

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the interior of a Gothic church. The image shows a series of tall, slender columns supporting a high, vaulted ceiling. The architecture is characterized by pointed arches and ribbed vaulting. Light enters from windows on the sides, creating a warm, golden glow throughout the space. The perspective is looking down the length of the nave towards the altar area.

Minneapolis and Saint Paul Area Synod

MINISTERIUM

October 29, 2020

Celebrating and Giving Thanks for the 50th
Anniversary of the Church's Decision to Ordain
Women into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament
1970-2020

PROGRAM

Welcome

Bishop Ann Svenningsen
Minneapolis Area Synod

Gathering Song

Mary Preus & Tom Witt
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Minneapolis

Devotion

Bishop Patricia Lull
Saint Paul Area Synod

Video of 35th Anniversary

Panel

Rev. Babette Chatman, *Augsburg University, Minneapolis*
Rev. Liz Eide, *Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood*
Rev. Marlene Helgemo, *All Nations Indian Church, Minneapolis*
Rev. Jen Nagel, *University Lutheran Church of Hope, Minneapolis*
Rev. Megan Torgerson, *Easter Lutheran Church, Eagan*

Music

Mary Preus & Tom Witt

Small Groups

Music

Mary Preus

Video of 2019 Churchwide Assembly

Music

Mary Preus

Blessing

Bishop Ann Svenningsen

O God,
you have called your servants to
ventures of which we cannot see the
ending, by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good
courage, not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading
us and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Ordination of Women

1970-2020

June 29, 1970

The LCA in convention voted to allow women's ordination.

October 24, 1970

The ALC in convention voted to allow women's ordination.

November 22, 1970

Elizabeth Platz was the first woman ordained in the Lutheran Church in the United States. She was a member of the LCA.

December 20, 1970

Barbara L. Andrews was the first ordained woman in the ALC.

June 8, 1975

Kay Jurgenson was the second woman ordained in what would become the Minneapolis Area Synod.

October 30, 1977

Janith Otte Murphy was the first ordained woman in the AELC.

June 4, 1978

Joy Bussert was the first woman ordained in what would become the Saint Paul Area Synod.

March 4, 1979

Lydia Rivera Kalb was the first Latina woman ordained.

August 26, 1979

Earlean Miller was the first African-American woman ordained.

May 15, 1982

Asha George-Guiser was the first Asian-American woman ordained.

July 19, 1987

Marlene Helgemo was the first American Indian/Alaska Native woman ordained.

January 1, 1988

The ALC, LCA, and the AELC united to become the ELCA.

January 22, 1988

Ruth Frost, Phyllis Zillhart, and Anita Hill were the first openly lesbian/queer women ordained (extra ordinem).

April 1992

The Rev. Maria Jepsen of Germany was the first Lutheran woman bishop elected worldwide.

June 12, 1992

The Rev. April Ulring Larson was the first woman bishop elected in the ELCA.

September 12, 1999

The Rev. Louisa Groce was the first octogenarian ordained.

June 2001

The Rev. Margarita Martinez was the first woman bishop of color elected in the ELCA.

December 12, 2009

The Rev. Dolores McKay was the first Arab/Middle Eastern woman ordained.

August 14, 2013

The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton was the first woman elected presiding bishop in the ELCA.

