

# The Woman's Pulpit

January-March  
2023

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

## Ending Gender Based Violence: Thursdays in Black

### 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence opened with a webinar on building the capacity of faith communities.

The urgent task of equipping church leaders and building capacity of faith communities to respond to gender-based violence was the subject of a webinar on Nov. 24, jointly organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Council for World Mission.

The event, supported by the All Africa Conference of Churches, marked the start of the annual 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence, which the World Council of Churches promotes through its **Thursdays in Black** campaign. It began on Nov. 25 and ended on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10.

Among the speakers was **Sikhonzile Ndlovu**, LWF's Advocacy Officer for Gender Justice. She noted that despite growing awareness of the problem, the scourge of gender-based violence continues to rise and to remain under-reported in countries across the globe.

In addition, the **Rev. Bafana Khumalo**, of the South Africa-based Sonke Gender Justice Network, noted that "as churches, we are complicit in the violence against women and girls in terms of our theologies, our symbols, our culture." As long as the church continues to embed the understanding of men as the head, he said, "the church will continue to be a patriarchal institution, creating an environment where abuse can thrive."

Echoing Khumalo's appeal for change was **Daniela Gennrich**, a

lay canon in the Anglican Diocese of Natal and coordinator for South Africa's We Will Speak Out coalition. She works to equip faith communities to prevent violence and support survivors, and is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. "Patriarchy is the air we breathe," she said, "and it feels so normal that we don't understand when women and girls cannot breathe."

Moderating the dialogue,

**Inside:  
Poetry from the Western  
Wall, p. 7  
Below:  
Pilgrims get a water  
blessing in the Jordan  
from Prof. Lewis, p. 6**

entitled "Harnessing ecumenical and diaconal assets and networks to end violence against women and girls," was the **Rev. Nicole Ashwood**, WCC's Programme Executive for the Just Community of Women and Men. Advocacy begins with us, she said. "Each one of us must ask what am I doing, or not doing, to effect the transformation that we want to see for all God's children"

Rev. Ashwood was IAWM's chief correspondent as we made arrangements to join the World Council international assembly last summer. She continues to help connect IAWM with the WCC.

*From the article by Beth Waltemath, Presbyterian News Service, Nov. 27, 2022*



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# Still Collecting Reflections from Karlsruhe Assemblies

IAWM members and friends who attended IAWM's international assembly, and the World Council of Churches meetings, are invited to send the editor your short reflections: When I think back to Germany, what stands out is. . . .

Send to [uccrev77@gmail.com](mailto:uccrev77@gmail.com)

### Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes:

I remember the experience of meeting women pastors and women in ministry from all over the world. While our context of living and serving are different, many of the challenges we face are so similar and we all work to make this world a safer place for women and children. Thank you for being sisters in Christ together!

### Ellie Johns-Kelly:

I am grateful for:  
-the extraordinary women and fellowship;  
-for the many ways my brain was expanded to consider the contexts of ministry across the world;  
-sweet prayer and music;  
-discovering the essential nature of our organization, as God's call to women is still not recognized by all;  
-certain traditions look right through us and fail to see women as equally called, present and worth conversing with;  
-our advocacy continues and is essential.

### Vima Couvertier-Cruz:

I'll always remember the experience of being at our assembly sharing with international members of IAWM. I greatly enjoyed interacting and placing the pictures of women ministers from all over the world in our booth, and sharing about the Romella Collar, supporting the ministry of Romella Nightingale from Pakistan.

### Margaret Ernst:

The thing that comes first to mind is riding the tram back late at night to the retreat center, sharing about my life and ministry with other IAWM members, hearing about others' experience of the assembly whose worlds and experiences are different from my own. I arrived to Germany alone but left with friends who inspire me from many parts of others' experience of the assembly whose worlds and experiences are different from my own. . . . The importance of centering the experiences of women of color, and having brave conversations about gender and sexuality as women in ministry, and the essential global struggle against anti-Black racism.

+++++

### Prayer Calendar Updates

Look for your 2023 Prayer Calendar, arriving soon, for all the new names and addresses!

