

The Woman's Pulpit

July-September
2025

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

“What A Powerful Witness Your Ordinations Will Be”

Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand ordains first women pastors; Uniting Church in Australia sends congratulations

From Uniting Church in Australia Assembly news, on line April 8 and Lutheran Church in Australia web site.

For the first time, two women were among the six ordinands in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) this spring.

Maria Rudolph and Sue Westthorp became LCANZ's first women pastors, after action last October to remove from the church's teaching a paragraph that previously prohibited women from being ordained.

They were both appointed to the churches where they have been serving in other roles.

President of the Uniting Church in Australia Rev. Charissa Suli wrote to LCANZ bishop Paul Smith to “express the prayerful solidarity and support of the Uniting Church at this historic moment.”

Suli said, “To Maria and Sue, I wish to say: what a powerful witness your ordinations will be, not only to your own communities but to the wider church and to women of faith across the world. . . You do not walk alone. You are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses—past and present—who have prayed, persevered and hoped for this.”

“Your ordination is not a victory over others,” she continued, “but an offering of your life for the sake of

the Gospel. You have been called, gifted and prepared for such a time as this.

I think of young women in your churches who, because of this step, may now dare to dream that God may be calling them too.”

In a world yearning for good news, she said, “...may this moment be a sign of hope—not just for today, but for every girl wondering if she belongs, every woman who has waited, and every community longing for renewal.”

**Next IAWM
Assembly will be in
Jakarta, Indonesia
July 22-25, 2026**

**Quarterly!
Zoom Gathering for
Fun and Connection
Friday, Aug. 1
9-10:30 a.m. Eastern DT
Discussion of theological
issues raised by AI,
especially issues in AI
companions for adults and
children.**

**Don't miss this one!
Email Marian for the code:
uccrev77@gmail.com
Next one: Nov. 1 at a new
time. See P. 2**

=====
**Join our WhatsApp
groups, see Page 6
for QR Code**

Pittsburgh reunion, p. 6. Back row from left, Lisa Lyon, Lola Turnbull, Ruth Becker. Middle, Lisa Ubbelohde, Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes, Jean Henderson, Bev Banyay. Front, Mary Green, Janet Grill, Carol Brown





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Prayer Calendar

Please add to prayer calendar: New Members

Add to Dec. 24-31:

Janet B. Grill, 5 McCoid Dr., Zelenople, Pennsylvania USA, 2pastorsgrill@gmail.com ELCA

Norma Hynes, 16.5 mls, Hattievilleville, Belize, Central America tupitministries.TMI.10@gmail.com PENT

Can you help find emails for the following members:

Wiselande Dorvil, Janet Ethridge, Nicole Raddu Ferry, Deborah Kapp, Alicia Sebila, Earline Vaughn, Christine Vogel

Correction: In the last issue the location for the United Church of Christ General Synod, where Barbara Brown Zikmund will be honored, was given as Oklahoma City. It is **Kansas City**.

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Do You Have Anything for our Archives?

Please send to our archivist Ann M. Rogers Brigham at her permanent address:
19 Church St. Apt. 2
W. Brookfield, MA 01585
USA
amrogersbrigham@gmail.com

Online Meetings for Connection and Conversation Continue Quarterly
Friday Aug. 1
9 a.m. Eastern

We will have conversation starter Prof. **Christine Housel** to speak about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and theology.

Housel is an advisor on ethics and AI ethics for groups in Geneva, Switzerland, and a former executive of the World Student Federation. She hopes to set up an NGO to mobilize churches to play a role in ethical decisions regarding AI, especially AI companions for children.

