

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE *MISSIO ECCLESIAE* IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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The Incarnate Word Summons Women and Empowers Them for Mission

Jesus included women in his mission and received them into the group of disciples on an equal footing. He restored their value as people designed by the Creator and taught that men have no right to repudiate them or treat them as if they were an object of their possession.

Jesus' treatment of women challenged the minds of the men of his time, who were prisoners of misogynistic ideas, and at the same time awakened the minds of women from the state of mental, social, and religious marginality.¹ As Samuel Gil Soldevilla says, "Jesus is going to restore the image² of the woman that had been disfigured by the hardness of the hearts of men."³ This reforming⁴ and revolutionary⁵ intentionality of Jesus in his message and in his treatment of women is evident when we examine the biblical texts, stripping ourselves of cultural lenses.

The rabbis in Jesus' day did not employ women's stories, nor did they mention them in their teachings.⁶ Jesus, in many of the parables, deliberately used the daily tasks performed by women, tasks that the men of his time did not usually see as worthy activities, such as cooking,⁷ sewing,⁸ weaving,⁹ keeping the lamps lit,¹⁰ milling wheat, the lost coin,¹¹ the widow and the unjust judge,¹² among others.

In the Gospels, several encounters of Jesus with women are recorded, moments in which he defended them when they were harshly judged by men, including miracles performed on marginalized women. On many of these occasions, he took advantage of the circumstances to teach the principles of the kingdom.¹³ Whenever he referred to women, he did so in a positive

¹ Luke 4:18–19

² *Imago Dei*, Genesis 1:27.

³ Samuel Gil Soldevilla, *Women in the New Testament* (Aula7activa-AEGUAE, 2009), 5.

⁴ Adriana Valerio, *Women and the Church: a History of Gender* (Benilde Cultural Association, 2017), 34.

⁵ Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus* (Bethany, 2006).

⁶ Bacari loose in Israel. "This is how women were treated in Israel in the Bible." YouTube video, 18 July 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvGbjHLloJY>.

⁷ Leaven, Luke 13:20–21.

⁸ The patch of the old garment, Matthew 9:16.

⁹ Thread, sewing, and clothing, Matthew 9:16–17, to teach about faith and the Christian life.

¹⁰ The Ten Virgins, Matthew 25:1–13.

¹¹ It was not common for women to manage money, as they were financially dependent on men, Luke 15:8–10.

¹² Luke 18:1–8.

¹³ Matthew 13:33 and others.

sense, never to condemn them. He intentionally sought fellowship with female persons. His fresh words and healing touches restored self-esteem and filled many of their lives with hope.¹⁴

The fact that Jesus treated women as capable of understanding spiritual matters was revolutionary. Jewish teachers were opposed to educating women in God's Word. In the Jerusalem Talmud are recorded the words of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, who testifies to the thought of the Jewish teachers of the first and second centuries: "It is better that the words of the Torah be consumed by fire than be entrusted to women."¹⁵

But Jesus sought to start the conversation with the women. At Jacob's well, Jesus addressed a Samaritan woman, overcoming the prevailing sexual and racial prejudices.¹⁶ He engaged in the most revealing theological conversation with her, about the work of the Holy Spirit (the water of life), about the right place of worship, and about the spiritual nature of God, and revealed himself as the awaited Messiah. The disciples did not hide their amazement at seeing that Jesus recognized this woman's ability to understand the depth of her teachings. Remember, she was a Samaritan, a woman, and a sinner. She was the first evangelist among the Samaritans.¹⁷

Mark narrates the episode of Jesus interrupting his schedule to go and heal a dying girl,¹⁸ who was a minor, a woman, and when he arrived, she was dead. No priest in his time would have given it importance. The same with the woman who touched her garment,¹⁹ an impure woman, and for years marginalized by society and removed from worship. No man touched her, least of all a priest, or offered her comfort in her illness. One Sabbath day, Jesus healed a stooped woman and called her "daughter of Abraham."²⁰ In Jesus' time, this title was used to emphasize the value of Jewish men as members of the community and heirs to God's promises, faith, and covenant.²¹

Jesus refused to treat women as objects owned by men or created for their pleasure. In Jewish society, a man could divorce his wife for any reason, even for having burned the food. The woman lived at the expense of her husband or her male relatives. A woman alone or abandoned had very little chance of survival. Prostitution and the charity of others were her only options.²² Jesus showed compassion for women, not only by His words but also by defending them, as in John 8:3–11, where he prevented an adulterous woman from being stoned. With his

¹⁴ For example, the woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43–48), Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:12), the woman with a bow (Luke 13:10–13).

¹⁵ Jerusalem Talmud (Sotah 3:4, 19a). <https://es.scribd.com/document/579476719/talmud-de-jerusalem-en-espaol>.

¹⁶ John 4. For Jewish culture, a man could not look, touch, or talk to a married woman, and the Jews avoided the Samaritans, whom they repudiated.

¹⁷ John 4:39. Many of the Samaritans who lived in that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

¹⁸ The Resurrection of Jairus' Daughter, Mark 5:25–34.

¹⁹ Mark 5:25–34.

²⁰ Luke 13:10–16.

²¹ Rosario Flores, *She is also "Abraham's daughter." A Liberating Perspective from Luke 13:10–17*. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia. An. Teol. 19.2 (2017) 251–281. <https://revistas.ucsc.cl/index.php/analesdeteologia/article/view/1849/1262>.

²² Bacari loose in Israel. "This is how women were treated in Israel in the Bible." YouTube video, 18 July 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvGbJHLloJY>.

words, he encouraged women and restored their self-esteem. He trusted them and freed them from the guilt, personal sin, and stigma of wickedness they carried.

In the Pharisee's house, he let a sinful woman kiss his feet and anoint them with perfume, then he forgave her.²³ When he healed Peter's mother-in-law, he took her by the hand.²⁴ He defended the woman who anointed his head with an expensive perfume in the house of Simon the leper,²⁵ an opportunity that the Master took to emphasize that this woman was fulfilling an essential role in his redemptive mission.²⁶ On another occasion, he used the Canaanite woman as an example of faith.²⁷

Restoring relations between men and women was a priority objective in Jesus' ministry. Soldevilla writes, "Through his actions, Jesus intends to demonstrate the equality to which men and women must be subjected simply because they are children of God. Their gazes were so close to both men and women, their words so fresh to both men, and their touches so restorative that they could not distinguish between men and women. He receives them as full partakers of the blessings of God's people."²⁸ J. Stott also says, "Without fuss or publicity, Jesus put an end to the curse of the fall, restored to woman the nobility she had partially lost, and restored to the new community of his Kingdom the original blessing of sexual equality."²⁹

During his life and ministry, Jesus was surrounded by women who not only accompanied him but also played a special role. Mary, his mother, had a great influence on Jesus during his childhood,³⁰ later joining the disciples and serving as an example to other women in the early church. The authors of the gospels show women serving Jesus and being instructed alongside the twelve apostles. Jesus did not reject women as his followers. Mark states, "These women had followed and cared for him when he was in Galilee. Besides, there were many others there who had gone up with him to Jerusalem."³¹ Luke also relates, "After this, Jesus went through the towns and villages, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. He was accompanied by the twelve, and also by some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary, whom they called Magdalene, and from whom seven demons had come out...."³² Other women who supported the ministry of Jesus with their goods are mentioned, including Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's administrator,³³ Susanna, Martha,³⁴ Peter's mother-in-law,³⁵ and many more.