### Can You Help Us Find New Emails for These Members?

Carmel Stabley  
Tenneh Nyeneme  
Thea Archinal  
Louise Crawford  
Liz Hernandez  
Rosemond Opoku Mensah  
Pauline Wanjiri Njiru  
Joy Noble  
Maurine Redenbach  
Send to Carol Brown,  
[csbrown550@hotmail.com](mailto:csbrown550@hotmail.com)

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## Remembering: Dr. Delores S. Williams, Womanist Theologian

Dr. Delores Seneva Williams, a seminal thinker and writer in the development of womanist theology, died at 88 on Nov. 17, said her daughter, Celeste Williams.

Raised in Kentucky in a family of Seventh-Day Adventists, she became Presbyterian when she married Robert, who also had the surname Williams. She marched in Alabama during the civil rights movement and experienced first-hand the sexism of its male leadership and the disregard of women's significant contributions to the movement.

While Williams was pursuing her doctorate in systematic theology, in consultation with James Cone, Tom Driver and Beverly Harrison, among her many interruptions was commuting from out of state, changing advisors, caring for her four children and the sudden death of her husband. A friend remembered how the sudden loss, and the shift to being a single mother of four, crystallized Williams' focus on survival as essential to Black women's rendering of liberation.

She described the liberation of Black women as an "archeology," which meant taking seriously the religious practice and language of "my mother, her mother, and her mother's mother—the slave." She concluded that Black women carried a "memory of brokenness" that could not be ignored.

Williams' book "Sisters in the Wilderness," based on her dissertation, has been hailed as groundbreaking. Her editor

called it "A foundational work in womanist theology" that set the stage for "a generation of scholars—not just African American women, but all those who are now exploring the intersectional dimensions of gender, class, race and sexual identity."

Williams was deeply influenced by the work of Alice Walker, from whom she first heard the term "womanist." She said Walker's vivid descriptions of Black women's experience provided the material upon which to construct a Black woman's theology at a time when Black liberation and feminist theologies felt exclusive.

Williams pushed back against the centrality that the cross played in Black liberation theology. Her critique of atonement theory in particular caused waves, especially out of the Reimagining Conference of 1993 in which she played a seminal role.

She retired from Union Theological Seminary in New York where she had been the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture for a decade.

*(From the article by Beth Waltemath, Presbyterian News Service, Nov. 27, 2022)*

**IAWM's New Website Is Live!**

**[www.womenministers.org](http://www.womenministers.org)**

**Check out photos, history, back issues of the Pulpit, and more.**

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## Remembering: Virginia Bunning

**The Rev. Virginia Lee (Knowlton) Bunning** died in September in Loveland, Colorado at the age of 74.

Born in Torrington, Wyoming, she was the second of six children to Jay and Betty Jean Knowlton. She attended what is now Eastern Wyoming College in Torrington, and graduated from the University of Wyoming with a degree in biology education. She attended DuBuque Theological Seminary for one year where she met her husband, Fred Bunning.

Virginia taught school in Wyoming, and she and Fred married in 1970 during Sunday morning worship at Community Presbyterian Church in Lingle, Wyoming. They then moved to Williamsport, PA, where Fred pastored, and subsequently to Illinois, where she re-entered seminary. The family moved to Lancaster, Wisconsin; she was ordained there in 1982, and joined Fred in co-pastoring the Lancaster church and two small rural churches. They then moved to Masonville, Colorado and co-pastored for four years before moving to Loveland.

Virginia and Fred then decided to become "tentmaking" pastors; Virginia worked in the Thompson Valley schools for 16 years while co-pastoring with Fred, and directing camps for the Presbytery of Wyoming. She served interim ministries in several churches and served as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Plains and Peaks for four years.

After early retirement she cultivated a garden as a "gift to the neighborhood."

She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother; she is survived by Fred and their children Joel and Jaylyn. After living with ALS for the last part of her life, she donated her body to science for research. A memorial service was held Sept. 24 in Loveland.

## Women Still Face Discrimination in Church of England, says advocate

Thirty years after the Church of England took the historic step of allowing women to become priests, equality campaigners say female clergy still face “institutionalized discrimination.”

