my past how to shape the future.

Both movements, civil rights for African Americans and justice for American women, were still, and are, very important to me. It was at my mother's funeral that I discovered the connection between my appreciation for both African Americans and for women. There, I met the black woman who had nursed me the first six months of my life. I discovered in that moment the bonding that pressed me to justice for both. So, it is not surprising, that the other woman in Nashville that I had learned from was a dynamic outspoken leader, Kitty Smith. She was active in the Edgehill Methodist Church.

Thirdly, Joan Morgan was a student at Vanderbilt's School of Divinity. She attended St. Augustine's Chapel. I remember once being invited to discuss Ethics and Nuclear Energy with a class in the School of Engineering. I felt that the professor had asked me to give some religious perspectives regarding Ethics and Nuclear Energy, but my knowledge of the subject was marginal, at best. So, I used my ability to find "the right person for the right job" to assist me. Not surprisingly, once again, I was led to a woman: Joan Morgan.

I asked for, and was given, permission to take a student with me. So, I invited Joan. She was very knowledgeable in Ethics and Energy. I appeared to know far more about the subject than I did because she coached me on asking her pertinent questions which she could answer. So, she did the work and made me, the man, look smart. She was the one who designed the session. The class of all male students and faculty were "knocked cold" by her expertise. Whereas, I appeared to know about the subject because I asked the right questions, it was, of course, her responses which were brilliant. I told the class that fact and then told them that when I was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt, there was only one woman in the School of Engineering in 1956, and that times were changing.

I have been blessed to have worked with many women at Vanderbilt University, and in the Nashville area, in the continuing struggle for their rightful place of leadership in the Church and for justice in the larger society. St. Augustine's was, in large part, God's way in giving me that blessing. I am grateful.

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From my perspective in 2006, it is difficult to remember feelings, discussions, and events as women increased their participation and their leadership in the Church. Now, it seems a natural, and certainly a proper and appropriate part of the Church.

I had grown up at Christ Church in Nashville where Grace Goss was, I believe, a deaconess. From my young perspective at that time, I believe she was accepted as someone who did a lot at the church.

My own feelings about women's ordination were accepting, but I didn't realize what a momentous change that would be to some people. I was a bit bewildered by the strength of objections – just as I am today over the strong feelings some hold toward those of different sexual orientations. It is easier for me to understand the anguish over the changes in the Prayer Book, which I believe was just as intense. People do not like change, so....

I was glad to see the ordinations in Philadelphia, just as I was glad to see the election of our current Presiding Bishop.

Perhaps my feelings and thoughts are simplistic. They are basically that God created all of us; that Christ died for all of us; and that the Church is the place for all of us.

We have had women on our vestry at St. Paul's – though I can't remember exact dates. Ruth Kinnard served, and I know there were mutterings about her role. I believe the election was close. As time passed, a number of us did serve on the vestry. The other role that women were beginning to fill was that of delegates to the diocesan conventions. I did serve in those ways as well as being president of the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) at St. Paul's. I worked actively with the Sunday School, also.

When the Reverend Charles Fulton was rector, the Reverend Lynne Kochtitzky came as his assistant. There was an article in the Nashville paper about her coming, I think in the context of a change that was happening in churches – ordained women. Lynne had lived in New York and told us that Madeline L'Engle had been her spiritual advisor. Lynne led some groups. Charles Fulton encouraged educational efforts, and Lynne was a big part of that.

Laura Myhr went into the ministry after being a leader at St. Paul's.

I think it is clear that St. Paul's has benefited greatly from the ordination of women. Having Ann Van Dervoot, Monna Mayhall, and Donna Scott as clergy leaders has made us a better congregation. Although not ordained, Sally Chambers and Jerry Redditt are other women who have been important in leadership at St. Paul's. I believe both Charles Fulton and Bob Cowperthwaite deserve a great deal of credit for encouraging this leadership.

I believe the Church as a whole, including the Anglican Communion, the Diocese and the Episcopal Church in the United States is stronger and better able to serve God with women in leadership roles.

