



OUT OF ADELAIDE

WOMEN TALKING MINISTRY

Papers presented at the Annual General Meeting of the

Movement for the Ordination of Women Australia

held at St Saviour's Anglican Church
2 Pridmore Road, Glen Osmond, South Australia

27 October 2018

Guest Speaker: The Rev'd Andrea McDougall

Book Launch Speech: Ms Lavinia Gent

Editor: The Rev'd Lesley McLean

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INTRODUCTION

Adelaide, the capital of the state of South Australis, is centrally located in our vast continent. That was one very good reason for it to host the Movement for the Ordination of Women's Annual General Meeting. There has been little active membership and no local meetings in Adelaide since women were ordained to the priesthood in 1992. As is demonstrated in Lesley McLean's book, *Woman, the Church's Buried Talent*, Adelaide was pivotal in the national debate and subsequently was the first diocese to ordain women as priests after the decision to proceed in 1992.

Since then membership dwindled until, in 2018, there were just four financial members. However, during the intervening years Lesley McLean had maintained her interest in the movement and contact with board members, at one stage being Vice President under Susan Sandford's leadership. Susan also encouraged Lesley to conduct on-line Quiet Days and MOW sponsored a Prayer Diary of ordained women in the Province of South Australia for 2012: a practice Lesley has maintained.

The venue for the AGM was the meeting room and church of the parish of St Saviour's, Glen Osmond. At the instigation of past MOW President, Janet Scarfe, a dinner for the past and present members was organised and Lesley arranged local visits.

Pirrial Clift, writing to those who 'would have liked to have been present', said that:

I (and I hope the other six board members who were there) had a lovely time in Adelaide. We are most grateful to Lesley for all the groundwork she did, organising our program in the midst of her publishing stresses. The weather was perfect as we met on Friday morning to view the magnificent Magdalene window in St Peter's Cathedral with commentary by Rosie Hamilton. We then enjoyed morning tea at the parish of Christ Church, North Adelaide with the Rev'd Joan Claring-Bould and the leaders of the parish play-group, Jean Bain and Briar Newman and the children.



Lesley, Lu, Judy, Jan, Val Graydon, Kathleen, Pirrial, Elaine, Georgie, Margaret, Joan

After lunch, we made our way to St Saviour's for a session with Lu Piper, sharing what we knew about the State of the Nation. Janet Scarfe and Lesley McLean had organised a dinner at The Feathers, and 23 MOW members and supporters spent a happy evening making new friends and catching up with old friends.

Saturday began with the AGM, and Hurrah! Lesley McLean is our new President. Margaret Lawther and I are the two Vice-Presidents, Kathleen Toal is Treasurer, Elaine Lindsay Secretary and Anne Wentzel, Lu Piper and Jan Malpas are also on the Board. St Saviour's provided us with a delicious lunch – their hospitality throughout the weekend was outstanding – after which we settled down to hear Andrea McDougall's engaging and very personal talk about her journey into priesthood and motherhood and how these two vocations co-exist successfully in her life. It's not that long since we heard how impossible it would be to combine motherhood and priesthood from hostile nay-sayers to women priests, and here - thanks to first generation MOW ers - is the living proof that it can be done, and done very well. Thank you God!

We did thank God together for all the blessings of the past, and prayed for guidance and help for the future in our closing eucharist in St Stephen's Chapel, at which I was delighted to preside. Unhappily Margaret Lawther had already left when this photo was taken.



The rest of us are, from the left, Georgie Hawley, Lesley, Pirrial Clift, Kathleen Toal, Elaine Lindsay, Lu Piper and Jan Malpas

To top it off there was the launch of Lesley McLean's book *Woman, the Church's Buried Talent* at which Lavinia, Alison Gent's daughter, spoke so well about her mother to a large crowd of Lesley's friends and relatives. And we dispersed, the remnant chatting for hours over a meal in the local Chinese restaurant, discussing complementarianism and the merits of various venues for the 2019 AGM. Brisbane perhaps? Bathurst?

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MOW Australia President's Report. Adelaide, 2018



This is the second time I have delivered the president's Annual report for MOW, and the last time. It's been an interesting and challenging journey. Thank you for asking me, it has been a privilege.

This year three board members are standing down; Jeannette McHugh, Angela Peverell and Georgina Hawley. I would like to offer a vote of thanks for Jeannette, Georgie and Angela, all of whom have made significant contributions to MOW. Georgie has been National Vice-President, Angela has served as Sydney Co-ordinator and also National Secretary and Jeannette held the role of National President for several years. I move that this meeting convey to Angela, Georgie and Jeanette our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all they did to further the cause of the ordination of women in Australia.

