

# Wheeling Right On

## First Lutheran Woman Pastor

Minneapolis — (RNS) — The friends of Barbara Andrews were in a mood to celebrate.

After she was ordained in her wheelchair as the first woman pastor in the American Lutheran Church (ALC), one of them shouted "Right on!" and they all applauded from their pews.

Miss Andrews, 34, a cerebral palsy victim since infancy, then officiated at her first service of Holy Communion during which the overflow congregation, accompanied by guitar, sang folk songs.

They improvised the song, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," to include a verse about "He's Got Barbara Andrews in His Hands."

The two-hour service at the small suburban Edina Community Lutheran church was pitched to the theme of celebration.

Miss Andrews, wheeled into the sanctuary in a place facing the chancel, clapped her hands with a choir of 12 girls as they sang the opening anthem, "All you people, clap your hands."

The preacher for the service, the Rev. James Siefkes, a long-time friend of Miss Andrews, said, "We are here to celebrate the ordination of Barbara Andrews who came wheeling through the door of the ordained ministry," signaling the end of restrictions against women in the clergy of the ALC.

He paid tribute to Miss Andrews' "persistence and struggle" in "standing against the odds of tradition, working her way into a man's world, and her confinement to a wheelchair."

These things, he told Miss Andrews, "speak loudly of your persistent love of the church. We celebrate them today."

For the ordination ceremony, Miss Andrews' wheelchair was lifted up into the chancel so that she partially faced the congregation.


The Rev. Arvid Dixen, pastor of the Edina church whom she will assist, asked her four traditional questions of ordination, including whether she was "ready to take upon you this holy ministry and faithfully to serve therein?"

To each question, Miss Andrews responded with a firm, "Yes, by the help of God."

Then the five participating clergymen — Mr. Siefkes, Mr. Dixen, Dr. Rogness, the Rev.

Vernon Bittner and the Rev. Wilmer Friesth — laid their hands on Miss Andrews' hand, formally ordaining her.

Miss Andrews said she regards the Christian ministry as "the hardest job around—both challenging and frightening. I really need your help. If you take my ministry seriously, then you have affirmed your own, because you might be asked to serve in my stead."

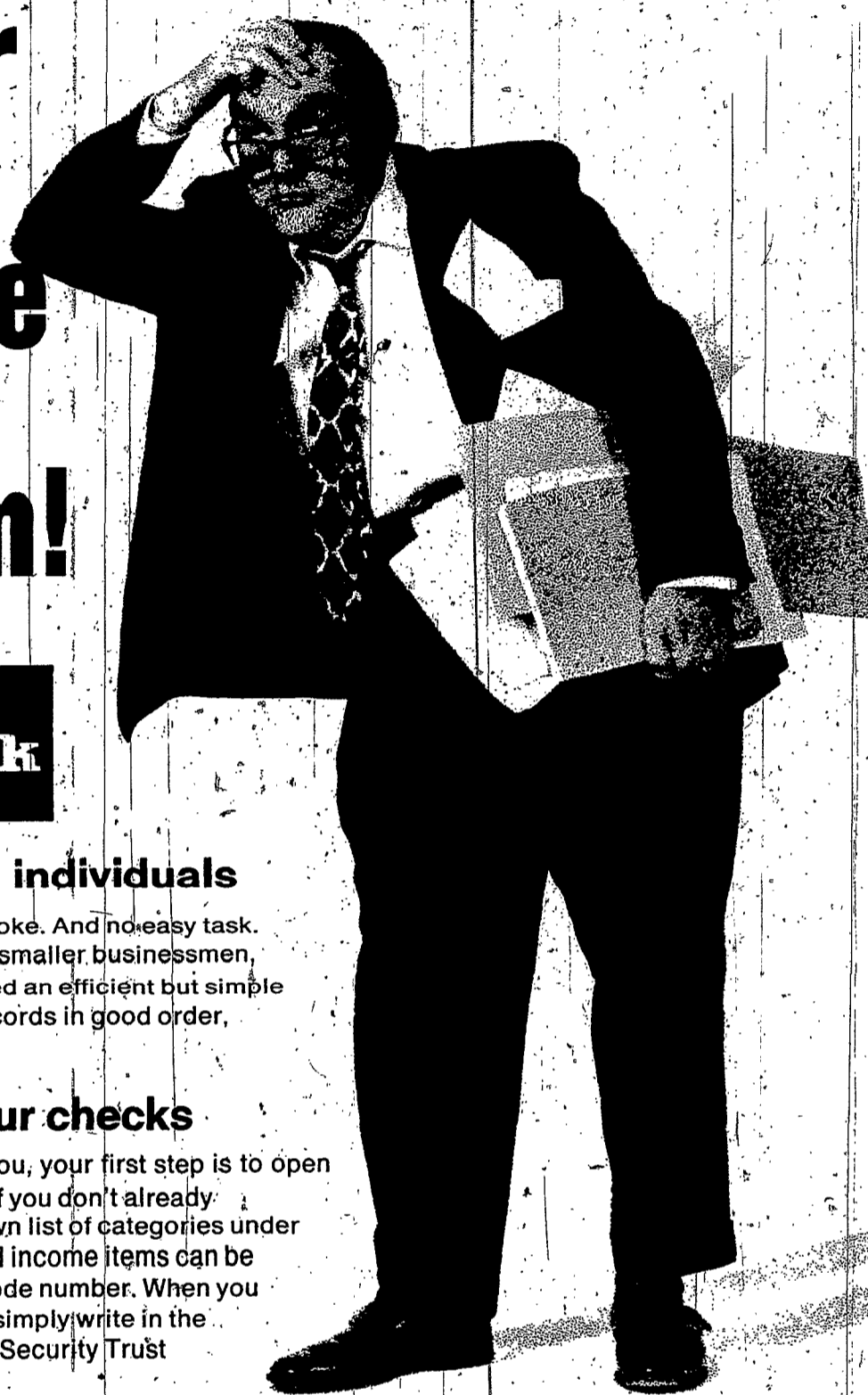


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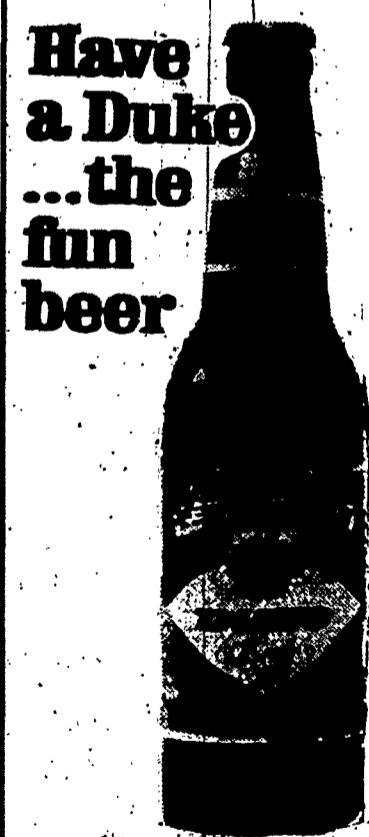
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