I also believe that we will continue to see evidence of this in big and little ways (even to the election of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives). With each success, women show we are able to take on all leadership roles. The more this happens, the better the world will be. Surely this gives hope for the many oppressed women in many cultures.

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I moved to Sewanee in 1977 as Instructor in Systematic Theology. Prior to that, I was in graduate school at St. Michael's in Toronto. Then, and now, I am canonically resident in Southern Ohio.

I'm not sure I met a live deaconess, but my home parish in Dayton, Ohio, had been established as a Sunday School by deaconesses, and we remembered Deaconess King in our history classes and Epiphany pageant.

I was initially opposed to the ordination of women, not on inherent theological grounds, but as a matter of casting. I believed, and still believe, that the priest plays the role of an "alter Christus" in the Eucharist, and since Jesus was male, it seemed logical to cast men in the part.

I fully support the ordination of women, and have come to believe that our renewed theology of baptism dictates that anyone who can be baptized can in principle be ordained, as all the ministries of Jesus belong corporately to the body of the baptized.

Terry Holmes had a great article in the Anglican Theological Review (ATR) about this in 1973. I hope you will cite it. In my case, a number of women came to me for spiritual direction in the late 1960's and early 1970's, claiming to have a vocation to priesthood. I tried to make nuns of them, but they weren't having any. In the end, my discernment was that their vocation was valid and the Holy Spirit was saying something to me and to the Church. While refining my understanding of sacramental theology in graduate school, I came to the position outlined in the preceding paragraph. In addition, I believe the current interpretation that several of the lists of "ordained" persons contain the names of women, that the "elect lady" of II John is clearly the woman presbyter of the congregation being addressed (so Chris Bryan) and that I Timothy: 2 must be read in the context of the rest of that epistle in which the ministry of women is strongly affirmed. Chris Bryan interprets it as "I do not insist that a woman teach or have authority over men (i.e., over men who do not wish that)."

I was afraid the Philadelphia ordinations would cause a backlash, but it was small enough that it did not prevent the positive vote at the next General Convention. I still believe those first irregular ordinations were a mistake that we all are still paying the price for as group after group, right and left, decide that anti-democratic acting out is prophetic witness. I was in Canada when they had their first legal ordinations and participated. Nothing but affirmation. More of a struggle, but participated in Gilly's ordination here, and finally Sister Lucy's ordination.

I suppose my first experience was with Episcopal Theological School (ETS) classmate Molly Bidwell Radley, who was also from Southern Ohio. We took canonicals together, and she was present at my ordination to the diaconate, having been approved for ordination to the diaconate and

priesthood when that became legal at the national level. She was later ordained deacon. I was on the board of examining chaplains when the question of approving her for ordination to the priesthood came up, and reminded my colleagues that she had already been approved and that we only needed to affirm our previous decision and congratulate her. The spiritual direction incidents occurred during my time in parish ministry in Southern Ohio. The confidentiality of that ministry precludes me from naming names. In Tennessee, my first experiences were with Carlyle Gill at All Saints, and then Sister Lucy as student and now a colleague for many years.

I just wonder what took us so long, how we ever thought we could have a complete ministry without ordained women. Having now taught women ordinands for nearly thirty years, and seeing the many wonderful priests among our alumnae, I am in awe at what God has worked among us.

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I am delighted to reflect with the Diocese of Tennessee on the ordination of women. The possibility of ordination of women came on the horizon when I was rector of St. David's, Nashville. I remember Bishop Vander Horst's (and I was devoted to him) red-faced diatribe against it at a DuBose clergy conference immediately after his return from a House of Bishops meeting. I thought, "This is going to be complicated."

My experience with women deaconesses was limited. There was a lovely well-known nurse-type Deaconess Crow at Christ Church, Oak Cliff in Dallas, but we had none of today's public focus on diaconal modeling in liturgy, parish and community servanthood.

The Philadelphia ordinations concerned me because I generally prefer "due process". As I look back, I am grateful for the women and bishops that were involved then.

