

A New Era Is Dawning For Women in U.S. Church

The status and role of women in U.S. religion are on the rise.

American women are being chosen for high national, in some cases international, administrative positions:

Claire Randall, a Texan and United Presbyterian laywoman, is general secretary-elect of the National Council of Churches, a Protestant-Orthodox organization.

Jean Eckstein of Iowa City was elected in October as president of the National Council of Catholic Laity.

Dr. Marion Kelleran of Alexandria, Va., was chosen last July as chair-person of the Anglican Consultative Council, a global advisory body that includes the Episcopal Church.

Conservative Judaism in the U.S. in September changed its regulations to allow women to be counted in the minyan, the quorum of 10 or more adult Jews required for communal worship.

Women are more numerous in chaplaincies, including military and hospital assignments.

The Rev. Florence Dianne Pohlman, a United Presbyterian, became the first woman U.S. Navy chaplain last July; in September, the Rev. Lorraine Kay Potter, ordained by the American Baptist Churches, was sworn in as the first woman Air Force chaplain.

The Rev. Faith Cornwall, a United Methodist and chief chaplain at Tennessee's Central State mental hospital, is one of a growing force of lay and clerical women involved in hospital and prison chaplaincies.

Women are more prominent in religion-related and seminary education.

Nuns are assuming top leadership in several Roman Catholic parochial school systems. For example, Sister Elinor Ford, OP, is superintendent of schools in the Archdiocese of New York. In Rochester, Sister James Lynch, SSJ, is coordinator of educational services.

Charismatics List Meetings

The following is a list of meetings and Masses sponsored by area Catholics in the Charismatic Renewal.

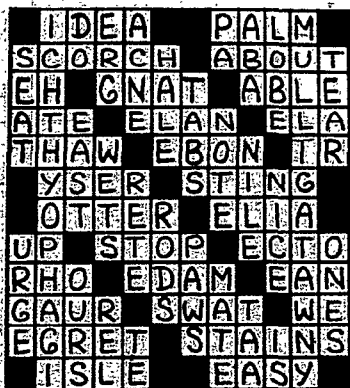
Pentecostal meetings are held on Mondays at the homes of: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dunning, 159 Chestnut Ridge Rd., Chili Center; Mr. and Mrs. Klaus Schulz, 156 N. Greece Rd., N. Greece.

On Tuesdays, Mr. and Mrs. William Buechel, 3681 Lake Avenue, Rochester; Mrs. John Sherry, 15 Starlite Dr., Rochester; Mr. and Mrs. Warren Lynch, Hamlin-Clarkson Town Line Rd., Hamlin.

On Wednesdays, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mahaney, 479 Covewood Blvd., W. Webster.

On Thursdays, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Hauser, 1570 Culver Rd., Rochester; St. Charles Borromeo Church, Rochester.

Crossword Answer



The Rev. Patricia Budd Kepler, a United Presbyterian, is the new director of ministerial studies at the Harvard University Divinity School.

Ten women were among the 60 administrators attending the late October meeting of the Midwest Association of Theological Schools. Sister Joan A. Range of St. Louis University Divinity School became the first woman on the association's board and was subsequently elected secretary-treasurer.

The visibility of women in religion is increasing apart from the issue of the ordination of women, although that continues as a thorny issue in Catholicism and Anglicanism.

In early October, the triennial General Convention of the Episcopal Church failed to approve moves that would have permitted women priests. The denomination ordains women to a lower level of ministry and the relatively strong vote for women priests at the convention gave supporters cause to hope for a liberalizing of the canons in three years.

The Anglican Consultative Council, which holds no legislating power for the world's 47 million Anglicans, sees no reason to bar women from the priesthood and it suggests that each of the autonomous Anglican Churches make its own decision.

While the pre-convention Episcopal debate on women priests claimed wide attention, there was almost no fanfare last June when the Reformed Church in America broke with a 345-year-old precedent and opened the way for possible ordination of women.

Joyce Stedge, 47, a mother of six who lives in Pearl River, N.Y., is the first woman in the Reformed denomination to receive a license to preach. She anticipates ordination.

