

# Women in Ministry—Compiled Conversations—2018

## NC Synod, ELCA

*This is the compiled narrative collected from three gatherings of women on the Word & Sacrament roster. We have had 67 of our just over 100 women on the roster as part of these conversations. We also have gathered our women on Word & Service roster for this same conversation; that compilation is shared in a separate document.*

*We share these with our utmost attempt to preserve anonymity and with immense gratitude for the honesty and vulnerability of our women so that we can be better together.*

*Each gathering was facilitated by Dr. Mindy Makant, Deacon. The gatherings included time with rostered women with the female bishop's staff present. A portion of the time was spent in conversation without bishop's staff present. Following several hours of our conversation, Bishop Tim joined us and heard a summary of the conversation. Each gathering ended in worship together.*

### Women in Ministry Conversation – May 8, 2018

#### What does leadership mean?

Dichotomy between chaplaincy and ministry. You walk with people over 70 to death and then you're called to new ministry where those people go 'what??'

...can't rise out of the milieu...

Leadership ought to be communal but the reality is that leadership feels very lonely.

#### What makes it lonely?

Being the only woman in the conference.

#### What makes it challenging?

Another dichotomy is that leadership is not what I want but what the world wants. History offers somebody in a CEO business suit telling you what to do. Images that have gone before are telling us what that should look like.

I'm constantly going against people saying that I look too young. "You're like the little girl playing pastor up there." There's a feeling that you have to prove yourself.

Young fellow intern looks like pastor and they call him that.

They feel a need to comment on my clothes.

My shoes. Every week my shoes!

Intentionally wear a collar to casual functions to help folks see that I'm a pastor. I can't NOT wear the collar.

The nurse and doctor (even in my collar) ask if I'm the patient's daughter.

"He looked like a senior pastor."

Women in other professions face the same things.

Lack of skill.

I work with a leadership coach to give myself skills. If the synod is really eager to have more women in leadership role, there needs to be an intentional partnership for helping folks gain those skills. Even financially.

Developing some type of organizational awareness about leadership. How can I help the congregation be their best self and help them get there? Continue taking the EQHR. Coaching with the clergy coaching network is really helpful...expensive but helpful.

Be better at recognizing who I'm speaking with and listening to, knowing who's in pain. A general thing like that would be really helpful.

When you can step back and self-differentiate that's very helpful.

### **What do you aspire to?**

That question never gets asked! Seminary says you're going to be a pastor, caring for people. Seminary doesn't say you're going to be a great leader.

If you were in any other career, you would have agency in dreaming about where you might go.

I want to be in a place where I'm valued by my colleagues, a significant leader, upward mobility, better pay...

### **How do you define upward mobility?**

If that's what we aspire to then we're seen to be greedy

In seminary they used the language of creating leaders but not sure we were equipped for it.

My seminary was very intentional and talked about our role as being public Christian leaders.

Is there a difference between seminaries?

Continuing to change the culture of the community. Help the community understand that they're claimed and gifted and called for ministry in the world.

I'd love to see a way to do consulting in retirement to work with Bowen Family Systems to help leaders.

I peaked out too soon. I love where I am! Our financial planner said, "Your degrees are your best asset." We just laughed! I don't feel called to a larger church.

I want to grow in leadership where I am, but I don't feel like I'm equipped.

### **What reasons are there for not being in a larger church?**

Stage of life. I served in large congregations in internship and first call and there were a lot of things to be excited about in that setting, but not now.

I worked with three rostered leaders, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to build that staff trust. I was always seen as the woman on staff. It's stressful in a different way now that I'm in my current call (lone leader).

I don't feel like a large congregation would be interested in me. Because of my being a woman. I would not want to interview because of this statement which I heard one time from a call committee: "You were perfect for us except for the problem that you are a woman." I hope I'm biased about that.

During an interview with a call committee, I was asked, "How is that going to work out with your husband?" (Male pastors wouldn't be asked the same questions.)

Congregations need to be trained not to ask those questions. Candidates need to be trained not to ANSWER the question. If you bring your family into the conversation, that should be your choice.

The system is screwed up. It is. How can we be reflective about the system? How do we begin to believe in ourselves enough because this is not the way the church should be.

It would take a lot on my part to see myself in that role. How is it that the world says this about you and you say, "No. That's not for me."

Why not senior? I can't do all that. I can barely manage what I'm doing here. Well you'll have a staff. Different leadership role as a senior pastor. You don't just put it under a magnifying glass and say if I were at a large church I would do all the same things only with many more people.

I need to protect my sisters. I need to not answer the inappropriate questions in call committee interviews to protect my sisters.

How much longer does the interview go on when we keep trying to prove ourselves? Am I still trying to prove myself in my call because of the things I said in my interview?

