

# 50/40/10 Anniversary of the Ordination of Women

## Litany of Celebration and Lament

*Though the following calls for two leaders, use as many voices as you wish.*

### Introduction

Leader 1: As we celebrate the anniversaries of ordination of women in the Lutheran Church in the United States, we also acknowledge the need for lament.

This litany calls for honesty: both cheers of celebration and groans of grief. As with much of church history, looking back brings real gratitude and also heartbreak.

Today we also extend this lament and celebration to encompass the experiences of all women—within and outside of the church, across vocations and throughout the world.

### The Overarch

Leader 1: For the institutional church's decision fifty years ago to finally ordain women,

Assembly: **WE CELEBRATE!**

Leader 2: For all the ways women have led the church in new, vital directions

Assembly: **WE GIVE THANKS!**

Leader 1: For the resistance in recognizing the indispensable presence of women in church leadership,

Assembly: **WE LAMENT.**

Leader 2: For the blatant and subtle ways the institutional church has for centuries kept power centered in men,

Assembly: **WE GRIVE THIS LOSS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.**

## The 50th Anniversary

Leader 1: For the blossoming of the gospel since women joined men in proclaiming the Word fifty years ago,

Assembly: **WE CELEBRATE!**

Leader 2: For the faithful yes of women to the call of ministry and for their courageous work, clearing the path for other women to follow.

Assembly: **WE GIVE THANKS!**

Leader 1: For women who were dismissed quietly or not so quietly from positions they held— sometimes with little warning or explanation;  
For women who have voluntarily left because of abuse or impossible expectations,

Assembly: **WE LAMENT!**

Leader 2: For female pastors who today encounter disdain for their call and resistance to their leadership;

Assembly: **WE GRIEVE THIS LOSS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.**

## **The 40th Anniversary**

Leader 1: For the vibrant expansion of the church's ministry starting 40 years ago as women of color were ordained in the Lutheran tradition;

Assembly: **WE CELEBRATE!**

Leader 2: For the holy work and presence of women of color;  
For the wisdom they bring, the healing they share, the Word they proclaim and the sacraments they administer,

Assembly: **WE GIVE THANKS!**

Leader 1: For black, indigenous and women of color pastors who continually endure microaggressions, insults and injuries;

Assembly: **WE LAMENT!**

Leader 2: For the systemic racism in our nation that corrupts the sharing of the gospel, and for the church's sin of guarding power in whiteness,

Assembly: **WE GRIEVE THIS LOSS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.**

## The 10th Anniversary

Leader 1: For LGBTQIA+ pastors who have enriched the church throughout history;  
For the brilliant surge in Christ's ministry in the last 10 years since the ELCA finally allowed LGBTQIA+ pastors to serve publicly *and* live authentically.

Assembly: **WE CELEBRATE!**

Leader 2: For the gift of genuine diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity that LGBTQIA+ pastors celebrate and embody, a gift that brings freedom and life to the whole church;

Assembly: **WE GIVE THANKS!**

Leader 1: For pastors not only targeted by sexism but the intersecting burdens of heterosexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Assembly: **WE LAMENT.**

Leader 2: For the obvious and subtle ways the church continues to keep power in the norm of hetero, cis-gender, maleness, obstructing Christ's ministry and discounting the gifts of its faithful leaders,

Assembly: **WE GRIEVE THIS LOSS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.**

## **The Expectations of Women**

Leader 1: For all women, the polite and the pushy, the pot-stirrers and the peace makers, the administrators and janitors; those who make the coffee, those who pay the bills; for the deacons and deaconesses, the teachers, and the prayer-chain maintainers; for all those who show up and speak out, in quiet or loud ways,

Assembly: **WE CELEBRATE!**

Leader 2: For the gospel of Jesus Christ that continues to be embodied in the world thanks to its women leaders,

Assembly: **WE GIVE THANKS!**

Leader 1: For the ways women's relationships, family roles, and even their bodies continue to be questioned or judged as a means to control them.

Assembly: **WE LAMENT!**

Leader 1: For women whose leadership has not been accepted,

Leader 2: their scholarship minimized,

Leader 1: their strength regarded as shrill,

Leader 2: their gifts not taken seriously,

Leader 1: their courage called "uppity,"

Leader 2: their pastoral presence patronized,

Leader 1: and their theological commitments questioned,

Assembly: **WE GRIEVE THIS LOSS FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.**

## Closing

Leader 1: We now bring to mind the women we most love and appreciate, those who have changed our lives, who have expanded our faith, our hope and our love with their presence and leadership.

*[Some silence, inviting people to name these women aloud or in their hearts]*

Leader 1: God is with you.

Assembly: **And also with you.**

Leader 1: Let us pray:

**Assembly: God of gift and God of help,**

**We celebrate how your Holy Spirit has blessed your church through the work of women and girls, including in this time and in this place. Give us strength to commit anew to the full inclusion of women at all levels of ministry in your church and throughout the world, that your compassion and justice would abound and abound and abound.**

**Lead us in Jesus' way,**

**Amen.**