As reported in *The Guardian* on Nov. 11, the most recent data show that fewer than one in three paid clergy are female, though more women than men (55%) had started training for the priesthood.

Last month **Martine Osborne** became chair of Watch (Women and the Church), which campaigns for gender equality. She noted that individual churches can refuse to accept women as priests or vicars, and churches are permitted to reject the authority of a female bishop.

“The church is affirming women as equal while at the same time saying it’s all right for some churches not to accept them. It’s a contradiction,” she said.

Under the measures passed by the General Synod after years of bitter divisions over the issue, special provision was made for churches and clergy who said their theological beliefs prevented them from accepting female priests.

Individual churches were permitted to refuse female vicars, and were given the right to be overseen by “flying bishops” who also oppose women’s ordination, instead of their local bishop, male or female, who ordained women. **Sarah Mullally**, the bishop of London since 2018, was on occasion required to delegate her authority to the bishop of Fulham, a more junior bishop.

Osborne said there were churches in London that only accepted applications for the post of vicar from men. And although she is well supported in her parish, at times Osborne found herself “sitting at a table with senior clergy, some of whom don’t recognize that I’m actually a priest.

### Slower Than We Would Have Liked

“The Church of England acknowledged that progress toward equality was slower than it would have liked, but said the proportion of female clergy would increase as those in training took up posts. **Helen Fraser**, the C of E’s head of vocations, said, “If you compare the church to commerce and industry, I imagine our senior leadership doesn’t compare favorably in lots of places. But the reality is we started from completely standing still just a few years ago.”

Osborne countered, “How can we be in 2022 and the national church is still discriminating against women, who represent about two-thirds of their congregations and half the population?”

The Church of England should end its exemption under the Equality Act and stop legitimizing the theology that churches use to limit women’s ministry, she said.

“The C of E loves to give the impression that the battle over women’s ministry is all sorted now,” Osborne concluded. “We’ve come a long way, but we’ve also got a long way to go.”

*(From the Guardian, on line, Nov. 11, 2022)*

## Duckworth Elected Bishop of New Orleans

The **Rev. Shannon Rogers Duckworth** was elected the 12th Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana during a special convention May 14 in New Orleans.

Episcopal News Service reported that she was elected on the first ballot after attaining a majority of both clergy and lay votes.

She will succeed Bishop Morris King Thompson, Jr., who retired in October.

Duckworth is the first woman to be elected bishop in the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana. A native of Mississippi, Duckworth is currently serving as the diocese’s canon to the ordinary.

She was ordained a priest in 2001 after graduating from General Theological Seminary. She previously served as curate in Ocean Springs, Miss., a vicar in Lexington, Miss.; chaplain at St. Andrew’s Episcopal School in Jackson, Miss.; and associate rector of St. James Episcopal Church, Jackson, Miss. She is married to James Duckworth and they have two sons.

In her acceptance address, Duckworth said, “You have shared with me your vision and hopes. I thank you for your encouragement and energy. You inspire me and I will hold with great care the trust that you instilled in me.”

She was to have been ordained and consecrated on Nov. 19 at Christ Church Cathedral, New Orleans, by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry.

### Correction

The Oct-Dec issue reported the Latvian Lutherans’ decision to cease ordaining women. Your editor apologizes for not unearthing that the decision was made in 2016, not 2022, and thanks the correspondent who corrected me.

## WCC Reflects on Women's Leadership at Conference on Innovation in Africa

**Prof. Ezra Chitando**, the World Council of Churches' officer for HIV and AIDS advocacy in southern Africa, presented a paper on "Women's Transformative Leadership and Africa's Holistic Development: The Role of Churches" at an international conference on leadership transformation and innovation in Africa.

Prof. Chitando said "Although leadership globally is often associated with men, in reality women have played, and continue to play, significant leadership roles. The ideology of patriarchy has constantly sought to undermine women's leadership roles in society, while overplaying men's leadership roles."

