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national development. The Revolution of 1986 has opened the eyes of Filipinos, and perhaps other peoples of the world, to the fact that it is possible to transcend our petty squabbings, factions, class and sexual prejudices and other dividing lines to a unity of spirit, heart and soul to bring about freedom and democracy in a troubled land.

In the Philippines, the women made a distinctive contribution towards bringing that about. From the baby girl suckling her mother's breast, to the midwife, to the high-society grandmother, to a girl peanut vendor, to the nun facing the tanks, to the resplendent icons of Mary, to the brave women of media and election computers, and to Corazon Aquino herself.

Dave and I retraced our steps to EDSA in February, 1987, exactly a year after the revolution. The women were there again, standing side by side with the men. The old and the young. Even the lame and the blind. All jubilantly and courteously jostling each other for vantage points to see the on-going parade. Again we melded together, became one happy family as a nation and as a people, no longer to oust a tyrant but to celebrate our newly-founded freedom and power. As a Christian and as a woman, it was both a sobering and exhilarating experience to me.

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano is a writer and poet from Silang, Cavite, the Philippines. p. 348

Indispensable But Marginalised: Women in the Australian Church

Rosamund Dalziell

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The Australian church would not exist without women's participation and ministry, but their contribution has never received the recognition it deserves. Indeed women have been marginalised in many areas of the church's life. Declining church attendance by women as they enter the paid workforce must force the church to reassess its assumptions about women and its own future. Loss of female volunteers to the paid workforce is making the church aware of how much its activity has depended upon women. Women themselves are confronting the church by calling for equitable participation in decision-making, church structures, mission, workshop and in the ordained ministry. The World Council of Churches has acknowledged the problems faced by women in the church by launching the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, from 1988.

Women who have been misunderstood, marginalised or in some cases exploited by the church include women in the paid workforce, women working at home, women called to the ministry, missionaries, single women, and even women married to ministers or to candidates for ordination. Their opportunities for ministry have been restricted, their spiritual experience rejected, their voluntary work taken for granted and their right to participate in decision-making denied. The church is slowly changing, but more slowly

and painfully than wider society, which observes the struggle with irony, complacency or incomprehension.

WOMEN ARE TAKING INITIATIVES

Australian women in the church are becoming more articulate about their place in it and in calling for change. New women's organisations arose in the 1980s. The Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW), founded as a lobby group for women's ordination in the Anglican church, provides support for women seeking ordination and explores issues in feminist theology. Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) was formed within the Catholic Church at the **p. 349** initiative of superiors of religious orders—nuns in particular—to raise the consciousness of Catholic women about Christian feminist issues. MOW and WATAC hold regular joint conferences in conjunction with another new, Sydney-based group, Women-Church which publishes a journal of the same name. There are similar women's groups in the United Church. Women outside the church are becoming increasingly interested in spiritual issues: the National Women's Conference (Canberra, October 1990) included eight sessions on women's spirituality.

Women are publishing books which communicate their concerns to the wider church. Muriel Porter, church historian and journalist, gives a powerful and detailed analysis of the Anglican debate about women's ordination in *Women and the Church*,¹ also documenting the achievements of other protestant churches in this area, often overlooked. Barbara Field, an educator, presents the stories and thoughts of ten Anglican women deacons in *Fit for this Office: Women and Ordination*.² Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmey Jones edited a series of women's and men's stories about the role of women in the church, in *Opening the Cage*.³ Janet Nelson and Linda Walter, in *Women of Spirit*, bring together feminist concerns and the church by looking at the question 'What is women's place?', with God, in Scripture, in the twentieth century, in the paid/unpaid workforce, in her body, in the church and in the ordained ministry.⁴ Eileen Diesendorf has examined the reasons why many intelligent and committed Christian women become disaffected, in her study *Why some bright women leave the church*.⁵

Women in the Uniting Church initiated a national conference on women, on the theme 'The Church Made Whole' (January 1990). The organisers, determined to publish the entire proceedings of this conference, did so in a book edited by Elizabeth Wood Ellem.⁶ Women in other denominations too are being heard. Merolyn Coombs **p. 350** wrote in *National Outlook* on the 'agony' over women's ordination among Seventh-day Adventists.⁷

¹ Porter, Muriel (1989) *Women in the Church: The Great Ordination Debate in Australia*, Penguin Australia.

