

An exploratory study of women's experiences and place in the church: A case study of a parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Diocese of Cape Town

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Declaration

I declare that An exploratory study of women's experiences and place in the church: A case study of a parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Diocese of Cape Town is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Isabel Sparrow

4 May 2006

Signed



Abstract

This mini-thesis is a small-scale exploratory case study into the experiences of eight mature women members of a particular parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) situated in the Diocese of Cape Town. Using qualitative feminist research methodologies, this study sets out to explore how this group of non-ordained women perceives their roles in the church structure. The study examines what initially attracted the participants to this parish and what motivates them, despite the challenges, to continue performing their voluntary licensed and unlicensed roles in the church. It then goes on to consider the contradictory ways in which their roles as individuals, gendered as women, serve to simultaneously reinforce and challenge the patriarchy of the church. In this respect the participants often held conflicting views within themselves, thus demonstrating the complexities surrounding such issues. Upon reflection the researcher acknowledges that, similar to the participants, she also holds contradictory views on some of these issues. The research therefore identifies and explores three main themes in this regard, firstly the reasons why women originally joined the parish church, secondly the ways in which these women are active in the church and lastly the ways in which women's activities simultaneously challenge and reinforce the patriarchy and continued male domination of church.

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INTRODUCTION

Over a period of 30 years (from 1969 to 1999) the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA): Diocese of Cape Town and Province appointed three provincial commissions and four diocesan commissions to address the problems experienced by the Archbishop and the Diocese of Cape Town as a result of the Archbishop's dual role as Metropolitan and Primate. Consequently two special diocesan synods (in 2004 and 2005) agreed to establish three independent Episcopal regions: each under the care of a Diocesan bishop (Ndungane, 2005a).

False Bay region became independent on the 27 November 2005; Saldanha Bay region on the 10 December 2005, and Table Bay region remained as the Archepiscopal Diocese. This division of the diocese into three episcopal regions, relieved the Archbishop – currently Njongonkulu Ndungane -- of most of his pastoral oversight, freeing him up for his metropolitanical functions and his demanding international ministry. With the exception of the clergy statistics which cite the existing Cape Town region, my research took place before the division and thus refers to the original structure of the Diocese of Cape Town as discussed below.

Original Structures of the CPSA, Diocese of Cape Town

The Diocese of Cape Town is the principal diocese of the CPSA. This diocese stretches from Cape Town to Bredasdorp on the Southern Coast and the Orange River on the West coast. There are more than 130 parishes, divided into three regions: Table Bay an established, more affluent area, False Bay a developing one and rural Saldanha Bay, with many poverty stricken communities.

The Archbishop resides at Bishopscourt in the southern suburbs of the Cape Town Metropole – which also houses the Diocesan offices. He has episcopal control and authority over the whole diocese, but delegates authority within specified regions to Bishops-Suffragan - who are known as Regional Bishops. The Archbishop chairs such diocesan bodies and boards as Synod, Diocesan Chapter, Diocesan Council and Diocesan Trusts Board (Bank, 2002:B.2.1). He has the power to veto a resolution of the synod but provision is made to ensure that such power is used only for good reason (Suggit, 1999:22).

Provincial Synod is the legislative body of the CPSEA and meets every three years and is composed of bishops, clergy – male and female – and laity elected by every diocese as representatives (Suggit, 1999:21). Diocesan Synod meets every one or two years to pass important rules pertinent to the life of each diocese (The Acts, 1997). If the Bishop is incapacitated or absent from his diocese an appointed Vicar General presides on his behalf at the Session of the Diocesan Synod. Regulations concerning the church of any particular Province may not be contrary to, or conflict with, any enactment of the Provincial Synod. The Diocesan Synod resembles the Provincial Synod in its mode of procedure (Constitution, 2001: Articles VIII – IX).

The Anglican church has for centuries accepted three levels of ordained ministry: bishops, presbyters, deacons, in that order (Govinden, 1991:284). A bishop is chosen by an Elective Assembly of the diocese and he is responsible for appointing clergy – after due consultation with other advisers and parish representatives (Canon, 2001). The basic unit of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa is the local church. The

congregations and parishes are united in a diocese, and led and served by a bishop (Bank, 2002:B.1).

The priest is the authority figure for the parish and is responsible for all matters affecting worship and the life of the parish. The parishioners elect the churchwardens and council members, both men and women who, together with the rector and other priests administer the parish (Suggit, 1991). The church warden leads the church council and is the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the bishop. The priests are assisted by licensed laywomen and laymen who assist in the conduct of liturgy -- forms and rituals of the service and worship -- i.e. to preach, administer the chalice, lead worship, and share in the pastoral work of ministry to the sick, teaching, administration of the parish church and Chapelries (Suggit, 1991:22).



At parish level any parishioner (licensed or unlicensed), over the age of 18, is allowed to vote for a diocesan representative at the annual parish vestry meeting (normally held shortly before Easter). The number of lay diocesan representatives entitled to attend Synod depends on the size of the parish and the number of regular communicants. Based on this criteria the particular parish under discussion is allowed to have three lay representatives and one alternative representative. If, for any reason, any of the elected lay representatives are unable to attend, the alternative representative becomes the lay representative. The elected lay representatives each qualify to speak and vote at Synod meetings.

One parish in the Diocese of Cape Town of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa

For reasons of confidentiality, and in order to protect the participants in this study, I have decided not to disclose the specific parish involved in this study. Having said that it remains important to describe the parish church and the three Chapelries associated with the parish church in order to begin to understand the context in which parishioners, and my participants, find themselves. Although there are many differences between the parish church and Chapelries, one point is similar throughout, women make up the majority at Sunday services in all of these congregational groups (Rakoczy, 2004:198).

The particular parish church involved in this study comprises a parish church and three Chapelries [outstations]. The parish church is situated in an upper to middle class area. Outbuildings consist of two rectories, administration offices and a hall, all housed within well-kept, spacious gardens. Most of the 'office staff' is English-speaking. Melt van der Spuy (2004) argues that even a decade after the ending of apartheid South African suburbs remain largely divided along racial lines [and along economic lines]. The same can be said for this particular parish.

I recognize that the impact of apartheid was hugely problematic on all aspects of identity construction and that identifying post-apartheid persons in racialised categories is highly contentious, especially as the issue of race brings powerful emotions to the surface (Edwards, 1990:482). In addition such constructs gather meaning from changing social contexts and thus can't be assumed to have any inherent or fixed meaning. As an example of the fluidity of racial categories, one of the participant's, Sophia, recalled

being registered as a “Black” at birth, but when the third of her seven siblings applied for registration at the local “Coloured” school the Department of Education ruled that no more than three “Black” children could attend a “Coloured” school. At that point all the children were re-registered as “Coloured”. Children who began the day as “Black” ended it as “Coloured”. Stories such as these illustrate that although the participants are members of the same church and as such are interlinked with group identification (Bohler-Muller, 2002) their individual experiences differ due to ethnic and linguistic and other socially meaningful categories of diversity (Phiri, 2004:17). Although I recognise the limitations and political sensitivity of these racialised categories I have chosen to continue using the apartheid classification of ‘Black’, ‘Coloured’ and ‘White’ for the following reasons: These racialised classifications still carry meaning and signal something about people’s life histories and the choices and opportunities available to them which have lead them to their present location socially and economically.



Although I cannot generalize it appears that the standard of living and educational levels of the members of the parish church differ quite substantially from those in the Chapelries. The congregation of the parish church consists of mostly ‘Coloured’ and a much smaller percentage of ‘White’ members; interspersed with a few ‘Black’ people. Most of the readings and sermons are conducted in English. A rector, resident priest, assistant priest and a retired priest serve the parish church and Chapelries (‘chapelries’ are explained in more detail under separate heading below). The male assistant priest’s mother tongue is Xhosa but he is fluent in English and Afrikaans. All the other priests are ‘Coloured’ males. The rector and resident priest’s home language is English while

the retired priest speaks Afrikaans. All the priests are, however, completely fluent in both English and Afrikaans.

Although average weekend attendance fluctuates at the parish church there are about 220/250 regular attendees. Based on these numbers Mann (1998:4-5) categorises the parish church as a 'programme size church'. Accordingly, clergy are very involved in the 'programme church' but much of their time is spent planning, with other lay leaders, to ensure the quality of the programmes. In addition to the 'Xhosa' service, two morning services and one evening service are held at the parish church and one each at the Chapelries every Sunday.

Chapelries

The priest can, with the Bishop's approval, establish Chapelries, which are separate congregations that assemble for prayer and worship (Bank, 2002: D.8). Three such Chapelries form part of this parish. For clarity I refer to the Chapelries associated with the parish as Chapelries One, Two and Three. Chapelry One is long-established and situated reasonably close to the main parish adjacent to a wine farm. The Chapelry has long been involved in education at the local farm school attended primarily by "Coloured" children, who speak mostly Afrikaans. Sunday services are held in one of the school classrooms. The small congregation is made up of mostly farm workers who live in the labourers' cottages on the farm. The congregation members were relieved when the school and houses were recently upgraded from septic tanks and connected to the main sewerage system as this would prevent the normal flooding that occurred during the winter rain season. Many of the members of this congregation have invested

in their teenaged children's tertiary education bringing about a change in educational levels in the community.

Chapelries Two and Three are further afield but situated within an 8km radius of the main parish. Chapelry Two has also been associated with this particular parish for many years and consists of a 'Coloured' working class, mostly poor Afrikaans community. Social problems such as alcohol abuse and physical abuse to women and children often have to be dealt with by the resident/assistant priest or church councillors. This congregation meets in the local school every Sunday. One of the Chapelry layministers takes on the responsibility of setting up the altar and arranges the benches in straight rows before every service. An appointed lay minister or priest drives to the school to conduct the Sunday service. This person will normally also collect some of the very elderly at their homes and transport them to the near-by school for morning service. On average about 15 people attend the service. In contrast Chapelry Three is a newly established congregation of a mixture of mostly 'Black' and some few 'Coloured', Afrikaans-speaking people. Many of the people of Chapelry Three are homeless, poor and unemployed. Most of the people live in 'shacks' and have no municipal services such as running water, nor is there any place for Sunday services. The Xhosa-speaking priest approached the local school for permission to use the empty half of a container to conduct the service on Sundays. Here he sets up the altar and the congregation members either stand inside or outside the container while attending the service. The parish church councillors have been negotiating to buy a piece of land so that alternate arrangements can be made to house this congregation. As always, these arrangements take time to finalise.

Another peripheral group of 'Xhosa' people gather for worship at the parish church after the Sunday services. They are mainly in the employ of the local residents as domestic workers and gardeners. As such this group is not constant for they move to other areas frequently. Normally the congregation consists of about 20 members. They all appear to hold conversational English but they conduct their services in Xhosa. There is seldom a priest involved in this service. When this community sing their hymns they do so unaccompanied by any instrument, and the people all take it in turns to speak and pray. Most of the women wear the 'manyano' uniform described in the literature section.

Other organisations and activities

Although two predominantly woman's organisations exist, namely the Anglican Women's Fellowship (AWF) and the Mother's Union (MU), only the latter is operational in the parish church and Chapelries. Language barriers and transport problems prevent members of the parish church merging their MU activities with those from the Chapelries and the 'Xhosa' group, and underline the difficulties in trying to build organisations in locations of ethnic and linguistic diversity. The parish recently reintroduced small Christian communities (SCCs) -- regular weekly meetings at private homes -- for the purpose of studying Scripture in members' mother tongues. Bank (2002:E.5.10), considers these SCCs to be important centres that provide a network for communication within parishes.

Within this context I conducted an exploratory study into the place and experiences of individuals in a selected group of mature women located in one particular parish of the

CPSA, Diocese of Cape Town, with the aim of investigating these women's perceptions of their non-ordained ministry.

In Chapter One I review the relevant literature that focuses on women's active ministerial roles in the life of the early Christian community as apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and deacons, and their systematic exclusion from ministry and leadership roles as the church became more closely aligned to Roman cultural practices. Both Fiorenza (1988) and Suggit (1999) explain that Jesus constituted the church to become his church or "ekklesia" to no longer be a covenant between God and Israel, as in the Old Testament, but based on the person of Jesus, the true human being. Fiorenza (1988), however, expands on the concept of "ekklesia gynaikon", a notion of "women-church" that builds on the egalitarian practices of Jesus. She particularly criticises the androcentric notion that women are inferior and must be subservient to males. This notion, in the form of church teaching, attitudes and traditions, has historically been a major deterrent to women's progress in the CPSA. Although Anglican women had long called for their rightful place in the church structures, it was not until 1971 that a resolution was passed at the Anglican Consultative Council, Kenya – which encouraged debate of women's ordination throughout Anglican churches internationally -- that permitted bishops to ordain women with the approval of the Provinces: the doors to ministry and ordination were thenceforth open to women (Williams, 1984).

After this resolution the debate in South Africa around the issue of woman's ordination intensified. In 1985 champions such as Bishop Desmond Tutu came out in full support

of the ordination of women and the use of inclusive language in the church. Whereas little was done regarding the latter, Botha (2004a:44) tells us that Tutu presided at the 1992 Provincial synod, which allowed for the ordination of women to the priesthood. Not everyone agreed, nor did all of the 23 dioceses of the CPISA accept it. The fears that this course of action could cause a split in the church did not materialize and the CPISA continued to operate. Despite the progress, and as discussed in more detail below, the Anglican church has a long way to go before it becomes a true discipleship of equals. Today women are still underrepresented in positions where they officially have a voice for influencing doctrine and practices. Powell (2002) declares that, “the CPISA still operates on a system of hierarchies that are both patriarchal and clerical”. Powell recently used her influence, as the leader of the Transformation Board, to make delegates at Provincial Synod aware of the failure, of parts of the CPISA, to promote, affirm and welcome women’s ministry. What is apparent from the archbishop’s charge to Provincial Synod (Ndungane, 2005b) is that Archbishop not only listened to her call for transformation, but also responded positively. The question now is: will his influence be strong enough to turn the tide? Historically the church has proved that, on gender related issues, progress is slow. In the words of Botha (2004b:40), an ordained priest,

The journey of women in the church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPISA) – for both women’s ordination and for the right to have a meaningful role in the church structures – has been a long and difficult one. In some areas, such as women’s equal representation at all higher levels of church governance, the journey still has a long way to go.

Chapter two outlines the methodology used to conduct this study while in Chapter three I present the analysis of data collected from the eight women participants. Three main themes emerged: one) Why women joined the parish church; two) the ways in which

women are active in the church and three) tensions between challenges and reinforcements to the maintenance of patriarchy. Under theme one the participants cited many reasons for joining this particular Anglican parish. Primary amongst these was that of spiritual and emotional support, together with other support sources such as women church friends, priests and the need to establish new networks of community and friends. Theme two explored some of the challenges faced by the participants while performing their roles in the church, and contrasted their involvement in licensed and unlicensed non-ordained ministry work. While both licensed and unlicensed ministries are done on a voluntary basis, licensed ministries are all recognised by the church structure, whereas unlicensed ministries are not recognised by licensing. Discussions with my participants revealed that nurturing roles still dominate both licensed and unlicensed female non-ordained ministries. Under theme three I investigated the ways in which my female participants felt that being women helped them in their church work and the ways in which it limited them. Emerging out of this is a discussion of the ways in which the activities of these women often seem to simultaneously reinforce or challenge stereotypical gender roles.

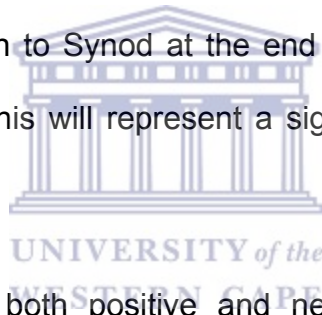
Relevance of Study

During my 20-year period of membership of the CPSA I have performed roles of brass cleaning through to being a licensed lay minister. I performed my duties with diligence and joy. On the spiritual side I grew in faith and love of Christ. At the same time I worked full time and progressed into managerial positions in the commercial world and eventually became a manager in a training institute for the construction industry, a

bastion of male-domination. The plight of unemployed women in the Western Cape motivated me to initiate projects where women received basic construction training with a possibility of future employment in construction. The exposure to these women was instrumental in my responding to a request to initiate an interactive women's group between the Diocese of Cape Town and Washington DC. The objective was to develop joint projects of mutual ministry on issues on violence against women. I will not go into the dynamics of achieving this objective suffice to say it took two years to accomplish. The month that all the Washington objectives were met, however, I received an emailed communiqué from the offices of the Archbishop at Bishops court stating that the group was disbanded. Two of the members were female priests and I quote one's response to this decision. "I feel that I have once again been kicked in the stomach by the church". The working group of women unanimously decided to challenge the hierarchical decision and it was repealed. Two week's later, however, we decided that we would no longer operate under the umbrella of the church and notified Bishops court that, in future, we would operate as an autonomous body.

As part of our own training during the aforementioned two-year-period the working group progressed into other non-profit initiatives such as Tamar (a training programme to empower women whose lives was or still are affected by the issue of violence). I became both a trainer for Tamar and acted as facilitator for gender sensitization workshops for church members, not necessarily Anglican. While the church acknowledges the valuable work conducted by Tamar, no budget is allocated to this outreach.

