

The Ministry of Women in the Church and the Ordination of Women as Deacons in the Diocese of Christ our Hope September 23, 2017

Introduction

At its establishment in 2009, the Anglican Church in North America provided a range of flexibility to its constituent Dioceses in the matter of the ordination of women to the diaconate and the priesthood. This range of flexible practice honored the historical positions and convictions of the various Dioceses forming the Province. The words of a new communique from the College of Bishops dated September 7, 2017 summarize the Province's foundational policies in this matter:

In an act of mutual submission at the foundation of the Anglican Church in North America, it was agreed that each Diocese and Jurisdiction has the freedom, responsibility, and authority to study Holy Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition of the Church, and to seek the mind of Christ in determining its own convictions and practices concerning the ordination of women to the diaconate and the priesthood. It was also unanimously agreed that women will not be consecrated as bishops in the Anglican Church in North America. These positions are established within our Constitution and Canons and, because we are a conciliar Church, would require the action of both Provincial Council and Provincial Assembly to be changed.

A basic assumption behind this range of flexibility was (is) that the Dioceses of the Province, regardless of specific practices concerning Women and Holy Orders, are united in unwavering submission to the authority of God's Word. This conviction concerning the authority of the Scriptures includes four fundamental beliefs expressed by all Dioceses in some practical form:

1. God created both men and women in his image, and both sexes share common dignity, worth, value, and potential for godly influence within the Church, home, and society.
2. Both women and men are redeemed and made full and equal members of the Body of Christ. Men and women are adopted into the family of God as joint-heirs with Christ in the full inheritance of the "sons of God." Both women and men are freely gifted by the Holy Spirit for ministry, according to the will of Jesus, Lord of the Church.
3. In some form, all ACNA Dioceses are structured according to the view that God has created men and women to serve together in the Church in a **complementarian** fashion. No Diocese is structured in what would be called "a fully egalitarian fashion," i.e., all offices and ordinations are open to all, regardless of sex.
4. The matter of the ministry of women within the Church, and the opportunity for women to be ordained to any order within the Church, cannot be resolved by bending the knee to cultural demands, by appeal to social justice, or by appeal to individual rights as understood in our current political environment. Faithful Christians must settle these

questions by understanding and submitting to Scripture, as informed by almost 2000 years of Apostolic Tradition and Catholic (i.e., universal) Order.

However, there have been questions from the beginning: Should the practices of all the Dioceses of the Anglican Church in North America conform to one position on the matter of Ordination and Women's Orders? Is this a "first-order" or "second-order" issue – the first requiring doctrinal unity, the second allowing for differences? Can the Church truly be unified if there are different beliefs and practices concerning this issue? Can the Anglican Church in North America advance in ecumenical dialogue when key potential ecumenical partners consider this a settled "first-order" issue? How do we walk with other theologically orthodox Anglicans (i.e., the GAFCON and Global South Provinces), when the practices within those Provinces vary in terms of the ordination of women?

As a result, the College of Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America called for the establishment of a Theological Task Force on Holy Orders in 2011 in order to:

- Study the nature of ordination biblically and historically.
- Consider the biblical, historical, and theological convictions and practices concerning the ordination of women.
- Consider the convictions and practices of ordination, including the ordination of women, within the Dioceses of the Anglican Church in North America.
- Identify implications, questions, and concerns RE: the ordination, or the non-ordination, of women within the Province.

This Task Force included leaders and scholars who held different, even opposing, positions on these matters. They were not asked to make recommendations but only to gather, report, and deliver findings to the College of Bishops. Their final (fifth) report was submitted in January 2017. The College received this report and dedicated several months in 2017 to prayerfully consider it. September 5-7, 2017 was set aside for the Bishops to gather in conclave for a time of dedicated prayer and discussion with a view to proposing a way to move ahead as a Province with clarity in these matters. In the meantime, the Dioceses were free to continue to operate according to their respective positions and practices.

The result of the Bishops' Conclave has just been published in the form of a statement issued on September 7, 2017. That full statement is appended. The Bishops' essential conciliar conclusion concerning our Province's policy and practice in the matter of women's ordination to the priesthood is stated in this paragraph:

Having gratefully received and thoroughly considered the five-year study by the Theological Task Force on Holy Orders, we acknowledge that there are differing principles of ecclesiology and hermeneutics that are acceptable within Anglicanism that may lead to divergent conclusions regarding women's ordination to the priesthood. However, we also acknowledge that this practice is a recent innovation to Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order. We agree that there is insufficient scriptural warrant to accept women's ordination to the priesthood as standard practice throughout the

Province. However, we continue to acknowledge that individual dioceses have constitutional authority to ordain women to the priesthood.