² Field, Barbara (ed) (1989) *Fit for This Office—Women and Ordination*, Collins Dove, Melbourne.

³ Franklin, Margaret Ann and Sturmey Jones, Ruth (1987) *Opening the Cage: Stories of Church and Gender*, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

⁴ Nelson, Janet and Walter, Linda (1989) *Women of Spirit—Women's place in Church and society*, St. Mark's, Canberra.

⁵ Diesendorf, Eileen (undated) *Why Some Bright Women Leave the Church* (unpublished). (Summary by John Harris in *Zadok Perspectives*, March 1988.)

⁶ Ellem, E.W. (ed), *The Church Made Whole*, National Conference on Women in the United Church 1990, David Lovell, Melbourne.

⁷ Coombs, M. 'Seventh-Day Adventists Agonise over Women's Ordination', *National Outlook*, July 1990, pp.21-3.

Sharon Kirk presented a research paper on women and the church to the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship.⁸ The Australian Council of Churches publishes a national ecumenical women's journal, *Voices from the Silence*.

Women's communication skills are essential if their authentic voice is to be heard in the church. A recent Australian publication entitled *The Bible and Women's Ministry: An Australian Dialogue* does not include one woman among the eight contributors.⁹ This is not atypical of the way in which some male theologians debate theological issues about women while excluding women from the debate.

Women are now enrolling in theological colleges in increasing numbers. Churches will have to decide how to encourage the gifts of a significant number of theologically trained women among the laity. This trend is particularly striking, given the obstacles facing women who study theology. Few opportunities exist in Australia for women to study theology at universities, which would make them eligible for government tertiary allowances, and give them access to campus-based childcare. So women must organise childcare and negotiate class attendance and study times with their families. Women who are not candidates for the ordained ministry must pay their own fees and also accept that their studies are unlikely to lead to paid employment. It is significant that a number of women approach theology from a background of church history.

The laity as a group, both women and men, are disadvantaged by the *clericalisation* of theology in Australia. The absence of theology from university curricula has meant that theological education has been linked to the training of the clergy in exclusively male theological colleges. But this may be slowly changing: Flinders University has set an important precedent and recent changes in higher education could mean that all organisations offering theological qualifications at university level may need to create links with a tertiary institution. Such a development could be helpful to women. [p. 351](#)

WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Legislation bans discrimination against women in most spheres of Australian society. Affirmative action, equal opportunity and inclusive language are widely accepted as normal. Much of this has simply passed the church by, sometimes through lack of attention, sometimes through deliberate resistance. The Uniting Church appears to be the only denomination that has attempted to come to grips with some of these issues. Nevertheless, the social changes are so profound that no woman, man, institution or denomination can remain unaffected by them.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Two contrasting theological frameworks are applied to women in the Australian Protestant churches. One approach emphasises Paul's teaching on church order and headship in the family as a basis for male authority in the church and for limiting women's ministry to particular areas. Restrictions on women's ministry and participation in leadership vary between and within denominations where this theology is influential. In its extreme manifestations, women are not permitted to preach, teach, take a leadership role in worship or church administration. But in general, women are still allowed to do

⁸ Kirk, Sharon (1987) *Women and the Church*, Christian Brethren Research Fellowship, Brisbane (unpublished).

⁹ Nichols, Alan (ed) (1990) *The Bible and Women's Ministry, an Australian Dialogue*, Acom Press, Canberra.

some of these things. The operative words are ‘permit’ and ‘allow’, which indicate that women themselves are not making the decisions which concern them. The last frontiers are preaching and ordination. This theological approach is usually characterised by a rejection of the feminist movement, and promotion of the stereotyped nuclear family as an ideal, with the wife as full-time home-maker.

The other theological approach takes as its foundation text [Galatians 3:28](#), ‘*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*’

Men and women are considered to be equal in God’s eyes. The ordination of women is supported on the grounds that both male and female are needed to present the image of God to the world, because God transcends male and female and both are included in God’s nature and being.¹⁰ The use of inclusive language in liturgy, scripture and hymns is also advocated. [p. 352](#)

The Salvation Army maintains the principle of the spiritual headship of the man within the family while according equal training and standing to men and women as officers of the Corps. An Australian woman, Eva Burrows, held one of the two most senior positions in Australia, and is now head of the Salvation Army internationally.