Apart from the above workshops another group of women and I continue to work towards gender equality in the church. During 2005 Provincial Synod approved the creation of a Provincial gender desk. With the division of the Diocese of Cape Town the Tamar working group recognized that a small window of opportunity exists to create a similar gender desk for the new Saldanha Bay Diocese. With this objective we recently held a very successful gender consultation day to investigate the creation of a gender desk for the Saldanha Bay Diocese. The 47-strong delegates (consisting of both lay and clergy women and men from numerous parishes) unanimously agreed to the creation of the gender desk, which decision was supported by the new Bishop of the Diocese. In this regard a steering committee (composed of women and men) is in the process of drafting a motion for submission to Synod at the end of the year. I believe that if this motion is approved by Synod this will represent a significant step forward for women and men in the church.



These diverse experiences – both positive and negative -- made me curious to understand other women's perceptions of their experiences and place in the CPSA and motivated my interest in conducting this research. I also realised that many women in the CPSA, especially over the last 100 years, have been working towards the goal of equality, but most of those women have remained faceless and unknown. By recording the stories of my participants I give voice to their lived reality in the church today.

Chapter One

Literature Review

No issue in feminist theology is as contentious as that of women's place in the church and their call to ministry. Each Sunday all around the world women comprise 60%, 70% or even more of a local congregation gathered to worship God, empowered by the Spirit for ministry. [Yet] ... the power of kyriarchy and the patriarchal nature of the church severely limit the ability of women to exercise their gifts for the good of the church community (Rakoczy, 2004:198).

The purpose of this section is to focus on several key issues in the relationships of women to the early church. Biblical texts deserve particular attention because they provide us with a perspective on Jesus' attitudes to women during his three-year period of ministry, and the role of women as apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and deacons in the life of the early Christian community. Systematically, as the church became more closely aligned to Roman cultural practices, women became excluded from ministry and leadership roles. I also examine, through the writings of women that have been lost and forgotten for centuries, the early developments of women's cloistered lifestyles and how those women and nuns found ways to influence religious and political events.

1.1 Jesus and Women

In first-century Palestine, the way Jesus treated women was considered revolutionary. Jesus, extended honour and respect on all women and unlike the men of his generation and culture, taught that women were equal to men in the sight of God (Graham, 1994:14-15).

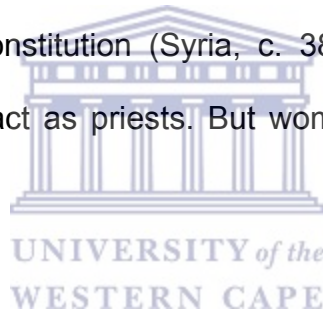
According to feminist theologian Rakoczy (2004) the gospels provide us with encouraging evidence of Jesus' attitude to women and illustrate the importance he placed on their roles in ministry. By his actions Jesus broke several cultural taboos associated with women. For example, whereas the Jews did not commonly associate with Samaritans, Jesus initiated a discussion with a Samaritan woman at the well and told her that he was Christ. Subsequently she took on a role unusual for one of her cultural and gendered background and became an evangelist to her own people (John 4:1-38). On another occasion Jesus ignored local custom and allowed himself to be touched publicly and then to heal a woman who was haemorrhaging: a condition that made her unclean, and a virtual outcast (Furlong, 1984; Mark 5:25-34). The gospel of Luke gives instances where Jesus chose the company of women, for example, his frequent visits to Martha and Mary's home in Bethany. During these visits Martha is depicted doing household chores, whereas Mary is seated at Jesus' feet receiving instruction (Williams, 1984). Yet the story suggests that when the traditional Martha complains to Jesus about this situation he encourages her to follow her sister's example. "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41). Throughout his three-year period of ministry Jesus and his disciples were accompanied by women who assisted them financially: "these women -- Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others -- were helping to support them out of what they made" (Luke 8:1-3). Whereas the disciples went into hiding when Jesus was crucified, two identified women, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons remained sitting opposite the sealed tomb (Matt 27:61). At dawn the next morning both Mary's witnessed a violent earthquake and

watched an angel roll back the tomb stone to reveal an empty tomb. The angel told them that Jesus had risen just as he predicted (Matt 28:6). The women hurried away to tell the disciples and on their way met the resurrected Christ. Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matt 28:10). These examples demonstrate the significant position of women in Christ’s life and ministry (Rakoczy, 2004; Young, 1993; Williams, 1984).

1.2 The Early Church: Tensions between egalitarian and patriarchal tendencies

The Pauline letters in the New Testament provide us with a glimpse of the egalitarian early Christian missionary movement where, after the Pentecost event, men and women worked together in fellowship. Feminist theologians (Rakoczy, 2004; Ruether, 1979; Young, 1993) describe how women in the early church developed and sustained house churches, working as deacons, prophets, apostles and teachers; and how they were prominent missionaries and co-workers with Paul. Some of these women are named: (Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia, Syntyche, Mary, Tryphaina, Persis, Tryphosa, Junia) while others are referred to only by the function they perform. Regarding the contentious matter of women apostleship Rakoczy (2004:202) argues that Mary Magdalene fulfills all three of the New Testament criteria to determine apostleship: a person must have accompanied Jesus during his lifetime (Acts 1:21), must have seen the risen Jesus (1 Cor 15:3-9; Matt 28:9) and been commissioned by him (Gal 1:11-17; Matt 28:10). She accompanied Jesus during his ministry (Lk 8:1-3), saw the risen Jesus at the tomb (Jn 20:11-18) and was commissioned by Jesus to ‘go and find my brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’ (Jn 20:17-18). Therefore Mary Magdalene can be named an apostle.

The Pauline injunctions (Col 3:18; Eph 5:21-33) illustrate the way women's ministry and participation in worship became more limited over time in certain communities in the early church. Similar to Paul in the New Testament, Tertullian (160-220), an early church father, stridently declared that no woman was allowed to speak in church, teach, baptize or discharge any man's function, especially the duty of priest (Rakoczy, 2004; Ruether, 1979; Young, 1993). There is recorded evidence, however, that women continued their work in ministry, as shown by statements by John Chrysostom (349-407) – who accused women of being more harmful than savage beasts and also protested the power exercised by women in the priesthood -- “The divine law has shut women out from the ministerial office but they use force to get inside” (Rakoczy, 2004:230). In the Apostolic Constitution (Syria, c. 380) a proclamation was passed forbidding women to teach or act as priests. But women kept insisting on performing their ministries.



As the church became more closely aligned with Roman cultural practices, especially under the rule of Emperor Constantine who made Christianity a state religion, (c. 4th), hierarchical authority became paramount and led to women's subordination in theory and practice (Rakoczy, 2004). Fiorenza (1988) points out that tensions were bound to arise between the state religion, where there was general acceptance of male religious privilege and authority, and the more egalitarian practices of the first Christian communities, which admitted women as well as slaves. Systematically, the equality in Christ described in Gal 3:28 – “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” - - gave way to the injunctions of the Household Codes which led to the domestication of women (Ephesians 5:21-33; Col 3:18f). These Household Codes reinforced patriarchal

relationships that were familiar in both Jewish and Roman households and were incorporated into Christianity. In turn, as some argue, they led to incredible suffering in the human community down the centuries, since they were used to condone slavery (Rakoczy, 2004). Domestic relationships in contemporary society have been profoundly influenced, and remain influenced, by these hierarchical patterns that developed in the early church.

1.3 Developments of offices that marginalised women

In one of Paul's letters (1 Tim 5:3-19) he indicates that the church had a distinct group of women called "widows". Ignatius of Antioch speaks of "virgins called widows" and the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, and the Didaskalia Apostolorum (Syria, c. 230), refers to widows as, "appointed for prayer". The Didaskalia makes many references to deaconesses. For instance, "for there are houses to which you [the bishop] cannot send a [male] deacon to the women, on account of the heathen, but you may send a deaconess" (Zagano cited in Rakoczy, 2004:232).

It is not clear whether the women were ordained as deaconesses over and above their membership in another order, that of widows or virgins, but they clearly had an active ministry in the church. The bishop ordained deaconesses in the same way as priests and deacons, and the early Christian literature defines their work as being parallel to that of male deacons (Ralphs, 1999).

The women deacons assisted at baptism (including the anointing), instructed the newly baptized, visited the sick and in general were involved in the education and charitable works of the church (Rakoczy, 2004:232).

In the absence of the priest and deacon they could read the gospel and distribute the Eucharist (Ralphs, 1999). However, both the orders of widow and deaconess steadily declined because of the restrictions placed on women. The Council of Laodicea (c. 364) abolished the order of widow, and the order of deaconess was phased out in the West by the Synod of Orleans (c. 533), and disappeared altogether by the ninth century in the East (Rakoczy, 2004).

1.4 Alternate routes followed by women: monastic orders

The development of the cloistered life in the fourth century provided women with an outlet from which to serve God while at the same time giving them some control over their lives. Many of these cloisters also became centres of learning where women developed their intellectual gifts. The women were thinkers, writers, scholars and founders of the monastic life style for women. Two such women were highborn Roman matrons, Marcelle and Paula (fourth century) who, influenced by their mentor, Jerome, founded circles of ascetic women in their homes for the purpose of studying the bible (Ruether, 1979; Brenna, 1985; Zimmerman, 1985; Rakoczy, 2004). Women of note included Abbess Hilda of Whitby (eighth century), under whose direction five bishops trained (Rakoczy, 2004).

The tradition of learned monastic women continued into the Middle Ages as illustrated in Young's (1993) "Anthology of Sacred Tests". Their stories highlight how women contributed to religious knowledge but they are of limited use for our purposes as they describe cloistered women, who are not the object of this study. However, since several of these women found ways to extending their influence beyond the confines of the

cloister and influenced religious and political events, I will briefly explore their religious and political contributions. Abbess Hildegarde of Bingen (1098-1179) became a nun at 14. She founded a nunnery based on the Benedictine rule and dictated two major works, "Know the Ways of the Lord" (Scivias) and "Book of Divine Works". She was a "visionary, preacher, prophet, exegete, musician and herbalist and she broke through many of the cultural and ecclesial prohibitions against women in her day" (Rakoczy, 2004:145). Her other extant works include hymns, books on medicine and natural history. In addition to her spiritual writing, Hildegarde wrote many letters challenging religious and political leaders. The writings of Clare of Assisi (1192-1254), a follower of Francis of Assisi and leader of the Poor Clares, the female order of Franciscans, highlight the limitations placed on cloistered women, especially as they describe the life of poverty. At first Clare had freedom of movement to tend to the poor and infirm, but four years after she established the order of women, the Franciscan church authority forced the cloistering of Clare and her women followers (Young, 1993:66). The writings of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) refer to religious communities known as Third Orders or Tertiaries, more specifically Dominican tertiaries. The women were not cloistered in this order and were mostly mature widows, although Catherine was a young, unmarried woman. Catherine's book "The Dialogue" serves as a guide for others on the spiritual path (Young, 1993:75). Catherine is known for her deep spirituality and her compassion for people who were ill or suffering. She is also known as a religious reformer who challenged the corruption in the Catholic church of her time. Finally, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was a Spanish nun and reformer in the Carmelite order. Teresa lived during the Spanish Inquisition when the Catholic church, in its attempt to enforce orthodoxy and stave off the impact of the Reformation, was persecuting perceived

heretics. Teresa was forced to write down her experiences of ecstasies so that her confessors could judge whether or not they constituted heresies. In her book “Life”, Teresa describes the obstacles she faced in founding a reformed Carmelite convent and also discusses her visions and the centrality of prayer. Thirty-one poems and 458 letters of Teresa are extant (Young, 1993:90). It is important to note that Pope Paul VI named both Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila “doctors of the church”, yet the Catholic church did not allow women to study theology until the 20th century. Opportunities for theological formation for women in the Reformation churches had also been very limited until the 19th century (Rakoczy, 2004:17).

2 Developments in women’s roles in the church

While much of the research into women’s roles in the Christian church has been undertaken by Western theologians who focus on issues of gender oppression within the hierarchical and patriarchal ecclesial structures, there is also a growing body of research being undertaken by women from other contexts. The purpose of this section is to set in place an overview of the contribution of feminist theologians, as the backdrop to my particular research - which is an exploration of the experiences and place of a selected group of women in a parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Diocese of Cape Town, and an investigation of these women’s perceptions of their non-ordained ministry.

2.1 International Perspective

Feminist biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, coined the word “kyriarchy”, derived from the Greek words “kyrios” (lord or master) and “anchein” (to rule or

dominate, which she defines as “a socio-political system of domination in which elite, educated, propertied men hold power over women and other men” (Fiorenza, 2001:211). Fiorenza’s work repeatedly stresses that the community formed by Jesus was a “discipleship of equals”. She argues that this egalitarian model – where roles were shared -- was replaced by a hierarchical, patriarchal ecclesiastical structure by the second or third century after the Jesus movement (Fiorenza, 1988:316). She argues further that the post-Pauline biblical literature suggests a steady loss of the egalitarian vision and the reversion to oppressive, patriarchal, hierarchical structures, which not only led to the exclusion of women leaders in the early church “but also segregated and restricted them to women’s spheres” (Fiorenza, 1988:310). Based on this historical reconstruction Fiorenza proposes a recovery of the early model of the “discipleship of equals”. Her notion of “women-church” (ekklesia gynaikon) builds on the egalitarian practices of Jesus and the early church as a model for the contemporary church, and includes women and men committed to struggling against patriarchy and the hierarchical, male-dominated structure. She believes this model will lead towards “greater equality, freedom and responsibility, as well as toward communal relations free of domination” (Fiorenza, 1988:154-309; Fiorenza, 1993). Fiorenza’s model of ministry speaks directly to this research but as she is addressing a western/North American context the South African participants of this study may have very different experiences from that she discusses.

Another proponent of “women-church” is Rosemary Ruether, an internationally recognised theologian, who also writes from a North American perspective. “Women have to withdraw from male-dominated spaces so they can gather together and define

'their own' experiences", argues Ruether (1988:59). "Women-church groups", she suggests, "should claim collectively to be church and therefore liberated from patriarchy" (Ruether, 1988:58). In her view, "patriarchy has traditionally split woman from woman, and women of the ruling classes from poor women". Additionally, she says, "the patriarchal culture reverberates with the constant demand that women keep silent" (Ruether, 1988:58). She suggests that the first step towards moving away from patriarchy is to gather women together to articulate their own experiences and communicate with one other. In this way women move from being objects to subjects. She also argues that women need to affirm the humanity of males behind the masks of patriarchy. Only then can women begin to experience liberation from patriarchy (Ruether, 1988:60).



Ruether's advocacy of woman-church can be ascribed to the concern of women that the ordination of women will not lead to constructive change but can, in fact, be a mixed blessing as there are few role models of different ways of understanding ordained ministry, thus compounding the problem of clericalism. During Archbishop Ndungane address at the 25th anniversary celebrations of the ordination of women hosted by the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia on 29 July 1999 he cautioned women to be conscious of the danger of clericalism. Under 'Issues of Leadership and Power in Africa' he states, "the ordination of women far from changing the situation will simply lead to the creation of female clericalism alongside male clericalism". Whilst some might suggest the sustained discussion of clericalism as one of the besetting problems of the organisational church (and in particular the CPISA) as appropriate, unfortunately the

constraints of a mini-masters thesis prevented me from pursuing this complex issue in more detail.

I have been focusing on the general discussion of women's roles, but now I move to discussions of women in leadership roles. Clifford (2001), an associate professor of theology at a University in Pittsburgh (who writes from a North American perspective), expands on the debates surrounding women's ordination in the wider Anglican Church. While the texts provide useful background information for this study, as they raise questions of woman's experiences within the confines of a patriarchal church, there are contextual limitations. "For most churches, the movement toward the ordination of women was very gradual and in stages", writes Clifford (2001:153). According to Clifford, the Anglican community before the mid 20th century refused to consider female candidates as eligible for ordination to the priesthood, irrespective of their qualifications. The situation changed in 1973, when a number of women were ordained in the United States Episcopal church (equivalent to the Anglican Church in South Africa). Clifford (2001:155) cites statistics from the 1998 Episcopal Clerical Directory, to the effect that 1,955 women priests constituted 13.9% of those ordained to the priesthood in the United States that year. There were also 11 female bishops worldwide, eight of whom served in dioceses in the United States "although", she says, "many of them [women bishops] assist male bishops as suffragan bishops". Even though a small percentage of women have been consecrated to the episcopacy, debates still persist around whether the appointment of women bishops will split the church. In a 2004 article in "The Guardian, Unlimited", Stephen Bates, United Kingdom religious affairs correspondent, describes the debates surrounding the ordination of women bishops in the Anglican

Church. He reports that some male bishops are still unwilling to accept women bishops. For example, former Archbishop of York, Dr Hope, a leading traditionalist, warns that if women are allowed to become bishops, the church will have to set up a separate province for members who disagree with the move (Bates, 2004). Clifford (2001) argues that even the ordination of women priests has not necessarily resulted in equal access to positions of authority in their churches. “Ordained women [priests] tend to engage in more specialized ministries”, she writes.

Rather than become pastors, rectors, or vicars of parishes, they are likely to serve as assistants or associates, or to be employed in hospitals, prisons, and colleges as chaplains (Clifford, 2001:55).

This implies that women hold a type of ‘second class’ status among the ordained.

A number of leading feminist theologians have taken a different perspective in exploring the alternate expressions for religious experience that are being created by women. The following texts provide valuable insights into women’s experience of church from various contexts.