²³ Luke 7:36–50.

²⁴ Mark 1:29–31.

²⁵ Mark 14:3–9.

²⁶ Mark 14:9.

²⁷ Matthew 15:21–28.

²⁸ Soldevilla, *Woman in the New Testament*, 8.

²⁹ John Stott, *The Christian Faith in the Face of Contemporary Challenges* (New Creation, 1990), 280.

³⁰ From the statement in Luke 2:40, "The child grew and became strong; he progressed in wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him," it can be inferred that Mary and Joseph were exemplary and responsible parents.

³¹ Mark 15:41.

³² Luke 8:1–3. Gil, *Women in the New Testament*, 8.

³³ Luke 8.

³⁴ Luke 10:40, John 12:2.

³⁵ Matthew 8:15.

The Greek text says that they “ministered” to him (*diakoneo*, to serve or minister); they were in charge of taking care of Jesus' and his disciples' personal needs, as well as their food, when they were not staying in a house. In a social context where women hardly left their homes, the fact that these women accompanied a rabbi would definitely be something to talk about.

On one occasion, while Jesus was in the house of Mary and Martha,³⁶ Martha chided her sister Mary for putting aside the feminine tasks of feeding the men while she sat down to learn from Jesus alongside the men. In Jewish society, women were not taught to read and write, nor did they attend school in the synagogue to learn from the Scriptures. They could not even worship in the same place as men!³⁷ Luke relates, “Martha, seeking Jesus' support, says to him: 'Lord, don't you mind that my sister leaves me alone doing all the housework? Tell him to help me.' But Jesus answered her, 'Martha, Martha, why do you worry about so many things? There is something more important. Mary has chosen it, and no one is going to take it away from her.'”³⁸

Around the death and resurrection of the Lord, women also had a special and unique role. They did not flee, like most of his disciples; they were with him on their way to Calvary and on the Mount of Crucifixion.³⁹ They accompanied his remains to the tomb, returned to the tomb on the Sabbath to anoint his body,⁴⁰ and were the first to see the risen Christ and spread the good news to the disciples.

Jesus put an end to the curse of the fall and restored to women the nobility they had partially lost, giving them an equal place in the community of disciples. He considered women valuable for the mission, trained them, and included them as key players in the expansion of his kingdom. The Holy Spirit came about 120 in the upper room and made no distinction between men and women to fill them and sanctify their hearts. The Great Commission was shared by men and women alike in the early church, taking the gospel to the far reaches of the known world.⁴¹ They spread the seeds of the kingdom that came with Jesus, a kingdom that broke with traditional patterns and marked the end of the deceptive cultural heritage that perpetuated the degradation and abuse of women. The *missio ecclesiae* embraced by the first Christians was counterculture, setting the model for future generations of disciples.

Historical, Cultural, and Theological Influences that Drove Women away from Ministry

Although the New Testament does not establish a model of male ecclesial leadership, androcentric leadership began early in the history of the Church. In 363-364, the Council of Laodicea forbade the ordination of women to the presbytery. A century later, the Council of Chalcedon (451) established further limitations by imposing the minimum age of 40 for the ordination of deaconesses.⁴² Despite these regulations, in some regions, deaconesses continued to be recognized and ordained.

³⁶ Sisters of Lazarus, Luke 10:38-42.

³⁷ Bacari loose in Israel. “*This is how women were treated in Israel in the Bible.*” YouTube video, 18 July 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvGbjHLloJY>

³⁸ Luke 10:40-42.

³⁹ Luke 23:26-30.

⁴⁰ Luke 24:1-2.

⁴¹ Darío López, *Disciples of Jesus: From Invisibilized to Protagonists* (Puma, 2023).

⁴² Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documented History* (Verbo Divino, 2005), 182.

Women were definitively removed from the ordained ministry a few years later, during the Council of Orange (441 A.D.), which explicitly forbade the ordination of deaconesses. The Second Lateran Council, eight centuries later (1123), established clerical celibacy, putting a straitjacket on women's ministry and curtailing any possibility of official recognition of their calling and service.⁴³

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has affirmed and still affirms that ecclesial leadership has been male since its inception. Today, thanks to published historical research,⁴⁴ these arguments have been widely refuted, demonstrating that ministry in the church until the third century was equally shared between men and women.⁴⁵ Women performed functions essential to community and liturgical life, such as discipleship, baptisms, communion, teaching, and preaching, and received wide recognition from the community.

From the Reformation (1517–1648) onwards, the vast majority of historical Protestants, influenced by medieval Catholic thought, resisted the recognition of the call and vocation of women to ecclesial leadership. The medieval church's message about women was ambivalent: “On the one hand, women were on a pedestal and worshipped almost like the Virgin Mary, but, on the other hand, they were seen as schemers, descendants of Eve, who could lead men astray with the sins of the flesh.”⁴⁶ Protestant churches adopted the model of the male priesthood,⁴⁷ and, although no biblical basis was developed, women were excluded from ecclesial ministries.

Martin Luther taught the submission of women to men by stating that it was Eve who was responsible for introducing sin into the world. John Calvin emphasized that a woman is created as a “helper fit” to a man, who, subject to male authority, is not to exercise authority over men. However, some of Luther's theological principles, such as the universal priesthood of believers, allowed women to preach when a man was not available. Calvin, for his part, advocated that the church should conform to the culture of the context, excluding practices that might be offensive to people, which is why he did not allow women to speak in the congregation.⁴⁸

The origins and roots of machismo in America date back to the time of the conquest. The Spanish and Portuguese colonizers, with the backing of the Roman Catholic Church, imposed their patriarchal culture and promoted male superiority and domination over indigenous women. Immigrants of European origin and the religious or secular education regulated by the Church of Rome, at all levels, preserved the patriarchal culture.

⁴³ Madigan and Oziek provide extensive information on women priests in the Christian church both in the early church and in the history of the second century onwards, documented in very diverse sources such as ecclesiastical ordinations, conciliar decrees, funerary inscriptions and dedications, letters, biographies, among others.

⁴⁴ Early sources such as *La Didascalia* (DA) and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (CA) detail the roles and importance of deaconesses in the Christian community and help to understand the impact that ecclesiastical councils had on their status.