WOMEN AND THE ORDAINED MINISTRY—THE ANGLICAN DEBATE

The Anglican debate about the ordination of women has been prolonged, public and painful.

Women with a strong sense of vocation to the priesthood have been confused and hurt when told that women are simply not *called*. This has been the conviction of many in the Anglican Church, despite the fact that women are ordained as ministers in other parts of the Anglican Communion, including New Zealand, Hong Kong, the United States and Canada, as well as in the Uniting Church of Australia. A majority of lay people and clergy support women’s ordination, but the form of the constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia makes change difficult to achieve and easily blocked by a minority.

Muriel Porter gives a full account of the ordination of women as deacons in dioceses throughout Australia and ends at the time of the death of David Penman, Archbishop of Melbourne and a strong advocate of women’s ordination. At that point the debate appeared to have come to a standstill. Women deacons had to endure seeing their male colleagues ordained as priests while they were not. Lay people who looked forward to women’s ordination became frustrated almost beyond endurance and some left the church.

On 31 August 1990, the Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Owen Dowling, announced his intentions to ordain women to the priesthood on 24 February 1991, in a full and carefully prepared statement covering all the main arguments and other considerations. The Synod received the bishop’s decision with a standing ovation and subsequent media coverage was extensive. Within days the Archbishop of Sydney, Donald Robinson, expressed his displeasure and also his intention to contest the legal validity of Owen Dowling’s decision.

During the next few weeks, one diocese after another—Bathurst, Tasmania, North Queensland and less expected, Adelaide—either cleared the way or made significant progress towards ordaining women to the priesthood.

¹⁰ Dowling, Owen. Presidential Address to the Thirty-Seventh Synod of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Anglican Church of Australia, 31 August-2 September 1990.

Owen Dowling has stated that he will reluctantly await the answers p. 353 of the church's legal tribunal although he is concerned about the effects of legal wrangling on the church. Meanwhile, the church and over a hundred and fifty women deacons throughout Australia await the next development.

WOMEN AND MISSION

The self-sacrificing work of women in the church's welfare activities has always existed. Hundreds served faithfully in the Salvation Army and in home missions and charities of other churches such as the Sydney City Mission, the various Wesley Missions and St Vincent de Paul. In normal church life however, a women's ministry was limited to parish visiting, women's organisations such as Mothers' Union and Women's Guilds, and teaching Sunday School. Even deaconesses were severely restricted in their opportunities for public ministry. It is no wonder that so many turned to the mission field as the only real opportunity for active service.¹¹

Muriel Porter makes the point forcefully that the Australian church actually exported its women to serve overseas, while denying women opportunities for ministry in Australia. *'The major missionary efforts simply would not have been possible without them.'*¹² And even within missionary organisations, women's gifts were not always acknowledged nor were they always listened to or nurtured as one would expect.

Within Australia, women also played a crucial role in the establishment and work of the Bush Church Aid Society, which was set up to provide an evangelical ministry to people living in remote bush areas. Itinerant deaconesses conducted services, preached and provided practical caring. Women also worked as hostel sisters and nurses. In Australian missions such as the Australian Inland Mission, Aborigines Inland Mission and the United Aborigines Mission, the life and work of dedicated women like Annie Lock, Ruby Hyde and Delia Rutter have become legendary.

WHY EMPLOYED WOMEN ARE NOT AT CHURCH

Although the church in Australia needs to relate more effectively to the concerns of both women and men in the work-place, one cannot p. 354 assume that the reasons for men's disaffection apply equally to working women, or that the latter simply absorb the non-religious ethics of the workplace. Women whose qualifications and abilities are affirmed in a non-discriminatory way at work are more likely to perceive the discrepancies between changing social attitudes to women and the slow pace of change, or even resistance, in the church. For example, numbers of women have left the Anglican church because of its failure to endorse women's ministry by ordaining women as priests.

But the main reason may well be that women are just plain busy and value their weekends as family time. Numerous studies also show that in marriages where each partner works full-time the woman still carries out far more than 50 percent of the unpaid household work.