Save Saturday, Nov. 1 for our next Zoom. Ella Sonawane and Pulpit editor Marian Shearer are your hosts. *Email Marian for the link: uccrev77@gmail.com.*

Giving to IAWM

IAWM is a 501 c (3) non-profit, and all gifts may be tax deductible for USA members. One way it can be deducted is if you itemize your deductions. A second way is if your age is 70 1/2 and older and you make a direct transfer from an IRA or retirement account to IAWM. If interested in exploring this option, contact your retirement account management and ask if you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your account. By making a QCD, your gift is deducted from your income, lowering your adjusted gross income, and thus producing a tax savings. For more information contact IAWM treasurer Carol Brown at csbrown550@hotmail.com.

Remembering: Elizabeth Tapia

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth S. Tapia, former professor of mission and contextual theology at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, died June 5. She was an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, a dean at Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines, and faculty member at other institutions.

A committed ecumenist, and IAWM member, Tapia served several roles in the WCC including as member of the Asia Task Force, and was the first women's concerns programme secretary for the Christian Conference of Asia.

She was a member of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, and other similar boards, and was listed as a noteworthy theology studies educator by Marquis Who's Who.

Her former students paid tribute to "Ate Eliz" saying she was an "exceptional woman of God," advocating for gender equality, social justice, care for the environment and for God's whole creation.

Union Seminary reported that inclusive language became the norm while she was there. In their memorial message they said, "As a feminist theologian, she challenged prevailing narratives, asked difficult questions, and amplified voices long pushed to the margins. She illuminated how gender, race, class and culture intersect in the lived experience of women around the world."

She is survived by her husband Rev. Alan Cogswell and a stepson. She was buried at Bethany United Methodist Church, Guiguinto, Bulacan.

From World Council of Churches June 12, Facebook, and internet biography.

Remembering: Joan Brown Campbell

The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, age 93, died March 29 in Ohio. She was the first ordained woman to serve as the general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and the first woman to serve as director of religion at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York.

After a lifetime of local activism, she was ordained at age 49 by the National Baptist Church, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's denomination. Soon after, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognized her ordination, and later she also held standing in the American Baptist Church. She was the first woman to serve as the executive director of the US Office of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

In their obituary in their April 10 weekly on line news, the WCC said, "Campbell led a delegation to meet with Pope John Paul II, to present His Holiness with a copy of the New Revised Standard version of the Bible. She was part of the delegation led by US President Clinton to attend the funeral of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel. Along with her friend, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, she traveled to Belgrade during the Balkan wars and negotiated the release of imprisoned American soldiers, working with the Serbian Orthodox Church. She and Carl Sagan, the renowned astronomer, helped cofound the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. She served as an election observer when Nelson Mandela was elected as the first Black president of South Africa. She was the only woman in the procession of over 200 clergy at the enthronement of Desmond Tutu as archbishop of the Anglican Church in South Africa. Towards the end of her tenure at the National Council of Churches, a young Cuban boy named Elian Gonzalez survived a shipwreck and ended up in the home of relatives in Miami. Working with the Clinton Administration, the Cuban government, and the Cuban

churches, she helped negotiate Elian's safe return to his family in Cuba."

In 2017, when she was 86, she married the Rev. Albert Pennybacker, a colleague at the National Council of Churches and partner in religious justice activities. He died in 2022.

The Rev. Angelique Walker-Smith, WCC president for North America, said, "She was truly a lioness who paved the way for so many."

A memorial service was held April 27 at Plymouth Church, a United Church of Christ congregation, in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

From WCC April 10 news, and Adelle M Banks obituary in Religion News Service, April 11.

Remembering: Jacqueline Means

The Rev. Jacqueline Means was the first "regularly" ordained woman priest in the Episcopal Church (USA). Her death was announced June 3.

Her ordination on Jan. 1, 1977, followed the "irregular" ordination of 11 women in Philadelphia in 1974, and four other women in Washington, D.C. in 1975. In 1976 the Episcopal Church made the canonical changes allowing women to become priests.

Means had served several parishes in the Indianapolis, Indiana diocese, and had been active in prison ministry for the Indiana Women's Prison and the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries.

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2011 attacks, Means was part of a Critical Incident Response Team formed by the Episcopal church to help support dioceses and parishes affected. Two general conventions adopted resolutions marking anniversaries of her ordination.