Many of you know that Gary Toal, husband of our long serving National Treasurer and a faithful supporter of MOW for many long years, died recently. We offer you, Kathleen, our deepest sympathy and love at this difficult time, and our gratitude that you have come to Adelaide, so soon after your bereavement, which shows your own commitment to our aims and goals. Another early and strong supporter of MOW throughout the years was Morna Sturrock, who died this month, and was perhaps known to many of you. May Gary and Morna rest in peace and rise in glory.

I would also like to offer thanks to all the board members who have served over the past twelve months. I have enjoyed working with you and getting to know you as the beautiful, strong women you are.

Looking Back

Melbourne Meeting

Very early in 2018, following a decision by the Melbourne members to have an informal gathering, the board decided to join them. We met at St Margaret's Eltham and the parish was invited to join us for the morning and the closing eucharist; about seventeen attended. It was a great opportunity to meet face to face with members from far-flung places, and to meet some of our supporters from St Margaret's, which has a long history of enthusiastic involvement in MOW. As a bonus we gained a couple of new members and revitalised interest in MOW Australia.

It was here we arranged to have the 2018 meeting in Adelaide, which already has proved to be a blessing. Contacts with Adelaide members have been renewed or strengthened, and we have had the opportunity to raise awareness of our existence in the dioceses of Adelaide, the Murray and Willochra. By a happy coincidence we are all here to celebrate with Lesley the launch of her book, which is an unexpected pleasure.

When I was elected president, it seemed to me that given the scattered nature of the board, the infrequency of meetings, and very limited resources, that facilitating closer bonds between board members was a priority. I realised that future activities of the board depended on the board acting together. As Sydney MOW met regularly as a group, they already possessed a sense of collegiality that the rest of us did not have owing to the tyranny of distance. I have attended various events such as Archbishop Kay's installation in Perth, the installation of the first woman dean at Newcastle Cathedral, Morna Sturrock's funeral, the consecration of Bishop Kate Prowd in Melbourne and other events where I have had the chance to meet up with MOW members. I now feel I do know many members much better.

This banding together, forming relationships, supporting each other, is a vital component of MOW Australia's work of building up a stronger membership and support base from which to launch our actions.

The monthly email meetings were another way to bind us together. There were drawbacks but they kept the conversation going. I am happy to say I have discovered a program on TeamViewer which promises to give us all that our emails offered and more, and looks simple enough for even me to understand, if the new board should choose to take them up.

The Google Group continues to provide a forum for discussions and over time I have got to know some others through correspondence continued outside it. Angela Peverell continues to post news and events on Facebook thus helping to keep important issues alive in the public mind. She is planning to up-date our website.

I have been fortunate enough to have had a small number of letters on MOW issues published in Perth, Willochra and Melbourne church papers, and there are a couple of fliers around to place in public places.

Finances

Our financial situation prohibits any ambitious plans or even simple things like advertising or publishing. Kathleen will advise us of the financial details, so I will only say that with a very small paid up membership and few hands raised to help carry the burden, we are limited in what we can do. We long to make Australia

more aware of the need to regard women as created *imago dei* along with men. We know that without women in Holy Orders or senior roles in church governance the church has, as Ireland's Mary McAleese said, '*been left flapping about awkwardly on one wing*'.

Looking Forward

The church is broken, wounded, and without two healthy wings cannot fly. Levels of public trust are way down, and we know that women can make a significant contribution to her healing and restoration – but how can MOW Australia assist?

Over the last twelve months we have become increasingly aware of the doctrine of complementarianism which is being quietly introduced and absorbed into the thinking of younger generations of Anglicans through the Diocese of Sydney which funds church plants and clergy all over Australia. There is a recent offer to fund a bishop for six years in the financially strapped diocese of Bathurst. Yes, he will ordain women as part of the agreement made at synod. My question is – for how long?

For those who sit before me and do not know what complementarianism is, I include the following very brief summary based on my understanding of the work of Australian theologian and Anglican priest, Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity*.*

Complementarianism is a doctrine based on two premises:

1. Men and women are created equal – but different. They *complement* each other, hence complementarianism.
2. Jesus is subordinate to the Father throughout eternity.

Its argument is that the Father is the 'head' of Jesus, that is, Jesus is subordinate to the Father and the Father has authority over Jesus. In order to reflect the relationships within the Trinity, men are in authority over women, who are subordinate to men in the church and in the home.