Despite the assertion of British author Joan Morris that women held jurisdiction equal to that of bishops in pre-16th century Catholicism, advocates of women's ordination in the

On Saturday evening, Mr. and Mrs. John Donnelly, 9 Ellicot St., Rochester; Mr. and Mrs. James Reid, 113 Amity St., Spencerport; Mr. and Mrs. Donald Wollschleger, 350 N. Winton Rd., Rochester.

Weekly prayer meetings are held at St. Peter and Paul Church at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and at St. Theodore Church at 8 p.m. on Mondays.

Mass is celebrated at 8 p.m. every First Friday at St. Lawrence Church and at 7:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of the month at St. Charles Borromeo Church.

Nazareth Alumnae Plan Travelogue

The Nazareth College Alumnae Association will sponsor a travelogue at the Nazareth College Arts Center on Wednesday, Nov. 14, beginning at 8 p.m.

The speaker, Kaye Lechleitner, will describe her trip to California, including such areas as Southern California, coastal regions, Disneyland, Yosemite Valley, Lake Tahoe and the Sequoia National Park. Her program will be illustrated with color slides.

The chairwoman for the event is Mrs. William R. Sullivan and her committee includes Mrs. James McMahon, reception; Mrs. John Connally, tickets; Mrs. John Conidine, refreshments; and Joan Ewing, publicity.

Catholic Church see little likelihood of winning Vatican or popular backing in the near future.

A Commission on the Role of Women in Church and Society, approved by Pope Paul, is not considering the possibility of ordaining women.

Yet the panel is exploring ways to expand the involvement of women in the Church, and the pontiff does not seem to have closed the door on those who disagree with the Vatican's views on women's ordination. Sister Maria Teresa MacLeod, OP, a nun who reportedly finds no biblical or doctrinal objections to women priests, has been named to the Vatican Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

Sentiment favoring women priests, however, is strong in some segments of the Catholic Church, and interest in considering priesthood in light of women's demands for "equality in ministry" is even more widespread.

"We're just beginning to ask the question, 'What is Christian priesthood?'" Sister Agnes Cunningham of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Ill., said recently.

"We've been operating out of the Judaic priesthood which had no place for women," added the nun, the first woman to become a director of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

The women's liberation movement has undoubtedly had impact on religious structures, making them more receptive to the leadership and voices of women.

Assessment of individual qualities was behind the election of Ms. Randall to the top National Council of Churches post, of Mrs. Eckstein as president of the Catholic laity council and Dr. Kelleran as chairperson of the Anglican Consultative Council.

"Tokenism" does not appear to have been involved in any of these choices. Each of the three women, in their own areas of activity, has had long years of experience and tested ability.

Ms. Randall, who becomes the world's foremost woman ecumenist when she succeeds Dr. R. J. Edwin Espy as National Council general secretary on Jan. 1, 1974, is known as a "tough" administrator with reconciling spirit.

Women often bring broad spectrums of concerns — and high moral values, according to Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston — to public and religious life.

In taking the helm of the National Council of Catholic Laity, Mrs. Eckstein said the organization in the future must be concerned with persons, families, communities, the world and the Church. "We must listen to everyone, inside and outside the Catholic Church, and get to know the pulse of the people," she said.

Dr. Georgia Harkness, the theologian now over 80, is among those who feel that not enough progress is being made fast enough. She links the attainment of equality for women with the maturity of the laity. Dr. Harkness agrees with a statement by Francis O. Ayres:

"The church needs to recover a sense of its wholeness, of being the people of God in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female — in other words, neither basic nor primary distinctions."

Dr. Harkness believes that day may be coming.



Debbie Schellman, the only American and one of 10 women named to a papal commission studying the role of women in society and the Church, in her home in Atlanta as she readies for her November trip to the Vatican. Miss Schellman, 21, is a graduate of Marymount Junior College in Arlington, Va., and her parents have long been active in the Church.

When she goes to Rome for the commission's first meeting Nov. 15-18, Miss Schellman will be joined by 9 other women and 15 men from varying walks of life. The youthful delegate says she expects the initial session to be more of a "get-acquainted type of thing" and an establishing of "thought flow" to be followed by more intensive meetings during 1974. [RNS]

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