From Episcopal News Service June 4 on line.

Women's Ordination Worldwide promotes women priests and deacons

Women's Ordination Worldwide, WOW, is a network of proponents for women's ordination in the Roman Catholic church, and women ordained deacons as well.

Their *Facebook page* noted a story from the Abbott of Montserrat, Manel Gasch, who went on record with his opinion that the ordination of women is a "complicated" matter, as it would pose a threat to the unity of the church.

Columnist Merche Saiz wrote a reply. "To assert that the inclusion of women in the sacrament of Holy Orders is a threat to the unity of the church is not only a theological fallacy, but an affront to the intelligence and faith of millions of Catholics, and especially to the women who have dedicated their lives to the service of God and the community. The true schism will not be caused by the just demand for equality, but by the obstinacy of those, like you, who cling to the patriarchal and exclusionary power structures that no longer have a place in the 21st century."

Women Deacons As Well

WOW added, "The Abbott does not seem to be aware that within the Eastern (Orthodox) Church itself there is now work ongoing towards restoration of the ordained woman's diaconate. . . . most recently, the May 2025 ordination of Zimbabwean **Angelic Molen** as a deacon in the Orthodox Patriarchy of Alexandria and All Africa."

WOW also noted a call for the church in Ireland, reported by Gerry O'Hanlon SJ, to issue a statement that the Church in Ireland "Has discerned the pastoral sense and even the necessity of the female diaconate and is requesting the Holy See (in Rome) to allow this to happen."

Roman Catholic Women Priests Ordain Bishop, Challenge Rome

In their June newsletter, Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) Canada reported that **Paula Hoeffler** was ordained as bishop, in a ceremony attended by seven women bishops from the RCWP movement, representing the United States, Canada and Austria.

Hoeffler was ordained bishop for the Great Waters Region, in a liturgy held at First United Church of Christ, Cincinnati, Ohio. She was a Catholic educator for more than three decades, and was ordained a priest in 2014.

In the same issue, the bishop for RCWP Canada, **Jane Kryzanowski**, reported, "Women have embraced what I call the Ministry of Irritation."

Though women were only silent observers of the second Vatican council in the 1960s, she said, now in the Universal Synod process, initiated in 2022, women have spoken boldly. Yet even in the Synod sessions in Rome in 2023 and 2024, "Discussions of women's ordination were silenced. It remains off the table."

Southern Baptists Still Arguing Largest U.S. Denomination Votes About Women Pastors

At their meeting in Texas in June, the delegates voted again on a proposed amendment to the Southern Baptist Convention's constitution, which would have kept any church that "affirms, appoints or employs a woman as pastor of any kind" from belonging to the SBC.

The amendment received 60.74% of the vote, just short of the two-thirds majority needed to move forward. A similar proposal failed last year on a second vote.

The SBC has already dismissed some congregations who employed women in roles they called pastor—pastor of family ministries, education, and the like—if women were permitted to preach. But it has allowed others to stay in the fold.

SBC President Clint Pressley, a North Carolina pastor, said he wasn't sure why the measure fell short, saying he believes the SBC's statement of faith is clear that only men can be pastors.

From Religious News Service article by Bob Smietana, on line June 11.

Roman Catholics Still Studying Women Deacons Remains Under Discussion

Deacons are ordained ministers who perform some of the sacraments and preach at Mass, but who do not celebrate the Eucharist, hear confessions or anoint the sick. Pope Francis initiated 10 study groups to discern a way forward for the church on how it selects its bishops, combats poverty and relates to women and LGBTQ Catholics. Study group 5 focused on issues around specific ministerial forms, including whether women should be allowed to serve as deacons.