This conclusion is contrary to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and disagrees with Orthodox teaching about the Trinity which asserts that the three persons of the Trinity are equal in every way.

In practice complementarianism declares that the ordination of women to the priesthood is wrong because of the likelihood women priests will be placed in leadership positions over men. It is *not* about celebrating the eucharist, although it seems to be until we grasp the fact that *leadership* is the issue. For example, when I was a curate and presided at the eucharist my complementarian colleague was undisturbed because the male rector was in authority over me. Preaching was a different matter, for this doctrine holds that it is not permitted for a woman to preach or teach either men, or older teenage boys.

Many people look at MOW and say, 'Perhaps it's time to quit. You have achieved your goal.' Have we though? Shall we pack our bags and leave the women in four dioceses with no foreseeable chance of following their priestly vocations and their lay people without female leadership in the churches, which are '*flapping about awkwardly on one wing*'? Shall we passively stand by while the 'reinvented doctrine of the Trinity', or complementarianism, steadily and rapidly gains ground across Australia and indeed across the Western world?

I love being a priest. It could never have happened without the tireless work of my MOW sisters and brothers. I cannot imagine anything more awesome, more amazing, more humbling, more blessed than standing at the altar celebrating the eucharist with a company of people '*proclaiming Jesus' death and resurrection until he comes again*'. When I die I want to wear a chasuble in my coffin for my last visit to church, as my final, albeit silent witness, to the life, death and resurrection of our Lord.

Will history remember me as a kind of curiosity – with you Lesley, and you Andrea and Lu – one of the few women who once served in Holy Orders in Australia, before women were put back into their place in the pews? Will we be like the early women bishops depicted in the catacombs with beards painted over their faces to conceal their femininity. Will we women priests be a long forgotten oddity? I hope not.

Perhaps in the face of the intransigence and power of complementarianism (or Jensenism as I have heard it called) and in light of our limited resources, MOW Australia needs to rethink, re-focus. Do we need to channel our energies into helping the parishes understand what complementarianism IS, and how to argue against it? Do we need to focus on supporting and encouraging leadership skills in women, so that we might hear more women's voices in decision-making and the formulation of policies? Whatever we do in either of these areas will give hope and strength to women who have heard God's call, and will help them respond with joy and confidence. This is something the new board will have to decide.

Lu Piper is going to give you a summary of the status of women in the church at present, so I will say no more – only this: every single voice, every man and woman, sympathetic to our goals, *your voice is indispensable*. We need to speak out and speak up about what is happening to denigrate woman and exclude them from leadership roles in the church in Australia.

The church is the Body of Christ. We women are just as much a part of Christ's body as our male counterparts. Because of that incontrovertible fact we will all be given our rightful place – one day. It is our task to make it happen sooner rather than later.

Pirrial Clift President, MOW Australia 2018

*Kevin Giles *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006). Giles names complementarianism, subordinationism.

The State of the Nation - Presented by the Rev'd Lu Piper OAM



An introductory comment

Sometimes my mind gets full of things to think about. It seemed to me that my mind was often getting filled up with questions and matters about the Anglican Church in Australia and the situation of women within it. It began to dawn on me that maybe others had similar issues on their minds too, and that a look at the church across our country as a whole might be an item that could be put on our Agenda at the MOW AGM in Adelaide. Someone suggested that we call this item, 'The State of the Nation'. That was a good idea! Then, as I thought further about it, I decided that I would not write a report, but just provide information for people to ponder.

What follows here is not, therefore, a presented report, but I will note down for you, the reader, the issues that I was pondering before the AGM, and then I will note for you the information that was provided as we sat around a table together in October at St Saviour's, Adelaide. I should mention too, that the afternoon prior to our AGM we members of the Board, along with a couple of others, shared what was happening in our own Dioceses. That conversation enabled us to get things off our chest and I believe, to be freer the next day to take in what is happening in other places across our country.

Now to the matters and questions that were on my mind

Many of us Anglicans know about the diocese in which we reside, but have limited knowledge about the twenty-two Dioceses beyond our own borders. Also most of us seem to think we belong to what might be called a 'national Anglican church', but is that reality or just an illusion? How many of us are aware of the influence across many dioceses of the complementarian theology which espouses male headship that is coming out of the Sydney diocese? How many of us are aware that the Sydney diocese does not only not ordain women to the priesthood, but now has the majority of male clergy believing that their female deacons should not preach – even though the deacon's licence allows them to do so? And that female deacons should not take Bible studies where men are present? How many of us know that many female deacons themselves, in the Sydney Diocese, also now believe that they should not be teaching or preaching where men and older boys are present, and that the majority also now believe that it is not right either that they be ordained to the priesthood? Are we

understanding how limiting towards women, the theology coming out from Moore College is? Do we realise there have been these significant changes in the Sydney diocesan thinking since the time Peter Jensen became Archbishop? Have we been keeping abreast of these trends?