While recognizing that Africa is characterized by multiple religions that include African traditional religions, the Bahai faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Rastafari and others, Chitando's review focused specifically on African Christian women's transformative leadership and how it has the potential to change the continent's fortunes.

Chitando noted that many male leaders in Africa since independence have been guided by "very problematic leadership styles shaped by patriarchy and aggressive masculinities." African Christian women seek to express a new way of leading that recognizes the rights and dignity of all," he said.

*-World Council of Churches news on line, Oct. 21, 2022*

And Mary said,  
My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit rejoices in God my savior. . .  
. Surely, from now on all generations will  
call me blessed, for the Mighty One has  
done great things for me.  
Luke 1:46-49a, NRSV

## Presbyterian Church of East Africa Celebrates 40 Years of Women's Ordination

Noting 40 years of women's ordination wasn't just a celebration for women, but a celebration for the whole church, "Because the whole church has benefitted from the ministry and leadership of ordained women," said the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) moderator. **The Rt. Rev. Thegu Mutahi** said during the celebration, "I am product of the ministry of women," as he recounted the story of the parish minister of his home congregation.

The 40 years celebration was launched at PCA Bahati Martyrs' Church, which was the site of the first ordination of a woman, **Jane Nyambura Njoroge** in September 1982.

**The Rev. Susan Nina**, one of the coordinators, said the first celebration kicked off a week of celebratory activities. Nina said the launch was made even more special by the visits from families of five deceased women clergy, who continue to be acknowledged for their faithfulness as pioneers.

The celebration also included a two-day academic symposium at the Presbyterian University of East Africa, where women and men presented papers on the legacy and contributions of women in ministry. Participants identified barriers that still remain, such as gender stereotypes, traditional cultures and patriarchal church structures.

Moderator Mutahi concluded, "Our daughters know that this is their church, because they can look up at the women who have gone before them and the women currently serving, and they realize there is a place for them in the church"

*-From the article by the Rev. Lauren Scharstein for Mission Crossroads/ special to Presbyterian News Service.*

## New Hymns from Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

The latest collection from the Presbyterian poet the Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette offered up new lyrics for Advent and Christmas hymns, in "God's World Is Changing," exploring issues including racism, immigration and poverty. Gillette's work of more than two decades offers up new lyrics to familiar hymn tunes at [carolynshymns.com](http://carolynshymns.com).

For instance, to the tune Lobe Den Herren: Down by the Jordan, a prophet named John was baptizing,/Preaching a message the people found bold and surprising:/ "God will forgive! Show that you'll change how you live!/ Surely God's new day is rising!" *-Presbyterian News Service*

## Roman Catholic Women Ordained in 2022

Alberta, Canada: April 30

**Teresa Elder Hanlon**

Albany, NY, USA June 3

Deacons **Mary Ann Mathys,**

**Kati Nimcheski**

Albany, NY, June 4, priest

**Kati Nimcheski**

Ft. Myers, FL, USA July 7

Deacons **Elaine Pfaff**

**Rosemary Robinson**

Olympia, WA USA July 30

**Donna Johnson-Smith**

Albany, NY USA Aug 27

**Phillis Sheppard**

**Mary Ann Mathys**

San Francisco, CA USA Sept 10

**Rosemary Robinson**

Portland, OR USA Sept 10

**Denise Bernt**

**Viola Baker**

Frankfort, IL USA Sept 28

**Carmella Angela Cicirelli**

**Eileen Mary Mathy**

**Susan Marie Russell**

Corolla, NC USA Oct 10

**Elaine Pfaff**

Coralville, IA USA Oct 22

**Martha Sherman, Bishop**

*-from RCWP correspondence*



# Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine Explores Places Where Jesus Encountered Women

**IAWM Member the Rev. Rebecca Cole-Turner** accompanied **Prof. Karoline Lewis**, Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, and 32 others to Israel and Palestine in November to visit places where Jesus met women in the Gospels.

Prof. Lewis was featured speaker at IAWM's centennial assembly in 2019 in Pittsburgh, opening to listeners the scriptures from John about the woman at the well. Cole-Turner remembers Lewis remarking, as she left the assembly, "Oh, by the way, I'm doing another tour in Israel of the women in Jesus' life next fall." Cole-Turner said, "I emailed before she left the building! I wanted to go on such a trip led by a really pre-eminent preacher."