Katie, an African American womanist theologian, reflects on the power of the old-time black religious experience of prayer and music practiced by her family who are direct descendants of African-American slaves. Cannon (cited in Russell, 1988) describes her mother’s keen memory for passing down eyewitness accounts to succeeding generations. A favourite story is how, in the past, her mother’s ancestors had met in secluded places – woods, gullies, ravines, and thickets (aptly called ‘hush harbors’) – to pray without being detected. Although detection is no longer of concern, the ‘hush harbor’ tradition of prayer-type meetings continues in Cannon’s parents’ home.

With the abiding love of family legends firmly in our hearts, my mother invites each of us to pray, quote scripture, lead a song, or give a testimony, all executed between the singing of spiritual songs.

Maria Pilar Aquino (1993), a Latin American feminist theologian, describes another alternate movement practiced predominantly among the Roman Catholic women in the Hispanic churches in the United States and Latin America. Great numbers of these Hispanic women are transforming the church with the formation of grassroots movements, “basic Christian communities”, (hereafter BCCs). The BCCs are lay run, often with women as leaders. People meet in homes and reflect together on Scripture and how the contents relate to their lives and their struggles against poverty and oppression. Jeanne Gallo explains:

The [BCC] action may be in the religious domain: catechesis, Bible study, planning a prayer week. It may also be in the social arena: improvements in the neighbourhood, collective works, teaching the illiterate to read, doing political and legal education, creating and participating in political activities (quoted in Clifford, 2001:165).

This is very helpful to my research for although the basic Christian communities emerged out of the context of liberation theology in Latin America they have had a profound impact on the church in other parts of the world. In Africa there are similar communities, known as “basic Christian groups”.

2.2 African Perspective

Leading Ghanaian woman theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, argues that within the women’s basic Christian groups, women find safe places for prayer and worship without the power of male leadership restricting women’s experience of church (Oduyoye, 1996). Her publications stress her concern for the liberation of African women, whom

she sees as oppressed through social, cultural and religious ideologies. Because of women's "abject poverty, many of the African norms of human relationships have altered", and African women's theology reflects this by working to construct a liberating theology (Oduyoye, 2001). She describes a liberating theology as one that, "gives preference to the poor and marginalised and also demonstrates the universal love of God for people, including women". Oduyoye (1996) states that while some of the women leave the ecclesial church, others maintain concurrent membership in the local parishes and in the basic Christian groups. She believes that, although many men view women's desire to minister as a bid to supplant them, women are actually motivated by a desire for partnerships. "Partnership of women and men, ordained or not, is the true image of the Church of Christ" (Oduyoye, 1996; Rakoczy, 2004). Because African women's experiences have been transmitted almost exclusively orally and usually in vernacular language, African women theologians have expressed an interest in capturing the experiences in writing. Oduyoye and others started the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter 'the Circle') in 1989 to research and record women's experiences (Phiri, 2004:16). Smaller Circles have been set up in different African countries. Publications of the Circle focus on the experiences of women theologians – theologian defined as ordained or non-ordained -- who are creating safe spaces for women to experience God. Despite the fact that the communities are different to the one that is the focus of my research, these analyses do raise some important issues that overlap with my study, as the following discussion explains.

Isabel Apawo Phiri (2004), General Coordinator of "the Circle" and Malawian woman theologian, has conducted research to examine African women's theologies in South

Africa. Phiri argues that previous studies have incorrectly combined African American Womanist Theology with African women's theology. Phiri (2004) locates African women's theologies in the discipline of liberation theology.

On the African continent, women called the reflection of their context and their faith 'African women's theologies' (quoted in Phiri, 1997). By calling it 'theologies', the women acknowledge that even within Africa, women are unique, "due to differences in race, culture, politics, economy and religion" (Phiri, 2004:17). All theologies are committed to exposing the ideological base of Christianity that maintains and justifies the oppression of women and to suggesting ways in which the churchwomen's space can be transformed to empower women for liberation (Phiri, 2004:22). The African women theologians are trying to capture some of these insights in their writings.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text "UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE" below it.

2.3 Southern African Perspective

After the launch of the Circle Brigalia Bam, Deputy Director of the South African Council of Churches tried to establish a South African National Circle in 1991. Although research and the writing of women's experiences in the church was encouraged, this did not materialise (Bam, 1991). This was very disappointing, especially as the policy was to include women of all races and religions who were willing to write about their experiences of God in the context of Africa. Despite this setback a South African National Circle was established in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1991. The Cape Town Circle has lasted more than 12 years and members include black, white, South Africans, Malawians, Swazis, Basothos, African

traditional Christians, Jews and Muslims. There is also a very active Circle in Natal, and a group in Pretoria (in Phiri, 2004).

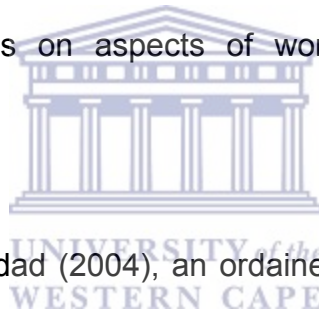
A number of books have emerged from this Circle and these works are of relevance for this study because the stories document the contribution made by African women of faith to church and society. Examples include “Claiming Our Foot Prints: South African Women Reflect On Context, Identity And Spirituality”, edited by Denise Ackermann (1997), who is a leading feminist theologian and acted as co-coordinator of the Cape Town Chapter for 10 years. Another member, Azila Reisenberger edited ‘Women’s Spirituality In The Transformation Of South Africa’ in 2002. Denise Ackermann published another book in 2003 titled “After The Locusts: Letters From A Landscape Of Faith”. An earlier book – “Women Hold Up Half the Sky” -- edited by Ackermann, Draper and Mashinini (1991) deserves particular attention, because it reflects on the position of women in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa and examines the progress in South Africa of feminist church history and theology.

Dorothy Ramodibe (1996), a lay woman from Soweto, Johannesburg, has also raised issues from her experiences in the Roman Catholic Church. “I experienced terrible oppression from men in our society and even in the church, where I expected my salvation to come from” (Ramodibe, 1996:14). She claimed that [with few exceptions] men make decisions affecting the church, even though women make up the majority of the people in the church (Govinden, 1991; Ramodibe, 1996; Rakoczy 2004:198). She attributes this to the fact that women are treated as minors and inferior to men in both society and the church (Fiorenza, 1993:32; Ramodibe, 1996:16; Rakoczy 2004).

Ramodibe argues that because of the vested interests of those in the hierarchical structures, the church is one of the most oppressive structures in society today. According to Ramodibe the churches in South Africa cannot be “improved, but need to be renewed”. For effective change, says Ramodibe, “men have to be liberated to accept women [and] then the re-created church will be a source and agent of liberation, justice and peace in all respects” (Ramodibe, 1996:18).

2.4 Anglican South African theologians

Women closely associated with the South African Anglican Church are the authors of the two texts below. These texts are very helpful to my research as they provide insights from South African theologians on aspects of women’s experience of church in particular contexts.



In the first article Beverley Haddad (2004), an ordained Anglican priest and lecturer in religious studies, explores women’s experiences of “manyano groups” (prayer unions). The article investigates how African women try to find spaces within the manyano groups and various church societies. Haddad explains how the women gather countrywide on Thursday evenings to share in extempore prayer and praise -- public sharing of their problems and lived reality of survival, in direct relation to biblical text – and to fundraise internally by sharing their meagre finances. A distinguishing feature of Indigenous African Women’s Christianity is the wearing of a church uniform – normally a black skirt with a blouse, girdle and hat in one of a variety of colours – each colour identifying a particular denomination. Haddad says that manyano practice results in “a very different experience from those women listening to theological sermons in male

hierarchical church structures” (Haddad, 2004:9-10). She argues further that, even though the women in these organisations do not recognise themselves as “feminists, they use this space to carry out practices of resistance that are consistent with the women’s theological project” ((Haddad, 2004:4). She believes that the manyano movement is a site of struggle, survival and resistance that needs to be recognised as an influential space for indigenous women of the church.

In contrast to Haddad’s exploration of women creating their own experiences of church, the next text speaks directly to my research as it considers women’s experience in the formal structures of the Anglican Church. Dr Betty Govinden (1991) a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Durban, Westville, and frequent CPISA representative at national and international levels, questions whether the church is really in touch with women’s deepest needs. She reflects on the women’s movement within the traditional Anglican faith and says that after years of invisibility and silence, both women academics and women involved in practical action are now discovering their own voices. Dr Govinden argues that equal weight should be given to both voices. “Liberation in all forms is at the core of the Christian gospel” (Govinden, 1991:292). She feels that the church would be wise to carefully consider – as part of the mission and evangelism – women’s changing cultural context, and not to dismiss the women’s movement as subversive. Intrinsicly, the issue is not about the ascendancy of women over men, but about a move towards equality, where men and women are finally reconciled in a “renewed humanity”.

Next I explore the perceptions of women closely associated with the Diocese of Cape Town. Although the views expressed cover a range of topics they speak directly to my research question.

2.5 Cape Town Anglican theologians

Phoebe Swart-Russell's doctoral thesis, UCT (1991) provides a historical account of women's experiences and the debates surrounding the ordination of women in the CPUSA and provides valuable contextual information pertinent to this research. Of similar value are the journal articles by Cynthia Botha (2004a and 2004b), a self-supporting assistant Anglican priest, who reports on the historical events related to women's journeys in the church, and makes reference to a conference held in 2002 to celebrate the first ten years of the ordination of women to the priesthood. Wilma Jakobsen (2003), an Anglican priest and once chaplain to Archbishop Tutu, provides a more detailed account of the conference. She describes how women have lost their voices through their upbringing, through their fear of the consequences of speaking out, and their fear of rejection and belittlement, and she also outlines the challenges posed to the CPUSA after the 2002 conference. Three in particular are very relevant to this research: How is the church to be a place of mutual ministry where leadership is shared equally between men and women? How is the church to be open to the ministry of women in their sometimes different and often challenging ways? How is the church to offer gender education at all levels of ministry in the church? (Jakobsen, 2003). She argues that many of the church structures today still inhibit women from realizing their full potential within the life of the church.

My Diocese of Cape Town, says Jakobsen, began ordaining women deacons in 1988 [and women priests in 1992] ... [but] although there is a Canon and an Archdeacon, women are not in real leadership and decision-making positions in the CPSA. We cannot afford to sink into tokenism.

The Anglican Clerical Directory for 2005 estimates that 28 women clergy have been ordained in the Diocese of Cape Town (Table Bay region) since 1992. The following breakdown in table 1 reinforces Jakobsen’s (2003) argument that women are not in real leadership and decision-making positions as most of the women priests are employed as assistant priests. The statistics did not specify whether the three deacons are vocational deacons. If not the three deacons are probably preparing for a second ordination as priests and usually serve a curacy under the authority of a rector in a parish. As such they hold no decision-making role.

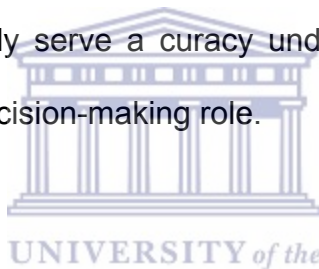


Table 1

Total number of clergy	298	Total number of women clergy	28
		Canon and rector	1
		Rectors	5
		Archdeacon and rector	1
		Assistant Priests	13
		Deacons	3
		Hospice chaplain	1
		Others: Connected to projects like Fikelela (Aids Centre)	3
		Retired	1

I conclude this section by briefly exploring what Anglican women, Cathy Powell and Rosemary Stodel, have said about how the structures of the CPSA relate to women and how women cope with the tensions of living within this hierarchical church structure. Stodel’s text is an examination assignment towards a Diploma in Theology, Cape Town (2004, unpublished) and the Powell documents are housed in the archive section of the

University of the Witwatersrand. I requested the Powell documents from the librarian at Witswaterrand via email and she posted the documents to me. I also contacted Rosemary Stodel telephonically and she forwarded the documents to me by email. The texts are valuable for this research and deserve discussion as they raise a wide range of women's experiences in the CPSA.

Cathy Powell (2002), lawyer and nominated leader of the Transformation Board, reported to Provincial Synod on the slow pace of transformation in the CPSA. She claimed that even though there is only a limited number of ordained women clergy even this has not been accepted by some male parishioners. "Some men refuse to take Holy Communion from a woman priest". According to Powell,

Women's late entry into the priesthood, the prejudice they face within the church, and their chronic under-representation at all higher levels of church governance, are an insult to women and a denial of God's wish for them to fulfill their potential as human beings.

Powell concluded that as the church structures are top heavy the church is inherently incapable of change because transformation is a threat to vested interests and a structure is a collection of vested interests (Ramodibe, 1996; Powell, 2002). Powell argues that by implementing the Transformation Board as an official structure, "the CPSA creates a false impression of working towards transformation, when the church, as an institution, is not" (Powell 2002).

Some women hold more optimistic views. One such is Rosemary Stodel, a recent Anglican theology graduate, who says, "Anglican women are allowed to serve the

church at both synod and diocesan levels, and providing the Bishop is in agreement, are ordained”. She optimistically speculated that, “perhaps the next Electoral Assembly will see a woman elected as Bishop” (Stodel, 2004). However, this did not materialise. At the end of March 2004, the proposal to consecrate the nominated female bishop failed to secure a majority vote. At the end of March 2004, the exclusively male synod of Bishops at Elective Assembly (in the Western Cape), clergy and elected laity (both male and female) appointed yet another male bishop.

3 The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA)

The following four books are central to this section of the research and include: The ‘Diocesan Manual of the Diocese of Cape Town’ (2002). A team of workers led by Canon Louis Bank produced the Manual. Other members consisted of three clergy and two lay persons (who both worked as secretaries within the diocese). The Manual was published as an aid and as resource material for parish priests and ordained and non-ordained members. ‘The Anglican Way’ by Canon John Suggit (1999) offers a brief look at various topics related to Anglican membership. ‘The Constitution and Canons’ (2001) offers a more detailed account of the legal and pastoral parameters for life and ministry of the CPSA. This is supported by the ‘Acts of Diocesan Synod’ (1997). All the books mentioned are freely available from the Diocesan office but I doubt that many Anglican parishioners have read them.

3.1 The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA): The Institution

In South Africa Anglican chaplains [from England] ministered to expatriates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Robert Gray came as the first bishop in 1848 and

in 1870 the Anglican Church in South Africa became an independent Province, with its own Constitution and Canons and its own archbishop (Suggit, 1999:15-16). As such, Church Law, called 'Canons', governs the CPISA. According to Article XXIV.8 of the Constitution the Metropolitan shall be the Archbishop of Cape Town (Bank, 2002:B.2). At present the CPISA has 23 dioceses spread over seven countries in Southern Africa, including the South Atlantic Island of St Helena. The CPISA has more than two million members representing many languages, racial and cultural groups (Bank, 2002:B.1). According to Suggit (1999:30) half of the CPISA dioceses have a "Black" diocesan bishop, including the archbishop of Cape Town. He suggests that the increase in numbers of "Black" bishops and clergy in the last 30 years more properly reflects the composition of church members, most of whom are "Black".

3.2 Gender and the CPISA

According to Synod resolutions regarding the Mother's Union (MU) and Anglican Women's Fellowship (AWF) both the Provincial President and the Provincial worker of the MU and only the Provincial President of the AWF may attend Provincial Synod. They have the power to speak at synod meetings but no voting power. In the case of the MU the church recognises the work done in the "sphere of home and family life".

'Canons' (2001:171) states that regarding the gender of clergy, effective from September 1991

All references to bishops, clergy, priests and episcopal, clerical or priestly office, in the Canons, Constitution, and other formularies of this Province, shall be interpreted inclusively to mean men or women.

Despite this move gender remains a hotly debated issue in the CPSA. At the 2005 Provincial synod Archbishop Ndungane drew attention to the fact that both men and women in the church have bought into patriarchy. He encouraged them to turn away from the practice.

We [the CPSA] must declare that the gospel hope of abundant life is as much for women as for men. We must repent of the historic patriarchy of our faith, which so often colludes with discriminatory attitudes in our culture (Ndungane, 2005b:87).

Overall there has been a fair amount of literature exploring the CPSA, and much of this has come from the perspective of women. The works of Ackermann (1991; 1997), Wilma Jakobsen (2003), Powell (2002), Rakoczy (2004) and Stodel (2004) all speak about women's experiences in the church and were particularly useful for this study. Anyone interested in the international perspective of women's experiences in the church would find the writings of Fiorenza (1988; 1993; 2001) and Clifford (2001) of interest. From an African perspective we turn to leading feminist theologians Oduyoye (1996) and Phiri (2004) who document women's accounts of alternate formats of religious expressions. Fiorenza (1988), Rakoczy (2004), Ruether (1979) and Young (1993) provide a brief glimpse into the history and roles and ministry of women in the early Christian church movement and later in established religious communities (monastic orders). At the same time the writings of Bank (2002) and to a certain extent Suggit (1999) tend to be in line with more traditional church writings, largely ignoring the disparities between men and women's roles, and tend to be more quantitative in approach.

