



We Are Church, We Are Called

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Elizabeth Platz

Nov. 22, 1970

Elizabeth Platz is ordained in the Lutheran Church in America, which makes her the first woman of European descent ordained in a Lutheran church body in North America.

Dec. 22, 1970

Barbara L. Andrews

Barbara L. Andrews is the first woman of European descent ordained in the American Lutheran Church and the first woman with a disability to be ordained in the United States.

Janith Otte Murphy

Oct. 30, 1977

Janith Otte Murphy is the first woman of European descent ordained in the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

March 4, 1979

Lydia Rivera Kalb

Lydia Rivera Kalb is the first Latina woman ordained in a Lutheran church body in the United States (LCA).

Earlean Miller

Aug. 26, 1979

Earlean Miller is the first woman of African descent ordained in a Lutheran church body in the United States (LCA).



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Asha George-Guiser

July 1, 1982

Asha George-Guiser is the first woman of Asian descent ordained in a Lutheran church body in the United States (LCA).

July 19, 1987

Marlene Whiterabbit Helgemo

Marlene Whiterabbit Helgemo is the first American Indian woman ordained in a Lutheran church body in the United States (ALC).

April 13-16 1980

10th Anniversary

The 10th anniversary gathering was the first time female pastors across the AELC, LCA and ALC met. The Rev. Dr. Norma Cook Everist remembers that there was an element of fear in the gathering. People were uncertain if women's ordination would last.

“Too often, when female clergy meet and share, the air is filled with anger, frustration and pain. Stories are sad, discrimination is outrageous, and the joy comes mostly from the little moments of warmth shared with a kindred soldier before leaping back into battle. Uncomfortable, but true.”

—The Rev. Margaret Gatter Payne, 1985



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Ruth Frost

Phyllis Zillhart

Jan. 22, 1990

Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart are the first openly lesbian women to be ordained in a Lutheran church body in the United States. Because of the ELCA's policies on clergy in same-gender relationships, the congregation that called them, St. Francis, was put on ecclesiastical trial, suspended from the ELCA for five years and then expelled in 1996. Frost and Zillhart were formally received back into the ELCA in 2010.

Jun. 12, 1992

April Ulring Larson

April Ulring Larson is the first woman of European descent elected as a synod bishop in the ELCA. At this time, she was only the second female Lutheran bishop in the world.

Louisa Groce

Sept. 12, 1999

Louisa Groce, of African descent, is the first octogenarian woman ordained in the ELCA.

“During my 98 years of life, I have seen God sweep aside barriers of ethnicity, gender and age to help me become a pastor of Christ’s beloved people. Each step of the way, this was not a calling I sought nor did it come about by my effort. It has all been God’s work from beginning to end.”

—The Rev. Louisa Groce, 2017



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Margarita Martinez

June 7, 2001

Margarita Martinez is the first woman of color and first Latina woman elected as a synod bishop in the ELCA.

"Margarita never shrank back from human tragedy. She never denied the reality of injustice. She never shrank away from calling us, the church, to confront the injustices of racism and sexism. Yet, no matter how powerful those were, they were never strong enough to silence Margarita's song. It was a song of praise to God, and a song of protest when we were not living together as God intends for God's people."

—Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, 2007

May 12, 2002

Sharon Stalkfleet

Sharon Stalkfleet is the first openly bisexual woman of European descent ordained in the ELCA.

Phyllis Anderson

Nov. 5, 2004

The Rev. Dr. Phyllis Anderson is elected president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, which makes her the first woman of European descent to serve as president of an ELCA seminary.

Dec. 12, 2009

Dolores McKay

Dolores McKay is the first woman of Middle Eastern descent ordained in the ELCA.



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Jessica Crist

Oct. 1, 2011

Jessica Crist is the first woman of European descent elected as chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

Aug. 14, 2013

Elizabeth Eaton

Elizabeth Eaton is the first woman of European descent elected as presiding bishop of the ELCA.



The percentage of bishops who are women in the ELCA Conference of Bishops increased from 6 (9.2 %) in 2008 to 23 (35.4%) in 2019.

Patricia A. Davenport

Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld

May 5-6, 2018

Patricia A. Davenport and Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld are the first women of African descent to be elected as synod bishops in the ELCA.

“Many women in this church have shared that people continue to disrespect or ignore their voices and authority. Today, women of color continue to wait longer for calls than do all men and all white women. But there is hope. ... What didn't seem possible a generation ago is becoming a reality in our church.”

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, 2019



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50th Anniversary

1970

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of U.S. Lutheran Churches' Decisions to Ordain Women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

In some congregations during the 1960s, women were still not allowed to serve on congregation councils or speak at congregational meetings.



In 1970, a survey of 4,745 Lutheran adults found that 75% of LCA members and 66% of ALC members agreed with the decision to ordain women.

1970

In 1970 the American Lutheran Church formed a committee of men to study the ordination of women. It was not until Margaret Barth Wold spoke up that women were asked to join the committee.

Women's organizations such as Lutheran Church Women from the LCA and American Lutheran Church Women from the ALC were key in achieving women's ordination.

Many female pastors of this first generation had never heard a woman preach until they heard their own voices in the pulpit.



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40th Anniversary

1979

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the First Women
of Color Ordained in U.S. Lutheran Churches



As recently as October 2018, out of 2,979 women active on the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, only 289 are women of color. This is 9.7% of the ordained women.

Statistically, pastors who are women of color experience discrimination more than their white counterparts because of racism.

On average, pastors who are women of color face a disproportionate wait time for their first call compared to their white counterparts.