A shift that needs to happen to for women and men, is that it's okay to serve small congregations. That doesn't help with upward mobility. We don't reward for people saying they love serving in small congregations.

Seems like it's more training the culture.

It's true both for women and men. You don't learn in a small congregation how to be a pastor in a large congregation. If you want to learn, how can you? Different skill sets.

I had wished several times I'd taken that church administration class.

I had heard before I came to NC that the synod hadn't done enough to be proactive in promoting women's roles in the church. Not enough to foster a landscape for women serving in part leads to women waiting so long for a call in NC.

So much of what we do is inspire people to see the kingdom of God. Can the bishop's office help congregations see that?

### **What is the role of the synod office to change the culture in the synod?**

Important for those pastors in those congregations now (where the senior is about to leave) to talk about calling a woman pastor.

If my male senior pastor got up and preached about women's issues how much more impact would it have?!

Would men say the same?

I would like the synod to train men to be more mindful.

A good example!! Two candidates shared stories during the most-recent bishop's election that women candidates could not have shared. What will you say in a public forum and how would that be perceived? A woman could never!

Women should be in the call process mock interview. Many women agreed they would be willing to be a test person for call process so that they could make note of things that weren't good questions.

Someone from bishop's staff goes in to each interview in the VA Synod.

We should have some clarity about whether or not there are off-limit questions in an interview. How do you say I don't want to answer that? And then what if a male interviewee answers it?

Two years ago at synod assembly, Bishop Smith said we're putting an asterisk by the congregations who won't interview women. What's happened with that??

When I came into the synod, I was told, "It will take a lot longer for a woman (approximately three months longer) to get a call in this synod...and there's nothing I can do about it."

If we look at the race issue, we allow black folks to teach us, then we realize we need to teach the white folks to teach us. Let's do the same with gender. The anti-racism training we did at synod assembly was not a heads-up racism thing, but got everyone there. Maybe we need to do a similar thing with gender?

Supply preachers should be women. Interim pastors should be women.

Feedback loop with numbers...success gets measured by numbers. How many times are women called to first call congregations which are often struggling? Growing numbers might really not be possible, so then I'm not successful.

Who here has been "the" token woman interviewed by a call committee??

I'm in a congregation where the pastor's not allowed to see the numbers (budget), so how can I help?

Theologically, we might agree that we're called to be faithful not successful. Membership structure has gotten us to the wrong place. How do we engage in the world?

A value on corporate churches that are time, place, and location. Opportunities and risk in a corporate church to allow pastors to grow.

Older male pastor, younger female associate pastor. I will not be able to be myself as an associate. It's exhausting, it's a tap dance. I work at about 75%.

Can I be an associate and be me?

*\*How many of you feel like you are feeling like you're holding back? 7 out of 18.*

I'm not preaching. I'm not doing baptisms.

I had to manage myself and had to manage my senior pastor's ego. It's easier just to move around in order to keep the peace.

There is the perception that a woman's voice and a woman's form is pushing them into new things. They feel pushed. But I'm not really pushing; I'm just being a woman.

I know this is my last call and I have a tremendous amount of freedom and I'm feeling like I can fully be myself.

As a solo, I hold back on the things that aren't characteristically feminine. Holding back from authority; holding back the power.

I say sorry a lot. I've been trying to be intentional to remove that word it when it's not necessary.

### **Concrete things the synod office could do:**

A coach for first call pastors. Intentional mentoring with female pastors. "You can be a good leader."

VA synod assigns a mentor to every first-call.

Leading Well (Sr. Pastors of Large Staff) is a three-year program.

Contributions to retirement account because women are underpaid and they can't save as well. What congregations assume they can do because they are a supplemental salary unto themselves (paying guidelines from the parsonage level because husband has a parsonage).

Systemic issue of women being underpaid.

This doesn't happen in the real world (ie. the place that's hiring you does not ask what your spouse does to come to their own determination that the combined salary is 'enough' for you as a family). Just in the dysfunctional way that the church exists.

Is there a systemic way to help congregations (finance folks) learn how to advocate for women?

How can I speak up for what I need/what I deserve and a change?

## **What do you want the bishop to know?**

Bishop can write well. Use your voice to point out places in the lectionary where women are highlighted. Writing about women in ministry can be an effective way to put out there that women are effective ministers and effective proclaimers of the Gospel.

Call processes: there are pastors who just don't play the game. They go around the process. If we're focusing on the call process. What kind of power does the synod have when that happens except for a slap on the wrist after it happens? Sometimes the pastor (senior/solo) manages it and leaves the congregation out of the picture and other potential people out of the picture.

A man is saying, "I know everything that's right and I know who should fill this position."