Chapter Two

Methodology

The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) supposedly champions the political rights of the oppressed. Yet, as Powell (2002) points out, vested interests and the top-heavy patriarchal structures render the CPSA incapable of authentic transformation (Ackermann, 1991; Botha, 2004; Ramodibe, 1996). However, despite the many years of invisibility and enforced silence, women continue to work towards a church that is more rather than less inclusive. In the last century, particularly, certain meaningful changes occurred in the CPSA structures, such as women's ordination and women's involvement in non-ordained ministry (Botha, 2004; Rakoczy, 2004). Notwithstanding these positive changes, I based my thesis on the assumption that not all the members – both male and female – of the CPSA-community welcome women's ministry. This exploratory case study investigated the views of a group of eight mature women from different socio-economic and racial backgrounds, currently involved in non-ordained ministry in a particular parish of the CPSA, Cape Town Diocese.

Problems Experienced

Based on the purposive selection criteria (Neuman, 2000) I compiled a sample of eight women between the ages of 40 and 70 -- from different racial backgrounds -- who are all involved in some aspect of non-ordained ministry. I was immediately faced with language barriers. I am fluent in English and Afrikaans but cannot speak Xhosa. Financial restrictions prevented me from hiring the services of a translator so I had to

ensure that the persons selected for interview met the specified selection criteria whilst simultaneously being fluent in either English or Afrikaans.

An important aspect of this research was maintaining the participants anonymity (De Vault, 1999). In some instances this was very difficult as many of the participants operate in licensed and high-profile roles within the hierarchical structure of the parish church. I wanted to produce an analysis that did not distort the participants lived reality whilst also fairly and accurately reflecting the described aspects of the participants Christian life experience. To solve some of the problems of identification, especially of participants whose senior positions added weight to their arguments, I substituted pseudonyms for each participant and also used collective voices. For instance I picked out one or two voices to substantiate the arguments, e.g. several participants said that, "... ". After reflection I refrained from changing any other details of their identity as I did not want to distort their reality. Additionally to augment certain arguments I used narratives by feminist theologians such as Wilma Jacobsen (Mayson, 2004).

I spent many hours reflecting on the data collected to analyse the experience of the participants into more abstract and general terms that linked the individual participant to processes outside her immediate social world (Acker et al., 1991). Yet the analysis that follows does not pretend to be objective. As a feminist researcher I realised that I was not an impartial observer but that I bring my own social constraints, identity and prejudices to the research process, which identity has shaped, to a large extent, my understanding of other peoples identities and cultures. I accept that in the end it was my understanding of the situation that structured my write-up (Edwards, 1990:486).

I recognized particularly that the years of conducting awareness raising and empowerment workshops around gender-related issues for mainly Christian women in and around the Western Cape influenced my perceptions of patriarchal subordination greatly. To deal with my own subjective opinions I kept a research journal during the interview and analysis process which served as a valuable reflexive tool. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) however, we need to celebrate these influences as this allows the researcher to become an equal partner in the creation of the data, rather than a reporter of findings.

The best feminist analysis ... insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical place as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research (Harding, 1987:9).

Smith (1995) argues that the relationship between the researcher and research topic, as well as the ideological and socio-political persuasions of the researcher, are acknowledged as impacting on the research process and conclusions.

Methodological framework

One of the main debates between research scientists and social researchers occur around the issue of quantitative vs. qualitative methods (Kelly, 1994). Quantitative research tends to be seen as apolitical, ahistoric and scientific, reproducible and verifiable (Durrheim, 1999; Jayaratne, 1991; Maynard, 1994). Quantitative studies processes and produces supposedly objective data, "inquiry is purported to be within a value-free framework" (Maynard, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:8). The quantitative study often engenders "a science that silences too many voices" (Denzin and Lincoln,

2000:10), and “emphasizes measurement or analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:8). Given that I wanted to explore individual women’s perceptions I believed a quantitative methodology was not ideal for this study.

In contrast "qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes-counter disciplinary field that crosscuts the humanities, social and physical sciences" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:27; Jayaratne, 1991; Kelly, 1994; Maynard, 1994). Emphasis is placed on the political nature of the research and on the intimate relationship between the researcher and participant. Qualitative research focuses more on subjective experiences and meanings and so seemed ideal for my purposes. The method also aids with self-reflexivity, a fundamental element in the entire research process (De Vault, 1999; Maynard, 1994; Mies, 1983; Smith, 1995; Wolf, 1996). Hollway (cited in Banister, 1994) provides a critique of objectivity as in itself perceived as a particular (culturally masculine) kind of subjectivity. Furthermore the qualitative approach is concerned with creating useful knowledge that can be used to "make a difference and be empowering to the participant" (Kelly, 1994:28). While I do not have the power to change the participants perceptions I hopefully constructed research which raises consciousness on issues pertinent to structural dimensions of the church and which explores the representation of stereotypical gendered roles in order to add to the current debates.

I chose to conduct my research as a qualitative one. Within the framework of qualitative research a variety of methods such as case studies, personal experience, life stories,

interviews, observation etc., can be used (these methods can be used in quantitative studies too, the difference lies in how they are used). For the purpose of this research I chose the semi-structured, in depth, face-to-face interview as my method of collecting data (Anderson and Jack, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Greef, 2002; Mies, 1983). This approach was the most suitable to support my research. Greef (2002:292) defines qualitative interviews as “attempts to understand the world from the participants point of view, to unfold the meanings of people’s experiences [and] to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”. De Vault (1999:73) advocates that researchers listen in ways that are “personal, disciplined and sensitive to differences”. This model provided me with a myriad of insights into the research question; insights that I do not believe would have emerged had I employed quantitative methods. The methodology views the participants as the experts and allows for an in-depth exploration of their complex lived reality. In addition this approach encouraged open-ended questioning and in turn allowed the participants a certain amount of freedom to dictate the interview proceedings, counteracting, in some way, the power relations prevalent in the research process.

To further offset the power imbalances I consciously applied the principles of feminist research to my work (Baker, 1992; Acker et al., 1991). Prime among these was to use research methods of gaining knowledge that were not oppressive or harmful to the participants; to promote collaborative and reciprocal relationships; to listen to the active voice of the participants and to recognize an individual woman’s ‘personal’ problem as similar to many women’s ‘personal’ problems – which renders the personal political (Acker et al., 1991; Baker, 1992; Greef, 2002).

There is now considerable literature as to what constitutes feminist research. Intrinsically there is acceptance among many feminists that there is a distinctly feminist mode of enquiry. According to Banister (1991) "feminist" interventions form a central component to the research process and product made by the feminist researcher. So while there is no specifically recognized feminist method or methodology, how feminists proceed with a piece of work is evaluated in relation to its purposes and what it seeks to, and does achieve (Maynard, 1994). While I conducted the research on and with women, therefore, and used feminist methodology, the research does not automatically qualify as feminist. Kelly et al., (1994:27) argues that feminism as praxis is not based on "the simple fact of women sharing a gender in common, but on a common agenda, the liberation of women". The way in which the work has been structured, conducted and interpreted locates my work as feminist.



Locating myself within the research

Insider/Outsider status

As a "White", middle-class, female member of the CPSA and part of the academy I was positioned as an insider/outsider. Beoku-Betts (1994) explores standpoints of the researcher with "insider- and outsider- status". She discovered that her relationship as an insider was based on a process of negotiation rather than granted immediately on the basis of ascribed status. Other disadvantages are that as an insider the participants and the insider can create "blindness by the researcher" because of the closeness with the participant. This blindness can be problematic because the researcher assumes an in-depth knowledge of the participant that is incorrect. I reflected on this process

vigorously and became aware of my own limitations regarding the participants experiences. I was conscious that I did not have true insight into their lived experiences. This also placed some distance between the participants and me as did other dynamics such as marital status, cultural, professional and racial backgrounds. I found that the disadvantages were countered/outweighed by advantages.

I had conducted awareness workshops as well as a series of gender sensitization workshops at this particular parish so many of the participants knew me. One advantage was that a degree of trust existed and the majority of participants shared their experiences quite openly (Fontana and Frey, 1998). The participants and I were also located in a similar church structure which meant that I had more in depth knowledge of the local setting than an outsider and did not have to learn about the special nuances of meanings discussed (Acker, 1991). This increased the validity of the data collected (Banister et al., 1991; Järvilnomen, 2003). As explanation of validity Plummer (2001) says validity is concerned with making sure that the technique is actually studying what it is supposed to. He provides an example of a clock that is consistently 10 minutes fast as being reliable but invalid since the clock does not tell the correct time. Additionally Plummer (2001) argues that it is impossible for a researcher to be completely free of bias. Rather than nullify the variables the researcher should take note and publicly describe the variables.

Research Design and Data Collection

Aims

The central aim of this study is to explore how female members of a Christian parish of

the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Cape Town Diocese, experience and perceive their roles in the church. A secondary aim is to investigate how gender stereotyped divisions influence the women's experiences. As the study gives voice to and validates the experiences of the women who have challenged traditional positions in the CPSA to attain gender equality in non-ordained ministerial appointments I consider the study to be political in nature (Maynard, 1994).

Participants and selection criteria

Originally I planned to use a random selection for the interviews but upon reflection and given the constraints placed upon a mini Masters research project, I realised that this particular approach would limit the research, as I wanted to reflect the diversity of this parish. For this reason I changed to purposive sampling as outlined by (Neuman, 2000). My criterion for selection was that the women must occupy some non-ordained ministerial position. I was particularly interested in the periods from 1960's to date. Of necessity this concentrated the sample mostly on middle-aged women. Additionally the women must have been involved in church ministry for many years and constitute a sample of the different racial communities involved in the church. May (1993) provides three additional conditions for successful interviews. First is the question of accessibility (whether the participant has access to the required information). The second condition is cognition or an understanding of what is required of the participant. The last condition is that of motivation. Under this condition the researcher must make the participant feel that their participation and answers are valued (May, 1993). Based on these criteria I constructed a list of persons and approached them for interviews.

The following eight women (all of whose names have been changed) met these criteria; had also been actively involved in licensed and unlicensed non-ordained ministry in this particular parish and agreed to participate in my study:

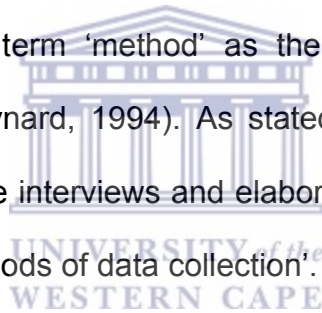
- Joy, a 60-year-old 'White' married English-speaking woman joined this parish in 1975. She is a full-time homemaker and is a high-profile participant who has been actively involved as a licensed leader throughout her 30-year association with this parish.
- Sheena, a 57-year-old 'White' married English-speaking woman joined this parish in 1982. She works flexi-time for her husband and is a high-profile participant in a position of licensed leadership and influence.
- Lindi, a 65-year-old 'Black' divorced woman with four children, three of whom died between 1960 and 2000, joined this parish in 1985. She works as a domestic and is a leader of the Xhosa MU (Mother's Union). In addition she performs unlicensed roles in the parish. Her mother tongue is Swazi, but she speaks fluent English and Xhosa
- Maggie, a 65-year-old 'Coloured' married Afrikaans-speaking woman joined this parish in 1996. She is a community health care worker and is a high-profile participant in licensed leadership positions.
- Barbara, a 60-year-old 'White' married English-speaking woman joined this parish in 1985. She is a full-time homemaker. She performs unlicensed ministries within the church and community.
- Sophia, a 40-year-old 'Coloured' married woman was baptized in this particular parish. She is a social worker and is a high-profile participant who has been actively

involved in licensed leadership since joining the youth league. Her mother tongue is Afrikaans but she is fluent in English.

- Thandi, a 50-year-old 'Black' married woman joined this parish in 1995. She works as a community health worker and performs unlicensed roles in the parish. Her mother tongue is Xhosa but she is also fluent in English and Afrikaans
- Amanda, a 65-year-old 'White' married English-speaking woman joined this parish in 1976. She worked in the nursing professions and, since retirement, has increasingly become involved in high-profile licensed leadership.

Methods

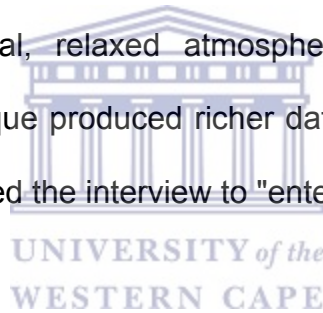
Sandra Harding refers to the term 'method' as the techniques used for gathering research material (cited in Maynard, 1994). As stated earlier I decided to use semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews and elaborate on the reasons for using this approach more fully under 'methods of data collection'.



Compiling the Interview Schedule

In line with Greef (2002) and Smith's (1995) literature I compiled a set of questions to guide me during the interviews. These questions forced me to think about the interview and any difficulties that may be encountered. I concentrated on open-ended questions to allow the participant as much freedom as possible. I also prepared some prompts to funnel the interview into more specific areas of interest (Greef, 2002; May, 1993; Smith, 1995; Ulin, 2002). I reflected on how best I could obtain the participants feelings on whether women should be consecrated as bishops. I decided to use a vignette towards the end of the interview (Smith, 1995).

Two participants requested that the questions be forwarded to them in advance. I was not prepared for the participants reliance on the questions. They had obviously studied the questions and prepared their answers. To offset this rigid process I encouraged the participants to take the lead when new avenues of thought were introduced and diverted the participants attention from the interview schedule by the technique of funneling (Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995). During this part of the interactions the participants often introduced new topics of interest that I had not previously considered (Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995). During the later interviews I discarded this schedule as I found that the schedule separated me from the participants. I felt that as the researcher I held the questions and the participants had to answer those questions. This interfered with my attempts to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere of two women involved in conversation. This latter technique produced richer data and new insights, certainly for me, on certain topics and enabled the interview to "enter novel ideas" (Smith, 1995:12).



Negotiating Participation

I approached the identified participants telephonically to invite them to be part of the research. I explained the aims of the research clearly, namely that the research was for my master's degree and that while the contents of the interview would remain confidential I might use some of the material for publishing at a later stage. I also explained that the parish in question would not be identified. If required, pseudonyms would be used during transcripts, further ensuring the anonymity of the participants. The participants were not pressurised or coerced to be part of the research. At the same time I asked whether the participants would be comfortable if I used a tape recorder

during the interviews. All the participants agreed to this request (Greef, 2002; Plummer, 2001; Smith, 1995). These points are highlighted further under 'Ethical issues'.

As soon as the participants agreed to be part of the interview process I forwarded a short letter of thanks by either email or post to the individual participant (Greef, 2002; Plumber, 2001). As mentioned two of the participants requested that I also forward a copy of the interview schedule prior to the interview. I made a point of explaining that the questions served as a guide only. I was keenly aware that as a feminist researcher I was in a position of accountability to the women participants of the research (Banister et al, 1991). The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time to the participant and at a venue of their choice. Acker et al., (1991) and Plummer (2000) both point out the importance of a non-threatening environment whilst conducting the interviews.

Method of Data collection

In line with qualitative methods I chose the semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interview as my investigation tool (Smith, 1995). This method of interviewing has been the research technique most often associated with qualitative methods but is, of course, suitable to produce both quantitative and qualitative data (Maynard, 1994). This method suited my research, as I was interested in the subjective stories of the eight participants who were involved in non-ordained church ministry. This method also facilitated empathy and rapport between the researcher and participant and also allowed for greater "flexibility of coverage" (Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995; Ulin et al., 2002). Additionally the semi-structured in-depth interview is in line with feminist methodology, as it counters androcentric knowledge production by allowing women participants to articulate what



they feel are the most important issues affecting their lives (Anderson and Jack, 1991). Very importantly the approach allows for a breaking down of power relations and encourages a more human relationship between the researcher and participant (Smith, 1995).

After each interview I transcribed all the tapes personally (Emerson et al., 1995; Smith, 1995). I employed the qualitative thematic analysis approach which helped me to capture the richness of the themes that emerged from the discussions with the participants (De Vault, 1999; Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995; Ulin, 2002).

Procedures

Conducting the semi-structured interview

One of the eight participants was very eager and immediately contacted me to make arrangements for an interview at her home. Greatly encouraged and lulled into a place of false security, I conducted that interview at the beginning of November and transcribed the data and started analyzing the content. Then I relaxed for about a week before casually resuming my quest for appointments. Suddenly everybody was too busy to accommodate the interviews. By choice the participants suggested January or February. Surprisingly I lost none of the participants during the lapsed period but I lost valuable working time.

I was aware that the participants were doing me a favour (Plummer, 2001) and I arrived at the venues well in advance of the appointed time. I started the interview with an ice-breaker: a general question about the participant and then moved to the ethical issues

of the informed consent form (Kent, 2000) and negotiated the research contract between the participant and the researcher. Once the consent forms were signed and I informed the participants of their rights during the interview I also made sure that the participants did not feel pressurised to be part of the research. Part of the qualitative approach (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995) is to show the participant that their opinions and views are valued. This is done by listening to the participants attentively and to make frequent eye contact. This ensures that the participants know that what they are saying is of interest. I also allowed a period of silence for reflection (Fontana and Frey, 1998). This proved very effective for quite often, after a pause, the participant started talking again; sometimes elaborating on a subject, or reverting back to a previous statement to expand on the subject. Occasionally the participant clarified her understanding of the question, illustrating that they were not passive in the question and answer structure (Banister, 1995; Fontana and Frey, 1998; Greef, 2002; Smith, 1995). Each interview lasted just over an hour. At the end of each session I thanked the participant for their time and willingness to be part of the research. One of the eight women requested a copy of the transcription for her attention and records.

Whether I conducted the interview at the participant's home or at my home I endeavoured to create an atmosphere of comfort and trust and provided emotional support where needed. As the following incidents show I was not always in control of the situation.