⁴⁵ Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests* (El Almendro de Córdoba, 2025). She examines women's leadership in the Early Church and the scandal of their subordination beginning in the third century.

⁴⁶ Ed. B. Clouse and R. Clouse, *Women in Ministry: Four Points of View* (Clie. 2005), 18.

⁴⁷ This male ministry and its functions were taken by the Catholic Church from the priestly ministry of the Old Testament.

⁴⁸ Clouse and Clouse, *Women in Ministry*, 19.

Our Theological, Historical, and Pastoral Identity

Our Wesleyan Identity

During John Wesley's ministry, “women who felt disenfranchised in a male-dominated world began to develop a new sense of self-worth and purpose.”⁴⁹ Wesley defended the place of lay preachers and women in the movement, despite criticism from the Anglican Church. It was in his relationship with women ministry partners that Wesley's thinking on women's ministry shifted to making women official in various roles.⁵⁰ Among them was Sarah Crosby, the first woman preacher of early Methodism,⁵¹ to whom Wesley wrote: “I believe that the strength of the cause rests here, in which you have an extraordinary calling. In the same way, I am convinced that each of our lay preachers has it; otherwise, I could not consider his preaching at all.”⁵²

In the sermon entitled “On Visiting the Sick,” Wesley affirmed and encouraged the women called to develop their full potential and, importantly, publicly acknowledged their contribution to the movement:

There is no difference here; “There is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.” By the way, the time has passed for that idea of many that “women are only good to be seen, not to be heard.” And consequently, many of them were raised as if they had been designed to be pleasant toys! Does this idea honor sexuality? No, this way of thinking contains the deepest cruelty; it is a horrible cruelty, it is barbaric. And I don't know how any woman with feelings and spirit can submit to it. Woman, surrender no more to that vile servitude! You, like men, are a rational creature. You, like them, were made in the image of God; you are equally a candidate for immortality; you women, you are also called by God.... Do not be disobedient to the heavenly calling.⁵³

John Wesley laid the theological foundations for gender mutuality, a theological basis that influenced the recognition of ministries and the ordination of women in the denominations of the Holiness Movement, including the Church of the Nazarene.

Applying Wesley's quadrilateral method, formulated by Albert C. Outler, to know God's will on the subject of women's spiritual leadership, we can reach the following conclusions:

In Scripture, God values both women and men and calls both to his service. Ecclesial communion wrought by the Spirit (Ephesians 4) is not possible without the practice of philogyny.⁵⁴ In this type of relationship, men and women express God's holy love by giving each other courage, treating each other with respect and appreciation, recognizing and valuing their gifts, abilities, differences, and sharing responsibilities.

⁴⁹ Paul Wesley Chilcote, *She Offered Them Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1893), 12.

⁵⁰ Diane Leclerc, “Lesson 9: From Wesley to the Modern Period.” ENTE Online Module of Multicultural Ministries of US-Canada: Fundamentals of Women's Ministry, 2021.

⁵¹ Sarah Crosby was installed as a class leader at age 22 and later became an itinerant preacher, traveling with Wesley on several occasions.

⁵² Leslie F. Church, *More About the Early Methodist People* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 356.

⁵³ John Wesley, *The Works of Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 7:125-26.

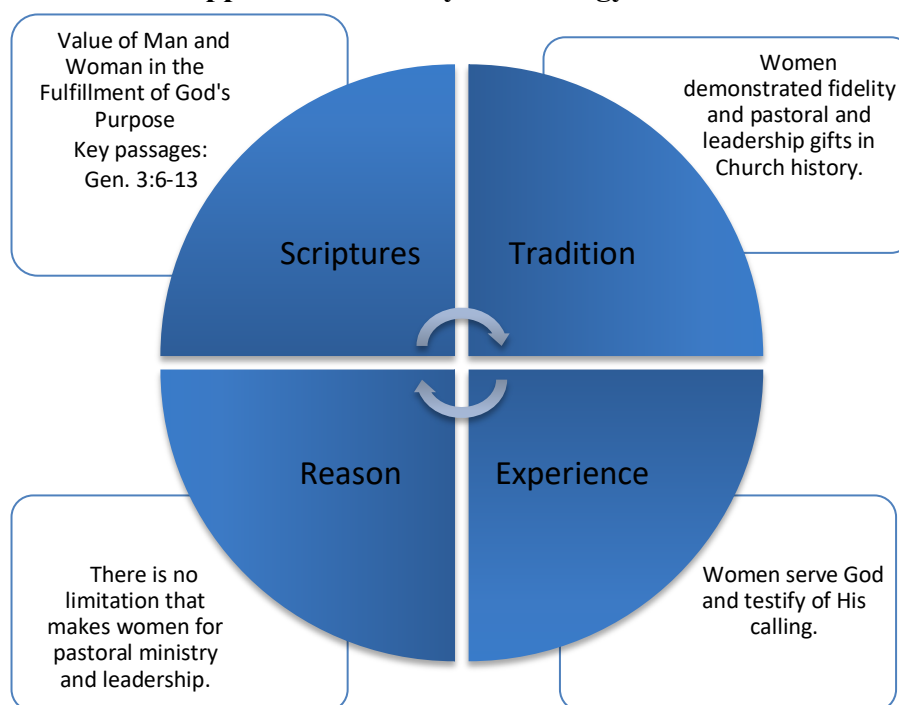
⁵⁴ Philogyny, comes from the Greek *philo-* (loving) and *gynē* (woman), here it is used in its social sense to describe affection or appreciation for women, as opposed to misogyny (hatred of women).

The Christocentric church empowers women, promoting a level playing field with men and challenging patriarchal gender roles. The purpose of the gifts bestowed by the Spirit is to strengthen the unity of the church, to enable her to serve, and to guide her in her spiritual growth. In the early church, the Holy Spirit assembled the team; in other words, church leaders distributed ministerial responsibilities in obedience to the Holy Spirit, not excluding women and allowing them to fulfill their ministries according to the gifts and their individual callings. Gifts for ministry are not specific to one gender or another.

The *Christian tradition* is a witness to the role and leadership of women in the church. Experience tells us that God imparts gifts and calls to ministry to both women and men.⁵⁵ The *reason* leads us to conclude that women are suitable for pastoral and leadership ministries in the church.⁵⁶

These important considerations have led churches in the Wesleyan tradition to affirm gender mutuality and to practice the ordination of women to Christian ministry.

Quadrilateral Approach to Wesleyan Theology on Women's Ministry



Gender mutuality is inherent in Wesleyan theology because, at its foundation, it is relational. Its central theme is love. God, who is love, loves us and calls us into a loving relationship with himself and others. God values each individual and calls them to contribute to his redemptive mission. The church, as the first fruits of God's kingdom, must be consistent with God's vision of restored humanity, modeling for society gender relations that express God's holy love that dwells in our hearts.