In other words, each Diocese is responsible to do its homework in terms of study, prayer, and discussion to reach its own convictions and practices concerning women and holy orders. That work must be centered in the authority of Holy Scripture and informed by Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order. Following regular Anglican methodology, that process within each Diocese must be conciliar under the leadership of its bishop(s).

Through our history in the Anglican Mission in America and PEARUSA, the Diocese of Christ our Hope, along with its bishops, the majority of its clergy, and its parishes have held consistently to our current position and practice concerning women in ministry. Our position can be summarized in this way:

1. We affirm women in ministry, and we open all positions of ministry within the local church to women according to their gifting and spiritual maturity (apart from ordination). This accords with our mandate to disciple, equip, and release all Christians to their God-given ministries and calling within the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16).
2. We ordain called, gifted, and qualified women to the Holy Order of Deacons.
3. We do not ordain women to the Holy Order of Presbyters.

This is not simply an inherited position but one that is based on consistent and frequent study, discussion, prayer, and reconsideration. It confirms two phrases found in the September 7, 2017 statement of the College of Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America. RE: ordaining women to the priesthood, the Bishops stated:

- [T]here is insufficient scriptural warrant to accept women's ordination to the priesthood as standard practice throughout the Province.
- [T]his practice is a recent innovation to Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order.

In other words, it remains the settled conviction of the bishops and majority of clergy of our Diocese that the ordination of women to the priesthood is not convincingly grounded in Holy Scripture. We also agree that this practice is an innovation in Church history. To state it more directly, it is a departure from Apostolic Tradition and Catholic Order. That, in and of itself, would not prevent us from considering a change in this matter, if it were in clear agreement with God's Word. However, after continued, extensive study, prayer, and discussion, we remain convinced that the weight of Scripture supports our current beliefs and practices.

However, throughout this season, clergy and laity in the Diocese of Christ our Hope (DCH) have continued to raise the issue of women's ordination from differing assumptions and inclinations. Questions arise; new scholarship and insights emerge; people are talking. Responding to the conversation has called us to continue to grow in our understanding of Scripture, theology, and God's plan for his Church. As a result, the bishops, canons, and Diocesan Council of the DCH have done more work in this area. The position of the DCH has become (to us) more developed, more encouraging, and more robust. We believe it is time to state these convictions and practices clearly in writing. That is the purpose of this paper.

Basic Preliminary Principles and Comments

- **Conviction:** This is not an incidental or unimportant issue. This is a matter of significant importance to the faith and mission of the Church in the 21st Century. We commit to clarify and teach, discuss, and practice what we believe to be the best biblical teaching concerning women, ministry, and ordination in our Diocese.
- **Humility:** While we take our stand with confidence in the Scriptures and in the theological coherence of our position, we do so humbly. We understand that differing ecclesiological and hermeneutical principles can lead orthodox Anglicans to differing convictions than ours.
- **Respectful, Gracious Conversation and Debate:** In our local ministries in the DCH, we commit to respect, honor, support, equip, and serve all people. Beyond the DCH, we actively partner with and stand alongside Anglicans who differ from us on both sides of the aisle. We urge every leader and every lay person in DCH churches to follow our example and treat those with whom they disagree with honor and graciousness. We particularly urge our diocesan constituency to treat their Provincial brothers and sisters, and all other genuinely orthodox Christians, as partners and friends in mission and ministry. Furthermore, we urge all constituents of our churches to treat all men and women with fundamental respect and kindness, as we have been treated by Jesus Christ.
- **Unity:** We commit to maintain the unity of the faith and the purity and power of the Gospel in the ministry and mission of the Diocese of Christ our Hope. We pray regularly and frequently for unity in our Diocese and in the Church as a whole.
- **Mission:** It is important to resolve this issue simply and satisfactorily so that we can continue to focus on our primary mission, centered in evangelism and discipleship, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. We need all Christians within our churches to unite in love and passion for Jesus and his Gospel, and to unite with mutuality, godliness, and respect in the work of God's kingdom in our day.
- **Enthusiasm:** We believe that our position in the matter of men, women, ministry, and ordination gives dignity and worth to all people. It is, we believe, beautiful. We urge all DCH churches and clergy to be enthusiastic and earnest in affirming, equipping, and releasing all Christians for gifted ministry.
- **Limits:** The biblical and theological study of the identity and interrelationship of men and women in the home and Church has produced enough papers and books to fill a large library. We cannot fully explain or defend each point and each position we hold as a Diocese in a short position paper. The purpose of this paper is to explain our position and reasoning simply, effectively, and positively, so that the boundaries of our life together are clear. Fuller development and explanation of our position depends on further reading and discussion. At the end of this paper, there is an introductory appendix along with a PDF file, a report of a significant study which may be useful as supportive material for our practice.

The Constitutional Position of the Diocese of Christ our Hope RE: Men, Women and Ordained Ministry

The official position and practice of the Diocese of Christ our Hope concerning men and women in ordained ministry is stated in our Constitution, adopted by Synod on November 5, 2016.