From the beginning, I had no objections to women's ordination. I stood by the Reverend Helen Havens of Houston, Texas at the phone booths at the 1976 Minneapolis General Convention following the positive vote in the House of Deputies and overheard her excited call home. The gifts of women have been desperately needed and, by and large, beautifully offered. What an image at the high altar of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, Abilene, in our Diocese of Northwest Texas: the Reverend Elizabeth Parker, very pregnant and carrying her baby quite low, climbing to the top step to concelebrate the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass! Her husband, the Reverend Andrew Parker, went off to seminary against women's ordination but quite soon came home to tell me of meeting "Liz" and also changing his mind. They have shared ministry deeply and have been deeply effective for years. They are raising three sons.

I was told that the fabulous Anne Bonneyman, my Tennessee parishioner, was the first woman in the state to apply for Holy Orders. One late Saturday afternoon she came into my office after meeting with the Standing Committee and asked, "Why is it so difficult? Why was there so much rudeness?" I reminded her when anyone is first it is hard to plow new ground, and this issue touches people in really strange ways, some of which reach far down into the unconscious. Anne continued on to Virginia Seminary and to outstanding ministry in Knoxville and Wilmington, Delaware parishes. She has just been installed as Rector, Trinity Church, Boston – no small honor, no small responsibility. She has largely raised three sons alone and feels a deep call to inner city ministry.

From December of 1980 to August of 1997, I served as Bishop of Northwest Texas. It was my responsibility and opportunity to introduce women's ordination to the Diocese. At first, we moved slowly, rejoicing when a conservative congregation with an old-fashioned, much-loved Anglo-Catholic priest wanted to call a female associate. Some congregations were opposed to the concept, but gradually as marvelous women appeared on the scene and got to "know the folks", the ice was broken in most places.

One must beware of generalizations but the female gift of nurturing was so welcome, and I think loosened up some of the male priests. It is poor stewardship of God's gifts not to ordain women.

Our Mission Committee Chairman was the Reverend Jo Mann, a very attractive, articulate, loving native of West Texas. We both were nervous when we went to a rural corner of the diocese to present a plan for joint congregational ministry. She spoke. The question and answer period began in dead silence. Finally, a highly-respected female leader said, "Mother Jo, we just love your hair." Jo accepted that graciously and we were off and running. That my present diocese of residence, Fort Worth (where I grew up), does not accept women priests is hurtful, sad, and destructive. I rejoice that our new Presiding Bishop is a woman – and how gifted for leadership she is!

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The first booklet, "Journeys to Ordination: A History of Tennessee Women in the Priesthood and Diaconate in the Episcopal Church," carried throughout themes of imperative conscience, determination, strength, humility, and extraordinary resilience from women who experienced their call to the priesthood. These characteristics were at the core of those who experienced their call to serve Christ in the Episcopal Church. Leadership was leadership and could be encased in many different roles, but it was to the ordained priesthood that most saw as the place where their gifts and talents would take them.

Although I came to the Episcopal Church in the 1970's at St. David's with confirmation extended from Bishop Sanders, I was aware that women had been aspiring to ordination since the 1940's. Normally, I would not have given this reality much thought but I became keenly aware of a "glass ceiling" because my best friend had expressed her desire to enter seminary and enter the ordained priesthood, a calling she had expressed since being a teenager. I found it was difficult to understand why someone with such a great mind, enormous curiosity for truth and social justice, could be marginalized because of gender and considered what a loss that would be for the Church and for the souls who would not receive the benefit of her wise counsel. But, she was clearly told she would not be allowed to enter seminary or to consider ordination in 1969. So, the pilgrimage of a friend became a personal one that lasted for 26 years until she was ordained on October 15, 1986 in our diocese. The struggle of change continues as it will always. Every generation has what are perceived to be giant issues of monumental proportions, and for many, ordination of women continues to be one of those issues.