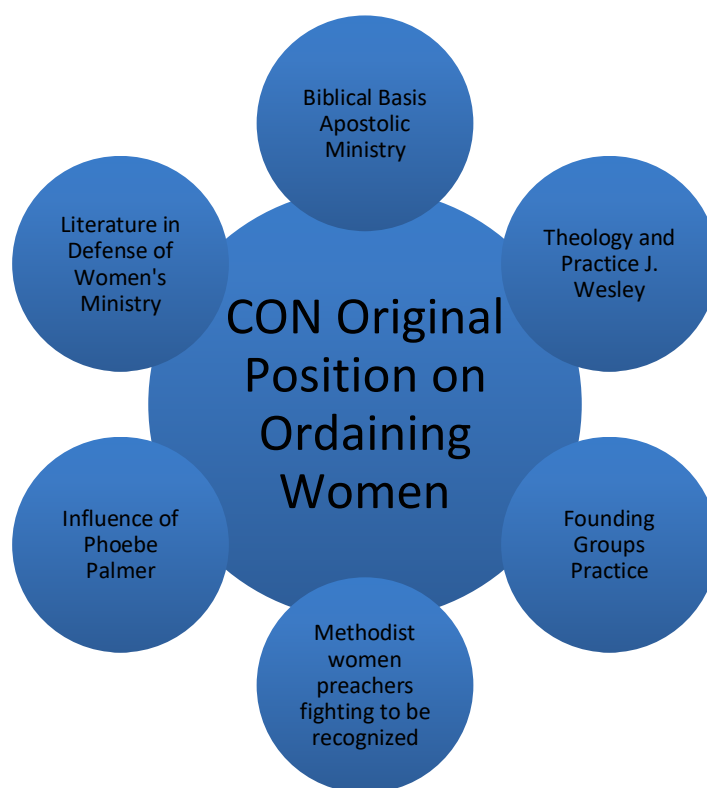
⁵⁵ Nancy Beach, *Gifted to Lead* (Zondervan, 2008), 16.

⁵⁶ Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests*; Randy L. Maddox, "Wesleyan Theology and the Christian Feminist Critique," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 (1987):102.

Our Nazarene Identity

The Church of the Nazarene, founded in 1908, arose from the union of three groups that were part of the so-called Wesleyan Holiness Movement,⁵⁷ a movement where the discussion on the ordination of women to the ministry was already closed by 1890, a conclusion that they condensed with this phrase in Latin: “*Si Spiritus Sanctus locuta, caus finita*: “If the Holy Spirit has spoken, it is a closed case.” They had considered their Wesleyan roots, the authority of Scripture, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced in the fine ministries of women in preaching, teaching, and social service.

The Church of the Nazarene was born with 25 percent of ordained ministers being women, who served as pastors and evangelists and held various functions in the organization, including participation in leadership teams, local boards, and high-level government bodies. That impulse toward equality was one of the factors that separated the founding groups of the Church of the Nazarene from the mainstream Methodism of their time, but it also held them together.⁵⁸



⁵⁷ Members of the Holiness Movement increasingly differed from the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church in several respects, one of which was the ordination of women.

⁵⁸ In 1908, the year of its official organization after the union at Pilot Point, 25% of the ordained ministers in the Church of the Nazarene were women, reflecting its strong roots in the Holiness Movement that promoted equality in the pulpit. This figure is documented by historians of the institution, such as Stan Ingersol, former archivist of the denomination, in his research on the female clergy and the development of the Nazarene identity. Nazarene Archives, “Ordained Women and the Church of the Nazarene,” 16 March, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/NazArchives/posts/ordained-women-and-the-church-of-the-nazarene-the-ministry-of-women-has-been-a-n/5223600567711125/>.

Phineas Bresee always supported the ordination of women, but in general, it seems that he took for granted the “right” of women to ordination. Bresee's questions to ordination candidates were aimed at inquiring about their experience, calling, and gifts. In his remarks to the 1908 Manual Revision Committee, Bresee insisted that gender is not and should not be an issue in ministry.⁵⁹

As Michelle T. Sanchez explains, “Since its founding in 1908, the Church of the Nazarene, like other major holiness denominations, has ordained women to all offices of ministry in the church. In this sense, the tradition of holiness stands out in extraordinary ways from most other major Christian traditions in America at the time. In the words of sociologist Bryan Wilson, “The Holiness Movement in its various forms brought women to the forefront, perhaps more than any previous development in Christianity.”⁶⁰

To counter ecclesiastical opposition to women's ministry, the early Nazarenes addressed the issue of women's ordination in two effective ways: oral teaching and the printed page.⁶¹ This double testimony left no doubt in the Nazarene women that God had called them to the ministry and that he had set them apart for this service.⁶²

As we can see, a crucial aspect of the Nazarene identity, from its origins, was its willingness to open ministerial functions to women.⁶³ In the early years, women found no hindrance within the denomination to serve according to their calling: women were ordained, recognizing and valuing their gifts and their calling.

A Radical Change in Deteriorating Mission (1930-1990)

By 1930, a generation later, from the time Bresee left the Peniel Mission, Nazarene men began a debate about women's ordination, and American and Canadian Nazarenes began to resist women's ordination.

⁵⁹ Ingersol, Stan, “Your Daughters shall Prophesy,” *Holiness Today, Church of the Nazarene*. March/April 2000.

⁶⁰ “Her Daughters will Prophesy: The Emergence of Women’s Ordination in the Tradition of Holiness.” <https://www.cbeinternational.org/es/Recursos/tus-hijas-profetizar%C3%A1n/>

⁶¹ Methodist literature on women’s ministry spreads: *Promise of the Father* (1859), by Phoebe Palmer; *The Feminine Ministry* (1859), by Catherine Booth; *Women in the Pulpit* (1889), by Frances Willard; *The Woman Preacher* (1891), by William B. Godbey; *The Ordination of Women* (1891), by B. T. Roberts; *Why not? A Plea for the Ordination of Those Women Whom God Calls to Preach His Gospel* (1894), by Walter Sellw; *Women Preachers* (1905), by Fannie McDowell Hunter. The publications of Palmer (1859) and Booth (before 1888), serve as marks, as it were, to a modest shelf full of defenses on the ordination of women. Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Catherine Booth were among the handful of leading figures, both male and female, in the nineteenth-century Wesleyan Holiness Movement.

⁶² Some influential leaders and writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries include: Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874), Catherine Booth (1829-1890; co-founder of the Salvation Army), B. T. Roberts (Free Methodist), Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Nancy Hardesty, Letha Scanzoni, Frances Willard, Amanda Berry Smith, and Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza.