Article X Concerning Men and Women in Ordained Ministry

Within the Anglican Church in North America there is a diversity of understanding regarding the role of ordination for women, and therefore the roles women may serve within the sacramental ministry of the Church. This Diocese upholds the biblical teaching that both men and women are created in God's image, are redeemed in Christ to be equal heirs of the grace of God, and are freely called and fully gifted for Kingdom ministry according to his sovereign will. Therefore, this Diocese is committed to promoting and honoring the ministry of women alongside men, both within and outside the church. Nevertheless, this Diocese believes that a biblical balance between equality of gifting, freedom for ministry, and the embodiment of spiritual order within the Church is best expressed by distinguishing the ordained roles available to men and women. This Diocese ordains called and gifted women as vocational deacons. We ordain called and gifted men as vocational deacons, transitional deacons, and presbyters. In all this, we gratefully receive the service of both men and women as vocational deacons, and men as transitional deacons, in a broad variety of ministries according to God's gifts and callings in each person's life. At the same time, we express our commitment to order within the Church by reserving sacramental ministry to presbyters.

This remains the position and practice of the Diocese. Nevertheless, we believe that there is value in further development of the basic positions articulated in our Constitution.

The Basic Principles of Male and Female in the Image of God in Creation and Redemption

In contrast to the rest of creation, which reveals God's existence, attributes, and powers, God created humanity as his unique image-bearers. Humanity's identity and capacity to *image* God is in a different category from creation's capacity to *reveal* God.

Understanding what constitutes the *imago dei* has captured the imagination and energy of theologians, philosophers, and ordinary Christians throughout history. Is it humanity's capacity to think? Is it the gift of a *will* – an ability to make moral and ethical choices – and therefore our responsibility as moral agents? Is it simply humanity's calling and capacity to know and relate to

God personally?¹ In addition to these questions concerning the most foundational aspects of the *imago dei*, we suggest that the image of God in humanity broadly includes the following.

Gendered Differentiation and Equality

When God created humanity, he specifically did so as the Three-Personed God (the Trinity): “Let us create man in our image, according to our likeness.” In doing this, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in unity created mankind in unity, male and female. Three Persons, one God, created two persons, one image bearer. The image of God in mankind includes the foundational calling to individual men and women to be like God, to connect and relate to him, and to honor and reflect him. Both women and men are equally created to relate to and reflect God. Whatever is said about people bearing the image of God can be said equally of any man or woman. While the Fall of Man radically altered the image of God in all humanity, the redemptive hope and path to image-bearing is equally shared by men and women.

At the same time, the universal understanding of the one holy, catholic, apostolic church has remained unequivocal: there is a creation-level distinction between men and women, and that distinction is good (Genesis 1:31). In fact, the idea of one humanity in two distinct persons itself reflects our Creator. God’s actions as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from one another and yet completely undivided and united as the work of God. For instance, the persons of the Trinity act distinctly and together in giving us knowledge of and relationship with the one God. We know God the Father through his Word, the Son, and we are brought into relationship with the Son and understand him through the working of the Spirit. In similar ways, humanity is created as distinctly male and distinctly female, yet we are called to live together in fundamental unity and harmony as we fulfill our identity-level calling to reflect God.

God is certainly beyond male and female; nevertheless, there is a “God-likeness” in maleness and a “God-likeness” in femaleness. Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, God in the flesh, is the only Person who fully imaged God in himself. As such, he forms the embodied example of the image of God in humanity for both men and women. For our part, our incompleteness demands that we value differentiated men and women as both expressing the image of God, yet prised through the filter of only two genders.

Gender distinctions are notoriously hard to discuss, much less define: they are deeply shaped by culture, custom, personality, and human presuppositions. At most, they are not radical or universal distinctions but rather general characteristics, callings, and capacities appropriate to the sex that God gives to each person at birth. Yet they are real and substantial distinctions. To state the obvious, men and women have gendered differences in how they participate in God’s mandate to “multiply and fulfill the earth.” Until recently, the idea that the particular

¹ For those wishing to explore this issue further, we highly recommend John Swinton’s powerful reflections on *imago dei* in the book entitled, Dementia: Living in the Memories of God, Eerdmans 2012, ISBN 0802867162.

distinctions relating to child-bearing are reflective of profound, identity-level distinctions connected to one's gender has been assumed by most sociologists, anthropologists, biologists, poets, theologians, and the Church as a whole.² St Paul can differentiate between "mother love" and "father love" in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-13, and until recently such comments were self-evident.

As a Diocese, we agree that humanity is created by God to reflect his image in its common humanity and in its differentiation as two distinct image-bearing genders, male and female.