Pope Leo XIV has continued in Francis's footsteps, appointing women to high positions leading Vatican departments that oversee Catholic nuns, monks and brothers, and help select bishops. But he has not indicated that he is in favor of women deacons, telling a gathering of deacons in Rome last year that "these are things that he will continue to study, reflect upon, and (he doesn't) know what the outcome will be." Discerning Deacons, an advocacy group, has submitted 29 testimonies from women who feel called to the diaconate to the department overseeing Group 5.

From Claire Giangrave article in Religion News Service, May 27 on line.

More News of Women Worldwide

Burghart speaks to Americas

Rev. Dr. Anne Burghart, Lutheran World Federation (LWF) general secretary, addressed the Leadership Conference of the Americas on their theme, *Embodying the Word*. The conference brought together some 50 church leaders from across the Americas, in Guadelajara, Mexico in May.

She reflected that it was when they were empowered by the encounter of the resurrected Christ that the disciples were ready to go out and share the good news—to make the new creation visible—to embody, in and through their lives, the Word they have witnessed as loving, compassionate and liberating.”

LWF Regional Secretary for Latin America, the Caribbean and North America, **Rev. Sonia Skupch** said the significance of such a gathering should not be underestimated. In the midst of world conflicts, for people to say “we come together, we pray together, we celebrate—I think it is both a service and a sign of hope for this time.”

Lutheran World Federation news, May 15, on line

Lutherans Publish Book on Gender Justice

Gender Justice and Women’s Rights 30 years after Beijing: So close yet so far is a new resource from LWF. It is a collection of reflections from 12 gender justice advocates, who over the years have contributed toward implementing the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It may be downloaded from the LWF web site.

Desperation is a Spiritual Gift: Princeton

Princeton Theological Seminary (New Jersey, USA) professor **Kenda Creasy Dean** commented on an event held for young professionals who were not seminary students, to hear about their spiritual lives. It is part of the Polaris Project, supported by the Lilly Endowment, to combat isolation among young Christian leaders and counteract the narrative that all young people are losing their faith. “Desperation is a spiritual gift,” she said, “and so it gives you a chance to experiment with things that, you know, 10 years ago were off the table.” *Religion News Service May 19, on line*

Remembering: Antje Hanselmann

The World Council of Churches noted with sadness the death May 10 of the Rev. Antje Hanselmann, Evangelical Church of Germany.

Hanselmann was a vicar at the WCC Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, and graduated from their Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies while she was there.

She served as a pastor for the Evangelical Student congregation in Northern Germany at Kiel University and a pastor in the Kiel-Baarden Parish.

World Council of Churches news, June 12 on line

IAWM Members Send News and Prayers

Robinson Attends Nicene Creed Event

As commemorations of the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea continue, IAWM international liaison **Romella Robinson Sharaz** sent a report about an event in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in March.

Distinguished speakers lectured on how the Council of Nicaea was a unifying moment in the early church; theological debates at the Council and their impact on the church today; the influence of the Nicene Creed on worship, prayer, liturgy, theology and faith practices; and the historical, ethical, political and theological context of the Nicene Creed, and implications within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Robinson said, “Participating in the Christian Study Centre’s historic conference was both a humbling and transformative experience for me. . . I was deeply moved by the richness of the theological discourse and the spirit of unity that echoed throughout each session, also by participating in worship and prayers.”

Glasgow Earns Doctorate in Caribbean

The Rev. Dr. Eleanor C. Glasgow-Lane, who serves Grace Anglican Church in St. Lucia, earned her doctor of ministry degree this spring from the Graduate Theological Foundation, Florida. Her dissertation is “Getting Past the Past: Women in Administrative Leadership.”

She conducted a study of Anglican women in the Windward Islands, “to explore the extent to which female clerics are impacted negatively in an outmoded patriarchal milieu; and ultimately, to sensitize the church (as a leading social institution) to the need to review and seek consciously to eradicate” the male bias.

She concluded that the diocese has not enabled support systems for women leaders in a systematic and deliberate way, for the fullest embrace of women clerics, particularly those in administrative positions.