One particular participant had requested that the interview take place at her employer's home. She was employed as a domestic worker. I contacted the employer to make sure

this arrangement was in order and was assured there would be no problem. The participant welcomed me at the front door, introduced me to her employer and then seated me at the dining room table. The table was laid with tea cups and tray and a home-baked cake. Her employer was gracious but initially quite disturbing as she noisily scratched for some item in the sideboard drawers. Then one of the little dogs urinated in the corner and she asked the participant to clean up the mess. This incident certainly disturbed the rapport (Fontana and Frey, 1998) I was trying to establish with the participant and I was sharply challenged with concepts of social class and race. I felt that I was part of the participant's powerlessness in her working environment and I did not want to compound those feelings of powerlessness by continuing the interview. I turned the tape recorder off to give the participant ample time to perform this request and to compose herself afterwards. When she returned to the table I offered to return on another day. She refused the offer and we proceeded with the interview. When I returned home I journalled my feelings and reflected on the emotions I had experienced particularly as the participant made no mention of the incident during the rest of the interview. On another occasion I set up an appointment with a participant and when I arrived at the house there was nobody at home. The second appointment I was luckier, the husband was home. I spoke to the participant's husband for about half an hour when the phone rang. The participant had been delayed and forgot the appointment and asked that the appointment be postponed yet again.

On reflection of the raw data collected I felt happy that the participants had responded freely to open-ended questions and had imparted their own experiences spontaneously. I therefore felt that the credibility of the data had not been compromised.

Transcriptions

Banister (1991) argues that the transcription process is part of the research process as the researcher recalls the actual interview impressions, perceptions and feelings. On completion of the interviews I recorded my impressions of the interview immediately as I felt this would aid me during the analysis. Greef (2002) recommends that the researcher transcribes and analyses the interviews while the data is still fresh. I transcribed each interview verbatim (Emerson et al., 1995; Smith, 1995). Basically each transcription took about eight hours, a very time consuming exercise. One participant spoke almost entirely in Afrikaans. Before translating the data I captured this text verbatim too.

Translation into English

Finnegan (1992) points out that translating interviews and data is inevitably problematic as interviews are always embedded in particular cultures. The act of translation represents an attempt to capture and transplant nuances from one language to another so that the transcriber does not lose the original meanings. With this particular translation I was faced by translating Afrikaans jargon and vernacular phrases that were richly descriptive. I aspired to retain the spirit of the discussions; to allocate similar weighting to the words and to consider the extent to which the act of translation implies the construction of a particular reality (Swart, 1998). I hope I have remained true to my participants meanings.

Data Analysis

Banister et al., (1994:54) defines a thematic analysis as “a coherent way of organizing or reading some interview in relation to specific research questions”. Themes qualify as statements or issues that appear repeatedly throughout the raw data. In contrast the topic can appear randomly but hold analytical importance. Furthermore, by using a qualitative thematic analysis the researcher brings a public spotlight on the decision making process in establishing findings (Ely et al., 1991:156). It is important to realise that analysis is selective (Banister et al., 1994). Therefore, two researchers can identify different themes and come up with different interpretations of the same data, and this is where my insider status must have shaped the study (Smith, 1995; Ulin, 2002). I entered a phase of reading the transcripts and making copious notes. Then I pondered those notes and re-read everything again without making notes. I concentrated on events (past and present) and structure (how this was perceived by the participants, activities, metaphors, feelings about their activities and facts (what happened and how) and looked out for contradictions (Anderson and Jack, 1991; Ulin, 2002). In line with Smith’s (1995) approach, I then read the transcripts and used the margins to identify any emerging themes, which I highlighted in different coloured pens. Then I coded the transcripts by inserting line numbers as an identifier of instances (Smith, 1995). Using the computer’s cut and paste facility I generated a new sheet with the main theme heading and inserted all the participants pertinent quotes and corresponding line identifiers (Ulin, 2002). I essentially created a master list per theme, ordered coherently. I was now ready to start analyzing the broad themes into sub-themes (Smith, 1995).

The first two main themes were governed by the first set of questions on the interview schedule but the remaining main theme was completely new. Smith (1995) argues that good qualitative work clearly distinguishes between what the participant said and the analyst's interpretation or account of it. During this process I kept at the forefront May's (1993) argument that while analyzing people's reasons for actions those actions should be seen in terms of their social identity and how their identities are constructed within the social setting in which they live and work. I explain the analysed themes in greater detail in Chapter Three. For the purpose of this research I have analysed what I thought to be the three most important themes: Why women joined the parish church; where women are active in the church; and the impact of patriarchy. I must stress that there were many more themes identified and issues raised but there is no space to discuss them within the limited confines of this study.



Ethical Issues

The ethical statement serves two purposes. Firstly it ensures that the research causes no harm to the participant and secondly protects the researcher. I devised an informed consent form, and have attached it to this study as Appendix 1. All the participants were asked to sign this document. Kent (2000) highlights five elements necessary to protect the participant's right to exercise self-determination: information; understanding; voluntariness; competence of potential participants; actual consent to participate. My consent form clearly outlined the aims of the research and set out the research contract between the participant and the researcher. The form explained the participant's right, i.e. that the participant's involvement in the research is on a voluntary basis, and that the participant has the right to terminate the interview at any stage, without any

questions asked. I gave the participants the option of anonymity and informed them that the parish would not be identified in the research paper. I gained permission to use certain aspects of the research should I wish to publish in the future. Once I explained the purpose of the research and what information would be collected I ascertained the participants willingness to continue with the interview. With the participants permission the interviews were tape-recorded. I personally transcribed the interviews and the tapes were destroyed after the transcriptions (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Fontana and Frey, 1998; Smith, 1995).



Chapter Three

Analysis and discussion

Introduction

Literature shows that women in the CPSA have struggled for the right to have a meaningful role in the church structures (Botha, 2004a and 2004b). This journey has not only been slow but painful as well. Wilma Jakobsen, the first ordained deacon in the Diocese of Cape Town in 1988, recalls the pain she experienced at her friend Wilfred's ordination service where, as an ordained deacon she was allowed into the sanctuary, but she was still not allowed to stand at the altar and celebrate the Eucharist.

I participated in the service chanting the Gospel and taking a chalice. The sense of exclusion at particular moments in the service was excruciatingly painful, and it was only at the end of that day that I allowed myself to feel all the pain. I hope never to experience that kind of pain again. Yet, as the tears flowed, I knew in a paradoxical way, that my own call to priesthood was being affirmed (Jakobsen, 1991:251).

Jakobsen, unlike the participants of this study, is an ordained priest in the CPSA. While doors into the church have opened up for ordained women like her in the last few years, most women involved in the church operate outside of the formal hierarchies. This does not, however, mean that their contribution is marginal, as the following discussion shows. In this chapter I explore the experiences of non ordained women in the CPSA. In discussing their perceptions I begin by asking what attracted my participants to this particular parish of the CPSA in the Diocese of Cape Town.

1. Why women joined the parish church

The participants I interviewed cited many reasons for joining this particular Anglican parish. Primary reasons, however, were access to spiritual and emotional support provided by women church friends, priests and the fellowship of the small Christian

communities (SCCs). While some were “died in the wool” Anglicans, with long family traditions of attending the church, others had been pulled in later in life by marriage and family members, or as a result of a move to Cape Town and the need to establish new networks of community and friends.

1.1 Spiritual and emotional support

This section is closely linked to women’s experience of the church. The interviews highlighted personal problems and crises participants had endured and the way various support structures in the church had effectively helped them to cope. Barbara joined the parish in 1980. Reflecting on a period when her husband went into an isolation ward at hospital with an unidentified illness, she said,

They told me he was slipping away. While he was convalescing our 9-year old daughter was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Then, after years and years of nonsense we discovered that our teenage daughter was using heroin. I don’t think I would actually have managed without the care and the prayers of [my] women [church] friends around me. Just knowing their genuine support gave me strength.... It held me and lifted me ... absolutely....That for me was paramount.

All the participants in this study placed the emphasis on God’s spiritual sustenance as a primary reason for joining the church.

After graduating as a nurse Amanda did her pediatric training and finished her Diploma in Nursing Education at Stellenbosch. She continues,

My experience of church has been very positive. If I think back the church was where I became involved in the charismatic movement. There was a deep love of God in that. Where I cannot take communion every Sunday it does not have that special meaning. I do not give out as much nor do I get in as much. I would never go into a non-conformist church.

Joy recalls how, as a young child, church activities formed part of her life.

I didn't grow up in a family where all went to church every Sunday. I was very lucky that we always lived within walking distance of the Anglican church so that I could always get there ... it was my choice ... I wanted to be there.

She joined this particular parish in 1979 and reflects on the significance of faith in her life today. "Faith is terribly important, but I do not have to be proving my faith to anybody, or even to myself. I just have a wonderful feeling of calm and peace within me and am grounded within my faith ... in my belief and trust in God". Without her deep trust in God Maggie does not believe she would have survived such personal tragedies as an unfaithful husband, the inexplicable death of her 4½-month-old son, near insolvency after being abandoned by her husband and her ensuing depression.

I just had to pull myself together, I said, 'with God's help'.... That is one foundation I have had all my life, which I cannot do without. The church has played a vital role in my life. It is like my daily bread.

I end with Joy's précis of her work with terminally ill people.

You just ask God to help because basically God is providing all the time. One thing I can say to you is that more than one terminally ill person has said to me that they have a sense of security if I am there. Perhaps I just bring with me the presence of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit. Unknowingly.

So for these women it was the support structures in the church that provided access to spiritual and emotional support that led them to the church.

1.2 Emotional support from women church friends or the priest or a combination of both

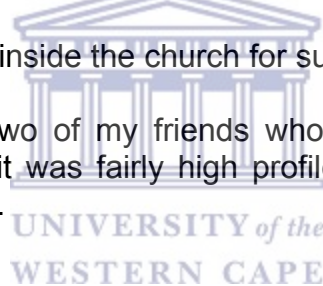
The participants were divided in their opinion as to whether they saw their women church friends or their priests as sources of support. Some participants had a preference for one or the other while others used both sources. Joy relies predominantly

on her woman friends in the church for support and recalls a period before her mother's death.

I got to the stage where I was exhausted. I knew that my friends were just carrying me and lifting me up [in prayer]. In any problem, where I feel I cannot cope, I immediately call on a group of women friends in the church, who, I must say, are mainly lay ministers.

Yet she also feels comfortable speaking about confidential matters to the priest. "I have always felt that I could go speak to the priests". Over and above emotional support women church friends provide practical help too. "When I was in hospital", says Sheena, "some men showed support by visiting and saying, 'are you better now? but mostly it was the women who came in and said, 'what do you need ... how can we help?'" By choice, Amanda restricts her confidences to the male priests and relies on only a select few female friends inside the church for support.

There were only one or two of my friends who really knew [about a particular personal crisis]. Because it was fairly high profile I spoke only to the priest and really got support from him.



Another participant, Maggie, enthused about the support received from priests while she and her husband were recently hospitalized. "At the hospital we were flooded by support", says Maggie, "all the male priests came regularly. There was someone [a priest] there everyday."

Three participants have different views. The first does not rely on the support of church friends or the priest, the second feels let down by some of the resources and the third likes to practice the extempore group prayer methods described by Haddad (2004).

“I remember being at this Anglican parish church since childhood”, says Sophia. She is a 40 year-old woman “in the prime of my life”, a caring mother, a supportive wife and an energetic worker in both the church and her place of employment. Sophia says she believes in keeping her private life private. “I have never gone to female church friends or to the priest. I am a private person. I turn to my mother and my sisters and certain community members for support”. Conversely, Thandi, the wife of a priest who joined the parish in 2002, would welcome emotional support, but she feels triply uncared for. Firstly, by the Anglican church. “What I can tell you is this: as the priest’s wife I don’t feature anywhere. The Anglican church is concerned about the priest, but not about his family or spouse”. Secondly, by members of the main parish. “The people of the main parish, um We are not close. Most of the main parish don’t even know who I am because I worship and work mostly with the women at the outstation [Chapelry Three]”. In contrast she feels like a family member and totally accepted by the women of Chapelry Three. “I feel we are a family ... a community”. Thirdly, by her spouse himself.

I always say to my husband ‘I do not see you as a husband but just as a priest because your work is almost 24 hours per day and six days in a week. I feel so neglected at times that I do not know whether I am married or not.

In this respect Thandi’s views coincide with Mpumlwana’s (1991:372) experience as a priest’s wife. She argues that she has to share her husband, “day and night with others” and that she is expected “never to complain or demand his time”. Lindi joined the Xhosa-speaking community of worshipers in 1985 and found a new family and a base of support in which the community relies on the group in its entirety for spiritual and emotional support in a way which confirms Haddad’s (2004) point that the manyano movement serves as “a site of struggle, survival and resistance”. Lindi explains how the people relate to and respond to each other’s personal problems.

We do not hide our problems. We just mention we have this problem publicly at the church service and ask everyone to please pray for us. Some, they pray for your problem others say, 'this thing that has happened to you, you mustn't be upset about this'. When the people leave the church they continue praying for each other's problems. Because you tell all the people, maybe one of the people say 'Lindi has this problem'. Then I feel they are praying [for me] and I feel better.

In this section the participants provide views of the value placed on emotional support structures received from women church friends and/or priests. While most of the participants consider this an important aspect for joining the church one participant discusses the lack of emotional support she has received. The remaining participants point out other resources such as support received from family and community friends and extempore group prayers.

1.3 Small Christian communities (SCCs)

When I compare the formation of grassroots movements – basic Christian communities (BCCs) – among the predominantly Latin American Roman Catholic women (Aquino, 1993) and the African basic Christian groups (Oduyoye, 1996), I am encouraged by their similarities to the small Christian community (SCCs) of the Anglican church. As discussed in literature the BCCs emerged out of the context of liberation theology in Latin America and have had a profound impact on the church in other parts of the world (Aquino, 1993). They are all lay run and groups meet in homes to reflect on Scripture and how it relates to their lives and struggles. Unlike Ruether's (1988) women church groups, leadership is not restricted to either women or men, and equal partnerships are encouraged. The participants of my study held strong opinions about our Anglican SCCs. Most of the participants identified membership of these weekly gatherings as a key element of being part of the church. Maggie goes so far as to pinpoint her

membership of such a group as one of the highlights of her church experience. “The small Christian community proved to be a support group when I was feeling down and needed to be [spiritually] motivated”. According to Sophia, “This meeting place allows the average man and woman a platform to share their life experiences and problems, with the assurance that everything shared is held in confidence”. She points out that sometimes this venue provides a place for clarifying ambiguities, “We cannot stand up on Sundays and say to the priest, ‘but we do not understand what you are talking about now.’” Similarly, Barbara has been emotionally sustained by her association with her SCC group comprising about eight members, two of whom are men. “Over our eight-week ‘family course’ we developed a close knit relationship. My experience is that the SCC is comfortable ... social ... therapeutic ... and of course, loving”. As far as Sheena is concerned the SCC is a place for possible transformation.

The people change and the church has to somehow change with those people. I think that is why the SCCs are so important. Male and female leaders are selected on the belief that they have some kind of spiritual depth. My experience has been that the leader sometimes asks another member to partner them, or there might be occasions when they ask somebody else in the group to lead a particular section or a block of discussion. In that way the growth of the younger leaders is encouraged.

While some participants thought that the emotional support from SCC membership was a key element in being part of the church, others, who had not tried it, were less sure. “I do not belong to a SCC group. Personally I have quite a resistance to the concept”, says Amanda, “because I think it can become a clique and I think there can be internal conflict in those groups”.

1.4 Family affiliations

In the case of three of these participants there was little or no choice about which church to join. “It was to be Anglican”, says Joy, “there was no question about which church to join”. She recollects how two days after arriving in Cape Town the parish priest knocked at her front door. “I was very surprised. He explained he had received a letter from the parish priest in East London, where we came from. Then on Sunday, of course, I was in church”.

Amanda’s story is similar. “My father was an absolute dear. There was only one church in his life and that was the Anglican church, so we [the children] were very much brought up in the Anglican church”. And to this denomination she has adhered. Another participant, Barbara, attended Sunday school at an Episcopal church in England (equivalent to the South African Anglican church). “My reason for joining this parish”, she laughingly admits, “was to have the children christened”. She only recently became a regular worshipper, “I was involved in the study of philosophy -- which I loved and adored – for many years”. She links her long-term exposure to philosophy with her rediscovery and deeper understanding of the biblical scriptures and her new found commitment to involvement in the church.

When I came back [to church] more regularly - not that I actually ever left - I was able to hear things, and see things, and understand things a bit differently. I felt better able to understand myself. Being in church itself just made a difference. For me it was ... like an awakening into the Christian side of my life.

These three participants relocated to Cape Town from elsewhere, but Sophia and her siblings were born into this parish. She has fond memories of her Sunday school years,

but as she grew older tensions began to emerge around her participation in church activities.

As I became older and resocialised I experienced inner battles about women's role in the church. Soon I confronted the challenges by not being silent on these issues. This caused many vibrations and sometimes I was unpopular with parish leadership.

Now, 24 years later, she feels she has reached a place where she can be an active and proactive member of the church. One of the participants from the group, Maggie, was drawn into the church by her son. She belonged to a Calvinist church, but while her younger son was studying for his confirmation at the Anglican church he persistently encouraged his mother to join his church. "Joshua would ask me when was I coming. So I joined the Anglican church [Chapelry One] about nine years ago".