Relationship, Interdependence, and Mutuality

That's not all. When God created the first man and woman, he blessed them together in marriage (Genesis 1:26-29; 2:18-25), declaring an intended unity and interdependence reflective of his own Trinitarian identity. In this regard, the very nature of the relationship between man and woman in marriage is meant to image the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This suggests that the interrelationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it is revealed in Holy Scripture is the template for the love, unity, mutuality, honor, interdependence, and respect God intends for marriage.

These qualities of relationship are not limited to husbands and wives but apply (ideally) in differing degrees and appropriate expressions to all human relationships. The husband/wife relationship that reflects the Triune God extends (in differing degrees and appropriate expressions) to children, grandchildren, and other members of the family. It also ideally extends to others through friendship, partnership in labor, and our common life as a race seeking to fulfill our spiritual vocation as God's image-bearers and stewards over creation. Each relationship has its unique distinctions: for instance, sexual relationships are created exclusively for husbands and wives (Genesis 2:23-25; Exodus 20:14-17; Hebrews 13:4). Nevertheless, God's created plan was that love, honor, mutuality, interdependence, unity, and respect apply in every direction, to every human relationship.

Tragically, that's far from the reality we experience. The radical, destructive alteration of human relationships that resulted from the Fall is second only to the radical break in humanity's relationship with God. Relationships in every direction were (and are) broken by sin. Disconnected from God, Adam immediately began to blame Eve for his choice. Adam and Eve's first son murdered his brother. The redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ heals the most fundamental relational break, that between God and individual people. Redemption also offers

² Despite the many recent criticisms of inherited gender norms, the basic fact that men and women are different, not only in their biological makeup but also in a variety of behavioral and social tendencies, continues to receive empirical verification in the social sciences. For a sampling of some of this research, see <https://calvinistinternational.com/2016/09/13/natural-complementarians-men-women/>

the hope of restoring and transforming relationships in every other direction – husbands and wives, parents and children, friendships, communal life, etc.

But back to the point: in creation, God creates men and women as distinct and complementary to one another and he binds them in relationship to one another. This creational relationship, and the love, cooperation, mutuality, and social harmony that it is intended to embody, is itself and integral aspect of the *imago dei*.

Mutuality and Interdependence as Stewards of Creation and Servants of God

The order and distinct properties of the three Trinitarian persons are reflected in their common action in the world as the one God: as the Cappadocian Fathers said, “every act of God proceeds from the Father, through the Son, and is perfected in the Spirit.” Similarly, God called Adam and Eve to work in complementary harmony to fulfill their common vocation, to multiply and fill the earth and to govern and steward God’s good creation (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25). It takes male and female to produce children and a family. It takes male and female in relationship to properly care for creation. That was true at creation and it is still true, even in our fallen world.

However, the Fall of humanity, our redemption in Jesus Christ, the establishment of the Church, and the commissioning of the Church to the work of the Gospel have all combined to broaden the tasks and the forms of male / female interdependence and mutuality. As God’s redeemed children, we are still called to be stewards of creation and to fill the world with new life. But that calling now includes the stewardship of the Gospel itself, our spiritual vocation of bringing the Kingdom of God to a fallen world, and the multiplication of new life in Christ.

Like Genesis, in which God’s creation mandates were given to the male and the female individually (Genesis 1) and to Adam and Eve as a couple (Genesis 2), our calling today applies to Christian individuals and couples. But in this Age of Redemption, there is another form, another family, in which transformed men and women relate to one another and work together to accomplish God’s will. That new family is the Church, the household of God. In that family, young and old, single and married, male and female, rich and poor, uneducated and educated, are called to reflect the image of God through unity, mutuality, interdependence, holiness, love, and service. Each of us shares a common life and common vocation.³ We are to live as one family, brothers and sisters in Christ, and joint-heirs of the grace of God.⁴

³ Read these Scriptures, a small sampling of the wealth of teaching concerning this new household of God: Luke 8:19-21; Acts 2: 17-21; Romans 12:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 4:1-7; James 2:1-8.

⁴ The obvious limitations of expression that define the unique covenantal nature of marriage as between “one man and one woman only” continue in the Church. Nevertheless, all Christians in the household of God are called to love, unity, mutuality, and interdependence in our communal life and Christian service.

However, it does not follow that distinctions of gift and office disappear from this new family. In fact, we find the opposite to be true: Romans 12:3-6⁵. But the offices give to the Church are given for the sake of the whole, in order for the whole to fulfill its calling and vocation: Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:1-5.

The Basic Principle of Order in Creation and Redemption

The ontological equality of men and women and the mutuality and interdependence of men and women are not matters of significant disagreement among orthodox Christians. The focus on relationship that we believe is also part of the *imago dei* may be a slightly innovative thought, but it can hardly be considered doctrinally controversial.