The trip, of course, did not take place in 2020 as planned, nor in 2021, because of the pandemic. But on Halloween Evening of 2022 they departed from Chicago, a group of pastors, spouses and seminary students, including a few men.

Their first stay was at the David Tower Dead Sea resort and spa, where they enjoyed floating in the salt water and applying its mud to arms and faces. "We started to bond as a group," Cole-Turner said, "laughed constantly, people were generous and loving, and the younger folks helped the older ones get around safely." Cole-Turner herself, now retired to North Carolina, had recently had hip replacement surgery and welcomed the accompaniment.

The next stop was Masada, the mountaintop where Jewish rebels withstood a siege by the Roman army. Cole-Turner said she was impressed all over again by the enormity of what the zealots did.

Their Palestinian Christian guide, Lama, provided commentary, giving different windows of understanding. Then followed a trip to Qumran, where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered. "It was another moment of profound awe," she said, "at all that took place some 1900 years after they were stored in caves in their jars."

## Onward to Cana

The group could not visit Jacob's well, because there had been a skirmish there, but Lewis shared more of her interpretation of the Samaritan woman at the well. This woman, she said, was an example of the people Jesus was trying to reach during his ministry, a woman who was at the margins of society.

Then they visited the wedding chapel at Cana, where John's Gospel records Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine, and his mother's encouragement to claim his calling.

Another day took them to Magdala, the recently excavated fishing village reputed to be the home of Mary of Magdala. Cole-Turner said Lewis is preparing to publish thoughts in response to Diana Butler Bass's recent articles about Mary. "Just seeing the outlines of a fishing village that was there in Jesus' time was another profound moment," Cole-Turner said.

Within the last 25 years a new church has been erected there honoring Mary Magdalen, which uses the six-petaled rosette that has become the symbol for the Magdalen. (It's rumored that several members of the tour got tattoos of the rosette later in Jerusalem!) This was the first place, Cole-Turner said, where we really began to connect with the women in Jesus' life, those he loved and who loved him. "Seeing the ruins, imagining Jesus there, imagining Mary Magdalen there was really a highlight for me."

## Ruins and Excavations

A visit to the Church of the Beatitudes featured more information about the Sermon on the Mount from Lewis. Then a trip to Capernaum nearby, featured the

excavations of a synagogue from Jesus' time, and the ruins of what has been identified as Peter's house, where Jesus healed his mother-in-law. A sunset sail across the Sea of Galilee ended with communion under a full moon. The sea was calm, Cole-Turner said, and it was hard to imagine a great storm there, but easy to imagine Jesus walking toward them on that calm sea.

## Bethlehem and Jerusalem

A visit to Bethlehem gave the group a chance to visit with Palestinian Christians, and attend worship at the Evangelical Christmas Lutheran Church. Afterward there were conversations with local worshippers, to learn more about the situation for Palestinians in Israel.

They were welcomed for a visit to Dar Al-Kaima University College of Arts and Culture., by its vice president Rana Khoury. She said the University's founders believe in the arts as important to raise the level of cultural and societal awareness. She said, "We must, as Christians, actively engage injustice and confront the issue of the continuing displacement of Palestinians from their homelands."

Later, in Jerusalem, the group walked the Palm Sunday road to the Garden of Gethsemane. "For me, it really brought to life decades of reading about Jesus."

The next day brought a long-anticipated trip to the Western Wall, where people gather to pray. Cole-Turner noted that there were five times as many women waiting to pray as men, but 2/3 of the wall was reserved for men and only 1/3 for women. See Page 7 for her poem about that experience.

The final days yielded visits to the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount; the Via Dolorosa, and the Garden Tomb, and a closing worship. It brought together history, possible history, and the scripture accounts, for Cole-Turner. A farewell dinner with their tour leaders, Shepherds Tour and Travels, and their guide Lama Jamjoun, was a traditional Armenian meal. She concluded, "We are part of the modern-day women in Jesus' life."