Indigenous Ministry in Guatemala

Nora Coloma responded to IAWM president Ella Sonawane’s note to her when Nora was on the prayer list. “With my life partner, Dr. Vitalino Simlox, we have been doing free work for 10 years in the benefit of the indigenous Mayan students of our country, so that they have the opportunity to attend university. The Lord has never left us without food on the table. . .we are determined to continue working for the indigenous population of Guatemala, where discrimination and racism are profound.”

She concluded, “Thank you once, twice, and a thousand times. May the Lord’s blessing be with you.”

Email Carol, csbrown550@hotmail.com, to join the writers.

IAWM Reunion in PA: A Delight

By Jean Henderson

What a delight to get together with IAWM sisters we've known for decades!

Pittsburgh area members Jean Henderson, Ruth Becker and Janet Grill hosted Lisa Ubbelohde from Wisconsin and Mary Green from Iowa, April 10-14, 2025, at Passavant Village in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, and Sherwood Oaks in Cranberry Township, PA. Lisa had served Lutheran churches in nearby Butler and Pittsburgh in her early ministry and had arranged for reunions and worship attendance. Lisa and Mary also visited Pat Arledge-Benko in Murrysville and Betty Sykes in the South Hills of Pittsburgh during their visit. All of us had traveled together to many assemblies in the USA and around the world over the last 40 years, including Munich, Budapest, Auckland, Cuba and Saskatoon.

On April 12, ten IAWM sisters gathered for an early supper at Sherwood Oaks: Jean, Mary, Ruth, Lisa, Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes (our past president), Lola Turnbull, Carol Brown (our treasurer), Beverly Banyay, Lisa Lyon, and Janet Grill. Lots of catching up, sharing our stories, remembering our IAWM sisters who have died, and munching on good food.

It was an especially tender time to be together since many of us are aging past the time of world-wide travel to assemblies. We all agreed that the highlight of our shared ministries has been being a member of IAWM and knowing one another. We send our blessings to all of you!

(See photo, page 1)

Plan for Jakarta in 2026

The week of July 20, 2026, IAWM will gather for our next international assembly. Local women ministers, theme discussions, Christian ministry in a majority-Muslim county, and maybe a side trip to Bali? **Details in the October issue!**

Join our new WhatsApp groups!

By Kimberly Greway, IAWM Vice President

We're excited to launch a new way for members of the International Association of Women Ministers to stay connected, informed, and encouraged—no matter where we are in the world. As clergywomen serving in diverse contexts, it can be challenging to stay in touch. This new platform is one way we live out our commitment to global sisterhood, shared wisdom, and spiritual solidarity.

Our new IAWM WhatsApp Community is a central space designed to help us:

- Share updates and announcements
- Highlight upcoming events, online gatherings, and prayer opportunities
- Create space for mutual encouragement and connection across borders

What you can expect:

- An IAWM General Chat room for sharing thoughts, updates and pictures
- A Prayer Concerns room to share joys and concerns
- An Announcements room for upcoming events
- Individual rooms for each chapter

How to Join:

- Use your phone or tablet's camera to view the QR code, then click the link below it.
- Or, use this link to join the IAWM WhatsApp Community:
<http://bit.ly/43dRovs>

We look forward to connecting more deeply—across time zones, traditions and callings—as we walk the road together.

IAWM (International Association of Women Ministers)
WhatsApp community



IAWM (International Association of Women Ministers)
WhatsApp community



Elsie Stowe, Connecticut Pioneer in the 1930s

From the editor: The historian of my home town, Oxford, Connecticut, USA, publishes pictures on Facebook of town history. Occasionally there shows up a picture of a woman on church steps labelled "Pastor Elsie, 1930s." I asked for more information about her, and this is what they sent. Elsie would have been a contemporary of our founder, Madeline Southard, though it's likely they never met.