Change seems always difficult to embrace whether it is a hemline, a social change, or a theological shift. It somehow represents loss that had kept us comfortable: power, certainty, prestige, and so on. I guess that change or shift is difficult unless you are the beneficiary of the change. In the early 1960's, my friend and I were both at Yale as working wives so our husbands could go through divinity and graduate schools. We would be the best thing next to being a minister or priest...being the wife of a minister. At the time, that was the accepted role for a woman. It seemed we understood our place and yet acceptance and understanding of the status quo would change. Yale was male. No women were allowed in the L and B Library in the Sterling Library. No women allowed at Morey's. Connecticut also had its rules which included no birth control sales allowed in the local pharmacies. Women learned by culture to be kept nicely in their place with a certain amount of control. It did not seem oppressive because Yale was very welcoming on many levels, especially at the divinity school. I do remember when being invited to faculty homes for dinner, after dinner the traditional separation took place. Women went with women and men with men for conversation. Even Dr. Sallie McFague, who was at Yale at the time, and who became a

renowned scholar and eventually Dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, was refused by the Episcopal bishop a meeting regarding ordination discussion. Christian education is where most of the women turned their energies.

Elsewhere, however, outside the academic walls, the culture was not particularly offering equal opportunity to women. Yet some of those wives, through their own education, have become scholars and leaders in their fields and have had to accomplish what they accomplished by a certain amount of "push back" on the cultural norm. Serena Jones, the child of one of the students at Yale while we were there, is now a professor at Yale. Christie Olsen, another Yale Divinity graduate is now Canon at the Washington National Cathedral. Women are succeeding in professions that were once the purview of men in the secular world. The Church, historically, has tended to follow rather than lead the culture on issues of social justice, and it may continue to so do. But, where women have been accepted in our Church, their contributions have enriched parishes, dioceses, and the lives of those with whom they come in contact. Their sacrifices are real and significant but to take a different path would be to become someone else other than the one God intended. So it was with my friend. She became a psychologist as well as a theologian and pastoral counselor. The depth, enrichment, and insight she has brought to her work have been life altering for many. And so I say, thanks be to God.

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Several years ago, when I was rector of the Church of the Resurrection in Franklin, Tennessee, a parishioner brought me a gift. It was a needle point plaque stitched with a series of letters. After several unsuccessful attempts to guess what the letters meant, the donor informed me that it was an anagram for "Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet." That plaque summarizes my experience with the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church.

Having grown up in a conservative, southern home and a traditional Episcopal Church, I never considered the possibility of women clergy. My first realization of that possibility came in 1968 when I entered seminary at Nashotah House in Wisconsin. From the beginning, I was totally opposed to the concept. How could the Church break with such long-standing tradition? My opposition grew as I became more involved in the growing ecumenical movement, particularly between Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox. Like the late Michael Ramsey, the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, I did not believe that there were any biblical or theological reasons why women could not be ordained. The question for me was "should they be?" Surely, for the Episcopal Church to do something so radical would seriously jeopardize the fragile progress being made, particularly between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. I believed then, as I do now, that to be a disciple of Christ is to work and pray for the unity and witness of His Church in the world. This was His expressed will in the "high priestly prayer" as recorded by John in the fourth gospel. Because of this strong conviction, I voted at the Diocesan Convention against the ordination of women. Having done what I believed was right at the time, I prayed that God's will would ultimately prevail. I was also well aware that within the polity of the Episcopal Church in the United States, only the General Convention could authorize the ordination of women. When the General Convention approved the ordination of women, because I took seriously my ordination vow to be loyal to the doctrine and discipline of the Episcopal Church, I felt compelled to find a way to move from the position of opposition to acceptance.

My transition from opposition of women in Holy Orders to acceptance was a gradual process that was rooted in biblical theology. I came to realize more and more that the Apostle Paul was correct when he wrote "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave nor free." I also had to accept, that in the best theology of the universal Church, baptism is the primary sacrament of "ordination" because it is initiation into Christ Himself and His continuing incarnate ministry in the world. Therefore, ministry, like salvation, could never be based upon gender or anything else except God's grace. In time, I was blessed to have two wonderful female assistants. The first was the Reverend Becca Stevens-Hummon who came to the Church of the Resurrection as a deacon-in-training and stayed as assistant priest.

The second assistant was the Reverend Donna Gafford. The three of us had a fully shared parish ministry with each offering unique gifts for the ministry of the Body of Christ. I thank God for them and for the many, other ordained women I have come to know and whose ministry I have come to appreciate.