## Turning 72 at the Western Wall: Jerusalem, November 8, 2022

It rises up through the misty rain,  
taller than I ever imagined it would be.  
First, armed guards separate us by gender -  
the men and boys go left,  
the women and girls go right.  
Our group of women immediately see  
that males get two-thirds of the Wall,  
while females get less than one-third,  
even though the number of women  
is almost five or six times that of men.  
As a woman, it's hard to get a space  
on the Wall to pray, so I get line.

While waiting my turn, I notice two doves  
high up in a rocky niche, cooing softly,  
peacefully. No one pushes or shoves  
as we silently wait to begin our prayers.  
Finally, I'm next. As I approach the Wall,  
I raise my right arm, put my hand on  
the cool, rain-soaked stone, feel a frisson  
of - what? electricity? energy? power?  
Astonished, my hand feels as if it's  
vibrating, full of life, like I'm touching  
an electric fence. But it doesn't hurt,  
just seems to pulse within me,  
a strong wave that flows throughout  
my body, unlike anything I've felt before.  
I don't want to let go, so I start praying,  
first reading the prayers friends gave me,  
stopping after each to find a small opening  
in the Wall to insert their written prayer.  
Next, at first out loud, then apophatically,  
I begin to whisper my own prayers,  
as time swirls around me, drawing me  
back into time-before-time, the Holy One  
present, ancient, strong, palpable, loving.  
I'm caught up in deep emotion, an understanding,  
a spiritual knowing that reaches my inmost self.

Then faintly, at a distance, I hear the call of  
the muezzin for Muslims to stop, kneel,  
pray Zuhr prayer, leave worldly matters behind.  
I lower my hand from the Wall, open my eyes,  
look at the women of all faiths, ages, sizes, colors  
around me, think to myself: *whatever we pray,  
however we pray, we're together on Holy Ground,  
and the Beloved hears us in every language,  
answers our prayers from Spirit's heart of Love.*

Rebecca Cole-Turner, CJN On my 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday, November 8, 2022,  
on pilgrimage in Jerusalem at the Western Wall.  
Dedicated to Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis, Our Leader for "The Women in Jesus' Life"

## In the News

**Rev. Laura Ayala** has been selected as coordinator of Global Missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The Puerto Rican pastor, denominational leader and former nonprofit executive has been pastor of First Baptist Church of Rio Piedras in San Juan for almost nine years. She said her concept of mission was re-shaped when Hurricane Maria struck the island five years ago. “You have to do missions locally. You have to be prepared,” she said.

*(from the CBF Blog on line)*

The newly elected 150-member **World Council of Churches Central Committee** is 39% women, as reported in the Just Community of Women and Men September report. Thus 61 per cent are men; 9 per cent youth, 7 per cent indigenous persons, 3 per cent persons with disabilities, 72

per cent ordained and 28 per cent laypersons. They noted that the proportion of women was greater than the required 25 per cent, but lamented the dearth of youth and indigenous representation. The **Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson**, associate general minister of the United Church of Christ (USA), is one of the newly elected.

**Roman Catholic Women Priests** on Nov. 12 celebrated the 20th anniversary of the “Danube 7,” the first women ordained as Roman Catholic priests.

The online celebration included reflections from the five remaining of the seven, and a documentary featuring Dagmar Celeste and Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger giving the history of the 2002 ordinations.

*romancatholicwomenpriests.org*

**The Rev. Ruby-Nell Estrella** was elected the first woman United Methodist bishop in the Philippines in November. She has been treasurer of the Philippines Central Conference.

United Methodist News reported that Estrella received 362 votes of 460; 307 are needed. Estrella told UM News that many people have been predicting that she would be the first woman elected United Methodist bishop in the Philippines.

IAWM member **Elizabeth Tapia** sent the news of Estrella’s election. “I was there as a delegate, voted for her, rejoiced with the conference, and wept with joy with other women delegates, when she was elected, She is the leader we have been waiting for.”

Estrella will serve the Manila episcopacy. “I hope I will be able to do more for the youth and women of the church,” she said.