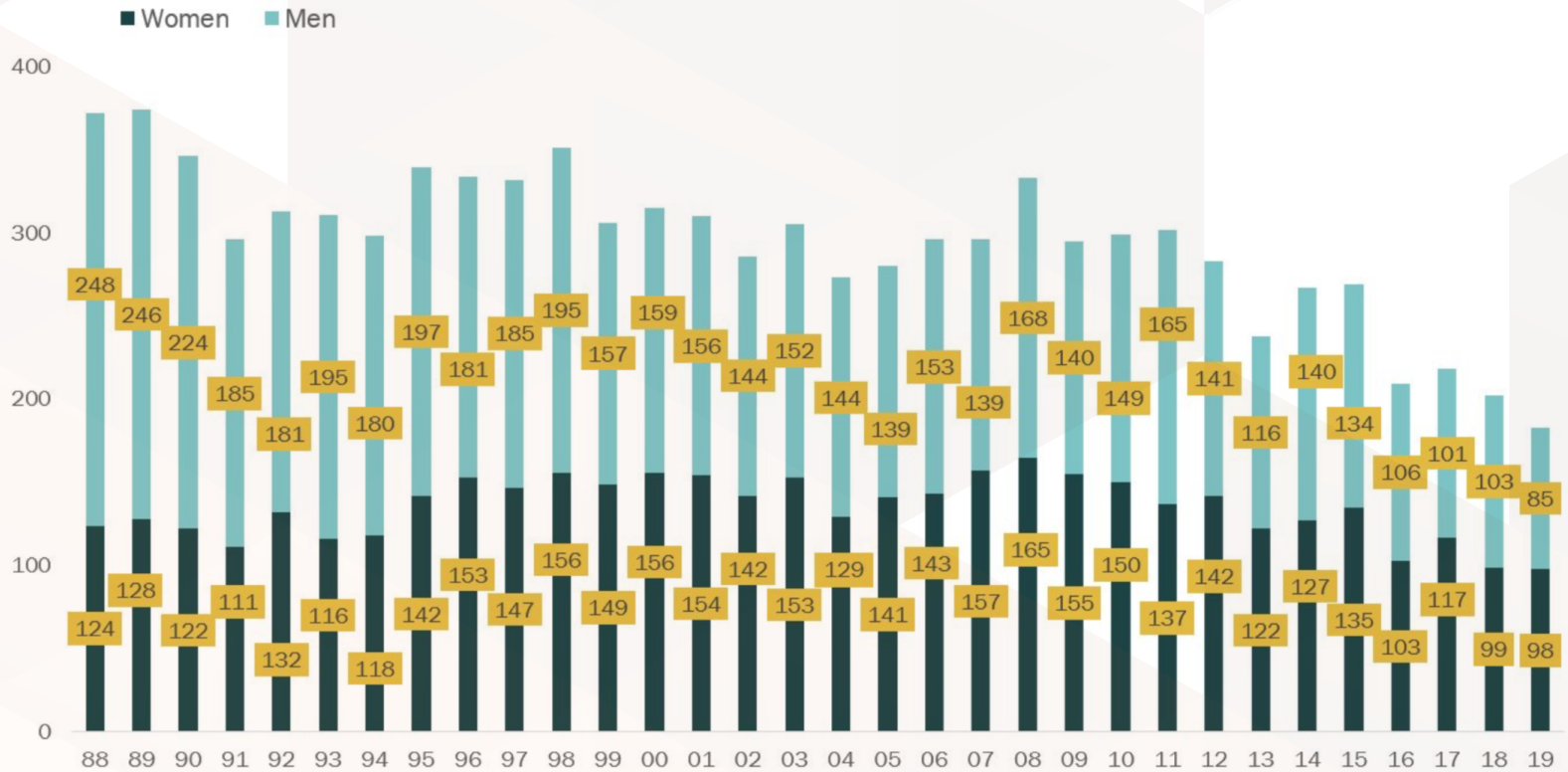
May 5, 2018

The Rev. Patricia Davenport was the first African-American woman bishop elected in the ELCA.

ELCA Statistics

Number of Ordinations by Gender
in the ELCA, 1988-2019

Nonbinary gender not recorded



In 1988, there were 372 total ordinations in the ELCA.

In 2019, there were 183.

The first year that more women than men were ordained was 2003.

Since 2003, an almost equal number of men and women have been ordained—2,275 men and 2,273 women.