Many of us Anglicans seem to be oblivious to what influences are moving across the country's Anglican church communities at this present time. How many of us know that representation on the Australian Anglican National Synod is calculated according to the number of clergy a Diocese has? How many of us realise that our National Synod is the only one in all the world-wide Anglican communion which runs on this system – that in all other countries the number of representatives from each of their Dioceses is of an equal number? Are we aware that the Sydney Diocese, because its clergy out-number by far any other Diocese, therefore has very significant influence over decisions that affect all other Dioceses as well as its own? Do we then comprehend that that is why the Standing Committee of the National Synod is so heavily stacked with a Sydney theological bent – even though the representatives may not all be from the Sydney Diocese itself? Do we realise that if a motion was put now that women be ordained to the priesthood, that it more than likely would not get passed? Do we realise that Archbishop Kay will more than likely never be able to become Primate because of Sydney's influence?

And then there is GAFCON. This, for want of a better way of putting it, is Sydney's international arm. This has been set up to counteract the ordination of gay clergy and the same-sex marriage issue. It so far has not hit the issue of female clergy, and in fact many female priests attended the last gathering of GAFCON in Jerusalem in June of this year (as Sydney does not ordain women to the priesthood, obviously those women were not from Australia). But in relation to MOW this organisation needs to be watched as it entrenches the Sydney diocese in a position of leadership internationally and so of greater influence geographically. And how many of us are aware that the bishop of Tasmania heads up the Australian branch of GAFCON, thereby linking the Tasmanian diocese closely with Sydney?

As I have stated in my introduction above, with all these thoughts in mind and more, I felt it is opportune to set out these issues to the MOW Board at the October, 2018 AGM. And rather than a report, instead provide material to each Board member which would provide the basis to explore the issues that these questions raise. So I set about correlating information on each of the 23 Dioceses, in order to provide an overall view. The diocesan information included the Bishop, and if information was available, where he/she had come from previously, and where he/she had done their theological studies, where there were assistant bishops the same applied, and also I covered the position of Dean. As well, I listed the numbers of active and retired clergy, the numbers of female and male priests, and of female and male deacons, and also the number of parishes in each Diocese.

These facts and figures gave us an overall picture of each Province and its Dioceses, and also enabled us to elucidate influences and trends. In that the Sydney position on women is troubling, we took into account particularly if the Bishop and other significant clergy had Moore College training, and also noted where we could, where Dioceses were expecting their clergy to undertake their

training, for instance, we noted that Tasmania will only accept clergy who have trained either at Moore or Ridley. We were aware that the Dioceses of North West Australia and Armidale follow the Sydney line on women (as does the Diocese of The Murray), and we took note that the Dioceses of the Northern Territory and Canberra/Goulburn both have Bishops who have trained at Moore, while the Bishop of Bendigo was ordained in the Diocese of N.W. Australia. We also noted that the Diocese of Bathurst will soon have a Bishop appointed from Sydney. We noted that once a Bishop with a Moore College background is elected, we then see Moore College clergy being appointed in his Diocese. We noted that the number of parishes/clergy in the Regions alone of the larger Metropolitan Dioceses are in fact equal or more so, to any of the smaller Dioceses. We noted in the 2016 figures, that Sydney had 781 active clergy, Melbourne came next with 438, then Brisbane with 253, Perth with 202, and Adelaide with 135. The figures themselves show that Sydney has about twice the number of representatives of even the next largest diocese, on General Synod.

As well as this information, photocopies of the following were also distributed: a map of Australia with provinces and dioceses clearly marked, a list of Australian Anglican theological institutions, a print-out from General Synod of Protocol 4 regarding Women in the Episcopate, a business item from the Standing Committee of General Synod referring to the equal representation of Women, and a print out of the membership of the Standing Committees of both General Synod and the Sydney diocese.