Now, even after thirty years since the ordination of women was approved by General Convention of the Episcopal Church, we are still in a process of reception and acceptance. This is true for many in the Episcopal Church and in the wider Anglican Communion. This is true even though a woman is now Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. I must also confess that I am personally still in this process of acceptance because emotionally I find it difficult to think of women in the Episcopate. However, somewhere I still have that needle point plaque, so "Please be patient," I know "God isn't finished with me yet."

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I was asked to be chair of the search committee for a new rector for St. Ann's in Nashville in 1988. At that time, there were no women rectors in the Diocese of Tennessee (the Reverend Mary Anne Akin had served briefly as rector of St. James the Less in Madison). St. Ann's was one of the more liberal parishes in the diocese. The Reverend Donna Scott was on the staff as associate priest. Although we did not set out to find a woman rector, we knew that the congregation would be open to calling a woman, and we hoped that we would find strong women candidates for the position.

And, we did. Of the six candidates that we visited and interviewed in person, two were women (two others were African American men, and the final two were Caucasian men). Of the three names the search committee gave to the Vestry, two were women. And, the Vestry, of which I was a member, did indeed call a woman, the Reverend Lisa Hunt.

Lisa was, in some ways, a dark horse candidate. She had served at St. Ann's while a seminarian at Vanderbilt, so she was known to many in the congregation. She did not have nearly as much experience as the other candidates, most of whom had at least five years experience as a rector. Lisa, at the time, was serving as the assistant chaplain at the University of the South. Because she was so close to Nashville, we decided to visit and interview her. She shone at the interview, and we came away realizing she was a serious candidate for the position. Obviously, she made the same impression on the Vestry.

Lisa's coming to St. Ann's was not without problems. The church was in serious financial difficulty when she arrived, and she moved quickly to address problems that should have been taken care of long ago. The senior and junior wardens (both women) resigned and left the church within her first year. Although sexism was never overtly named as a cause for the problems, it was certainly an unnamed undercurrent.

But, Lisa weathered those early storms and became a great rector for St. Ann's, serving there for 17 years. The church grew tremendously under her tenure and leadership. As I look back on my service in the Church, both as a lay and ordained person, I would count chairing the search committee that brought Lisa to St. Ann's as one of my greatest accomplishments.

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I welcome this opportunity to reflect on this subject, and to report that, at first, I was opposed. Was! After some years I became convinced of the complementarity of male and female personalities, especially in the mutually fulfilling completion of both in Christian marriage. That's how, and partially why, we were created in the first place. It was, therefore, not difficult to understand that the priesthood would be *augmented* by including the unique attributes of women's spirituality.

My subsequent experience with female priests has been mixed. It seems emphatically positive especially in pastoral, caring encounters; rather offensive in some (rare) moments when attitudes of "in-your-face" feminism were either the text or the subtext; and troubling when occasional comments about compassionately including everyone seemed to ignore the distinction between accepting *persons* while not implying acceptance of their self-damaging *practices*. In my view, the latter attitude tends to conform to the "anything goes" themes in contemporary culture, and disregards scriptural, even legal and societal (moral) injunctions against the practices, a point that should have been clarified in seminary.

How did the Church agree to adopt a two-gender priesthood, after ~ 18 centuries of "men only", beginning with Jesus and the Apostles, or even back through Hebrew history? Fortunately, we have a brief, readable tutorial on that development in the Anglican Communion. It is efficiently summarized in the Windsor Report of 2004, Section A, paragraphs 12-21. Paragraph 21 is especially revealing:

Anglicans can understand from this story (i.e., the ordination of women) that decision-making in the Communion on serious and contentious issues has been, and can be, carried out without division, despite a measure of impairment. We need to note that the Instruments of Unity, i.e., the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting, were all involved in the decision-making process. Provincial autonomy was framed by Anglican interdependence on matters of deep theological concern to the whole Communion."