What Happened

Excerpts from the ELCA'S Women's Ordination Anniversaries Adult Forum

ELCA.org/50YearsOfOrdainedWomen

Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA) and Seminary Faculties

When Lutherans face something new or difficult, by tradition, we gather our best theologians and biblical faculty to study the issue. In the late 1960s, the newly formed LCUSA, with its Division of Theological Studies, provided a natural forum for studying a topic such as women's ordination. Four scholars were assigned the task and each of the four church bodies, including also the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, assigned representatives to an inter-Lutheran consultation of the study materials that took place in September 1969. Their study covered Scripture arguments that could be considered against women's ordination, those in favor, Scripture interpretation, the history of what Lutherans have said on the subject, and how workable women's ordination might be, and presented conclusions for a church consultation.

1

Notes From the Study on the Ordination of Women by LCUSA:

When the ten representatives of the churches gathered with the Lutheran scholars in Dubuque, Iowa, to compare views on the question of women's ordination, "Some were strongly opposed to [women's] ordination, but not one argued that a woman was by nature incapable of receiving God's charismatic gifts.

"Neither did the representatives accept the God-is-male argument against female clergy. ... The apostles-were-male argument was also rejected by the study participants."

2

The study notes that the word "ordination" does not appear in Scripture, that rites such as ordination shifted in use in Scripture and are therefore not helpful as mandates for our time. It spent considerable time on key terms such as "headship."

Reflecting on Lutheran confessional writings of the 16th century, the study notes the differences among Lutherans in their understanding of ministry, on how much emphasis it places on rulership or service, saying, "[The Lutheran view of ministry] does not make the pastor a special, sacred class of citizen; yet it calls for sufficient respect to make the office effective. The pastor stands with the people under God, yet also under God against the people as the voice of God's word."

3

What Happened (continued)

The study affirms a Reformation understanding of the word of God and the office of the ministry, summarized this way: “The person adds nothing to this Word and office commanded by Christ. No matter who it is who preaches and teaches the Word, if there are hearts that hear and adhere to it, something will happen to them according as they hear and believe because Christ commanded such preaching.” Readers will note this traditional understanding of the ministry Lutherans have, which means that they do not place emphasis on the gifts brought by the person occupying the pastoral office.

While the Division of Theological Studies of LCUSA undertook its study, some faculties of both ALC and LCA seminaries prepared studies of their own. In a particularly succinct 1966 one, the Board of Luther Seminary resolved:

- “God has left the details of the ministerial office to the discretion of the church, to be developed according to its needs and according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.”
- The New Testament does not confront the question of ordination of women and therefore does not speak directly to it. On the other hand, nothing in the New Testament speaks decisively against it.
- Although the ordination of women raises new and difficult questions, there is no decisive theological argument against the ordination of women.
- The practical objections, however serious, do not by themselves settle the question for Lutherans. As long as no decisive biblical or theological objections are raised, the ordination of women remains a possibility.
- The most serious objection is the ecumenical, that Lutherans ought not unilaterally in the present divided state of Christendom make decisions that affect all Christian churches. But inasmuch as other churches already have ordained women to the ministry, and some churches not presently ordaining women are open to discussion of its possibility, the exact weight of this objection is difficult to assess.

In view of the considerations above, we can see no valid reason why women candidates for ordination who meet the standards normally required for admission to the ministry should not be recommended for ordination.