Amanda, and some of the other participants joined the church for reasons linked to family traditions, and because they were relocated to Cape Town and needed a spiritual home. As discussed below marriage is another reason for joining the church.

1.5 Marriage

The other participants in this study come from different church affiliations. Two participants joined the specific parish through marriage. Sheena was raised in a Presbyterian household and sent to an Anglican school at the age of 12. Although she was drawn to the Anglican faith then -- "I believe it was a 'God incident' in my life" -- she did not become a confirmed member until after her marriage in 1970.

I waited and then I married Roger. His family is Anglican and there was always an understanding that I would become an Anglican. I was confirmed when I was 25. By that time I was desperate to be confirmed as an Anglican.

Thandi also married into the faith. “I was born, baptized and confirmed a Catholic. My family is all Catholic but I got married to an Anglican priest and joined the Anglican church.”

1.6 Companionship

Lindi accompanied her current employer from Swaziland to Cape Town about 20 years ago. Suddenly she was a stranger, in Cape Town, without friends or a church to attend. She had previously belonged to the Alliance church. “I didn’t know anybody”, says Lindi, “especially no other Swazis. My church was there in Swaziland; I really didn’t want to go to the location because it was too far”. She recollects how a fellow employee invited her to the Anglican church, and how this kindness changed her life.

One man was working here and he said, ‘Hi, how are you, where do you worship?’ I said, ‘Nowhere’, because I didn’t know anybody. Then he took me to the Anglican church and I met all the Xhosas at the service. At first I spoke Swazi only, then I learnt Xhosa. I have been worshipping there until now, and this has changed my life.

Barbara is inclined to agree with Ruether’s (1988) claim that women need communion with each other. “Perhaps women just need to be around people more, and they seek that companionship”. Barbara appreciates the way she was accepted especially while she was an erratic worshipper.

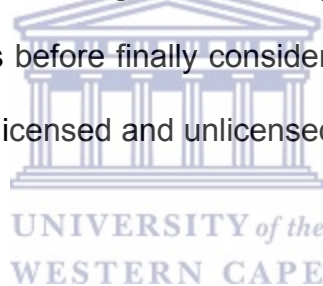
When attending church I would go one Sunday and then miss lots, and there were times I didn’t go very often at all, but all the ladies I knew were just the same with me. If I went to church it was as if I had always been going. That was so nice.

The participants obviously had a variety of reasons for joining this particular parish. The above discussions indicate that fellowship is another key motive for being part of the

church. Collectively the eight participants have been involved, to varying degrees, in about 165 year's worth of non-ordained ministry (either licensed or unlicensed) in this particular parish. This averages out to about 20 years per participant, with the shortest actually being nine and the longest 30 years. In what follows, I explore in more detail the participants activities in the parish, and how they feel about them.

2. Where women are active in the church

This section starts with an exploration of some of the challenges women face in the church, and continues with a description of the participants licensed and unlicensed ministry work. Whereas some operate in licensed leadership and authority positions, others work in primarily unlicensed caring fields. I briefly compare the work women do in the parish and in the Chapelries before finally considering the extent to which ordained and non-ordained women, both licensed and unlicensed, have taken on leadership roles in the church.



Individual priests, such as Jakobsen, consciously work towards bringing about transformation in the church. She describes the major challenges faced by women priests -- and to a large extent by non-ordained women too -- in the Anglican church, pertaining to the issues around conforming to what she describes as 'male spaces'.

My own experience is that women just don't fit neatly into male spaces.... I felt squeezed into a mould which is not one where I can be myself as a woman.... It provided much reflection about the use of power and authority in the church, about leadership and how to exercise it, and about how male and female leadership can be so different. I will always struggle to lead differently, to bring woman's perspective to debates, to preach and pastor as a woman, looking at scripture through woman's eyes, to take time to consult, to use language for God and people which is fully inclusive (cited in Mayson, 2004:54).

Sophia is optimistic about the influence of women priests such as Jakobsen. “The ordination of female priests”, says Sophia, “is very encouraging because most of them are not silent on women’s issues”. This statement is certainly true of Jakobsen (2003) who poses a variety of challenges to the CPISA regarding its discriminatory practices towards women, but, as noted earlier, ordained women are not the focus of this research as this study focuses on non-ordained women who, as the discussion will reveal, take on a wide variety of tasks for a wide variety of reasons.

2.1 Women’s non-ordained ministries

Non-ordained ministries cover a wide spectrum of activities, some of which are licensed by the bishop. Licensed ministries include preaching, leading worship, ministering to the sick, teaching, anointing the sick, and administering the chalice. The priest and the church wardens and councillors jointly administer all parish matters, including parish finances. To facilitate smooth administration each of the church councillors is allocated one or more portfolios such as education, evangelism and prayer, fund raising, maintenance, social responsibility and youth. Another group of licensed ministries is that of lay ministers, who assist the priest with certain liturgical duties and such pastoral duties as visiting and taking communion to the sick. Licensed ministry is recognised by the church structure. All licensed and unlicensed ministries are done on a voluntary basis.

Some unlicensed ministries revolve around beautification of the church and gardens (flower arranging, cleaning brass, tending the gardens), catering, and social responsibilities such as soup kitchens. Others include music, prayer groups which

gather on weekdays at 06:00 to offer prayers of intercession, scribing and needlecraft. I suspect that church communities revere the licensed ministries more than they do some of the unlicensed ministries. Licensed lay ministers are sometimes seen to have more authority than, for example, an unlicensed woman who serves the church through making and pouring tea after a Sunday service. In what follows I explore this idea through discussion with my participants - who are involved in both licensed and unlicensed ministries.

2.2 Licensed ministry

Amanda, a licensed lay minister, considers that Sheena, one of the participants in the study “wields quite a bit of power at council and is strong in her quiet way”. Sheena, the mother of three boys, refrained from becoming ‘too’ actively involved in parish activities until such time as her children were less dependent on her, but almost from the beginning she “belonged to and led a small group”. Over a period of years she increased her responsibilities in the main parish, eventually becoming a licensed lay minister and church councillor. She had been associated with council for about 15 years when she was elected as a church leader prior to a period when the parish was between priests. “During the very rocky nine months of interregnum one of the churchwardens resigned and I had to step in as churchwarden”. Joy is another high-profile participant who has been actively involved as a licensed leader throughout her 30-year association with this parish and serving on parish council for several years. Joy leads and coordinates the lay ministers. She believes that women’s roles in the church are changing. “Women are actually taking stronger roles in the church”, says Joy.

There are those [women] who will always be the nurturers, but looking at women’s

roles in the church, as a whole, I have seen that women are taking on different roles to that of just being in attendance [at church meetings] or being members of the church.

Apart from her time-consuming administrative function Joy is also a member of the newly established liturgy task team and, as her personal ministry, cares for the terminally ill. The participants all agree that, in the main, licensed and unlicensed women manage the church. “Quite honestly, in our church the mature women run the church”, says Amanda, “together with the church council and parish priest”. Similar to Joy, Amanda and Sophia serve both as licensed lay ministers and on the liturgical task team. “I am a lay minister, licensed to take communion to the sick and I am now involved in the liturgy task team”, says Amanda. Sophia explains the process adopted by the new liturgical task team which:

Before, only the male priests and the licensed lay ministers were involved with liturgical planning. The first liturgical session was interesting because it was not only what the priest said that was of relevance, but what members of the liturgy task team said too. In future the team will plan an entire service, such as the Easter service. We will decide what lessons to read and what kind of service to conduct. This will bring more people aboard when the services are conducted.

Amanda headed up the initiation of a healing service. She and other licensed lay ministers pray for sick persons, a ministry shared by Sophia. Amanda reflects on the first services. “I was really nervous but I thought the first two services seemed to go very well”. Since completing a diploma in theology Amanda has been drawn into additional licensed ministries in the main parish. “I am also licensed to anoint the very ill and the dying”. This ministry was previously reserved for the male priest and Amanda is one of a select few female lay ministers now licensed to this new ministry. Although Amanda, Sophia and Joy have common ministries Sophia works predominantly in the Chapelries. She recalls her early entry into a licensed leadership role, unique at the time. “In the

past I served on the Chapelry council and I became one of the first female Chapelry wardens when I was 29”, says Sophia. Apart from her licensed ministry as a lay minister, and a member of the liturgical team and of the healing service previously discussed, Sophia is also drawn into other activities, such as facilitation of meetings and report writing.

I facilitated sessions with Chapelry members, wrote up the reports, and will take the process forward until we roll out the action plan. I think the people feel very safe to participate ... to air some of their problems.

Sophia is also a very active member of the MU (Mothers Union), having served in a leadership capacity for a number of years.

There are many occasions, however, on which the licensed and the unlicensed duties overlap.



2.3 Unlicensed ministry overlapping with licensed ministry

The following story from Joy demonstrates how women are drawn into unlicensed duties while simultaneously performing their licensed duty.

I was the lay minister on duty one Sunday morning when there were problems with both the sprinkler system and the sound system. At one point I was up in the sound system ... and the next moment there I was fiddling about with the sprinklers.

I cannot think of a better example than this one to illustrate how women take it upon themselves to keep the church functioning well: In that case the councillor charged with the maintenance portfolio was not available to handle the crisis, so Joy coped in his absence.

In a similar vein, there is a licensed councillor with the portfolio of 'social responsibility' whose function it is to ensure that certain social activities (such as church fetes, social gatherings and outings) form part of the parish calendar, and unlicensed women like Maggie volunteer their services to help arrange these functions. Their unlicensed work is critical in ensuring the success of the social activities but such voluntary work does tend to be under recognized and under valued. The participants of my study seldom mention the organizational work undertaken prior to the function itself. Maggie says,

We have taken folks out to Robben Island, to Carmel in George, on a spiritual weekend at Volmoed and to visit the Aids Centre in Khayelitsha. There was also that event at Pampoenskraal that I couldn't get to, but the people who attended enjoyed.

She emphasises the importance of informal, and oftentimes, unlicensed labour such as care of the elderly and frail in the church. While she and Barbara are unlicensed, they regularly spend many hours voluntarily visiting and tending to the sick. Maggie explains,

I started a women's group and a TB care group [she worked in the nursing profession before moving to community health]. With my experience and knowledge of people I did a lot of home visits to the sick and frail accompanied by another [unlicensed] woman parishioner.

Barbara gets a great deal of pleasure from caring for people at the quadriplegic centre every Monday.

They [the quadriplegics] inspire me. Over the last three years I have become very friendly with three quadriplegics especially. Two paint with their mouths, and we share our love of painting. I sometimes take my paintings too and we spend a lot of time creatively criticising each other's work.

The third quadriplegic faces particularly difficult challenges as he only has head movement. Despite his restrictions Barbara is impressed by his positive outlook and attitude to life and the way he strives towards living a 'normal life'. "There are things I

help him to do, but he is mentally so alert and we talk about everything. He is my special friend”. While, on the one hand, such work represents outreach by the church, it also tends to be seen simply as individual choice. This is made even clearer when Barbara talks about the ways in which she uses her creative skill of calligraphy. Barbara contributes a great deal of time and energy to the work of the church which isn’t recognised by licensing, nor is her work public knowledge: “I love doing calligraphy, so I write the baptism cards and the registers and whatever is needed at church.... I absolutely love doing that ... it is a pleasure for me”.

Not only are there contrasts between licensed and unlicensed ministries but dynamics differ between the main parish and that of the three Chapelries, as discussed below.

2.4 Contrasts between different communities concerning licensed and unlicensed ministries

Generally Joy considers that the main parish is providing and meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the entire community. “If the people are coming to church regularly I think that means their spiritual needs are being met”. She goes on to say that, “to a large degree we are meeting other needs too: for example we tend and visit people when they are ill”. Maggie concurs with this reality but feels that the licensed leaders of the main parish are inclined to compare the Chapelries, which operate in a more rural setting, with the urban conditions prevailing at the main parish. She explains that the licensed leaders have identified that one of the biggest challenges facing the Chapelries is that of “community non-involvement”. To rectify this situation they have strategised about ways of getting community members more involved. Maggie’s story shows how

instrumental she was in the success of the outreach ministry, both in the social and spiritual arenas.

On the social side what I used to do was invite special people with special gifts from outside the area ... also to make our people feel comfortable that we are all born with natural gifts that we are not using. It was nice for all of us. I called them 'the friends of [Chapelry One]'.

The spiritual side of this outreach ministry was more complicated because Maggie had to skill herself in certain areas before she could help other women.

I first had to find out how to approach Chapelry council whenever a woman asked for training to learn more ... say to become a confirmation class teacher.... I had to motivate the training through the Chapelry council so that they would lobby the main parish.

Maggie warns that this type of outreach work can only be successful if planned over a number of years. "One has to give enough space and time: I would say four to five years". She also stresses the importance of careful planning as a prerequisite for success.

I used to work out my plan for the following year ... and write reports on recommendations and needs. I went to see the church people identified before the year started and said to them, 'This is my plan, how can we do this and make it happen together? ... and then I submitted the recommendations, together with the people responsible for the project.

Although this was an extremely difficult exercise and happened gradually over a period of six years, the results have been very rewarding. Whereas the parish register reflects the increase in Sunday attendance other changes have also occurred.

We [Chapelry One] have become more self-supportive and less reliant on the main parish. There are more [licensed] women on the Chapelry council ... if I had not got involved in the people's lives I would never have known that the people of [Chapelry One] had so much potential, nor that they had such very special gifts.

While Maggie felt that positive change has led Chapelry One to a place of self sufficiency, and a place where women's roles are increasingly being recognized through their being licensed, both Thandi and Sophia have very different perceptions of the other Chapelries.

The social contrasts between Chapelry One and the newly established Chapelry Three are enormous. "Poverty, unemployment, crime and abuse of women are rife in the area", says Thandi. She feels that as the priest's spouse the community of Chapelry Three recognise her as a leader, albeit unlicensed.

I will talk mainly about the [unlicensed] women in the outstation, who need guidance on church matters, and the different women's organisations [MU and Anglican Women's Fellowship].

Thandi feels she contributes a huge amount in terms of offering guidance and counseling, and, as the priest's wife, she is seen as a leader in the church-community. "I must tell you that these women have so many problems of poverty and unemployment and abuse that I end up focusing more on their problems than on the [official] church work." There is little input or support, she feels, from the main parish and the women of Chapelry Three look to her for help. "I am caught up in the middle of their problems, which, at times, frustrates me".

Sophia also recalls an incident at a recent combined Chapelry meeting where she had to confront the congregants' feelings of frustration. As the licensed lay minister she acted as facilitator and was shocked when both women and men alike, vented their feelings of frustrations about being isolated from the main parish. Sophia says,

The [Chapelry members] felt that the planning sessions [held at the main parish] were not too accommodative of them. They felt that the Chapelries represented the Third World and the main parish the First World. They said that the structure does not work well at the moment and in my report I suggested that bridge building is necessary between [the main parish] and the Chapelries.

Having spent several pages discussing the ways in which so many of the women are involved in both non-ordained, licensed and unlicensed positions of leadership, I would like to point out that some women believe that this involvement has its down side. Some of the congregation members, particularly the elderly and many female congregants, may resist women's increased influence in church leadership and administration. For at least two participants, the movement of women into licensed positions of authority is limited by their expectations of the congregation. According to Joy, "a number of older folk find women priests anathema".

I think that women in our parish do make a significant contribution to our church. The one concern I have is that they could almost become too controlling. If you look at our congregation ... we still have a number of the older folk and it doesn't go down well with them ... and this is a very personal feeling ... I get the feeling that it puts people off ... if it comes to women in leadership positions I think that some people, who sit in the pews, might find that difficult.

Amanda agrees. "Many people in the church have a major problem with the new structure of the church, with women [priests] and things like that". She reminded me about, "splinter groups that broke away from the Anglican church because they didn't want women priests in the church".

2.5 Extent to which women have taken on leadership from men

Literature indicates that within the legislative structure of Provincial Synod, all the bishops and deans are male. Procedurally, resolutions are passed by the combined votes of the bishops, in the 'house of bishops', the dual votes of the clergy in the 'house

of clergy', and the elected lay representatives in the 'house of laity' -- both male and female -- from each diocese. In what follows I explore the level of women's advancement into leadership roles in these houses of representation and at parish level.

House of Bishops

Within the 'house of bishops' women have no voice because all the bishops and deans are still male. As mentioned in the literature Suggit (1999) argues that half of the CPUSA dioceses have a "Black" diocesan bishop, including the archbishop of Cape Town.

House of Clergy

According to Powell (2002) women clergy are faced with prejudice within the church, and are chronically under-represented at all higher levels of church governance. She argues that this is an insult to women and a denial of God's wish for women to fulfill their potential as human beings. Considering the hardships experienced by women and their battles to obtain the status of ordained clergy, ten years after the first woman priest was ordained only five women priest were present at the 2002 Synod (Jakobsen, 2003). She also makes a compelling argument about ordained women not being in real decision-making positions, and states that there is a real concern that the church may be guilty of tokenism and of using the ordained woman as "cheap labour". Her statement is reinforced by the clergy statistics quoted previously (see section 2.5 Table 1), where just seven of 28 ordained women clergy hold leadership roles: namely an archdeacon and a canon and five rectors of parishes. The remaining ordained women clergy serve mostly as assistant priests and deacons and function as a chaplain and operate specific projects such as the Fikelela Aids project. More recently the official

representation list for the Diocese of Cape Town 'house of clergy' at the 2005 Provincial Synod records that male to female ordained clergy were represented at a ratio of five to two.