⁶³ C. Jeanne Orjala Serrao, Professor of Biblical Literature and Dean of the School of Theology and Philosophy at Mount Vernon Nazarene University. Nina G. Gunter, ordained minister, preacher, teacher, author, and General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene.

The story of Delona Smith (1891–1970)⁶⁴ exemplifies the pitfalls that women called to ministry faced. Delona, a mother of 8, was forced to defend her call in front of her husband and the academic leadership of Olivet Nazarene College, who organized a meeting to try to dissuade her from “her delusions.” Delona listened patiently, and when they finished, she calmly responded, “Which of you will want to face God on the day of judgment and take responsibility for my failure to respond to God's call on my life?” There was a great silence in the room; hearing no response, Mrs. Smith left the meeting with her husband, went home, and began her ministry. She had a special heart for people lost in the vice of alcohol. In the company of four of her children, she preached on the radio and, on weekends, in front of bars, and sang in a quartet. Delona died at the age of 81, having fulfilled her calling.⁶⁵

Her experience has been like that of many women who found themselves needing to defend their calling and their right to exercise a pastoral or preaching ministry, or another full-time ministry within the Church. If Delona had been born a few years earlier, her story would have been different.

What changed in the world for the church to alter its practice of ordaining women? There were four social and cultural factors beginning in the 1930s that came into play in the United States, each with a theological and spiritual dimension that profoundly affected Nazarene understanding and ministry practice.⁶⁶

From 1900 onwards, the so-called “modern era” brought scientific, technological, and industrial changes along with new ideas, such as the theory of evolution and new methods of studying the Bible that questioned its veracity and authority. In this context, as a reaction to the threat of modernity, fundamentalism emerged, a conservative, patriarchal, and legalistic movement that sought to defend the Bible and tradition as the only source of authority. The dispensational theology promoted by this movement taught a fatalistic view of society and history and announced the imminent coming of Christ.

Wesleyans and the churches of the holiness movement did not fit well into either the fundamentalist or the modernist group. The grace optimism that characterizes Wesleyan theology, which guided the church to engage in social reforms and develop transformational ministry to people, was opposed to the social pessimism of dispensational theology. On the other hand, the full (*plenary*) inspiration of Scripture in matters of faith and practice for the life of the Christian was contrary to the modernist position on the Bible, which considered it nothing more than a historical text.

⁶⁴ Intha Delona McGraw Smith, mother of Pastor Sam Smith; and Nazarene historian, theologian, and Johns Hopkins University professor Timothy L. Smith, who served as founding pastor of the Newport News, VA, Church of the Nazarene.

⁶⁵ Nina G. Gunter, “Lesson 1: The Need for Ordained Women in Ministry,” Module On-Line Multicultural Ministries US-Canada, Course: Fundamentals of Women’s Ministry, 2021.

⁶⁶ C. Jeanne Orjala Serrao, “Lesson 2: Historical and Recent Review and Hermeneutical Principles,” Module On-Line Multicultural Ministries US-Canada, Course: Fundamentals of Women’s Ministry, 2021.

As society aligned itself toward one of these schools of thought, holiness churches also began to lean in one direction or another, rather than following “the middle lane” or the “middle line” proposed by John Wesley and Phineas Bresee.

The Wesleyan Middle Position

Fundamentalism	Wesleyanism	Modernism
Conservative Legalist (law on freedom) Bible and tradition sources of authority Pessimistic view of history and the human being Dispensationalist Theology	Downtown: Wesley and Bresee Grace Source of authority the Bible (The Wesleyan Quadrilateral) Optimistic vision of history and the human being (theology of hope) Holiness Theology	Liberal Humanistic (reason, experience) The Bible is one among other sources of truth. Liberal Theology

In the late 1920s, Nazarenes lost the ability to see Scripture as a whole, focused on interpreting isolated texts, and avoided unwieldy passages, such as Paul's regarding women. That is why Nazarenes forgot that gifts and the call to ministry are not at all linked to gender but to the very nature of the church.⁶⁷

The second cultural factor perceived as threatening was the advance of feminism and some expressions of this movement. The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene was born during the second wave of feminism, which by 1900 was advancing with full force.⁶⁸ The media and secular culture projected an image of a liberated woman as totally unacceptable, which the population considered indecent, and even more so, the religious and theologians of the conservative line. Sexuality became a central issue in the media, so Nazarenes tried to prevent our members from being influenced by new ideas.⁶⁹ Back then, the church's leadership chose to take defensive actions rather than look to our historical-theological identity for direction. As a result, by the late 1920s in our congregations, the subject of sexuality had become taboo, not discussed, nor taught. Nazarene women went from being chosen saints and ministry colleagues to provocateurs and the cause of the fall of their brothers.⁷⁰

It was then that Nazarenes were subjected⁷¹ to rigorous demands regarding their dress, including the length of the skirt, sleeves, hair, makeup, pants, silk stockings, open-toed shoes, bright colors, and jewelry, among other things. We evaded our responsibility to form mature disciples, capable of discerning and making decisions by embracing the principles and values of the kingdom of God. In other words, we were not concerned with forming Nazarene people in terms of gifts, grace, and calling. We took the easy way out, fell in line, and succumbed to what

⁶⁷ Orjala Serrao, op. cit. 2021.

⁶⁸ Women fought and finally won their right to vote in America in 1920.

⁶⁹ The church places restrictions on its members on movies and other programs that promoted the new ideas.

⁷⁰ Orjala Serrao, op. cit, 2021.

⁷¹ Orjala Serrao, op. cit, 2021. This was the experience in the mission fields of South America because of the influence of missionaries who came from the East-Central United States with an emphasis on the sanctity of forms.

popular culture⁷² considered “decent conduct,” and fell into a theological amnesia that restricted women's ordination.⁷³ Recall that by 1925, the Nazarenes had not yet articulated a justification for ordaining and including women in ministry.⁷⁴

This legalistic reactionary stance spread to the mission fields. My mother, Noemi, daughter of pastors José Armagno and Rufina Aguado, who were from the first generation of ordained ministers in Argentina, kept a photo of skiing in Mendoza on her honeymoon in 1960, wearing a skirt. Eventually, she was “seduced” by the intense cold of the snow and put on pants for the first time in her life, but as she describes, she could not enjoy that moment while still feeling like a vile sinner.