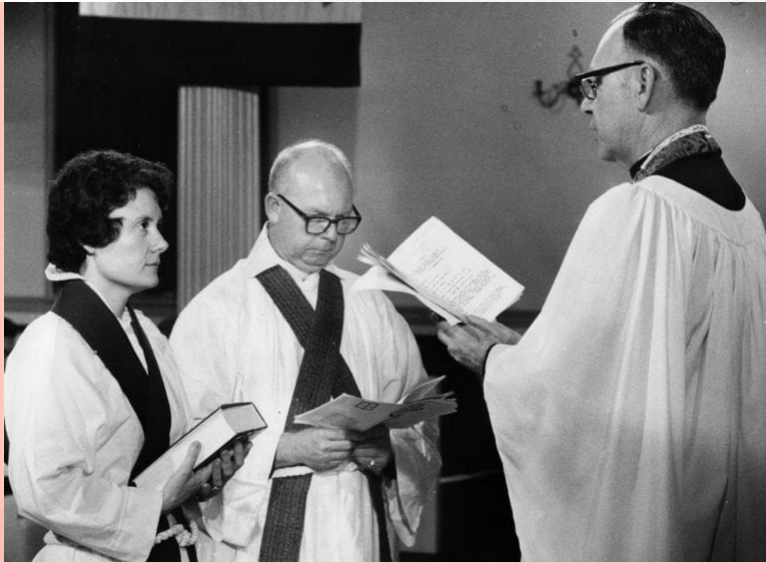
The Vote Itself

In the LCA one word changed everything: The resolution before the convention simply amended the denomination's Bylaw "by striking the word 'man' and inserting the word 'person.'" The revised Bylaw read: "A minister of this church shall be a person whose soundness in the faith, aptness to teach, and educational qualifications have been examined and approved in the manner prescribed in the constitution, and who has been properly ordained." The measure was adopted— somewhat anticlimactically—on a simple voice vote.⁶

A little more than two months later, "at the ALC General Convention in October, the Church Council submitted a motion that 'women be eligible for call and ordination in The American Lutheran Church.' The vote was more contentious than it had been in the LCA, but the measure passed: 560 to 414, with one abstention."⁷

Since the needs of the church down through the centuries are subject to variation, we are led to Luther's conclusion, namely, that God has left the details of the ministerial office to the discretion of the church, to be developed according to its needs and according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The First Ordinations



On November 22, 1970, Elizabeth Platz made history by becoming the first ordained Lutheran woman in America. A first-generation college student and graduate of Gettysburg Seminary, she had been working as a lay minister at the University of Maryland-College Park for the five years prior to her ordination.

Photo used with permission of the ELCA Archives

She was one of a small number of women who were qualified for ordination directly after the approval of women's ordination in 1970. Platz remained dedicated to her ministry at College Park and worked as a chaplain for her entire career, retiring after 47 years of service at the university.

[Lamp Unto My Feet - Ordination of Pastor Platz: CBS documentary on the 1970 ordination of Elizabeth Platz, the first American Lutheran woman to be ordained.](#)

The First Ordinations (continued)

On December 22nd, 1970, Barbara Andrews became the first woman ordained within the ALC. A graduate of Luther Seminary, Andrews was fully trained before the ALC convention and had been working where she could – in campus ministry at the University of Minnesota-St. Paul. She was ready to pursue her calling as a hospital chaplain as soon as the church would allow her to be ordained. She received a call from the church she had attended as a child, Edina Community Lutheran Church.

Reported in the October 1970 congregational newsletter, the church did not have the need or the resources to support an assistant pastor, but they decided, as a congregation, to still provide the call. Their call to ordination allowed Andrews to then begin a career in hospital chaplaincy.



Not only was Andrews the first woman ordained within the ALC, but she was also the first ordained wheelchair-bound woman across all Lutheran churches in America.

In a 1970 interview with the *Minneapolis Star*, Andrews stated, “[my] disability is not as much a handicap as my womanhood, but it’s a good back-up to arguments against employing me.”

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1 Raymond Tiemeyer, *The Ordination of Women* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), 54-55

2 Ibid, 9-10

3 Ibid, 16-17

4 Ibid, 17. Quoting from Philip Melanchthon, *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 26; *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore Gerhardt Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1959), 324.

5 “Reports and Actions,” 1970, 326-327. Footnote with the Luther faculty statement, submitted to the ALC Church Council on October 30, 1968

6 Maria Erling, “Democratization of Authority and Ordination of Women, Part I,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, October 1, 2011, paragraph 37.

7 Ibid.