Paragraph 22 goes on to say: *"The precedent that could have been set by this procedure has not, unfortunately, been followed in the matters currently before the Communion. This, we conclude, lies at the heart of the problems we currently face."*

I include reference to paragraph 22 because it seems relevant to the non-conciliar attitudes and votes of our General Conventions of 2003 and 2006 toward the other Provinces' concerns, and especially to the stated opinions and actions of our new Presiding Bishop on these subjects. I find it strange, even ironic, that she has acted out in her own ministry exactly what the Communion finds so problematic, and, together with some other female priests, continues to support the non-conciliar actions of our General Conventions, when she herself, and they, are the beneficiaries of the very

conciliar actions of the Communion that enabled her to occupy her present office and they to occupy theirs.

Therefore, I pray that all female priests may now follow the guidance of the Windsor Report themselves, to proceed in concert with, and within, the Anglican family, and encourage the Presiding Bishop to do likewise.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

I have worried, prayed, and attempted to put into writing the feelings I had as it related to women in the ministry, beginning with the change to elect women to serve on the vestry. This was my first hurdle – to vote for a woman to serve on the vestry. I just couldn't do it. Yet, I couldn't put into words why I had those feelings. And, even now, I don't have the words to support my change, other than I have the confidence in the women who have been nominated to serve in exemplary fashion. I was asked many times to be nominated for a vestry position, but always refused. So, when I did agree in 1999 (?) to being nominated, I was elected and felt strongly that my three years were well served. I know that the women who have been elected to the vestry are all well qualified.

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Since my retirement in 1986, I have had no involvement with the Church except the Episcopal elections and attendance at church. Although I was not in favor of the irregular ordinations, I approved of the decision to ordain women in 1976. My position as not changed. I have discovered that female clergy have just as many faults as male clergy. They also have just as many virtues.

Prior to my retirement, a newly ordained female deacon participated with me in services at the State prison for men for about a year, sometime in the 1970's. Our Episcopal service at the prison was held in a small conference room with 10-12 prisoners present. A female participant was well received, and she added a lot to the service. She eventually decided that she did not have a full enough ministry as deacon so she entered the ministry of the Methodist Church. This was prior to 1976. She would have made an excellent priest.

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Being a traditionalist (more or less), I would have preferred that women did not seek ordination. Rocking the boat is generally not appealing to me – unless rocking might somehow keep the boat from sinking. As for the irregular ordinations in Philadelphia, I was definitely opposed. I still can't see the wisdom of that move.

I remind myself that many women evidently feel called to the priesthood. I know most of them do a good job – maybe better than men, percentage-wise.

At St. Paul's there was no overt opposition to women's ordination. We had elected women to the vestry and everyone seemed glad of that.

Jane Montague
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I have served as Senior Warden at St. David's in Nashville. I have had no experience with deaconesses, according to my memory. I have had no opinion for or against the ordination of women to the priesthood. My position on ordination is the same for men and women as long as they both act responsibly.

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I have seen over the past thirty years women's roles in a great many projects. I have worked closely with them on many efforts that have resulted in projects and programs that have been of great benefit to the diocese and the National Church.

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I entered seminary in the fall of 1977, which means that from the very beginning of my ordained ministry, the ordination of women was a *fait accompli*, and one which seemed to be simply a natural development of the Church in which I grew up.

Of course, in my childhood, there were no women on the vestry; no girls were acolytes with me. I do not recall any women being layreaders or chalice bearers. No, women in the Church, then, were Altar Guild, the Sunday School teachers, youth group chaperones, cooks for parish meals. In other words, from the perspective of a child in the Church, women were the ones who ran everything that really mattered.

Fortunately, the rectors of the Church seemed to concur. In 1976, as a young adult about to go to seminary, I remember my rector commenting that it may feel strange and different to see a woman presiding at the altar, but certainly it was something we could get used to and should celebrate. He helped us all see this as an organic growth in the Church's self-understanding, something to assist and enrich our witness to the world.

It was also the case that when I got to seminary – Nashotah House (!) – the Trustees, or maybe the Alumni Board, had asked the faculty to sign a statement condemning General Convention's action in authorizing the ordination of women. They unanimously refused to do so. Ah, it was a different place in those days! Certainly, women who were students with us were the best possible evidence supporting women's ordination.

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