House of Laity

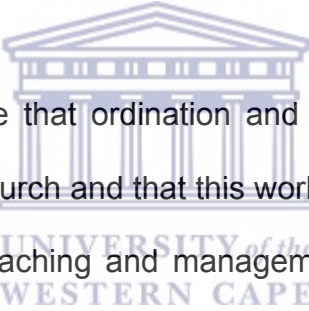
From discussions with my participants it appears that many of the church communities, both female and male, are still heavily influenced by internalised attitudes of patriarchy, a situation highlighted also by the work of Jakobsen (2003) and Ndungane (2005b). Parishioners appear more inclined to elect males both licensed and unlicensed, as 'house of laity' representatives. According to Sophia, "If there are two suitable women and one man up for election, most of the women will still select the man as the leader". My personal experience of similar parish elections coincides with that of Sophia. in that parishioners are more inclined to nominate lay synod representatives from licensed church council and lay minister members – who are also usually male – and who they recognise as leaders than to nominate women. Regarding lay representation at the 2005 Provincial Synod for the Diocese of Cape Town the official "house of laity" lists male to female at a ratio of five to one.

Parish level

Sheena, as a licensed church leader, is unambiguously in a position of leadership and influence. In her experience women are still poorly represented in the church council and other decision-making portfolios.

In my first year on [the main parish] church council there was only myself, the secretary, and one other [woman] delegate from the Chapelries. In fact it has pretty much been like that ever since.

Four of the eight participants are actively involved in licensed leadership roles as lay ministers, and these women have each been on church council at one time or another. Whereas these ministries are all recognised by the church structure, the work performed by the other participants is not recognised by licensing. What is apparent from my discussions with them -- and which will be enlarged upon in subsequent sections -- is that nurturing roles dominate female non-ordained ministries, both licensed and unlicensed. Something that keeps women from progressing is parishioners' perceptions and attitudes -- both male and female -- toward women leaders in the church. As Jakobsen (2003) argues, "this [attitude] is only one of the challenges that faces the structure of the CPISA".



From this information I conclude that ordination and licensing provide recognition for women and men's work in the church and that this work is mostly to do with reproducing the church liturgy, preaching, teaching and management. In addition to the cleaning and tea-making functions, most of the caring, nurturing and supporting work is done by non-ordained, unlicensed women and a few men. Such work, according to the report from Chapelry Three -- and probably most church communities in South Africa -- is the work that most urgently needs to be done ... yet it goes unacknowledged by the church.

At this stage I feel some clarification is in order about the patriarchal nature of the church structure. The literature abounds with references to issues of gender oppression within the hierarchical and patriarchal ecclesial structures.

3 Impact of Patriarchy

Rakoczy (2004:202) defines patriarchy as an ideology i.e. a way of thinking, feeling and organizing human life that legally, politically, socially and religiously enforces male dominance and power. She argues that culture, society and religious institutions -- including the Christian church -- are all structured on this principle. Furthermore a patriarchal society is initiated by men in positions of power, and continues to be maintained primarily by men, and has men as the principal beneficiaries, even though the specifics of these benefits are mediated by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. All men are not equally powerful. Closely related to patriarchy is androcentrism, the equally false understanding that the male is the norm of human life. Thus to be human is to be male, and the female is considered an inferior type of being, 'a second class citizen'. Ackermann (1991) argues that as patriarchy knows no cultural bounds and appears to be found in most societies, it is patriarchy that describes the male-dominated world in which we live today. Patriarchy, however, manifests itself differently and is experienced differently at different times and in different locations. In the next section I attempt to deal with the participants experiences of patriarchy in the contemporary South African church. Additionally I look briefly at traditional gender roles before exploring particular areas where the participants seem to reinforce or challenge stereotypical gender roles. I need to point out that the latter experiences are exercises in contradictions and that, like me, individual participants often hold conflicting positions - thus demonstrating the complexities surrounding these questions.

3.1 Traditional gender roles

Rakoczy (2004) refers to gender as socially learned behaviours and expectations that distinguish between masculine and feminine. But gender is also embedded in our social and religious institutions. Most of the participants identified the CPSA as a patriarchal institution. In Oduyoye's (2004) words, "Women are oppressed through religious ideologies". Rakoczy (2004:110), places an even stronger emphasis than this on gender oppression. She argues that women generally appear in society and the church "as support systems for males, used for the latter's purpose, and often relegated to the margins or total obscurity".

Moreover, because societies place different values on masculine and feminine behaviours, gender is also the basis for relations of inequality between men and women, at least in western societies. Within the gendered division of labour, western women are traditionally associated with the 'private arena' of childbearing, child rearing, emotional care taking, and responsibility for the physical maintenance of the household. In contrast, western men are associated with the 'public arena' of waged labour, physical prowess, intellectual achievements and political agency. Phiri (2004:17) argues that, for African women, issues of gender are overlaid by the legacies of racist imperialism and colonialism and that these, combined with the work of the missionaries, have shaped the cultures, politics, economies and religions of contemporary African societies. I suggest that the legacy of these historical processes has produced a thread of commonality which appears to permeate church-women's experiences in contemporary South Africa: that of gender subordination and oppression.

3.2 Reinforcing gendered nurturing roles

Patriarchy has demanded that women ‘naturally’ assume the role of carer and nurturer (Rakoczy, 2004). Many of the participants have taken on positions of authority and leadership but they do not challenge a gendered allocation of duties. Instead they see their roles as leaders emerging out of and through their roles as carers. “I have done this voluntary duty all my life”, says Joy. “You have to be prepared to give it [service] your all”. Within the scope of Joy’s leadership duties she has to give orders but her comments concerning the way she feels about giving these instructions confirm Ackermann’s (1991) argument that women seem to prefer performing peripheral roles in the Christian religious praxis.

I sometimes find that people look upon the role I play as that of lay ministers’ coordinator [leader] ... that I am on a plane higher than they are by perhaps issuing or giving orders. I am not. I happen to do this [leadership] work and am part of the lay ministry team. I'd rather be quietly working on the periphery helping people who need the care.

Jakobsen (cited in Mayson 2004) argues that women tend to lead differently to men. “I will always attempt – even if it is a struggle -- to lead differently from males”. Joy’s reflections of herself as a leader reinforce Jakobsen’s argument.

I think I have got that in me that I will always try to help or try to find another person that will help ... I am just made that way. I don’t find it easy to say, ‘Find somebody else to do it’. Perhaps it is a weakness in me.

She stresses that she performs her non-ordained ministry because of her belief that she is called by God to do so, and because she is a ‘servant of God’. As most of the participants are fairly progressive, a tension once again occurs regarding the role of ‘servant’. Rakoczy (2004:109-110) explains explicitly that Jesus, as servant, set aside

the pervasive cultural expectation that only women have the role of servant, by insisting that roles in the community be based, not on domination, but on service, and as such all Christians, not just women, are called to serve one another freely and lovingly. This of course undermines a major principle of patriarchy, i.e. that only women or subordinate men are servants. The gospels make it clear that there was nothing about Jesus that imposed service on others', since his was the first example of caring for the needs of others, freely and compassionately. I believe it is in this spirit that the participants generally operate but at the same time, they are doing this in a context of gender-based hierarchies so that their actions implicitly reinforce the very hierarchies they consciously or unconsciously aim to challenge.

Sheena is another example of someone who seeks no personal recognition for her years of voluntary labour.



I would not even look for a personal accolade for any of the duties performed. I had never thought of it particularly as women having this role because they are women. Women serve because God, who has gifted them, not specifically because they are women, calls them.

Some of the other participants comments draw attention to how women's work in the church tends to reinforce expectations about their role as nurturers. Says Thandi, "Women like to 'look around' ... you will find that it is the women who notice that Mrs So-and-So does not come to church anymore and think 'I wonder what happened to her, I must phone her and find out if she is fine'". Another participant, Lindi, recalls the day when she was approached by a male priest from an adjoining Xhosa-speaking parish and encouraged to join the MU.

You know what? As you are the grownup [mature female person] you must try to

come and join the MU and then when another woman has got a problem you are able to help.

Women's problems are here seen as women's issues rather than human issues.

The participants present a common 'essentialist' argument in support of the consecration of women to the hierarchical structure of the church, namely that a woman "will naturally nurture and counsel". Essentialism is the idea that human beings are defined by biological 'essences' that make them what they are: e.g. women are biologically different from men, 'White's are biologically different from 'Blacks', and there is no going against biology/nature. Certainly many of the participants in this study hold this view. Thandi believes that "a woman would have a better insight than a man would and also be able to relate better to women and the problems they experience in the church". Although there is general agreement that the consecration of a female bishop would be especially beneficial for women congregants, the participants generally accept essentialist notions of women and men's 'natural' attributes. "One cannot generalise", says Amanda, "but if she is a woman of integrity she will probably be a far better counsellor than a male Bishop would be". Although Joy has no problem with future women bishops she expresses concern for the woman herself, who risks going against her 'nature'. "She would have to be a pretty strong person to take on a role like that", says Joy. Amanda sees a contradiction between the roles of priest and mother, but not between the roles of priest and father, suggesting that even women in the church who see themselves as relatively progressive in many ways support gender-based stereotypes about the appropriate social roles for women and men.

In my mind, I cannot work out how a married woman with a family can actually supply what her people [extended church community] would ask of her. In such a

position she has to give so much to other people. How would she manage to be a mother to her own children? To me the question is always will she be married or single?

Such questions are seldom, if ever, asked of male priests. The essentialist view is reinforced theologically and is termed a complementary theological anthropology, i.e. that God has ordained men and women to be physically different and therefore to be assigned different roles (Ackermann, 1991). It is one of the arguments the Catholic church uses to refuse women's ordination. In contrast, Ackermann (1991) proposes 'a transformative anthropology' which presents a view of men and women who equally image God, and who, regardless of their sexuality, have the potential to become mutual partners with God in co-creation.

Sophia highlights the extent to which women's movement into lay leadership represents an extension of their gender roles rather than a challenge. One of her duties is the specific ministry of counselor.

Many people depend on me. I think they see me as a soft, caring person who is prepared to listen to them. They rely on my help ... the [male] clergy and [mostly male] council members recognise my contributions. I was one of the candidates considered for layministry with a special ministry of healing. I feel that at least they [church leaders] feel, even though we do not always see eye to eye, that they can trust me and that I am responsible.

Sophia strongly challenges the lack of women in the hierarchical structure of leadership. "This is a disgrace in the church. I do not think that women have a fear of being a bishop but the men have a fear of women bishops" In her opinion African people have been sensitised to equity and employment equity and representivity. "I feel no problems

will occur with the consecration of a woman bishop. Within this era I do not believe it will cause a split in the church”. Sophia sees no reason why, if the woman is called by God to serve in this leadership capacity, the church should object to the move. “I see this position as an administrative duty in a decision-making body”, says Sophia. She acknowledges that this move will meet with some resistance and refers to the gendered division of labour previously discussed, to make her point.

Most of the women in church are still in the private arena and very few have branched out into the public arena of church life. Some women in the church are against this move, but women would have a role model who has achieved; one who has moved into the church hierarchy. Overall I believe the results will be very positive.

Much of what these participants say suggests that women who move into leadership positions in the church do so because of their desire to serve, to nurture and to care: and yet, in the very act of taking up leadership positions, they represent a challenge to the very deeply embedded constructions of gender in which caring and nurturing is understood as incompatible with public leadership. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

3.3 Challenging gendered nurturing roles

This section shows how even those participants who favour change still tend to call on stereotypical arguments about how women are best suited for nurturing. “This is ridiculous”, says Amanda,

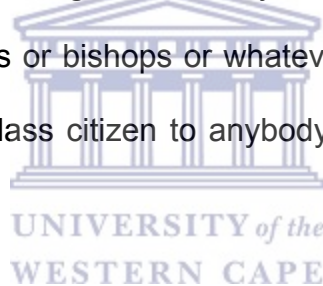
It’s time for the church to start consecrating women bishops. The church is made up of men and women and therefore we need a woman bishop. Furthermore, the time when women are left to do domestic chores and raise children exclusively is long gone. The familiar hierarchical structure of the church is going to change and to change radically ... Women are a very necessary part of the hierarchical structure.

How can they [CPSA leaders] have a proper overview without a woman's input there?

Amanda feels that change, once started, cannot be halted. And yet individual women's experiences and views are often contradictory. Amanda for example, also reinforces traditional gender roles, "I am not convinced that, as a woman with a family, you can have it all [both family time and time for church duty]", says Amanda.

It all revolves around the time factor ... if I look at it [ministry work] you need the time to do it [to plan and do the physical ministerial duties]. With all her family commitments of cooking and cleaning and caring when does a woman have time to get that involved?

Barbara strongly defends women's rights in society and the church. "Women should be allowed to be doctors or lawyers or bishops or whatever they want. I find myself as an equal, and not as a second-class citizen to anybody. Service is one thing, servile is quite another".



Barbara believes that gender should not even be in the equation when speaking about church leadership. "The Christian faith message is love your neighbour and love God". What is vitally important is that the person be "God centered". Barbara said that while change is happening all the time it should not divide the church.

That kind of reaction has nothing to do with God, and love and caring ... it has to do with what they [male leaders] want to be seen as. These mighty men -- and some of them are brilliant and wonderful -- but why must women be a threat to them, because that is what it is -- fear.

In a similar way to Sheena, Barbara argues that gender should not dictate leadership roles in the church, especially among people who proclaim to have the same mission.

“What matters is that the leader should spread God’s word and be dedicated to that, and gender should be immaterial when selecting future leaders in the church”. At the same time Barbara also says,

We have to be very careful about men’s roles. Neither a man’s nor a woman’s role is more important than the other. One has to be really careful about this because I believe men have a role to play and women have a role to play. I think the world has crossed over today, which has caused a lot of problems. Somebody once said -- I forget who -- that if women want to take over the men's roles, the men become wimps ... One cannot generalise but I believe there is an order to things and when you step out of that order and the natural laws in creation then you do create chaos.

Evidently, while Barbara strongly supports the advancement of women in the church she is simultaneously concerned about challenges to ‘natural laws’ and the chaos that might ensue should such laws be broken.

Next I look at expectations concerning priests’ wives and the ways in which gendered expectations about their roles permeate their experiences. Mpumlwana (1991), a priest’s wife, argues: “If my husband is to succeed in his ministry, I have to change my life style to accommodate him ... I am expected to act as the leader of women’s organisations, [and] if [I don’t I am] regarded as a deviant”. A participant in a similar position is Thandi. When her full time work allows she helps her husband in his ministry work at Chapelry Three. She has also accompanied her husband when he has relocated to different parishes, irrespective of her own work commitments. Whereas Thandi has complied with these relocations in the past she is now prepared to challenge the structures on this issue.

I don’t know whether they [church] will take into account that I am working and not jeopardize my employment by moving us far away ... If he [husband/priest] has to go there [new location] I will remain here, because we have to provide for our children.

Literature shows that many priests rely on their wives' income to augment their meagre stipend. Thandi argues that she is the breadwinner in this relationship, yet she illustrates that the church considers her employment to be of less significance than that of her husband.

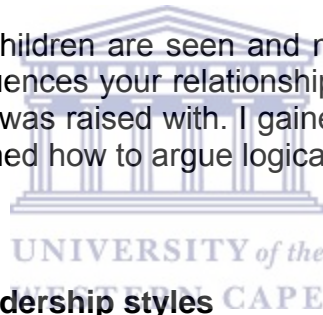
The last example relates to MU activities, a quarter from which one might not expect challenges to church patriarchy. Sophia outlines a brief background: "The MU is a world-wide, Christian, Anglican-based organisation that promotes the well being of families" in the world, and the organisation recently celebrated its centenary. Another signal of change was when the 'Mother's Union' changed its name to 'MU Family Life' so as to open up the membership to both women and men. MU members are not licensed but registered by the priest during a normal Sunday service. Sophia has seen a gradual shift in the MU international arena where the MU has become involved in awareness campaigns and served on United Nations bodies. Sophia feels, however, that the South African MU training material is still outdated,

In South Africa though the training programme for branch leaders still contains literature that reproduces gender stereotypes for instance that mothers are nurturers and carers of the sick and the elderly in the community.

About three years ago the main parish branch of the MU embarked on a training programme for all their members to address, "important aspects of building up the women's confidence, self awareness and self esteem". Sophia recalls a recent incident which, she believes, clearly illustrates the gendered struggles that take place between men and women in the church. "What was at stake here was the whole issue of men vs. women in the church". She explains that the male councillor responsible for social

functions approached the leadership of the MU to ask the parish MU group to cater for a golf day fundraiser at an agreed upon once-off payment. This arrangement suited the MU, as the money would augment the MU fundraising drive towards the groups' annual holiday. The MU honoured their catering commitment, but, when the profits had to be shared, the male church councillor refused to pay for, what he considered, "somebody else's holiday money". As the two parties could not agree the matter was submitted to church council for their decision. The council members voted in favour of the councillor whereupon the MU leadership assertively contested the church council decision, and it was reversed. It is unlikely that this kind of challenge from MU women to church hierarchies would previously have been countenanced. According to Sophia,

As children we were told 'children are seen and not heard'. This message follows you into adulthood and influences your relationships. Once I became resocialised I challenged the messages I was raised with. I gained a better understanding of how relationships work and learned how to argue logically, not emotionally.