However, we believe there is another fundamental reality seen in creation that exists alongside the ontological equality of men and women that is not universally acknowledged. We believe that God established *order in human relationships* as fundamental to an altogether good creation (Genesis 1:31). Further, we believe God applies order according to distinct gender-specific roles in the home, and in the Age of Redemption, in the household of God.

First, the plain reading of Scripture is clear: the husband is called the head of the wife in Ephesians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3. However one interprets the details surrounding those statements, it is abundantly clear that:

1. The distinct roles given to husbands and wives are rooted in Creation: 1 Corinthians 11:2-11 hearkens back to Genesis 2:15-25.
2. In these roles, husbands and wives are meant to work in perfect harmony as they carry out their common vocation of representing the rule and holiness of God in the world.
3. This harmony was fractured tragically by the Fall and subsequent condition of original sin. This brought disorder and conflict into the marital relationship (Genesis 3:1-19).
4. Because of this tragic reality, the natural order of male headship has often become a precursor and excuse for abuse, oppression, and degradation of women. Any operation of such so-called "headship" is sin and calls for repentance, or if necessary, intervention by the Church for the sake of the one so abused.
5. Even while asserting headship, and the submission appropriate to a wife (Ephesians 5:33), Christ calls Christian husbands and wives to mutual submission and true Christian harmony (Ephesians 5:1-21).
6. Further, even in affirming headship, husbands are called to "love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25ff.).
7. Headship in the home in no way negates the full equality of women in all that we have asserted so far in this paper

⁵ The idea of distinction and unity in the Church is similar to the differentiation of humanity into male and female in creation. In other words, in redemption as well as creation, distinctions within unity exist by God's design and out of his goodness.

We also read Scripture to say that male headship is operative in the Church, the household of God. St Paul is our primary teacher for this claim. As he writes Holy Scripture, inspired by the Spirit of God, St Paul appeals to creation (1 Corinthians 11:2-11) and to the Fall (1 Timothy 2:12-14) to assert male leadership in the Church. We acknowledge that some aspects of the teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:2-5 are clearly enculturated, the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12-15 is difficult to interpret and apply, and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 are hard to reconcile with St Paul's own teaching in 1 Corinthians 11:5. In recent years, some scholars and teachers have relegated these texts to an ancient world that no longer exists, and therefore concluded that they no longer apply at all. We understand the temptation to discard these hard texts, yet we have no authority or warrant to do that. We must continue to seek to properly interpret and apply God's Word, even when it is difficult. Most importantly, underneath the challenging texts and interpretations runs a current consistent with Jesus' own actions: In spite of his radical reversal of his culture's treatment of women (see Luke 10:38-42), and in spite of his own honoring of women as the first witnesses and messengers of the Resurrection (John 20:11-18), Jesus chose twelve men as the apostles of the Church.

Jesus' practices beautifully embody the point: Women are honored by Jesus and given freedom to learn, proclaim, and bear witness – roles which smashed chauvinistic cultural barriers. He personally honored women time and again through his miracles, teachings, and personal relationships. No greater honor has ever been given a human than to be the *Theotokos* – the bearer of God – and it was given to Mary. Yet when it came to the position of apostolic leadership in the Church, men were selected to serve in the role. Paradoxical though it may be to the modern mind, Jesus affirmed order while restoring full equality and dignity for women.

In this regard, the supreme example of order for both men and women is the same, Jesus Christ himself. He is "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Hebrews 1:3), but in his humanity Jesus exemplified both complete submission and true authority. He completely submitted to the Father, while he retained his identity as God (John 5:30; Mark 14:36; Hebrews 5:7-6). He is Lord of the Church which he served unto his death. Jesus exemplified spiritual authority and headship: he is the Servant-King of Isaiah. By his own life and example, he demonstrated decisively that the operation of true spiritual leadership is the work of loving, sacrificial service (Matthew 20:20-28). In our respective roles and callings in the Church and home, all men and women, regardless of gift and office, look fully to Jesus as the complete embodiment of who we are to be within the ordered roles we play.

Some Christians would object, saying that notions of relational order are a consequence of the conflict that resulted from the Fall in Genesis 3. They might also assert that authority cannot be distinguished from authoritarianism, from the unjust subjugation of others and from the abusive use of authority that has so frequently characterized our experiences of authority in the family, the Church, and in society. Nevertheless, though our experiences of authority have indeed often been marred by sin, relational order is not itself a consequence of the Fall, but is in fact a beautiful gift that is reflective of God's own eternal order as Trinity. God establishes

order at creation for the wellbeing of humanity⁶, even before the destructive influence and tragic consequences of sin entered creation.

Some may offer the rejoinder that order, and even gender, will disappear in the New Creation. There is more evidence for the former than the latter. However, even if both these speculative ideas are true, we are not yet in the eschaton. We cannot live in this fallen world with an over-realized and over-applied eschatology that denies the plain sense of Scripture.

Complementarianism in the Anglican Church in North America

Each Diocese in the ACNA expresses complementarianism.