As the information collected was obtained from diocesan websites and the 2014 *Australian Anglican Directory*, with an update on statistics from the 2016 Directory, I made it clear to the board members and others present, that figures may not always be current. Hopefully it did not detract from the aim of the presentation which was to show the current trends occurring across the country. This was for the sole purpose of enabling the board to make planning decisions for MOW that are taking into account the real situation we find ourselves in, as women who are wanting to continue taking our complete place as people of God in our Anglican churches.

There was some chance later in the day for discussion and reflection. It was obvious from comments made that we realise the precarious nature of ordained women in many of our Australian dioceses and so realise the need to keep vigilant.

Editor's note:

Irish priest and blogger Patrick Comerford, commenting on versions of the Bible, says:

When it comes to scholarship, I am wary of the claims to scholarship in modern translations that have their own politico-theological agenda, such as the New International Version (NIV), or the English Standard Version (ESV). In a letter in *The Tablet* last week [15 December 2018], Dr Sara Parvis, Senior Lecturer in Patristics in the University of Edinburgh, points out that the ESV study edition advocates a form of Arian theology – she might have added that the editor, Wayne Gruden, advocates ‘complementarianism,’ which is thinly-disguised theological misogyny.

Comerford Blog: 22/12/2018 ‘If I could only have 20 books, which ones would I take with me?’

(The Rev'd Canon Professor) Patrick Comerford is the Church of Ireland priest in Askeaton and a former professor of liturgy and church history in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and Trinity College Dublin.

GUEST SPEAKER THE REV'D ANDREA McDOUGALL

Priest in Charge, The Parish of St Francis of Assisi,
Clarence Gardens, South Australia.



My experience, particularly as it has led to my vocation, and on to ordination, has been one in which the barriers to my vocation were not experienced as a set of rules by the church which said that women could not be ordained, for indeed these had been changed. The barriers to ordination that I experienced were more subtle, and perhaps more insidious than this and many of them came from within.

I was ordained in the diocese of Willochra as a deacon in 2010, and as a priest in 2012, well after the acceptance of women priests in that diocese. This meant that I did not have to give much thought to the achievement of ordination for women. I had entered the Anglican Church in 2001, and my first Anglican priest was female. As far as I knew at the time I went through a similar ordination process as any of the men around me. I mention this in affirmation of the strength and validity of your work, which has borne much fruit and is a cause for celebration in the many places where to have women priests is just normality.

I myself was not raised as an Anglican but had my spiritual roots in the Church of Christ. The minister was male and the 'elders' were all male. One of my earliest memories of church was of these church council elders lined up across the front of the church on their allocated chairs every week, slightly raised above the rest of us. The Church of Christ subscribes to a 'believer' baptism – and so it wasn't until I was an adult that I was baptised by full immersion – a wonderful experience, and that marked my return to church.

It was as a newly married person that God led me back to church. However, it was not long after this that my husband of the time left our marriage

to be with someone else. I really struggled at this time, even more so as I had become influenced by some quite fundamentalist attitudes (from outside my church I must add) about marriage and divorce and which led me to believe that it would be wrong for me to marry again, meaning that neither would I be able to have children. My life, I thought at the time, no longer had meaning for me and it was at this point that I just turned my life over to God, I saw no further use for it myself. I guess you could call that my low point, but also my conversion – at least one of the turning points in my life.

So, what did God want done with this life that had been given to God? Well, I continued going to the church and becoming more involved and was greatly supported by people there. It was also there that I met Dave. Dave and I married and moved to the tiny little town of Hamley Bridge. I continued to work full time in Adelaide, giving me a commute of about three hours return each day, while Dave was at university. For about the first five years of our marriage, I was the breadwinner, and for most of that time, the only one of us with an income. It was during this time we had our first daughter. I worked up to the day before I had her, and then had six weeks off before returning to work full time.

Dave and I continued attending the Church of Christ and considered moving into ministry within the church at this time. We felt a real call to country ministry, to reviving the church in country places – Dave had been a Baptist minister in the past. Within our church, some congregations had voted to allow women ministers and women on the church council. However this change hadn't extended as far as the rural areas where this denomination was still very conservative. Women's ministry, then, was problematic, as was ministry by divorced people, and so ministry there wasn't going to be an option for us.

In Hamley Bridge we lived a few doors down from the pub. We would find on a Saturday night that young people would hang around there, trying to convince people to bring them out alcohol. They were bored. Dave and I thought we might try to do something about this problem. We asked around the churches in town – there were about four denominations at that time – whether they might like to help. It was the Anglican Church, tiny little Saint Thomas's, which responded, offering the cottage they owned next to the church to run a youth drop-in centre. We did, along with three other couples from the town. Together we offered a BBQ every Saturday night, table tennis, a pool table, computers. It became a place to hang out, where the young people could have a place to 'be', without being told they were up to no good. And so it was that we joined the Anglican Church.