What about normalizing an interview with a woman so that it's part of the landscape when people go through call process? All the mock interview are done by women. For a while. Why not train a group of female clergy to be the mock interviewees? The mock interview team is all women. When we get to half of our congregations being served by women, we can go back to having men as mock interviewees.

The reason there are so many fellowships for women in science is because they take intentional steps to level the playing field. We haven't done it as the church.

There should be call committee guidelines, or maybe commands. Folks cannot be part of the call process if they're going to cross their arms and say 'women cannot be pastors.'

How many bishops get elected from an associate pastor or small pastor position? So, how can women be known?

How do women in smaller congregations have a voice? [Synod Council. Deans. To be on any synod committee. Women clergy could be lifted up at convocation.]

Women who worked together in the Obama administration made a pact. We should make a pact of speaking out for each other in meetings.

Are there ways that this small group could offer support?

Men apply for a job even if they only match 75% of the criteria on the job description. Women only apply for a job if they feel 100% prepared.

I would love for the bishop to send a similar invitation to senior pastors who have female associates. Not to rail at them. But just to have Tim as bishop to use his power to say to them what we are hearing from women associates.

Might we include candidates in this kind of gathering? What about giving them the paper that gives biblical, historical, churchwide data/info so they can 'defend' themselves when people ask them if women can be pastors.

Are male candidates ever asked in the candidacy process if they're in favor of women in ministry? And if, not, maybe this isn't the church for you?

I need my male colleagues across the board to know what I'm feeling. Maybe a male needs to say it.

If the way to become a senior pastor is to get experience as an associate pastor, but then associate/senior pastor relationships are not good. How do we get that good experience to make us ready?

The gifts that get you to that position don't equip you for that position.

## **Women in Ministry Conversation – July 24, 2018**

### **What does leadership mean to you?**

Something done from within a group and collaboration, isn't pushing or pulling. Collaboration and quieter, gentler leadership styles are often not recognized/appreciated as leadership

And if I try to step out of this and lead more directly I'm perceived as shrill, brash, aggressive, a bitch.

Men hear: You've got balls. Women hear: You're a bitch.

When a woman is direct people do not respond as well as they would to the man who is a foot taller saying the exact same thing.

The gifts that we bring to the table are being under-utilized, even when they are recognized

I have felt 'stuck' in small congregations and like I am separated from the synod.

I teach leadership in other settings but in the church my gifts are not recognized

Clergy couples – double-edged sword

My leadership is accepted only because I'm married.

Even when you co-pastor people want to know who the "senior" pastor really is.

Second-career gifts are overlooked: When I was in candidacy I was told that these gifts (supervisory/managerial) would be well-used in the church.

Leadership means being faithful with the use of the gifts you have been given. But if we don't have opportunities to use our gifts, how can we be faithful stewards of them?

### **What are your leadership goals? Where would you like to be in your professional career? 5 years? 10 years?**

I want to move up to a large church. I would keep moving up.

Leadership—my husband said "you got balls." I am going to be authentic and real in my leadership. I didn't want to be a leader but God has totally changed me to be a bold woman of faith. I am not intimidated by the conflict my church is experiencing.

I want to be somewhere that is larger where I am now. Somewhere who values who I am—and will support me financially (at guidelines and not as an entry level pastor). My gifts are being used (where I am now) with collaboration within the congregation and staff. But I want to see my gifts used better than they are now. It gets scary as you get older as a woman. I had a 15-year period where I didn't have any benefits. I am going to be working until I am 70-75 years old.

In 5 years, I will be retired. I want to be in a teaching role and share my gifts and passions. I am not sure how I will be able to do that since I will be older.

I love the church I serve. They are very faithful and see me truly as their pastor. I don't hear the comments from them that I hear from you all. I am able to use my gifts. I have a congregation that I see on Sundays and I see during the week. I have been there 20 years. I know them now. I love them. With the size and age of our church, I can easily see that 10 years down the road we are going to look very different. I can see myself in another call but when you look at the availability of call (small number with mostly part-time positions) it doesn't seem feasible. I appreciate all that my congregation does for me but it has been years since I have had a raise. As my pension goes up, my paycheck in pocket goes down.

Are there just as many men still working at entry level pay?

## **Working in senior pastor or associate pastor positions: what should the role of a senior pastor look like?**

I am an exception. With one call, I was in a co-pastor position. It did not work well for a variety of reasons. Another call was with an experienced pastor who had been there for a while. The congregation was adamant that I was not to be called the associate pastor or assistant pastor but also not co-pastors. The male pastor became the "lead" pastor. He was to bring them in, and I was to "keep them happy." My title was pastor. His was lead pastor. I referred to myself as the "other pastor." It worked well because we operated based on our gifts. We were as close to co-pastors as we could have been. So when I hear senior pastor, I say let's get rid of that title. It causes problems. We should move to co-pastors.