- The ACNA does not allow women to serve as bishops in any capacity.
- Some Dioceses believe that only men may be ordained as deacons or priests.
- Some Dioceses follow a similar pattern but provide for a traditional historic order of deaconess that is believed to differ from biblical (male) deacons.
- Some Dioceses ordain women to the diaconate but not to the priesthood. Within that, there is significant variation in the understanding of the ministry of deacons in general and the specific appropriate ministry of female deacons.
- Some Dioceses ordain women as both deacons and priests; however, they maintain an “embodied order” (locally expressed, visible male leadership) by allowing female priests to serve only as associate priests, not rectors.
- Some Dioceses in the ACNA ordain women as both deacon and priest and allow women to serve as rectors of local churches. Order is embodied in that bishops can only be men.

An Overview of the Women in Ministry in the Diocese of Christ our Hope

Summing up the theological explorations so far,

The Diocese of Christ our Hope believes that people are given gifts for effective service by the Holy Spirit regardless of gender: see Acts 2:17-17; note the complete absence of reference to gender in the lists of spiritual gifts in Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12, I Peter 4:11-12, etc.; note the examples of women in the New Testament serving in a large variety of ministries. We believe that if “a man’s gift makes way for him” (Proverbs 18:16), then “a woman’s gifts make way for her.” In other words, a godly, spiritually mature and faithful person should be encouraged, equipped, and released to serve according to his/her gifts.

⁶ As an example, read the short epistle of Titus. He was sent to Crete to “put in order that which remained” (1:5). Eight times St Paul instructs Titus to teach (what therefore he expects to become) a well-ordered Church to be about the work of good deeds. Ordering the Church and embodying grace, love, mercy, mutuality, and positive good deeds in the community work hand-in-glove.

This leads us to a robust, expansive view of the ministry of women within the body of Christ, according to the gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit and the assignments given them by Jesus Christ. Specifically, in the New Testament we note that women exercise ministries of:

- Public prophecy and prayer: 1 Corinthians 11:4 explains how women are to prophesy and pray in public worship – with a visible expression that they are under authority. [Remember that prophecy is said to be a superior, desirable gift for the public teaching of the Church (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).] In Acts 21:9, we read that Philip, the apostle and evangelist, had four daughters who were prophets.
- Leadership: In Romans 16:1-2, Phoebe is not only given the office of deacon, she is called a *PROSTATES*, the broad, generic Greek word for a leader. A *PROSTATES* literally is one who “stands before the group,” i.e., to lead.
- Apostolic ministry: In Romans 16:7, Junia has a ministry among the apostles. This most certainly means “an apostolic ministry,” i.e., likely a pioneering evangelist or missionary.
- Evangelism: The first witnesses and proclaimers of the resurrection, commissioned by Jesus himself, were women.
- Teaching: In Acts 18:26, a woman named Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, instructed Apollos in the faith, i.e., they disciplined him. In Romans 16:3, Paul greets them as “fellow workers.” The order of their names, Priscilla preceding Aquila, is noteworthy. It may well indicate that she was the primary teacher and discipler of the two.

Therefore, the spiritual gifts and graces given to women in the apostolic era place them in the thick of all the ministries of the New Testament Church. This is a logical continuation of the changes Jesus himself made in the treatment of women in the Jewish world he inhabited.

With such grace given to women, it is therefore startling to see that order (male headship) in the home and Church is maintained in the New Testament. In terms of male leadership of the Church:

- The twelve apostles were all men, in spite of the fact that women were likely the most apt and dependable of Jesus’ disciples. When Judas betrayed Christ and committed suicide, a male replacement was picked.
- In instructing Timothy and Titus to appoint elders for the Church, St Paul envisions only men. Presbyters (overseers) are to be “one-womaned men,” i.e., devoted singularly to their wives. No “or to your husbands” is included. (See the appendix and PDF report for further development of this truth.)
- While women can teach in the Church, they are not to “teach authoritatively,” i.e., as the authoritative leader of the church (1 Tim 2:12).⁷ When they prophesy or teach, it

⁷ As already noted, these texts pose interpretative challenges. We agree with the vast majority of orthodox Christians that they include culturally shaped applications. In our world, we do not believe that women should wear head coverings, nor do we believe that women should always have long hair as a public acknowledgement of male headship. Neither do we believe that women are required to be totally silent in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:33-35). Nevertheless, these two texts explicitly connect the prohibition of women exercising oversight to the order of

must be within a visible system of authority (1 Corinthians 11:4). (See the appendix and PDF report for further development of this truth.)

Therefore, while the New Testament restores women to full dignity and giftedness, it retains order. There is a difference between charismatic gifting and ministry of all Christians and the structured order and authority systems of the Church. The leadership of husbands in the home (Genesis 1-2; Ephesians 5:21-33) is paralleled by the leadership of men within the local church.