The church might do well to address changing patterns of work within the family and the roles and needs of family members. Women in full-time work are likely to have less time than men for church-related activities. *The Second Shift*, a recent publication about

¹¹ Judd, S. & Gable, K. (1987) *Sydney Anglicans, A History of the Diocese*, Anglican Information Office, Sydney p.217.

¹² Porter, p.53.

women's work, explains how many women now work two daily shifts, the first in paid employment and the second, unpaid domestic work in the home.¹³

A significant number of women in full-time work are single parents, reflecting changing family patterns in Australia. Although many cases may be found where churches have offered valuable pastoral care to single parents, it is nevertheless true that the prevailing emphasis on the church as a family and on the theological importance of the family can be discouraging or oppressive to those who have experienced family breakdown. It is also discouraging to single people without children, who are also among women in the paid workforce.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH DECISION-MAKING

Australian women did not gain access to decision-making structures in Protestant churches overnight. In the Anglican church, Perth was the first diocese to allow women to be on Synod, followed by Melbourne in 1924. Women were allowed to be on parish councils in Sydney in 1921 and in Melbourne in 1954, although their church attendance had been much higher than that of men since at least the 1880s. They could not be Synod representatives in Sydney until 1978. Muriel Porter was the first woman elected to the Melbourne Diocesan Council, in 1985. **P. 355**

Today, women's participation rates are much greater at the parish level than in the higher echelons of church decision-making. Women are generally well-represented on parish councils and committees, and are increasingly appointed or elected as church wardens. In the Uniting Church, women's representation on Councils of Elders has increased, from 35 percent in 1977 to 45 Percent in 1985. It is less uncommon to find that the parish treasurer is female, but women are still under-represented on property and finance committees. At the higher levels of church organisation, the decrease in women's participation is striking.

In the Baptist Church, women cannot be members of the Baptist Lay Preachers Society, although the first woman, Marita Munro, was ordained in the Baptist Union of Victoria in 1978. Women hold very few positions in Baptist departments and organisations, according to a paper presented to the Baptist Social Justice Group in 1988. The paper called for changes which would encourage greater participation by women.

It is painfully clear that women's participation in the church structures of Australian churches is far from adequate. Moreover, very few are on the staff of theological colleges or in leadership positions in para-church organisations.

WOMEN AT HOME

'Many Christian books on the family almost idolise the home', writes Valerie Griffiths.¹⁴ Robert Banks includes the family in his list of substitute religions in Australia and describes the Australian home as a secular idol.¹⁵ A more realistic picture of Western women's relationships to the home is also given by Valerie Griffiths:

There is widespread concern about the stress on homes today, but much is aggravated by clinging to old cultural patterns. The industrial revolution, the separation of home from a

¹³ Hochschild, Arlie (1990) *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, Piatkus Press, UK.

¹⁴ In *Why Christians Disagree: The Role Of Women*, ed Shirley Lees, IVP, Leicester, p.85.

¹⁵ Banks, Robert (1987) *All The Business of Life*, Albatross, Australia, New Zealand & USA, pp.86-7.

man's place of work, and the size of the modern nuclear family, all serve to isolate mothers at home. Cut off from the stimulus and variety of society, they spend their time with other mothers and children ... They are better educated and trained than ever before in history, and when they get depressed and restless with hours of routine housework, they are accused of 'failing to accept their biblical role'.¹⁶ p. 356

The churches' solution for mothers at home with young children has often been to establish peer support groups for Bible Study or fellowship. There is a significant increase in organisations such as 'Women Aglow' and 'Know Your Bible' which offer women opportunities for Bible study and fellowship within a conservative evangelical framework. These groups provide friendship and social contact, but they are limited. In practical support, when a woman is ill, another mother with family responsibilities will have difficulty finding the time to assist or be unable to leave her own children. A much broader based support network is needed. Women at home may hunger for friendship and interests outside their peer group. They may wish to exercise a ministry in the church that is not related specifically to mothers and young children, yet all too often that is where they are kindly but firmly directed. The minister and congregation should not simply assume that the 'young mothers group' takes care of all individuals in that category.

Women who are at home without young children also have special needs. They may have older children, may be caring for elderly relatives or sick family members, may be single, widowed or divorced. They may wish to enter or re-enter the workforce but lack the skills or confidence. They may be looking for meaningful activity and friendship to fill their time or be fully extended and desperate for a break. They may be caught in a poverty trap, unable to afford not to be at home.