I have a unique experience as well. I came in as an associate pastor to a very strong senior pastor. After a little bit, I asked council to take the title "associate" off. They did allow it but the congregation struggled to make the distinction since it wasn't highlighted. People still referred to me as the associate or assistant. In another setting, a male pastor came and the congregation did not want to call him "associate." They wanted to call us both pastor. I asked for them to call me "lead" pastor and they only did that because of my request since I was the more experienced. I was also not designated as the supervisor as the male pastor. It is difficult because our agendas aren't always aligned and we try to work to be a united team. I don't see myself somewhere else but I wouldn't have chosen this set up. In both cases, I had to make the request.

Part of it is the congregation doesn't know what it means with the terms "senior" or "associate." They want to make us Minister of Worship and Minister of Pastoral Care. They struggle to figure out who do we go to for which thing? We have assigned ourselves to different teams and the congregation doesn't always know who to go to.

The key is to be redirected in that situation. For people to redirect to you and to have that support rather than try to answer the question themselves (because most of the time they don't know the answer).

Depends on the size of the congregation. All of my parishes have been very large. In those situations, the senior pastor has to be the CEO. At a certain point, that's just what has to happen. I have no want or need to have be in that role. My second parish was very young and both of us were young—our titles were the lead pastor and associate pastor. He was not my supervisor. It worked beautifully but we both had to know each other's roles. I am very comfortable with that set up. In my current context, the senior pastor always says that I am one of the pastors here. But he still has to be that CEO.

*\*More than half in attendance are the first female in their role/parish.*

## **If you are interested in a senior pastor role, how do we make it what is currently the ideal more ideal? How do we shift things collectively to make senior pastor something you would actually aspire to?**

I have the attitude that I don't have to know it all. I just need to have smart people around. I don't know if we as women think in those terms. And if we are threatened by smart people around us, we have to get over that. I have to be authentic and be me. The cards will fall where they will.

It has to happen at the parish level.... if they aren't feeling it, it isn't going to happen. When that conversation starts, maybe creating some scenarios to plant the seed/give the thought to open them to the idea of having a woman in a senior pastor role.

When the study is being done, when the call committee is being trained, that should be part of it. Don't start with the gender question. Start with "What does the pastoral staff look like in this place, what are the characteristics of the role that you need?" Then when names are coming, there will be this trust already established that these names presented are meeting those needs and is what the congregation has envisioned.

**In regards to feeling like your gifts are underused, the other group said they ..."felt they had to operate at 75% of their capacity to make sure that they didn't threaten the senior pastor." Does that resonate with you? Is that what you mean by unused gifts?**

*\*Majority in the room nodded, affirming this feeling.*

In my context, it's a small congregation and they just need someone to love them. It is just different in a smaller setting. At least 50% of my ministry has been in a small setting and I feel like my gifts are better used in a different way.

I feel like I have to placate the men I work with. I have to not act as smart as I am to appease them.

Women are perceived as less than if you are perceived in a positive light in a ranked position.

My leadership skills are undervalued as well; that's more of what I feel. I don't feel valued as a leader. I can be the person upfront and do those things but those are not my gifts. And if you aren't that person out in front, your gifts are valued differently.

I have to plant ideas so that it seems like someone else's ideas. Then I can just support it. It needs to be planted with a male council member or male pastor; just not a female.

There are years of career experience that are lost as well. I don't feel undervalued but I do feel under-utilized because my leadership skills aren't being used as much.

My sense of not being valued or underused gifts or not being used is beyond my congregation—I experience this on the synodical level or the larger church level.

When I was in-between calls for at least year, I felt like I had to be proactive and anything that happened for me was because I pushed for it to happen. I had to initiate everything.

Am I working up to using all of my gifts in ministry? No. But I am highly valued and trusted in the community. It's just the community needs are to be loved and encouraged. There's just not a lot of administrative work that goes on with a small congregation.

The synod was trying and some of it was finding the right fit with the congregation since I was looking for a team or associate pastor call. The bishop was the one who said he thought I was underselling myself and I had the gifts to be a solo pastor.

I reached out to the bishop and advocated that I am a good pastor. He said he agreed and that was the first time I had heard that. I waited eight years to hear this. I needed it sooner.

With my Senior Pastor, I got all the stuff he didn't like (as the Associate Pastor) like finance and administrative and pastoral care. It was that whole ego thing there. Then there was an indiscretion on his part as the Senior Pastor. He had to resign. Part of the agreement was that his resignation was with the date. Mine was effective when I accepted another call or when a call was extended to another pastor by the congregation. He got a call within just a few months of resigning. I did not have another call until a year later.