The sinful misuse of leadership robs order of its life-giving beauty. However, our sin does not negate God's plan, and the goodness of God's plan, for order within the home and Church.

An Overview of the Ministry of Deacons in the Diocese of Christ our Hope

The office of deacon has often fallen on hard times in the Church. A close examination of the Scriptures concerning the office of deacon should, by all rights, restore the importance of the diaconate in the life of the Church. To this end, we offer the following observations.

Almost all biblical students believe that a prototypical diaconate was established in Acts 6 in order to resolve the crisis concerning the neglect of Hellenistic widows. To solve this problem and not overcomplicate the word-and-prayer ministry of the twelve apostles, seven men were chosen to "serve tables." All of these men were "of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom." The ministries of two, Stephen and Philip, included not only humble service in the dining hall but bold, expansive, evangelistic / apologetic preaching of the Gospel. As a result of his preaching Stephen became the first Christian martyr. Philip's prophetic, evangelistic ministry was a long-term mainstay of the apostolic Church. This establishes the prototype that the diaconal ministry is rooted in humble service within the local church but must also give voice to the full gifting of each individual deacon.

There is a clear overlap between the qualifications for presbyter and deacon (1 Timothy 3:1-13). The distinctions between a presbyter and deacon are not primarily differences of character or spiritual maturity: they are fundamentally those of God's calling.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop a clear, unified, consistent pattern of church polity from the New Testament. Instead, we lean heavily on our tradition. Our Anglican polity did not come into sharp focus until the generation succeeding the apostles. By the 2nd century, the orders of bishop, priest, and deacon were well-established in the Church. Even then, the nature and character of the diaconal ministry has varied throughout Anglican history and still varies from Province to Province and Diocese to Diocese. Therefore, we understand the nature of diaconal ministry to be a matter of freedom and flexibility for the Church.

creation. Further, the juxtaposition of 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 in the same Spirit-inspired letter alerts us to a critical fact: there are culturally-shaped practices operating alongside universal principles. We have to clearly discern between that which is limited and cultural without discarding that which is universally true for the Church.

Therefore, rooted in Scripture and tradition, the Diocese of Christ our Hope believes that:

- The diaconate is a necessary office for the spiritual health, effective ministry, and effective mission of the local church. Therefore, the ministry and service of deacons should be sought, prayed for, and honored in each local church and throughout our Diocese.
- Deacons are leaders within the flock with a particular emphasis. The diaconate has the unique calling to establish, embody, and institutionalize the definition and nature of all Christian leadership as servant leadership. The ongoing servant leadership of deacons within the local church continually pulls the whole church toward servanthood.
- Deacons are servant leaders from within the flock, as examples among the flock. They have the unique privilege of walking alongside the sheep and exemplifying ministry and mission from among the Christian community. *Embodiment* is a key concept for diaconal ministry.
- Deacons must not only share the common call to embody servanthood, they share an ecclesial calling to serve the poor, the needy, and the marginalized. In this manner, deacons call the whole Church to serve and care for the least, the lost, and the littlest.
- In addition, deacons have an ecclesial calling to mission and evangelism. The diaconal order is the bridging ministry, connecting the Church to the world. By example, teaching, and leadership, deacons help all of us stay connected to the world.
- As the defining ministry of Christian leadership, all ordained and consecrated leaders are lifelong deacons.
- There are no particular or universal spiritual gifts assigned to deacons. A deacon can be given any spiritual gift or calling from the full range of Spirit-given graces and callings. Deacons can be gifted preachers and evangelists (Acts 6). They can have spiritual gifts of leadership (Romans 16:1-3). Deacons should be empowered and given opportunity /place to exercise any spiritual gifts and graces the Holy Spirit chooses to bestow on them.
- While some people believe that only men should be deacons based on 1 Timothy 3:12, we understand that deacons can be male or female (Romans 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:11.)
- We pray for and promote a robust diaconal ministry in the Diocese of Christ our Hope.

A Summary Vision for Women in the Diaconate in the Diocese of Christ our Hope

It should be obvious that we are enthusiastically for the ministry of lay and ordained women in the Diocese of Christ our Hope. We positively affirm and promote women who are gifted, called, and qualified to the historic order of deacons. We encourage and help all female deacons to serve fully in their office, according to their gifts. Gifted female deacons are free to serve in preaching, leadership, and evangelism under the authority of a rector within the local church. We do not, however, ordain women to the presbyterate (priesthood). We believe that the best interpretation of Scripture, and the unwavering historic practice of the Church, reserves priestly ministry for men. This is not a statement of lesser value, gifting, or influence

for women. It is simply, and only, the way that we believe God has ordered the Church *in order to reveal the creational principle of order*.⁸

Our world needs a multifaceted corrective message about God. It needs a new story, the story of redemption. It needs a new, theologically coherent world view. Men, women, marriage, singleness, purpose in life, salvation, the place of material possessions, the meaning of life, human pride and identity – all of this, and far more, need to be redefined and transformed by the truth and love of God. The concept of Godly order is included in this comprehensive redefining of human identity and purpose. Order and authority, operating in love for the sake of life, is virtually unknown in the world, but are essential to the identity and character of God-Who-is-Trinity and a blessing to humanity created in his image.