The third cultural factor was the emergence of new models or paradigms of androcentric “leadership” after the Second World War, models that responded to the pragmatic needs of the war and post-war period. At the same time, in the Church of the Nazarene between 1920 and 1940, a new style of district superintendents emerged, with a more administrative than pastoral function and a more pragmatic approach, with less reflection and a weaker theological foundation in decision-making.⁷⁵

The church, immersed in a patriarchal and androcentric society, curtailed the participation of women in ecclesial leadership, assuming that this would, in the opinion of the male leadership, slow down the growth of the denomination, since people would not accept women pastors into the churches. In addition, leadership did not prioritize encouraging women to use their gifts in ministry or championing their calling.⁷⁶

The fourth factor that we will mention is the institutional one. Between 1930 and 1960, the Church of the Nazarene experienced great growth. In this period, we were a church led almost exclusively by men. With a few exceptions, the women remained silent. In the general hierarchy of the church, women called to ordained ministry were marginalized. The contribution of women was forgotten during the first thirty-five years, a period of the most rapid growth and expansion in the history of the church in the United States and Canada, when the percentage of women in ministry was higher than it is today. And that amnesia stayed with us until very recently.⁷⁷

For fifty years, from 1930 to 1980, women's ministry remained invisible. In Nazarene Bible institutes, pastors' wives were trained to be hostesses, secretaries, mothers, and wives,⁷⁸ even those with gifts for teaching and preaching. On the mission field, Nazarenes continued to

⁷² The process of receiving and adapting to another culture, especially with the loss of one's own culture.

⁷³ By 1925, the Nazarenes had not yet articulated a justification for ordaining and including women in ministry.

⁷⁴ Orjala Serrao, op. cit. 2021.

⁷⁵ Orjala Serrao, op. cit. 2021.

⁷⁶ Orjala Serrao, op. cit. 2021.

⁷⁷ Orjala Serrao, op. cit. 2021.

⁷⁸ Floyd Cunningham, ed., Stan Ingersol, Harold E. Raser, and David P. Whitelaw, *Our Watchword & Song: the Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009). Quoted in Amy Kubichek, “Pastoral Leadership in the Church of the Nazarene, 2000-2019: A Preliminary Report.” <https://religiousworkforce.com/nazarene-demo-v-1#end3>.

question women who testified to their call to ordained ministry, although we should note that in Latin America, women have become seminary professors, preachers, and church planters.⁷⁹ It was only in the 1970s, thanks in a large part to the rise of secular feminism, that some women preachers and educators began to be heard, and books written by women were published.⁸⁰

While other denominations⁸¹ took steps to ban women from exercising their ministry, the Church of the Nazarene remained silent. As a result, we were invaded by fundamentalist theology, without having articulated arguments to counter it. By the end of the 1990s, female pastors had almost disappeared from our denomination in the United States, declining to 1 percent.⁸² However, in Latin America, the number of ordained women was gradually growing.

The Present: Where Are We Today? (1990-2025)

As we approach the third decade of the 21st century, some of the factors perceived as threats to the mission of the church in the last century remain, and others have been replaced.

The Theological-Ecclesial Context

Today in the Protestant theological universe, two main views on gender roles coexist. On the one hand, the “complementary view” emphasizes that God established in creation differentiated roles for men and women in marriage and society, and gives men authority over women and children. Women are seen as complementary helpers, created to serve men; their destiny is to adopt a submissive role, and their purpose in life is mainly to care for the home, procreate, and raise children. The complementary vision is shared by those who defend male leadership, based on an androcentric interpretation of creation and in some Pauline texts,⁸³ in which they defend that man was created as the “head” of woman. The most extreme traditionalist view restricts the participation of women in the church, whose only option for belonging to the faith community is to submit and “keep silent.”⁸⁴

Due to a lack of knowledge about our historical identity and of biblical-theological formation in this very relevant matter, lay people and Nazarene pastors, having been instructed by patriarchal culture and by preachers and authors of the complementary vision, reproduce this pattern in their relationships inside and outside the church.

⁷⁹ For example, Lucía C. García de Costa (1903-1984). “Argentinian preacher Lucía Carmen García de Costa was one of the most effective church planters in Nazarene history. In addition, she held a doctorate in linguistics and taught at the Nazarene Bible College in Buenos Aires, and she translated Wesleyan theological texts into Spanish.” Stan Ingersol, “Your Daughters shall Prophesy,” *Holiness Today, Church of the Nazarene*, March/April 2000.

⁸⁰ Mary Scott and Estelle Crutcher, Mary Latham and Mildred Wynkoop, all of them were already of age. These publications by women theologians helped foster a breakthrough in women’s ministry in the Church of the Nazarene.

⁸¹ In the 1980s, the Southern Baptist Convention banned women from preaching in its pulpits.

⁸² Cunningham, et. al, *Our Watchword & Song*.

⁸³ There are four biblical arguments on which the defenders of the complementary vision base their position: Creationist, Historical, Pauline, Silence. See: B. Y. Clouse and R. Clouse, eds., *Women in Ministry: Four Points of View* (Clie, 2005).

⁸⁴ Ruth Vindas Benavides, *Between Padlocks and Bolts: Symbolic Violence against Women since Neo-Pentecostalism in Costa Rica*. SIWO. Volume 16, Issue 2, 2023, [p. 1 – p. 33]. Latin American Bible University, San José, Costa Rica. <https://www.revistas.una.ac.cr/index.php/siwo/article/view/19086>.

The opposing position is the “egalitarian view,” which emphasizes that men and women are co-created to fulfill the mandate to care for, watch over, and bear fruit as joint heirs in Christ. Men and women are given spiritual gifts, not determined by gender, but given by the Spirit for full use in the church and in the world. This position aligns with the churches that defend and practice plural ministry, as well as those that share the Wesleyan point of view in favor of equality or mutuality, and with defenders of Christocentric Pauline theology: “in Christ there is neither male nor female.”⁸⁵

This position has been gaining ground among Christians globally. Many church organizations today recognize and value the contribution of women theologians, educators, missionaries, church planters, pastors, disciplers, preachers, administrators of ecclesiastical ministries, including theological seminaries, and directors of social aid foundations, among others. Like Wesley and our founders, several churches have changed their stance over the past 50 years, opening their arms to their sisters and empowering them to carry out their ministries according to their particular gifts and calling.⁸⁶

Overall, in 2022 in the United States, women accounted for 36 percent of all students enrolled in theological schools, and 13 percent served as senior pastors of a church.⁸⁷ The Assemblies of God, a sister denomination to the Church of the Nazarene and founded in 1914, took action to correct course in 1999 when it created the Women Ministers Network and the Women in Ministry Task Force to support women ministers. In addition, they published a document that exposed the biblical argument from Pentecostal theology. Their efforts bore fruit: the number of ordained women grew from 300 in 1992 to 10,383 by 2022; currently, they have 27.6 percent of women pastors.⁸⁸

Other examples are worth mentioning, such as the Anglican Church, which not only ordains women to the priesthood but also, since 1914, ordains women as bishops. In October 2025, for the first time, the Church of England chose a woman as its leader.⁸⁹ The Lutheran Church has ordained women since 1948 in Denmark and since 1970 in the United States and Canada, and so many other Baptist churches, Pentecostals, etc.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ “Women in Church Governments: A Sampling.”