A serious pastoral challenge for the churches is the mental health of women at home. Their self-esteem is often low, and a relatively high number of women at home are dependent on minor tranquillisers, and '*are more likely to suffer from depression than women who work outside the home*'.¹⁷ We have already explored some of the contributing factors, but others include community attitudes which denigrate the contribution of women at home, and unrealistic and demeaning portrayals of women by the media. The church could have a role in speaking out on this issue, as the Government cannot legislate for change despite clearly expressed concern. But as long as the church fails to accept women as equal to men in the sight of God, society will not listen. The ACC Commission on the Status of Women has done some work in this area, but has found that the churches' depiction of women in Christian publications is quite distorted.

As we have seen, churches are lagging behind the wider society in changing institutionally and attitudinally towards women. So we stand p. 357 on shaky ground if we seek to influence the community. But as we work for healthy change within the church we can also direct our energies and resources to pastoral needs. The ministry of women both lay and ordained, as well as those in religious orders, can be of great help to women in distress.

WORKING WOMEN WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Whether the church likes it or not, women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers, and this will have an impact on the church's activities. For families under

¹⁶ Lees, p.82.

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1978, quoted in Nelson & Walters, p.76.

economic pressure, two incomes may be essential, while for others the woman may decide to work for other reasons. Couples are increasingly assuming that their family lifestyle will be based on two incomes. Although it may be appropriate for churches to raise issues of affluence and consumerism, it is not helpful simply to be judgemental about women's motivation for working without looking at broader issues in the family and society.

We have already seen how women's church attendance declines when they enter the workforce full-time. Another development is the diminishing pool of volunteer workers. Christian and non-Christian organisations alike find it harder to recruit volunteers, as more women seek paid employment. Churches as well as school canteens are feeling the pinch. Many churches may need to reassess their priorities. Professional cleaning and secretarial assistance may be required. Flower arranging may disappear. Women's Bible-Study groups may need an evening as well as a day-time option, as 'Women Aglow' has recognised.

The increase in numbers of house-churches and home fellowship groups with little or no ties to the institutional church may be linked to this trend. These groups have flexible meeting times, rather than the standard Sunday morning service, have no plant to maintain or complex administration and thus fewer jobs to be done by busy people.

Church attendance on Sunday mornings can prevent Sunday from being a day of rest for working women or men. Catholic churches have begun to acknowledge the need for more options by scheduling a Saturday evening mass. The needs of working parents can be viewed by the church as a creative opportunity for ministry rather than another step in its decline. One result of women working is children's increased participation in after-school activities. Many branches of organisations such as the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Friendly Society have had an upsurge in numbers (as have secular organisations like p. 358 Girl Guides and Scouts). Weekday after-school 'clubs' run by churches are proving very successful. Holiday programmes with both recreational and Christian teaching components have been popular in the United States and some Australian churches are becoming involved in this area. Initiatives taken by churches in the provision of child-care for working parents have been greatly appreciated. Creativity is required when churches seek to staff these programmes, as the women who might have volunteered are now often the clients.

WOMEN MARRIED TO MINISTERS

It is natural to expect that women married to ministers would, of all people, be valued and nurtured by the church, but this has not always been the case. Extraordinary expectations have been laid on them, with very little pastoral care.

It should not be necessary to call for sensitivity and support from the church for ministers' wives in their difficult task. But women married to ministers are increasingly trying to clarify their role, with varying degrees of support. Some have prepared themselves for ordination or other ministries in their own right. In the Uniting Church a number of married couples who are both ordained exercise team ministries. Some women freely accept partnership in ministry with their husband without any special recognition. Others decide to keep a certain distance from their husband's work and parish involvement. Unconscious expectations of a minister are hard to challenge, but it is important for parishioners to support their minister and family, whatever model is chosen.

WOMEN IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

'Religious women are the yeast in the ferment of change in religious life', concludes Turner's survey of men and women in religious life.¹⁸ Since Vatican II, changes in the Catholic church have deeply affected almost all aspects of life in religious communities. Prior to this, *'abiding by the rules was the name of the game'*, conformity was important and under the vow of obedience, the superior's decision was absolute.¹⁹ By the late 1970s, most sisters were wearing informal clothes, had a personal money allowance and often lived in small communities in suburban homes. Enclosure regulations had been P. 359 discarded and the convent routine of set prayers replaced by more flexible prayer times worked out by small communities or by individuals themselves.