Therefore, all of us, male and female, lay, deacon, presbyter, and bishop, must submit to the principles and operations of embodied order within the Church and home. In terms of the orders of the Church, we believe the best (not the only, but the best) way to express this is a robust diaconate, with the full range of spiritual gifts, available to both men and women, and a local presbyterate and episcopate available to qualified, called, and gifted men. Further, we believe that all leadership within the body must be sacrificial servanthood for the sake of others. The results of Godly leadership and order are life, blessing, and love for others.

⁸ Many traditional Anglicans delimit women from the presbyterate because of the sacramental work of the priest. Some delimit women from the diaconate for the same reason. In stating the position and practice of our Diocese, we are not saying that the sacramental work of the priest is a non-issue. We simply have not explored that aspect of the question in this paper.

Appendix: Preliminary Notes and Comments Concerning “A Report of the Study Concerning the Ordination of Women Undertaken by the Anglican Mission in America,” Submitted by the Rt. Rev. John Rogers, Jr., Chairman, on July 31, 2003

Following our preliminary comments is the full text of a scholarly, thoughtful report from a committee commissioned to study the issue of the ordination of women. This committee was established in the early days of the Anglican Mission in America, prior to the founding of the Anglican Church in North America. This report continues to have broad favor and influence within orthodox Anglicans in America, and for good reason: it is a balanced, fair, and thoroughly biblical study of the issue.

The methodology for the study was unusual and commendable: opposing sides of the question of women’s ordination to the priesthood and episcopate were taken so that the best arguments, pro and con, for every particular point in the development of both positions are presented. Further, the report is thoughtful and challenging, but it is also accessible and understandable.

It is worth reading for anyone wrestling with the issue of women’s ministry and ordination, and we commend it to you. It presents both positions – biblical egalitarianism and complementarianism – well. This report provides a solid exegetical and historical basis for the position we have taken in the Diocese of Christ our Hope concerning women, ministry, and ordination.

However, we offer this study with a few caveats to readers in the DCH.

1. There are minor points along the way where we might offer a different nuance, or a different wording, or a corrective point, to better reflect the tone of our position. Mark any place as you read where you may ask, “Is this how our Diocese would say it? Is this accurate to our position?” Then contact a bishop or clergy person to walk through the paper with you.
2. On a more comprehensive basis, we believe the report overemphasizes the words headship, submission, and authority and under-develops the concepts of servant leadership, grace, and blessing through the proper operations of spiritual authority and order. We do not believe this is the intent of the report, and certainly not the intent of Scripture: we believe it is the tone of the language read through the lens of our own missional context. Without backing off the conclusions, or the message, we would modify and balance the tone of the presentation in a number of ways. In particular, we believe the sacrificial nature of male leadership at creation and the redemptive ministry of Christ as Lord and Savior of the Church is underemphasized. We believe that the word “submission” is used far more often in the paper than warranted by its use in Scripture. It is not consistent with what we believe to be a balanced reflection of Christ’s own submission to the Father.
3. We believe the report’s explanation of complementarianism lacks a proper emphasis on the strength and influence of women in the home and Church. The concept of submission as, by

definition, laying aside the free and independent exercise of strengths, and the offering those strengths to another, is not as clear as we would like.

4. The submission required of all, male and female, follower and leader, is not as clear as we would like.
5. We question the concept (pp. 31-32) that the priest directly symbolizes Christ in the Eucharist service and therefore must be male. Guarding the sacramental ministry of the priesthood is a strong position for many who object to the ordination of women as priests, but we understand the service of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist differently. We believe that the priest calls and leads the church into the sole and singular sacrificial work of Christ. Christ is the only One whose eternal sacrifice, accomplished at a single point in history, opens the door to heaven. ("Christ is sacrificed for us, once for all upon the cross.") The priest enters into it as fully as the church does. In terms of imaging Christ, redeemed men and women are both being transformed into the image of Christ: Romans 8:28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:1-2. We cannot say that "redeemed, godly males physically represent Christ any more than redeemed, godly females represent Christ." Therefore, our objection to female priests is about the embodiment of order, not the presentative nature of the sacramental ministry of the Church.

Nevertheless, even with these caveats, we find the position taken in the attached report defending a male-only priesthood exegetically and historically compelling. We offer this report in the hopes that it will more fully explain and support the position we believe and practice in our Diocese.