Historian Dorothy DeBisschop interviewed Elsie in the 1980s, and recorded stories about how many miles she walked around then-rural Oxford and Seymour to visit her parishioners. She also supervised "night school" which probably, like the original Sunday Schools, was secular education for those who had had to quit school and go to work. Our thanks to Great Hill United Methodist Church for the photos, and the Conference on Archives and History, New York Annual Conference, United Methodist Church, for the bulletin insert.

Telling Our Stories
250 Years of United Methodism
in the New York Area
1766-2016 www.nyac.com/250years



Elsie F. Stowe

*First Woman
Ordained in the New
York East Conference*

1894-1994



Elsie Stowe, a Seymour resident who became the first woman ordained in the New York East Conference of the Methodist Church. She served at Great Hill Methodist Church in the 1930's.

*Oxford Historical Society
Digital Photo Collection*

Rev. Elsie F. Stowe, ordained a Local Deacon in 1927 and a Local Elder in 1929, believed strongly in rural ministry. She served as pastor to four rural churches in western CT in her career.

The path to women's ordination in the ME Church was long and complicated. Maggie Newton Van Cott was the first woman to receive a local preacher's license, in 1869. But in 1880 General Conference voted against local preaching licenses for women, not granting them again until 1920. In 1924 women received limited clergy rights as local elders or deacons, but without conference membership; they were not granted full clergy rights until 1956.

Born in Monroe CT, Stowe graduated from the Blakeslee Deaconess Training School in New Haven in 1918. She was consecrated a deaconess in March 1920.

Later that year she was granted a local preachers license, and in 1924 she officiated at her brother's marriage. The newspaper headline read: "Married by His Sister: Woman Minister Officiates at Stowe's Wedding to Woman Dentist."

Stowe dedicated herself to rural ministry in North Wilton and Seymour CT and later served as Matron of the Methodist Church Home in New Haven until her retirement in 1960.

Get on line
August 1!
We're looking 4U!

It's
fun

our next online
conversation for
and connection:

Friday August 1

9 a.m. Eastern DT

Email Marian for the Zoom
code: uccrev77@gmail.com

In the News

Hartford International University appointed the **Rev. Sherry Turner**, an alum of the university's Black ministries program, as president. She is the first Black person and the third woman to lead the HIU (formerly Hartford Seminary). She comes from her position as vice president of strategic initiatives at Rhodes College, in Memphis, Tennessee, previously served the United Negro College Fund, and as CEO of the Atlanta University Center Consortium.

The Rev. Carolyn Cavaness is the first woman, and the first millennial, to occupy the pulpit at Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA. She is a fourth-generation clergy in her family, and leads the historic church at a time when Philadelphia is preparing to celebrate the country's 250th anniversary in 2026. She said, "It's a testament that this is the only African American institution from the founding era of America that is still alive."

The Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, pastor of Taraja church in Indonesia, is general chairperson of Indonesia Bible Society and World Council of Churches president from Asia. She served as a resource person at an April conference on Human Dignity and ASEAN: Pursuing Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Southeast Asia. Her specialty is cross-cultural religious literacy.

Faithful America, an activist organization originally founded by the National Council of Churches (USA), has called the **Rev. Shannon Flek** as its executive director. She has been executive director of the Oklahoma Faith Network, a pastor and a former probation officer. She helped challenge efforts to start a state-funded religious charter school, and helped oppose a plan to buy Bibles endorsed by President Trump for each classroom.

The Rev. Winnie Varghese has been appointed as the 12th Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, the first woman to thus serve. Varghese is described as a national leader in the Episcopal Church (USA) and currently serves at St. Luke's in Atlanta, Georgia. She begins her ministry at the Cathedral July 1.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in the United Methodist Church (USA) gathered statistics on the representation of women in leadership. They reported, "Overall, gender representation in the UMC leadership is improving, but there is still work to be done. For the first time in United Methodist history, in the United States, of the 32 resident bishops, **most resident bishops are female**. Currently 17 are female while 15 are male."

From Religion News Service, correspondence and denominational newsletters