Many sisters, especially some of the elderly, found it difficult to adapt to these changes. *'We were more secure before the changes; we knew exactly what we should do.'*²⁰ Despite some concerns about loss of identity, the new freedom and flexibility were welcomed. The sisters particularly appreciated moves towards a consultative approach to decision-making. Personal friendships are no longer discouraged. With more autonomy about individual ministries sisters are less willing to accept transfers without discussion.

Religious women felt that they related more effectively to lay people now that their lifestyles were less obviously distinct. They were concerned about hurts inflicted on lay people, often women, by the institutional church. They understood that the gulf was widening between the institutional church and the laity, many of whom were no longer prepared to accept unquestioningly the dictates of the church. Religious women also felt that they should learn to speak out on social issues, although this had not been their traditional role.

The future of religious life for women is uncertain, as few young women are entering religious congregations. Of those sisters surveyed, 72 percent remained fully committed and happy with their situation, while a small number were re-examining their vocation. Many committed sisters were finding new and creative areas for ministry as they struggled to work out their identity in a climate of change.

CONCLUSION

Awareness of women's issues in the church has forged new alliances that cut across traditional boundaries. Anglican and Catholic women have met together at combined MOW/WATAC conferences. Clergy and laity have combined forces either to support or oppose women's ordination. Some conservative evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics have forced an alliance to oppose women's ordination while liberals, progressive evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics find themselves in agreement. Religious sisters and lay workers are working together creatively for change in the Catholic church. Christian women are entering into dialogue with secular feminists. Of course, divisions remain even between women themselves. P. 360

Although the institutional church has wounded many women, it differs from other human institutions in that it has Christ's healing power within it. Its divisions may be public and damaging, but the Holy Spirit is working in new ways. Women are ministering to each other and where men support women in their vocation and quest for justice, healing is also experienced in the Christian community. Justice and reconciliation will open the way for healing at the institutional level. Even where major differences of

¹⁸ Turner, p.184.

¹⁹ Turner, p.89.

²⁰ Turner, p.73.

opinion exist, there are many cases where the church holds these together in tension without division for the sake of the Gospel.

The church as the body of Christ has the role of maintaining an image of Christian community, or even as modelling the Kingdom of God to the world. With respect to women, its failure to do this is conspicuous. But Christ's body was also broken, and if, as the church, we accept our brokenness, we are identifying with the brokenness of the world instead of putting ourselves on a pedestal. Women, who have been marginalised, and often exploited, whether in the church or outside, have special insights into the experience of those whom society has rejected, those with whom Jesus himself identified. Men who support issues of justice for women in the church sometimes find themselves experiencing the same kind of hostility.

The path ahead may be difficult, but it need not lack the Christian virtues of love, forgiveness, self-denial, humility and service. It is only as we ourselves seek to be more Christ-like that we will be instruments of healing and change for all of God's people. It is only in the imitation of Christ that the church will be seen to transcend the old barriers of race, class and gender.

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Married Couples in Clergy Partnerships: Opportunities and Problems

Sue Saunders

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This transparently open and honest account of the joys and difficulties of harmonising professional relationships (where husband and wife are both ordained and serving in the same parish) with marital relationships is to be highly commended. As more women graduate from theological schools, the number of ordained husband and wife teams can be expected to increase rapidly. The author discusses the crises of identity roles, the need for 'space' and the challenges and opportunities in the changing social context of church life. Did Paul anticipate some of these issues when he wrote to the Church in Corinth and to Timothy in Ephesus? In this case, study of the issue of roles is further complicated by the fact that, up to the present, only men can be 'priested' in the Church of England while women must remain as ordained deacons.

INTRODUCTION

The seeds of this article originally came from a group of clergy couples working in the Birmingham Diocese. There are ten couples who are both ordained—that's twenty 'Clergy people', a sizeable minority. We meet regularly to share joys and pains—often more pains, which is why this piece of writing seems to pose more questions than it answers. But I