I was told point-blank by a congregational member when I was available for a call in a multi-team congregation, "We really like you and think you are a great pastor. But we won't vote for you because when our Senior Pastor gets called to be the Bishop and our Associate Pastor becomes the Senior Pastor, you can't be the Senior Pastor because you are female."

**What are some concrete things that our bishop/bishop's staff could do differently to make your life better?**

I love that they are helping with negotiating. I am bad at this. I would love for someone to help me do that. The previous pastor had been paid \$10,000 more than me. And the pastor after me was paid \$10,000 more than me.

The senior pastor called me and told me to push back from the package during the negotiation. He said to ask for more because I am going to advocate for you on the other side. That was huge for me in the negotiating process.

The synod needs to be one having that conversation (negotiating salaries). When you are trying to advocate that for yourself, the perception is that you are money-hungry...just pushing for money.

"Oh we called you because we knew you could afford you." There's a perception that if we are tight on money, we can call a woman pastor "because they are cheaper."

There needs to be more training in the seminary realm about this (negotiating salaries).

The synod should provide training after first call negotiation because you still need to know how to do this. This should be part of the FCTE; there's a formula you need to be familiar with. When it is time to actually do this, we need someone to help us do this.

"I had to sell furniture to pay for food. That is ridiculous for a pastor to do in this synod" -- Synod has to be an advocate. I took a 50% pay cut so that the congregation could survive. I was in love with the congregation and it is so hard to negotiate and advocate when you are "falling in love with each other."

I do recognize that the training could be helpful but I still need someone to do this (negotiate the salary). Could the dean do this? Could another pastor with these gifts act as an "agent?" We need a "bull dog."

A female professor told me "You shouldn't negotiate your salary and ask for more money. You should just be grateful you are getting a call at all as a female."

Congregation member said: "We were such good negotiators. We saved \$5,000 on you."

The synod can help congregations understand the value of pastors. We are not the same level as teachers. We have master's degrees. Some of us more than one.

It should be called polity not guidelines. Make it sound like it isn't optional.

I wasn't being paid at all for prior experience (from previous careers) and the offer was below guidelines. They wouldn't budge on that so I asked if they would pay for my student loans. That is something that synod should use that as a bargaining tool (for negotiating).

I want the synod to help us with that transition...tell us, 'you have the gifts to move to a senior role, and here are the training and continuing education to develop the gifts you have.' 'You need to have these skills and tools for these roles.'

The Episcopal Church has a program called Fresh Start—training for next call. Could we think of ways to help at various stages along the way?

Have women do the training interview for a call committee. Ask a nearby female pastor to do a "practice" interview so that the congregation can realize they could call a woman. It would also give us the practice of being in that interview process.

"When are you going to have a baby?" (dumb interview questions)

"What are you going to do Sunday morning if your child gets sick?" (dumb interview questions)

How many part-time calls are truly going to be part-time? Synod needs to help make this clear to congregations. This needs to be representative of number of hours in the office during the week AND ON SUNDAY MORNING—because that's where people see it.

We have to be more involved in the seminary system. Sixteen women I know were sexually harassed and/or assaulted and reported it through the seminary system and eight of those men are ordained and one of them is even in my county.

Professor told me that he "would be glad to let me enter his class if I would change my degree from MDiv to MAR because I need to remember that I was married and that I was a mother." (happened in late 90s)

We have got to figure out how to get the seminary to better communicate with the synod and bishop and candidacy. How can these people get through the process?

Idea: Boundary Training: Add in sexual harassment training. It's not required in seminary but rostered leaders are required

Idea: Boundary Training required for any candidate prior to ordination.

*\*Half of the room acknowledged having been sexually harassed or assaulted by someone in their congregation or ministry context. Everyone agreed that they have experienced inappropriate comments in those contexts. One person acknowledged a situation that warranted calling the police.*

There needs to be a safe way to share something. Instead of listening when I reported something inappropriate that happened/was happening to me, I was told, "Surely that isn't what he meant." That person in authority went back to the initial person and told them what I said. That person then called me. We need better ways to handle this.

Another instance of getting labeled as a "bitch" for speaking up for yourself or saying that something offended you

After an inappropriate comment was made to me on internship, the pastor wrote a news article on what is appropriate and inappropriate to say to our female intern—he went for it. Anytime I got commented on my hair or appearance, he would announce it to the congregation, "How come no one comments on my haircut?" He drew attention to it in a funny way that got people thinking.

Our male colleagues need to advocate for us and call it out in the moment. (Get our male colleagues to use their privilege to step up to the plate.)

I had lost 15 pounds. And a male parishioner came up to me, slapped in me the butt and said, "Hey! You are looking good."

Idea: A training/Fall Convo workshop for our male leaders: How to support your female colleagues.