“Once my eyes were opened to the possibility of ordained ministry, and after various members of my ethnic/racial community encouraged me to become a pastor, I never gave up on my goal of seeking ordination.”

—The Rev. Cheryl Stewart Pero, 1995



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10th Anniversary

2009

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the ELCA's
Decision to Remove the Barrier to Ordination for
LGBTQIA+ Individuals

"Intentional welcome to all people and families matters. As Lutherans, we believe every human being reflects the Divine image. Each of us is a beloved child of God, wonderfully made, just as we are. Our confidence in Christ Jesus calls us to work with all God's people to transform our communities, so welcome can be a lived experience in our congregations and in the world."

—Reconciling Works



According to Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries,

18

extraordinary ordinations of LGBTQIA+ clergy
took place in the ELCA between 1990 and 2009.

There are over

883

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Communities
throughout North America, with

385

more on the way.



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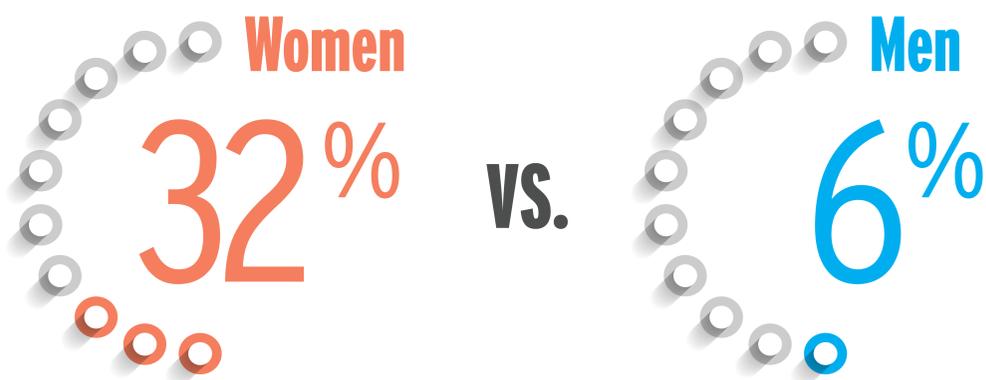
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Women's Ordination Statistics

Women are more likely to serve as supply pastors than men. Additionally, men are more likely to be senior pastors, while women are more likely to be associate pastors.

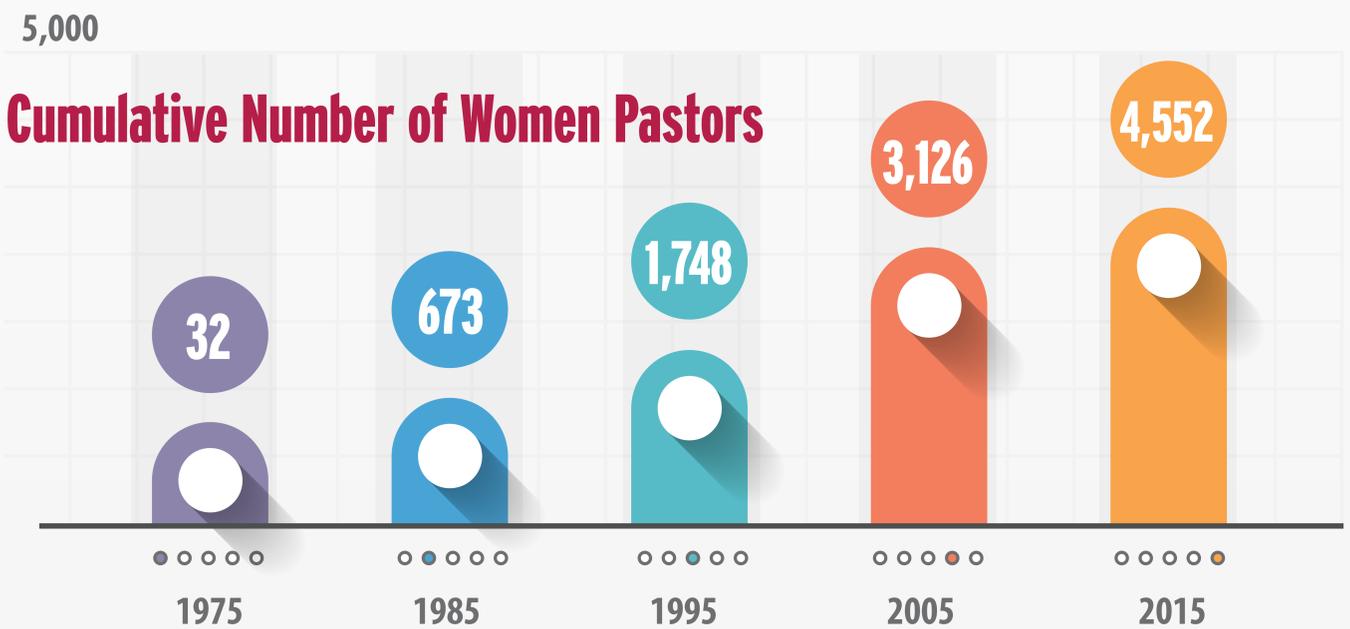
As of January 2016, 119 out of 145 member churches in the Lutheran World Federation ordain women.



In the ELCA, 32% of women pastors have experienced sexual harassment, compared to 6.5% of male pastors.



As of April 2016, the average defined compensation for female clergy in the ELCA was 86% of what their male counterparts were compensated. This gap is compounded for ordained women of color.



For more data, please see the 45th Anniversary of Women's Ordination Report: elca.org/About/Leadership/Womens-Ordination-research.

Data from ELCA Research and Evaluation



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