3.4 Reinforcing gendered leadership styles

Zikmund (1998) argues that senior women clergy in Episcopal churches sometimes feel so scrutinized and constrained that they appropriate directive leadership styles historically used by the senior male clergy in their churches. As a consequence, at least some women clergy seem to be adapting their leadership styles to fit how they believe male senior clergy would act. I spoke to my participants about their preferred leadership styles and discovered that while the foregoing is the case for some, it is not the case for others.

When Sheena took over the leadership at the church council she felt that decisions had formerly been reached in a very autocratic style.

My perception was that the rest of council [comprising of 12 men and three women], had been there simply to ratify what the male church leadership had already decided.

At first she operated in the same style as her predecessor but soon realised that, as a woman, it didn't feel right to be dictatorial.

I know there are some [men] who don't like it [that I am a woman leader]. I know there are some who believed that I am not fulfilling the role properly, as I am not doing it as they [male council leaders] would have done it.

Sheena soon started delegating responsibility "a responsibility of leadership" and believes she is doing a good job. "I bring different gifts to the work. I hold the door open to allow other people to bring [forth] their own ministry. I work very hard, but I hope that I am less autocratic". She has recently relinquished her position as chairperson of the church council: I believe this action to be of particular significance because the chairperson of parish council has a deliberative vote, except where the voting is equal in which case she or he has the casting vote as well and it is possible, therefore, that Sheena has diluted her influence and reinforced the male voices at church council through sharing the decision making in this way.

there is one man at council ... who just ... it became a perpetual power struggle, so I have chosen not to chair the meetings any more because I believe it is better for council if there is not a power struggle.

Joy also favours a more feminine style of leadership and has her own method of delegating. "I look at different aspects of layministry ... how one thing works and dovetails with another ... then I bring various people on board to perform the different tasks". This is her way of ensuring consistency of performance, even in her absence. "If

I were to step out of my position tomorrow”, says Joy, “the layministry would still be able to function perfectly”. Forward planning as well as creating team spirit forms an integral part of her leadership style. “I like people to work together as a team and not to dictate, ‘you do this, you do that’.” After presenting possible new procedures to the layministers she asks for their input and is often disappointed by their response.

Sometimes, when I look at their reactions, I think, ‘You don’t realise how much time I have put into this’ and then I could scream, but I have to say, ‘OK, if this is not going to work, then that’s fine’. Finding the strength to let go, and to walk away from those ideas is not always easy. I have found that difficult.

According to Ruether (1983) this type of leadership style is more typical of female leadership than of male leadership which tends to be more competitive. It becomes evident that women in leadership positions are often reluctant about participating in decision making in the ways that are traditional to men. As the section above suggests, there is considerable discomfort associated with women taking on decision making and leadership roles. The following section explores ideas expressed by several participants which suggests that this discomfort is associated with concerns about femininity and gender.

3.5 Fear of appearing unfeminine

It seems, from Sophia’s observations, that it is primarily an anxiety about being seen as unfeminine that discourages women from putting themselves forward for church council selection. “Fear is one of the biggest issues”, says Sophia.

Many of the women have been marginalised for so long. As women we feel that our voices are very small at the meetings. We are surrounded by men who fight at the meetings ... we have to become aggressive like the men ... so we want nothing to do with the council.

Another perception shared by the participants is that men 'don't have to be' sensitive to women but that women 'should be' sensitive to men. "Women must be firm but not too aggressive", says Amanda, "and they need to be very sensitive in how they approach men". This issue of sensitivity comes up repeatedly: Sheena believes that change of any kind must be handled with great sensitivity.

I have always tried to be sensitive to where people are at, for it is not only the men, but some women who would not like it [change to the structure]. When there was a question of the appointment of a [new] rector for our parish we could have had a woman. I would have had no problem with that, but I had to recognise that there were some people [in the church] who would, and I needed to balance things out and say, 'it is not the right time for it yet'.

Sheena believes that a gradual desensitization programme needs to take preference over merely presenting the parishioners with an accomplished fact.

I think in terms of an irrigation programme ... a drip programme is often more effective ... because then people do not see it as them being pushed around. It [change] doesn't have a label on it and they can be gradually de-sensitised.

This strategy will probably eventually desensitize most of the church people, but a major obstacle in the process is the protracted nature of this form of transformation. An argument reinforced by Botha (2004b) who points out that the first bill to extend the franchise of women in the CPSA appeared before synod in 1919 but it was not until 1960 that women were allowed to have a meaningful role in the church structures, and it was only in 1992 that the first women priest was ordained. These facts illustrate the strength of the deeply entrenched attitudes of patriarchy and demonstrate just how slow change can be.

3.6 Reinforcing the belief in male supremacy

The remarks of three participants illustrate the strength of the beliefs in patriarchy and male superiority in the wider society. “If I think of people of my age group [60] then I would say that they are just very used to letting the men get on with that [leading and decision making]”, says Joy. Thandi adds to this:

I would say it is because of the culture. I don't know whether we are born to nurture, to care more than the men are. We always leave the leading, the decision making to other people [males] and put ourselves in a place where we say, 'I fit here, I am going to care'. It is within our 'African' culture. All over you see it is the men that are up there and we, as women, allow ourselves to be told ... to be led by the men.

Another participant, Lindi, agrees that child-raising practices continue to help instill ideas about the appropriate behaviours for boys and the girls. “The mother teaches the girl how to grow up as a girl. At six years you [the girl] must know you are a girl and you are not to go this way [act like a boy]”. She believes that the father plays an important role in the boy-child's development. “The father helps the boy with something that the mother cannot help with: he tells the boy this is not the way to behave like a boy”. Thandi argues that the church can assist with this transformation by helping parents to change their attitude to child rearing, particularly concerning girls. “We as parents have to change the way we are bringing up our children, especially the girls. The church can help us with this. This is a possible way of developing future female leaders in the church”.

Lindi is ambivalent about women's and men's roles in the contemporary church, and notes that some church members are highly resistant to what she calls 'lady' priests.

People who don't go to church say that the man is the head and the woman is down there. But now you see the lady priest. Beforetime you never saw a lady. Some people they still have that old culture because they say, 'How can you preach to the people if you are the lady?' It is so ... they say, 'how can you do that'? But that lady God chooses and called her to come and preach and give you advice and so on. If you didn't believe in God you don't listen and you say she can't.

Many of the participants agree that in most South African communities leadership roles and decision making tend to be tasks ascribed to men rather than women, and communities remain uncomfortable with women leaders in the church, despite their small number. It is 13 years since the first women priests were ordained yet only 9.4% of ordained clergy in the Diocese of Cape Town are women, so it appears that within the local church patriarchy is still alive and well. The clergy statistics in the Cape Town Diocese also show that only seven of the 28 female clergy are in true decision-making positions, which supports Jakobsen's (2003) claim of tokenism and Clifford's (2001) argument that women constitute a type of 'second class' status among the ordained. The statistics illustrate that rather than becoming pastors, rectors, or vicars of parishes, the majority of ordained women serve as assistant priests and are employed as hospice chaplains or assigned to specific projects, such as the Fikelela Aids Centre. From this it appears that the church itself has different expectations of men's and women's roles within its ranks and assigns tasks accordingly. It appears that the church places a greater value on the leadership by male clergy and a lesser value on leadership by female clergy.

The way men tend to remain authority figures in the church and the way women continue to learn from men is illustrated by Lindi's report: "We used to go to Tom's place

every Saturday and read the bible. Then *he* explained to *us* how the things work. Just like that”. Lindi also identified two other males who were instrumental in providing her with biblical guidance and spiritual direction.

I enjoy going to church now, because it is very nice to know about God. The [two men] gave me the right direction to believe in God. I learnt a lot ... how to help somebody if they have a problem ... because when you worship God and somebody has a problem, you’re supposed to help.

During her 30-year period with the parish Amanda feels she has experienced a great deal of personal and spiritual growth and has really been encouraged by the male clergy in all her activities. “I have had no resistance whatsoever ... no challenge to what I am doing or anything else”. In contrast she has experienced that sometimes her fellow female lay ministers do not always recognise her spiritual development, and that there is a lack of acknowledgement of her role as a spiritual leader. “The problem with having a very long history in the parish is that some of my fellow female lay ministers have an idea of who I am, but don’t always acknowledge that I have grown spiritually”.

3.7 Challenging the belief in male supremacy

The diverse views expressed by participants suggest that each woman holds a unique perspective on women’s experiences of gender and patriarchy in the church. In many ways these experiences are ambiguous and contradictory, but there is one topic on which all of the participants agree: that inclusive practices are imperative for the future well being of the CPSA. Sheena states,

God creates both men and women, so we need both men and women to be contributing to the church. If it doesn’t happen then the church is poorer for that. Our ministry in the church is only complete when both men and women are active.

Sheena thinks that the inclusion of women – even in the face of opposition – is extremely important. She found that although most of her fellow councillors and the male clergy were very encouraging of her participation as a woman leader, two males in particular, proved problematic. “I think that fellow councillors accept me. There are two males particularly -- one of them is a councillor -- whom I know really do not at all like the fact that I am a female leader”. Sheena suspects that her one of her opponents felt that she superseded his leadership opportunity. “He told me he had been waiting for his turn and felt rejected by the parish”. While she mostly enjoys the work, the pressures of office are sometimes extreme. “It [leadership] costs me. It would be much easier not to do it”. Sheena shared that some males had tried to undermine her authority. “Instructions that had been given in council were countermanded”, she recalls. “When confronted, the males ‘completely denied’ their actions. Sheena feels that younger males cope better with female authority figures than older males do. ”Those who find me the most difficult to handle are those who are my age”. Sheena also provides an example of how one man was seriously offended by a woman in a leadership position.

Council decided I had to speak to this man on a certain matter. I thought he understood and accepted what I said but then he wrote a letter [to council] and said that I had seriously insulted his standing as a male.

Joy feels there will always be those males who challenge and resist women’s movement into positions of authority and leadership in the church. “A lot of the men, I must say, have given me the impression that they could do a better job”, says Joy, “even to saying, ‘Why should you be doing this [leading], perhaps I am better at it?’” Based on her personal experiences of lay ministers, Joy has come to the following conclusion:

It seems to me that we do not have many male lay ministers who hold top executive positions in commerce/industry or whatever. However, I have found that men who have aspired to a certain level in their working career but have not been successful, are often the ones who find a niche in the church and from this platform attempt to prove themselves. This does not always make for happy working relations and from this group I would say that I have felt some resentment and antagonism.

Powell (2002) argues that despite the limited changes, transformation in the CPISA constitutes a threat to men who have a heavy investment in maintaining the present gender order. The participants concur. "The [male] hierarchical structure of the church [CPISA]", says Amanda, "finds the transition very difficult, and fears the change". Sophia believes that pressure groups -- especially those constituted primarily by women -- will be unstoppable. "From my experience I predict that women's pressure groups working from the 'bottom up' will shape the top structures". Historically in South Africa, this 'bottom up' pressured approach has produced some change, but Botha (2004) argues that unless the church structures transform, women will not realise their full potential in the life of the church and that the church will be poorer for this.

This research, however, suggests that initiatives such as the recently approved Provincial Gender Desk and the pro-active approach to gender issues by both Archbishop Ndungane (2005b) and the recently appointed Vicar General to Saldanha Bay Diocese may, to some extent, challenge internalised attitudes and mindsets of ordinary people and their understandings of the appropriate roles for men and women, but the church's track record suggests that structural transformation emerging out of such challenges is likely to be very slow in coming.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

This study has examined how a group of eight mature, non-ordained women perceive their voluntary roles in a parish of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA) within the Diocese of Cape Town. During the process of analysing the data collected from my participants three main themes emerged namely why women joined the parish church; the ways in which women are active in the church and the tensions produced through challenges to church patriarchy.

My research indicates that the primary reason for joining the parish is the participants deep belief that they are called by God to do so. The participant's individually seek spiritual and emotional support which, in turn reflects their different perspectives as women, as women bring 'different gifts'. Secondary factors for joining include family traditions of long association with the church, marriage or relocation to the area, and the desire to establish friendship circles within a religious community.

In exploring where women are active in the church, it becomes apparent that the participants believe women, both licensed and unlicensed, are key in managing the church, together with the priest and the church council. Whilst the women have a range of leadership skills, what they imagine they bring to ministry is their ability to nurture, heal and care. It seems that ordination and licensing provide recognition for women's and men's work in the church and that this recognised work is to do with reproducing

the church liturgy, preaching, teaching and church management. In addition to the cleaning, beautification of the church and tea-making functions, it is mostly non-ordained, unlicensed women and some men who do the bulk of the caring, nurturing and supporting work. Yet, this is the work that is most urgent – work related to the issue of women’s poverty, and work concerning health, housing, education, availability of food and water – that tends to go unacknowledged by the church.

Concerning the impact of patriarchy on women, and the impact of church women on patriarchy, my research suggests that traditional gender roles are difficult to renegotiate especially as the socializing influence of the church has had a tremendous influence on sustaining the view that women hold an inferior status in the church. Child rearing practices reinforce such views in certain quarters, especially where girls are concerned. Essentialist ideas are pervasive, and even women who challenge patriarchy by taking on leadership roles accept that boys and girls ‘naturally’ possess different qualities and that there are dangers associated with challenging these ‘natural’ differences.

I conclude that women who move into leadership positions in the church do so because of their desire to serve God by utilizing so called ‘feminine’ skills of nurturing and caring. And yet, in the very act of taking up leadership positions they represent a challenge to the deeply embedded constructions of gender in which caring and nurturing is understood as women’s work. Most of the participants in leadership roles are reluctant to take part in decision-making according to the manner in which men traditionally function. Some of the participants appear to experience considerable discomfort around taking up decision-making and leadership roles. It appears to be of special concern that

women should retain their feminine image. In this regard they all favour what they understand as a 'feminine' style of leadership in which consensus is sought rather than authority wielded. What is obvious is that each of the participants holds a particular perspective of women's experiences of gender and patriarchy in the church and many of these experiences are contradictory in nature. Antonio Gramsci (cited in Kathleen Weiler, 1988) speaks about 'contradictory consciousness' – on the one hand the oppressed are in solidarity with others who are oppressed and they resist their oppression; on the other they are the products of their socialization into subordination and they continue to live this out. There is consensus, however, concerning the church as a hierarchal structure allied to male dominance, which in turn is allied to power. While the power struggles experienced by the participants give an indication that male leadership is not going to relinquish their power base easily; they simultaneously signal that male leadership will have to fight to hang on to their particular form of patriarchy. As Powell (2002) suggests, the church structure is a collection of vested interests, and transformation is a threat to those vested interests. She argues that transformation has to start with the individual, and women who move into leadership positions may well find themselves transformed in ways they could never have anticipated.

During this research, some strong voices were raised in favour of change, and it seems that change of some form is inevitable. Among those is Sophia, who pins her hopes on women's collective pressure groups and a 'bottom up' approach to producing change. She points out that this will only be successful if the church also meets the challenge of exposing women to leadership training. She warns, however, that some women will resist any change – which highlights how some women are their own 'worst enemies'

because they have internalised oppressive attitudes and perceptions, and reinforce existing power relationships in the church.

And yet there *is* change. Admittedly the change might be slow, uneven, unsteady, erratic and oftentimes painful – but change *is* taking place in the CPUSA. While it might not be clear just what that change is leading to -- especially considering that the clergy and laity representatives at the Elective Assembly of the Diocese of Cape Town CPUSA recently chose yet another male bishop rather than the nominated female bishop -- it is fairly clear which direction the change is taking. Literature shows that while the church structures continue as an inhibiting force preventing women from realizing their full potential within the life of the church, and not all parishioners recognise women's priestly ministry, the priesthood is nonetheless, now open to both women and men. There are more not fewer ordained women priests; more not fewer women in leadership positions; more not fewer women in places of authority. Women have a greater role in the church and their position is changing as they become increasingly visible and active in non-ordained ministry, so that there are more not fewer licensed women in the church. As for the participants in my research, they are, on the one hand, perpetuating typical stereotypical female behaviour by dedicating themselves to voluntary work – with a strong tendency towards the caring and nurturing ministries – but on the other hand, despite opposition, they are continuing to undertake leadership roles in the church and, in the process, producing changes in their own consciousness and in that of others. These changes cannot be dismissed.

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH: An exploratory study of women's experiences and place in the church: A case study of a parish in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA), Diocese of Cape Town

Have you been informed of the purpose of the study? Yes/No

- Mini-thesis in partial fulfillment of an M Phil Degree in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Western Cape
- Data collected to be published in the form of a mini-thesis
- Some of the data may be used for publication

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?

- At any time Yes/No
- Without having to give a reason for withdrawing Yes/No

Has there been any pressure exerted to participate in this study? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Have you received enough information about the study? Yes/No

Do you agree to take part in this study? Yes/No

Do you agree to the researcher using a tape recorder? Yes/No

I, the undersigned, consent to being interviewed by Isabel Sparrow. I have not been unduly pressured into granting this interview and understand that I am free to terminate the interview at any stage. I understand that any information will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The data collected will be published in a mini-thesis as a requirement towards Ms Sparrow's M Phil Degree in Women's and Gender Studies at University of Western Cape.

Signed _____ Date _____

(Please print name in block letters) _____