Idea: In the anniversary of the women's ministry, let's celebrate it! What events are being planned? Maybe in the e-news highlight a female pastor each week. Include articles on: good discussion questions to talk about in your council meetings and small groups; things that are appropriate and inappropriate to say, etc.

### **What do you want Bishop Tim to know?**

Think of women first when you need to fill a position.

It's frustrating to hear how there is a clergy shortage when really there is a clergy shortage of young, available men.

Bishop Tim is making positive changes but how do you extend those changes to the congregation?

We still hear, "we are not ready for a female." You have had 40 years to get ready!

When those first three names are given, is it ever that all three names are women? If there's a congregation who says 'we don't want a woman,' will you let the woman know that it was said and give her a choice to decide if she wants to interview?

I lift up that the bishop is willing to have these conversations. But I don't want to become a token. If that invitation comes, I want to know that the reason I am being invited is because I have the gifts to do it and if so, also because you want a woman's voice at the table. Don't just invite me because I am woman.

Male pastor: "You do know why you got invited? So that you there could be a woman on this committee"

Camping ministry, particularly with campfirmation: Confirmation clusters are a bunch of "good ole boy" networks. Message was clear that some won't invite female pastors into the cluster.

## Women in Ministry Conversation—September 24, 2018

### What does the idea of being a public leadership mean?

When I was ordained I started wearing a collar, not for other people but to remind myself that I was in that public leadership position. It helped me take on that role. I found it was really significant for me.

I'm on the flip side of that. The argument was made to me that wearing the collar was very important publically. From what I observed from my colleagues in ministry who were male, it seemed to me that it was being wielded in a way that, rather than being an inviting thing, was a way of setting one apart and calling attention to oneself. For me, it was never an important identifier.

One time when I went to an ordination, dressed for the ordination, I was asked the question, "Are you the maid?" Even wearing the collar!

I have challenged people who want to call me by my first name, which doesn't take into account my training, my degree. I insist on this for me, not for anyone else.

When we use the term 'leadership' we're assuming there is a follower. How are we defining leadership? For me, it's a responsibility to do what God is calling me to do.

It's a willingness to go out on a limb, to be deferential to God's ministry.

### What makes public leadership challenging?

What comes to my mind is loneliness.

It's challenging to not look like what people expect (middle-aged white man). How do you bridge that gap?

Even when you're wearing the collar, people don't register you in pastoral leadership. They simply can't comprehend that you might, in fact, be the pastor. I have to make a joke out of someone calling me by my first name. When male pastors are okay with people just using their first name, I say, "You're making it uphill work for the rest of us!" I should not have to placate you to ask you to call me pastor.

Sometimes parishioners ask, "Can I just use your first name?" I answer, "I would like for you to call me pastor." That does make some people feel uncomfortable. (I find it challenging to make people feel uncomfortable.) However, the senior pastor has asked people to call him "pastor" as well. That has helped.

When we did a funeral and the funeral home staff person addressed me by my first name, I said to them, "That would be Pastor Doe to you!" My colleague told me later that was the rudest thing he'd ever heard.

I couldn't stand that people kept saying, "Here's our child pastor."

When someone learned about the job I'd just taken, they said, "So, how do you qualify for this job?"

I got called into an ICU and came into the room behind a patient's head. "You called for a chaplain?" "I was expecting a man," he said. "Are you disappointed?" I asked. "No, I just don't know what to call you," he said. "How about Chaplain?" I said. And that was that. Sometimes we have to be bold and just put it out there.

In an ecumenical group with male clergy people, the conversation turned to 'Brethren this, and brethren that.' You have to call them on it. Are we going to let it fly or are we going to own it? If we don't own it, it'll just go on.

The struggle to get our colleagues to honor us is so strong. We were going to do Lenten services together. My colleague said, "You go first." (So I wouldn't have to be embarrassed by following his fabulous preaching.) But, I called him on it. "Why are you saying that? I am a minister of this church and I can preach in front of anyone."

The best way that men learn is to live with women leaders. That women are as different as men but have at least as many gifts as men.

I can remember my senior year of seminary, a lovely woman coming up to me said, "I have to tell you I don't believe in women in ministry." (I said, okay.) At the end of the year that I served there, she came up to me after my sermon and said, "You made me a believer." She saw that a woman could function effectively in a position of ministry. Sometimes our detractors are not necessarily men.

Sometimes I feel like it's ourselves, too. My senior pastor's a man and he doesn't have any problem seeing himself as a senior pastor. I do not see myself that way. Why not? I have every bit of the skills it takes!

Just read an article in the *New York Times* about the drop in confidence that girls have once they reach puberty. That resonated with me. I didn't see myself in a large congregation. When my bishop asked me to be an interim in a large congregation, I couldn't imagine it. It was his confidence in me—that I could even do that in retirement—that made me believe I could do it. And, I did it!

