

## LITANY OF CONFESSION AND COMMITMENT

**All (A): We confess that we are captive to our brokenness. Forgive us for the times we were silent. Forgive us for the times we were careless with our words. Forgive us for not paying attention. Forgive us for our surprise that hurtful words were being flung at our sisters in ministry. Guide us and make us new. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

Leader (L): Listen, children, to the truth. God has chosen to be merciful to all creation. You are no exception. Your sins are forgiven; your heart is made clean in the name of the triune God. **Amen.**

### **Read Acts 2:17-18**

L: We remember Esther, who spoke truth to power to free her people.

**A: Inspire us to lead as she did.**

L: We remember Ruth, who made Naomi's people her people.

**A: Teach us to value family as she did.**

L: We remember Deborah, who was both prophetess and judge.

**A: Help us be bold in our proclamation of truth.**

L: We remember Mary, mother of our Lord, who bore Christ into the world.

**A: Incite a movement to give voice to those who share Christ in the world.**

L: We remember Mary Magdalene, who wept at the tomb and yet still proclaimed.

**A: Surround us with the witnesses who, through tears, proclaim Christ to us.**

L: We remember Elizabeth Platz, the first woman ordained by any Lutheran denomination.

**A: Direct us to shape a different church for the next generation of women pastors.**

L: We remember Earlean Miller, the first African-American woman ordained by any Lutheran denomination in North America.

**A: Make us a welcoming people, open to all.**

L: We remember that you created women in your image.

**A: Encourage us to speak well of each other.**

L: We remember.

**A: Help us remember well and commit to do better.**

L: God of Surprises, you call us  
from the narrowness of our traditions to new ways of being church  
from the captivities of our culture to create witness for justice  
from the smallness of our horizons to the bigness of your vision.

L: Clear the way in us, your people, that we might call others to freedom and renewed faith and that all might know the beauty and power and danger of the gospel, especially through the ministerial witness of women, who with their many gifts, can bring healing to a suffering church and people. **Amen.**

Go in peace. **Serve the Lord.**



## THE STORY BEHIND THE VIDEO

On a staff retreat of the NC Synod of the ELCA, we began a discussion about the call process and women leaders. Instead of operating from assumptions alone, we committed to gather women and listen. In 2018, we held three gatherings with just over sixty of our one hundred women on the Word & Sacrament roster.

Each gathering was facilitated by Dr. Mindy Makant, Deacon. A majority of the time was spent in conversation without bishop's staff present including time to respond to how the synod might better help shape the landscape of ministry more faithfully for them. Following several hours of conversation, Bishop Tim Smith joined us and listened to a recap of what had been shared preserving confidentiality. Each gathering ended with worship — prayers from our worship together are used in this guide. A fifteen-page narrative was created from the responses and is available at [nclutheran.org/womeninministry](http://nclutheran.org/womeninministry).

All statements are real and were said to women serving in the NC Synod. Women at our first gathering wished for a way that congregations could hear some of their stories and receive them with empathy. Two colleagues brainstormed the video idea and pitched it to the synod staff. We created this video hoping it would challenge, heal, and affirm that we are at our best as God's Church when gifts of both women and men are recognized and appreciated.

We are grateful to the women of this synod for their courage and vulnerability. We are all better for it. We offer a special word of thanks to our male colleagues and allies who gave their voices to this project. As you watch, you will see that some become more emotive while others literally shrink in their seats. All of them expressed grief over the treatment of their sisters and vowed to continue to be vocal advocates.



**North Carolina Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

**BEGIN WITH OPENING PRAYER:** Ever present God; open the hearts and minds of all people, and inspire us all to use the unique gifts you have given us for loving service to each other. We pray especially now for those women whose gifts are best suited to serve your Church as rostered ministers. Empower them with courage as they answer your call and strengthen them for humble service, great compassion, and insightful wisdom. Support them through their ministries and enlighten the leadership of your Church to practice the equality that Jesus modeled to embrace all women and men whom you have gifted for service. Strengthen your Holy Spirit within those you have chosen for ordained and consecrated ministry. May they answer your call and follow you with generous hearts. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who called Mary Magdalene and Phoebe – as well as Peter and Paul – to be ministers in the early Christian communities. **Amen.**

**Watch Video - "Seriously?"** Found at [www.nclutheran.org/womeninministry](http://www.nclutheran.org/womeninministry)

**Please hold a moment of silence for reflection, confession, and lamentation.**

- After nearly 50 years of ordaining women, we still have a long way to go. What surprised you or struck you in the video?
- Have you witnessed these comments being said to female leaders? Have you experienced them yourself?

**Read Acts 2:17-18**

### Discussion Questions

This verse is a repeat of the words of the prophet Joel (2:28-29). In both places the words are inclusive of both men and women being called to speak the gospel.

- How do statements like those portrayed in the video hinder women from living into their call as described in the book of Acts?
- How do contemporary attitudes and behaviors continue to try and silence women or render them invisible?

Many of the comments focused on women pastors' appearances like body weight and clothing.

- Why is this the case? How is this different for male colleagues?

It is clear in the comments and statistics shared that there is a significant pay gap for our female pastors.

- Which statistic surprised you more – that six women are in the top fifty earners or that seventy-five women are in the bottom one hundred earners? Why?



These statements make us uncomfortable but they are meant to shine light on what is reality for many of our women in leadership. Further, the hope is that this video serves as a call to action.

- In what ways can you support female leadership?
- How can you help expand the imagination of your congregation with regard to pastoral leadership?
- In what ways are you championing the gifts of young women in your congregation?
- How else can your community be an advocate for ALL of God's children who experience the injustice of discrimination?

**End with Litany of Confession and Commitment (see back page) ↪**

### RESOURCES AT WWW.ELCA.ORG

- God's Faithfulness on the Journey: Reflections of Rostered Women of Color
- Women and Justice Social Statement
- Our Voices, Our Stories: Sexism in Church and Society
- Women of the ELCA

**Lutheran World Federation at [www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)**

- Gender Justice Policy

### Notes about the Prayers

\* Opening Prayer is drawn from a prayer written by Gwen Cashmore and Joan Puls in 1992. It is based on 'Hanta Yo', a Lakota Sioux invocation meaning 'Clear the Way'. With additions from Sue Williamson. Adapted to be inclusive of women serving on both ELCA rosters.

\* Prayer in Litany is from WOW: Founded in 1996, Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW) is an international network of groups whose mission is the admission of Roman Catholic women to all ordained ministries. WOW is founded on the principle of equality and therefore opposes any discrimination. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. (Galatians 3:28)