The Contemporary State of
Women in Ministry in the Assemblies of God

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The Assemblies of God has affirmed the ministry of women ever since its first constitutional statement in 1914 which included an article on the "Rights and Offices of Women." The conference committee recommended to the General Council that whereas the hand of God is mightily upon many women to proclaim and publish the "good tidings of great joy" in a wonderful way, that the General Council of the Assemblies of God submit the following scriptures for consideration (the council adopted):

1. In Christ, that is in the matter of salvation, the lines of sex are blotted out. Gal 3:28.
2. Women are commanded to be in subjection and not to usurp authority over the man. I Tim. 2:11-15.
3. They are called to prophesy and preach the gospel. Acts 2:17. "He that prophesyeth speaketh unto men to edification, to exhortation and to comfort." I Cor. 14:3.
4. To be helpers in the gospel. Rom. 16:3.

Therefore be it resolved that this Council recommend to the ministry and Assemblies of God, that we recognize their God-given rights to be ordained, not as elders, but as Evangelists and Missionaries, after being duly approved according to the scriptures.

The General Council adopted this resolution. In 1935, however, the Assemblies of God reversed the prohibition of female elders enacted in 1914 and authorized the ordination of women as elders or pastors.

Does the present state of affairs indicate that women ministers are on the increase as a result of this change in the early stance? In all the years since 1977 but one (1989), the number of female ministers in the Assemblies of God has risen annually, reflecting a net change of +17, +16, +70, +76, +31, +77, +94, +82, +35, +52, -81 (1989), +48, +46, +50, +68 each year respectively. According to the Office of the General Secretary, in 1977 there were 3,220 ordained and licensed women in the Assemblies of God. That means that 15% of the 21,397 ordained, licensed and specialized licensed Assemblies of God ministers were female.

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1 This article is adapted from an article prepared for Paraclete, Spring 1995.
Yet we must note that 1,225 or 38% of these credentialed women were 65 years of age or older. Thus, the statistics looked strong only because of the ministering women who served the Assemblies of God in the past. Already in 1977, however, as these women retired, strong numbers of younger women were not pursuing ministry and replacing them.

In the years since the General Secretary’s Office has kept statistics on female ministers, there has been a steady increase in the number of female clergy in the Assemblies of God. Yet, it must be noted that, until four years ago, the percentage of females in the total number clergy had been, with slight fluctuation, decreasing.

Another trend is that fewer and fewer Assemblies of God women pursue a call to ministries central to the work of the gospel. Today only 6.9% of Assemblies of God credentialed women are senior pastors. The percentage of credentialed women who progress to full ordination is decreasing; and the percentage of female ministers who are not senior pastors, nor serving in home or foreign missions, or who are past retirement age, is increasing. More and more female leaders are limiting, or have been limited in, their church involvement to peripheral activities in the ministry or are choosing secular employment over full-time ministry. Women in the Assemblies of God have been losing ground.

The following numbers offer a sketch of the recent status of female ministers in the Assemblies of God:³

In 1979, 3,253 (14.4%) of 22,584 credentialed ministers were females; 1,219 (37.47%) were 65 years of age or older; 2,648 (81.4%) were not senior pastors, home or foreign missionaries; 239 (1.06%) of all credentialed ministers were female senior pastors; 49% of all credentialed females were ordained.⁴

In 1981, 3,399 (14.2%) of 23,898 credentialed ministers were females; 1,385 (40.75%) were 65 years of age or older; 1,427 (41.98%) were not senior pastors, home or foreign missionaries; 252 (1.05%) of all credentialed ministers were female senior pastors; 48% of all credentialed females were ordained.

In 1987, 3,770 (13.8%) of 27,264 credentialed ministers were females; 1,542 (40.9%) were 65 years of age or older; 3,202 (84.9%) were not senior pastors, home or foreign missionaries; 283 (1.04%) of


⁴Credentialed refers to ordained, licensed and specialized licensed ministers. Until 1982, the General Council statistics did not include certified ministers (previously called Christian workers) under this rubric.