Once, when I was filling in at a congregation, a couple mentioned that they had come to that congregation specifically to hear a man since their congregation had women clergy.

Do you think women have more irrelevant things said about them and thrown at them? ...You think?! Your hair, your clothes, your makeup, your shoes! Ugh!

(dumb comment) It's nice to have something nice to look at in the pulpit.

### **What do you see yourself as? What do you aspire to professionally? If the answer would not be a large church, why?**

I think I'm living into it: a ministry outside the parish. I served with a male pastor who worked really hard to help congregations see me as a valid pastor.

I had aspired to be a teaching theologian of the church and that's what I have been for maybe 10 years but with compensation less than a first-call pastor. Do I want to go into parish ministry? I don't have health care, I don't have pension...

I object to the question because it's directed to parishes. I'm going to give the church my good years. The church has never used my skills and my fifteen years are done. I used those skills outside the church. I was told by the seminary if you do your internship as a chaplain, you'll never get ordained. I couldn't be ordained to what I really feel called to.

As women we have to be willing to be aggressive.

When I was the interim, they didn't want me. I thought it was because of my race. I learned instead it was because of my gender. They thought people would leave the church if they had a woman pastor. The spirit changed their mind. In their mind, they couldn't imagine that leadership. That experience makes a way. Often it makes a way for the next person.

Even though the problem is 'maleness' it's really sometimes women whose minds need to be changed.

Sometimes call committees say, "Are you going to be all about that diversity stuff? Can you do anything else?" Bishops don't know what to do with me.

I think there's a circular challenge in that you go in and look at the requirements: must have senior pastor leadership experience. How can you have experience if you've not been a senior pastor?

Let's send women to congregations for interim ministry so that they can pave the way for women to serve in permanent calls.

I'm extremely aware of that fact that the majority of our congregation in NC are small. There has to be good leadership in small congregation. When we put so much focus on large congregations, it's almost like we're denigrating small congregations. My goal was never to be in a large congregation. My goal was always to be in a small congregation. I felt that small congregations need good, enthusiastic, qualified pastors. I feel that pay-wise there should be some community pot that pastors of small congregations could have to supplement their compensation at a fair level.

It's about our imagination. I'm not sure it looks like small, medium or large parish. Maybe it's something that no one has even imagined yet. You can ask, "Am I going to continue being part of this institution even though we have to wade through the shit of women in ministry? Or am I going to need to step outside the institution in order to do ministry?"

The horizon needs to broaden a lot rather than to pigeon-hole people in what their experience has been.

### **Do you feel like you have to hold back in your leadership?**

I do. Because if I don't I've been called a bitch. Too uppity. People are afraid of me. They have this sense of not knowing how to relate to a female pastor/senior pastor. They want me to be soft-spoken and calm and unemotional and not speak my mind. If you speak your mind then you're out of place. That's why it's been so exhausting! I've learned if I go into the group, if I'm the first to speak, nobody else will speak. I have to check my facial expressions. I have to think about how I'm going to say something.

I couldn't have done that! (In response to "They want me to be soft-spoken and calm and unemotional and not speak my mind.")

I was once co-pastoring in a predominantly white congregation; a diverse neighborhood. We needed to take a vote of the congregation whether to have one pastor (the solo male) or two (him and me) for the sake of diversity. He had a fear that they would vote for me. I don't think I would have been able to breathe enough to stay if I had to damper who I am. But that keeps me from being called places.

My internship pastor and I butted heads over inclusive language. Pastor said there were "people" who didn't care for me reading the scripture with inclusive language. I continued to use it. Several years later, a call committee from a large congregation asked me to interview as the associate. The senior pastor contacted my internship pastor as a reference and he said I had not acceded to his demands to stop using inclusive language therefore he felt I wouldn't work well as an associate pastor. That door was closed. I'll never know if that would have been a good call because I didn't have that opportunity.

There are a lot of insecure male pastors out there and we seem to find them! One senior pastor I worked with—after working with me said, "I will never work with anyone again." He couldn't handle it. He needed to be the one who was worshiped. I don't play those games.

The only men I've dealt with in a congregation are on council. I've not dealt with the insecurity of men except around "the vote" (2009). In the Ministerial Association in our county I was the only woman pastor. That was uncomfortable.

As for the question about giving 100%: I have to give that all the time. I think they're looking for someone more outgoing. When they see me as myself—calm and less outgoing—they see me as precious and like their granddaughter. I feel that, in order for them to see me as a leader, I need to function at 100% all the time.

Now that I am treated as an equal (in a senior/associate collegial relationship), I realize that I WASN'T treated as an equal before. It's made me feel actually sad for all the things I let slide. I'm done making myself smaller. To be in a healthy place is so good.