<https://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Suydam/Reln220/Womengovernment.htm#:~:text=15.,man%20esa%20tradic%C3%83%C2%B3n%20desde%20entonces>.

⁸⁶ “Women in Church Governments: A Sampling.”

⁸⁷ According to a report by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS, 2022).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/nml.21612>

⁸⁸ Cristina Paparo, “The Assemblies of God Ordains a Record Number of Women.” *Christianity Today*, August 5, 2022. https://www-christianitytoday-com.translate.goog/2022/08/assemblies-god-ordain-women-record/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc

⁸⁹ https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/07/140714_mujeres_obispos_anglicanas_jgc. Sarah Mullally, 63, was appointed first Archbishop of Canterbury. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/cnvr9e05lp1o>

⁹⁰ List of first women ordained, https://en-wikipedia-org.translate.goog/wiki/List_of_ordained_Christian_women?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc.

Gender Roles in the Christian Church Today

Complementary vision	Egalitarian Vision
Husband's authority over the Wife and the children (Creation). Submissive woman (Role in the home and moral education of children). Male "head" of the woman (male leadership inside and outside the home). Ministry by sex: Male gifts of spiritual leadership. Women gifts of service and leadership to women. It perpetuates Machismo.	Husband and wife created equally. Cultural mandate is for both. Joint heirs in Christ. Gifts alike. Ministries according to gifts. It promotes social equality for women and other marginalized groups.

Changes in the Church of the Nazarene's Global Leadership Position

In the late 1990s, as women gained leadership positions in business and society, holiness churches changed their attitudes toward the ordination of women. In 1991, the feminist pastor and theologian, Dr. Susie Stanley,⁹¹ founded the International Association of Wesleyan Women Clergy and raised the alarm about the decline of women pastors, a problem she describes as “the glass ceiling.” She explains, “It's like in the business world. In the church, there is a limit. Depending on the church, it can be high or low. One level may be within your reach, while another may not.”⁹²

Much of the church leadership was affected in those years by the growth of the world's largest church, the Full Gospel Church in Yoido, Seoul, South Korea, founded by Pastor David Yonggi Cho, which had more than 700,000 members by 1993. Pastor Cho gave lectures encouraging pastors to tap into the potential of women, explaining that the explosive growth of his church was due to the female leadership who made up 67 percent of the pastoral body (out of 600 associate pastors, 400 were women) and led 95 percent of the 50,000 cell groups.⁹³ However, in Latin America, the cell strategy was emphasized, and the factor of female leadership was silenced.

In 2008, the Office of Pastoral Development in the United States-Canada Region created the Nazarene Women's Ministerial Council, whose purpose was to revitalize the ecclesial and

⁹¹ Susie Stanley; religious educator and minister; ordained ecumenical minister at Anderson Church of God, Indiana, since 1995; Founder and Executive Director of the International Association of Wesleyan/Holiness Clergy Women, from 1991 to 2006; former president of the Wesleyan Theological Society.

⁹² “The Stained Glass Ceiling,” *Christianity Today*, May 6, 1994. https://www-christianitytoday-com.translate.google/1994/05/theology-stained-glass-ceiling/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc

⁹³ https://en-wikipedia-org.translate.google/wiki/Yoido_Full_Gospel_Church?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc

ministerial leadership of Nazarene women internationally.⁹⁴ By the end of the 20th century, the percentage of women ordained in the Church of the Nazarene was 6 percent.

The 2013-2017 edition of the *Church of the Nazarene Manual* incorporated Paragraphs 501 and 918 on women's ministry and the use of inclusive language.⁹⁵

However, despite the laudable efforts of our global leadership to lead us to an equal church, and the fact that two women have served on the Board of General Superintendents, Hispanic Nazarene women continue to face visible and invisible barriers that prevent them from gaining equal access to all levels of leadership in the denomination.

Examining the statistical reports between 1990 and 2024⁹⁶ in the six regions, we can observe the following:

- In these 33 years, there has been an increase in the total number of women ordained. The regions that have grown the most are the USA/Canada, which increased from 4.7% to 20.1%; South America, which grew from 3.7% to 22.1%; and Africa, which grew from 3.3% to 19.4%. Asia Pacific from 3.3% to 16.5%; Eurasia from 3.2% to 15.2%, and Mesoamerica—the one that grew the least—from 4.3% to 14.1%.
- As for the growth of women in the total percentage of ordained ministers, Mesoamerica is the region with the greatest lag over these 33 years, with 9.8 points behind 1990. South America added 18.4 and Africa 16.1, being the regions that show the greatest difference. The USA/Canada follows it with 15.4 points; Asia Pacific with 13.2, and Eurasia with 12 points.
- Globally, the percentage of ordained women ministers ranged from 4.5 to 18.9, a 14.4 point increase.
- However, when we compare the percentage of women serving as senior pastors globally in 1990, they were almost nonexistent, 1%, and by 2024, they represent 13.6%. The percentage of women in the position of senior pastor by region, from highest to lowest, is Africa (18.6%), USA/Canada (14.5%), Asia Pacific (13.4%), South America (11.6%), and Eurasia and Mesoamerica (9.9%).

In conclusion, globally, we have not recovered, and we are far from reaching 25% of the number of women ordained at the beginning of the denomination. Although the trend is upwards, since in 2024, among the ministers ordained that year, 31.9% were women, we cannot settle for 18.9% globally. The same applies to the percentage of women who serve in senior pastor positions. Latin America continues to lag behind, especially Mesoamerica, where we are not fully leveraging the full potential of the human resources that women can bring to the mission.

⁹⁴ Promote women's participation in committees and governing bodies, as by 2008 the committees and councils of the Church of the Nazarene were composed of men, including the new committee on the future of the church.

⁹⁵ *Manual Church of the Nazarene 2013-2017*.

⁹⁶ Statistics provided by Laura K. Lance, Research Services, Sr. Programmer Analyst, Church of the Nazarene Global Ministry Center. Email 2 December 2025. With the note that many of the reports they receive from the regions do not report data by gender.

