



THEMATIC OVERVIEW

*A time of learning, discussion, and prayer as we explore Scriptural teaching about gender and leadership in the church.*

*As a Grace Group, we will explore together how to embody God's grace in our practice given the historic harms and contention in church and culture around how gender and leadership are held together.*

**Welcome + Opening Prayer + Commitments**

*Show me your ways, Lord,  
teach me your paths.*

*Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long. —Psalm 25:4-5*

*But who can discern their own errors?*

*Forgive my hidden faults. —Psalm 19:12*

Commitments:

1. Is this Scriptural?
2. How do we graciously \*see\* one another?
3. How do we image God as we work this out for His glory and the world's good?

**A Review of What We've Explored** (see pages 2-3)

**Why** is this discussion important?

**What** were women doing in Scripture?

**How** is it possible for women to serve so broadly given seemingly prohibitive texts?

**What now** for All Souls as we embody God's grace in our practice?

**Next Questions**

*to help us reflect*

1. What has been stirred in you during these weeks of discussion?
2. What is a specific question you have about the Bible's teaching regarding gender and leadership in the church?
3. What's something you're learning about God and his heart for his people through exploring this topic?

*to help us move into our lived experience*

4. Related to women and men leading alongside, in the church:
  - a. What fears do you have?
  - b. What hopes do you have?

RESOURCES

*Find more resources for further reading and listening on our website:  
[allsoulsseattle.org/resources/collections/gender-and-leadership](https://allsoulsseattle.org/resources/collections/gender-and-leadership)*

**Why** is this discussion important?

- Beginning at the Beginning: Genesis 1-3
  - What can we learn about God's original intention in creating human beings as male and female, as equally and equally in his image?
  - Does Genesis teach an 'eternal subordination' of women, *i.e.* was patriarchy God's intention and good plan for humanity in creation, or a post-Fall development?
  - What's significant about unity?

**What** were women doing in Scripture?

- A biblical survey of how women have served
- What can we see them doing— what gospel ministry were they given to, what leadership do they provide to worshipping communities, and those exploring life with Jesus?
  - Through study of both the Old and New testaments examples are found of women participating in God's kingdom within roles including (see Romans 16):
    - ✓ prophet
    - ✓ judge
    - ✓ apostle
    - ✓ deacon
    - ✓ church planter
    - ✓ teacher
    - ✓ evangelist
    - ✓ missionary

**How** is it possible for women to serve so broadly given seemingly prohibitive texts?

- How have you heard these passages taught before?
  - [Ephesians 5:21-32](#), [1 Timothy 2:9-15](#), [1 Corinthians 11:7-12](#)
- What questions do you still have about these passages?
- Where can you go for further study?

**What now** for All Souls as we embody God's grace in our practice?

- Where are women and men serving side-by-side in leadership currently?
  - Small groups
  - Church-wide group teaching/facilitating
  - Reading and prayer in public worship
  - Shepherding/soul care
  - Mercy/Justice/Missions initiatives
  - Vestry
  - Non-ordained staff

- Will women serve as deacons at All Souls?
  - Yes. As a community, we have completely cleared space for this and now eagerly wait on God to provide for this addition to our ordained, salaried staff. More on this below.
- Will women serve as priests at All Souls?

We remain in process on this. The Anglican priesthood, both in definition and practice, is still new to us, and, in fact, All Souls currently has no priests— R.J. and I are now ‘transitional deacons,’ en route to priesthood. So we are in a season of learning.

Regarding ordained roles, however, we have already made the biggest leap related to role definition, when we transitioned from a Presbyterian understanding of the deacon to the Anglican one. These two represent a much larger change/difference than do the Anglican deacon and priest. By the time one is serving as an Anglican deacon, she has already assumed an ordained, vocational, pastoral role.

Put another way, the leap from Presbyterian deacon to Anglican priest is a very significant one, and, yes, requires some adjustment for us as we consider these roles. But once someone is serving as an Anglican deacon (which is a prerequisite for any who join the priesthood), the vocational/ministerial distinction from the priestly role is relatively narrow. We are learning the specifics of this distinction, which, along with knowledge of relevant scriptural teaching, is necessary for any conversation about who can serve as a priest.

Notably, we have, in part, chosen to affiliate with a diocese (C4SO) within the ACNA that does ordain women to the priesthood so that the blessing of this ministry would be available to our community. We wanted this to be something open to us to explore.

To date, our current leadership have not formally entered a conversation about women serving as priests at All Souls (and, again, any who would serve as a priest will serve as a deacon first). We have been sufficiently occupied so far this year with adjusting to a denominational transition and to care in a pandemic. At the moment, we are working toward installing the group of leaders who will serve as a Vestry, and expect the priesthood discussion to unfold later in the year.

We expect this process/discussion to be clergy led (R.J. and me) and to include Vestry members and anyone invited by Vestry in an advisory capacity. We will prayerfully examine relevant Biblical teaching, the unique role of a priest, and the pastoral needs of the All Souls community. This process will be a big first “trying on” of our new Anglican polity (governance structure) as a clergy led, Vestry supported congregation...

And— as goes without saying— should God gift our community with women serving in ordained roles (deacon or priest), we want to be positioned and poised as a body to receive their ministry enthusiastically, gratefully, joyfully, and humbly.

Lord, may it be so.

- Andy