I do think that some things have changed over my years in terms of "let's step on her because she's a woman." I wasn't an associate because I refused to be an associate. I think there is a change in the landscape but it's just too slow.

I have to be better in order to be good.

Male candidates are better at asking for salary demands. We're not advocating for ourselves because it's not culturally normative. I'm really being willing to be On Leave From Call next if my demands aren't met because I know I'm worth it.

As women we need to be ready to speak as equals and speak up in collegial ways.

It's helpful to have congregational members, professionals who speak up—have experience in the business world.

## **What can the synod staff do?**

Synod staff can be helpful because they help set the guidelines to which women clergy can point when they're advocating for salaries at guidelines.

Synod staff or someone else could be helpful by facilitating/coaching women clergy through salary negotiations.

What kinds of conversations might men need to have in order to be faithful colleagues with us in this? Should we have this same conversation with men in the room? Or with men and women in the room?

Men need to be informed about the situations their women colleagues face. And then be held accountable.

One thing that's been helpful has been a bishop who has been able to speak up to congregations and be willing to push back when they aren't willing to be open to women serving.

The synod staff need to have the data, year to year, so they can watch how pastors are being paid. Oftentimes pastors are 'taking one for the team' but the synod staff needs to know. Someone on the synod staff needs to follow up in order to make it happen. Can't use the excuse of not having all the data. Staff need to GET all the data.

Too much of the call process conversation takes place over social media (Facebook Messenger) which makes it feel tough to have a real conversation. I would just call. It feels like the synod staff has the power. Start the conversation on FB Messenger and say "call me." (Several chimed in in agreement.)

In an RMP the bishop writes something but we don't know what it is. The assumption is that it's positive, but if it's not it would be helpful to know.

The fact that three women are assistants to the bishop is already telling a story. (A good story!)

It's very meaningful that the staff are in prayer for folks in the call. To hear from the bishop himself or from the staff: we have seen this gift in you and we think this a reason to put your name forward in this situation.

Someone from the synod staff needs to look at the congregational survey to confirm what is said by the congregation. So often the answers are fictitious/aspirational!

Staff could coach women as they write their profiles to keep them from underselling themselves. To help identify their gifts.

For candidacy: (an issue faced by a woman candidate) I had taken my kids out of their school and moved them for my internship. My husband's job was somewhere else. Basically, I was a single mom on internship with kids who'd been pulled out of their school and it was tough. After my internship, my congregation wanted to talk about how terrible my children were and how terrible I was as a mother. "Now that we've seen how you can't manage your household, we don't think you can be a pastor." That was tough to be judged in that way.

## **What can the bishop do? What do you want the bishop to know?**

In his encounters with clergy, lay people, whomever, be firmly an advocate for equality in ministry, equality in pay, equality in churches being willing to look at women and men as they look for pastors. How he models, what he models for the rest of us makes an impact. It does sink in. Who he is speaks volumes.

I have two children in their 20s who are watching him. There may be crabby people who are watching but there are also folks who we hope will be the future of the church.

Keep doing what he's doing!

Thank you for advocating for us.

Thank you for helping congregations see women not as the second-best choice, or the only choice (as in, "if you don't take her, you won't get anyone," but as a great choice.

40 years ago (2019) the first African-American woman was ordained at Prince of Peace, Greensboro (4 women clergy have come from that congregation since)! What can do we concrete to celebrate that and lift that up?

### **What could a group of women clergy do proactively to help one another?**

We have to get past the feeling that if we reach out and ask for help it's expressing weakness. If you're having a bad time, reach out to another clergy woman. Someone that you feel like you can bitch to all you want and she's going to continue to love you and listen and be there for you. Sometimes we feel like we shouldn't complain or gripe. Baloney! We need to be able to do that.

If I could give advice to myself, one of the things would be to be very intentional about trying to find some accountability partners and mentors. I think I had a sense that I needed to have it together so much that I didn't want to show what I didn't know. I wish I would've asked a lot more questions and found multiple mentors. And to name it with that person. It would've made life easier.

It did! (In response to, "It would've made life easier.") [Three of us] get together once a year and it definitely makes life better.

I have taken it on as a spiritual practice to share every incidence of harassment with my senior pastor.

When there's an opportunity to have someone serve in a place, lift up a woman's name.

Every supply preacher I have is a woman.

Encourage each other for positions that we see open.

The same things we're saying about clergy women would also apply to women of color. Lift up women of color, look to them for teaching, for preaching. Request teaching theologians for your congregation, your events.

It took an awesome council president who was male to bring to everyone's attention that what they thought they were looking for, wasn't it at all. I had been doing all the things they were asking for, they just didn't see it. He was able to say it to them; to show them.