Global Statistics of Ordained Ministers and Senior Pastors 1990⁹⁷

Region	Clergy Database								
	Total Newly Ordained	Women Newly Ordained	Percent	Total Ordained Clergy	Women Ordained Clergy	Percent	Total Senior Pastors	Women Senior Pastors	Percent
Africa	40	3	7,5%	399	13	3,3%	28	-	0,0%
Asia-Pacific	26	-	0,0%	540	18	3,3%	76	-	0,0%
Eurasia	9	-	0,0%	243	6	2,5%	60	3	5,0%
Mesoamerica	86	7	8,1%	842	36	4,3%	53	1	1,9%
South America	21	-	0,0%	382	14	3,7%	14	-	0,0%
USA/Canada	289	26	9,0%	8.990	422	4,7%	3.976	37	0,9%
Total	471	36	7,6%	11.396	509	4,5%	4.207	41	1,0%

Global Ordained Ministers and Senior Pastor Statistics 2024

Region	Clergy Database								
	Total Newly Ordained	Women Newly Ordained	Percent	Total Ordained Clergy	Women Ordained Clergy	Percent	Total Senior Pastors	Women Senior Pastors	Percent
Africa	203	50	24,6%	2.722	527	19,4%	1.251	233	18,6%
Asia-Pacific	109	22	20,2%	2.142	353	16,5%	1.015	136	13,4%
Eurasia	49	7	14,3%	1.276	194	15,2%	587	58	9,9%
Mesoamerica	81	26	32,1%	3.020	425	14,1%	1.335	132	9,9%
South America	206	63	30,6%	2.920	645	22,1%	1.081	125	11,6%
USA/Canada	361	154	42,7%	11.625	2.340	20,1%	3.718	538	14,5%
Total	1.009	322	31,9%	23.705	4.484	18,9%	8.987	1.222	13,6%

Barriers to Women's Involvement in the Missio Ecclesiae

It is evident to any observer the ambivalence between the confession of our identity and the androcentrism reflected in the leadership of our organization. While we have grown in the number of senior pastors and in the number of women ordained each year, the number of women in leadership positions, such as district superintendent, seminary director, or academic vice chancellor, to name a few, remains almost imperceptible. The opening to leadership at higher levels of the organization, such as Area or Country Strategy Coordinator, Regional Director, or Director of Global Ministries, is, in practice, closed to women, with some exceptions, such as Compassionate Ministries, NBI, DCI, etc., where women have been included, always under the leadership of men.

⁹⁷ Op. cit. Statistics provided by Laura K. Lance, Research Services.

The following briefly describes some of these cultural, organizational, and interpersonal barriers. It includes testimonies collected by the author from her students and ministry colleagues from the two Latin American and Hispanic regions of the USA/Canada.

The pastoral profession has been dominated by men throughout history, posing a significant challenge for women. The performance of women in ministry should be based on their femininity, not on adopting masculine forms. However, today, female leadership styles and forms of communication are not valued, and women of character, those who express disagreement, are labeled as rebels and are not recommended for promotion in the organization.

One of the most common barriers in our Latin American context is the delay in the ordination of women by ministerial credential boards composed of men. The author's own experience resembles that of many sisters, who saw their ordination postponed for seven or more years, without cause or explanation, except that "she does not need to be ordained, since she is not a senior pastor."

Another case is that of a woman who is rejected for a position in favor of a man, even though she is the most qualified. Sometimes, without considering the damage to the marital relationship, the position is given to the husband, a decision she is expected to accept with humility, to continue contributing in silence from invisibility, often without receiving economic compensation or recognition for her performance. Nazarene sisters have expressed, "single women are considered, but married women are not, in other words, to be called to ministry and to be married is a curse." Many give up, bury their gifts and their titles, and stop insisting.

At the local church level, women face limitations in accessing the pulpit. More and more women are graduating from our theological seminaries and universities, yet there is very little participation by women in preaching and pastoral ministry teams. This symbolic language evidences distrust in women's intelligence and in the Spirit's ability to lead the church through a female voice, and it minimizes women's spiritual authority in front of the congregation.

Society in Latin America is slowly becoming accustomed to women's leadership (women are excelling in many professions, including politics). However, machismo and violence against women continue to be serious social problems. As a holiness church, we should strive to present the counterculture model of the kingdom, but instead, many women face sexist discrimination in our churches. Gender stereotypes are evident when their contribution to the role of secretaries is limited, they are interrupted in meetings, jokes and misogynistic comments are shared, they are excluded from meetings where strategic decisions are made, they are required to do the same volume of work as men, without considering their role as mothers, among others.

Among us, some pastors and leaders do not feel comfortable with women on the team; in some cases, they impose rules on dress, regulations on interactions between men and women, such as traveling in the car, talking behind closed doors, or installing glass doors in the office, among others. With these regulations, we send a mixed message. Wesleyans believe in friendship between a man and a woman as an expression of the *agape* love that dwells in our hearts. We understand that the Holy Spirit guides us in a process of restoration, making us more and more like Jesus Christ, which involves growing in self-control in all areas of our lives (self-

control). We need to treat the issue of sexuality with greater responsibility, sincerity, and seriousness, as one more area of life that needs to be consecrated and sanctified.⁹⁸

In Conclusion

As we reflect on the *missio ecclesiae*, we must recognize that as a denomination, we need to be consistent with our historical and theological identity. Today, the new generations, especially the young people of Generation Z, are returning en masse to the Bible and the Christian faith.⁹⁹ Recovering and empowering women's workforce and gifts is not an option; it is our opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past, serving in the *missio Dei* as egalitarian teams, where we allow the Spirit to put together the organizational chart.

Proposals for Reflection

1. Egalitarian theology must be affirmed, taught, and lived.

- What would be the best strategies for training Nazarene pastors in our biblical-theological position, especially for countering arguments from patriarchal theology?
- What means are available to us to train Nazarene people (from children to the elderly) in our historical, theological, and gifted ministry to become a church that models equal integration by transforming culture rather than having culture impose paternalistic formats on the organization?

2. Take firm steps to accelerate change.

- In your ecclesial context, is there evidence of sexism and discrimination in work teams? What actions should we implement to eliminate the barriers that hinder women's ministerial development?
- What can men in leadership positions (which are the key) do to support women with ministerial calling?
- What is currently shaping our missional strategy: serious biblical reflection or social pressure?
- How can we avoid the delay in women's ordination?
- What would be the consequences of continuing to ordain men who reject the egalitarian view, or electing them to Ministerial Credentials Boards, or to some position of authority in the organization?
- What can we do to actively recruit women for vacant positions in the organization and evaluate candidates based on their aptitudes without gender bias influencing their selection?

⁹⁸ Research from Barna 2015 shows that 67% of pastors have consumed pornography. https://www-barna-com.translate.goog/research/pastors-pornography-use/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=es&_x_tr_hl=es&_x_tr_pto=tc.

⁹⁹ Barna Group confirmed that faith in Jesus has grown among young people, especially Gen Z, reaching 66% of U.S. young adults surveyed, but is quickly spreading as a global phenomenon. https://es-us.noticias.yahoo.com/generaci%C3%B3n-z-vuelve-religiosa-crece-061948961.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAANgvy1t24K86kTdWdYRXWgSW3g2v8jQYDYGX6M84BtTe130sB5c2nx1ZI7LgpmbY0zbYVGi35eV5sgm8tjgXhrEgZKufCLY-BHZuLph-sdSq8-iaVNKrb3-gl7NBf0JNmGJAENeNK1zASIZMs5ApLZNYitAVxRqW4li_UsqZOdDZA.