We had no idea when we moved to Hamley Bridge that it was right on the southern border of a huge Anglican diocese, the Diocese of Willochra. Through starting up the youth drop-in centre we met Bishop Garry Weatherill. It was not too long before Garry suggested that Dave forget his idea of becoming a teacher and become an Anglican priest instead.

I thought then that my role, my ministry (and I was still working full-time), would be to be a good priest's wife. So, I went with Dave to his selection conference and dutifully answered all of the questions. At the end of the selection conference we went across the road to St Peter's Cathedral (Willochra joined in with Adelaide for selection conferences) for evening prayer led by a young female priest.

I've had two or three what I would say are lasting spiritual revelations in my life, and this was one of them. As I shook her hand at the door I experienced what felt like an electric shock, almost as if she was holding a buzzer – and I had thought or heard a voice or something say 'you too' – and I knew that I was also to become a priest.

Probably it would be nice if I could say that I went off straight away and took action, but as we often do with a calling or vocation I resisted it for some time. 'Sure', I thought, 'once the kids have grown up'. Then I realised that perhaps I did have something to say, or a part to play in leading the way forward for mothers, or for those with children who feel that the kids are a barrier for them attending church. Perhaps there was something to say to the church as well, about making it easier and opening the way for these people, in church and in ministry. My being a person who shares a life like them – juggling that never-ending story of children and parenting and working life and chaos – could demonstrate how to make room for God in this busyness.

The Isaiah reading in the Thursday morning office really spoke to me in this discernment process: 'He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and *gently lead* those that are with young.' I feel that is what God has done with me, gently lead me through those years of raising children and wrestling with my calling.

In my talk today I would like to take the opportunity to introduce and pay tribute to a very strong Christian woman. Her name is Hannah Fry and she was born in 1824 in Gloucestershire, England. She emigrated to Adelaide at the age of twenty-five, with a large section of the congregation of the Shortwood Baptist Church. Many left that area as a result of the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution. The broad cloth weavers, like Hannah's father Luke Robins, from the Shortwood area, consequently suffered much as their jobs were taken over by machines. In fact, Luke had died in a lunatic asylum, probably as a pauper, not long after Hannah left England's shores.

In Adelaide Hannah married John Fry in Holy Trinity Anglican Church soon after her arrival. John was also from Gloucestershire, having arrived in the colony in 1837 with his parents. His father, Enoch Fry, had established a dairy farm in the area which he called Nailsworth, today a suburb six kilometres from the centre of Adelaide. Hannah went on to have six children over the next sixteen years.

Her life couldn't have been an easy one, being a pioneering woman, far from her home, living as a working-class wife and mother in the nineteenth century. Hannah's marriage seems not to have ended up a happy one. Her husband published a disclaimer in 1875 in the local *Express & Telegraph* stating that he would 'not be responsible for any debts contracted by his wife Hannah Fry after that date, having allowed her a separate maintenance'. He had copied word for word the notice his father had issued on his mother eighteen months previous. Never mind, John died within two years of the notice being issued. Hannah lived for another twenty-seven years, dying in 1902 at the age of seventy-eight; these twenty-seven years gave rise to some of her most productive achievements.

We can assume that Hannah operated out of a very strong faith. She was a founding member of the Tynte Street Baptist Church and an active member of

the Woman's Christian Temperance Union – well known by the cab and cart drivers to whom she distributed literature for many years.

Hannah was a poet and she published a book of poetry in 1900, a copy of which is held in the State Library of South Australia and which gives further insight into her world and her views. All of her poetry is Christian; she gives God thanks in all things, every reflection honours Jesus. Her poetry was a reflection of the early settlement of Adelaide and its happenings – untimely deaths, shipwrecks, the sights and sounds of early Adelaide – all overlaid with reference to God's goodness through Jesus.

Here are some lines from 'The Loyal Temperance Legion' (the children's branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union):

We are the Loyal Temperance Legion,
Who are assembled here;
We mean to fight for Jesus,
And never taste strong beer.

Hannah was an inventor. She developed and patented a medicinal compound she called 'Fry's Ointment'. She sent some of the salve to the British forces in Egypt in 1882, and received a letter of thanks from General Wolseley. Her ointment was later exhibited in the great South Australian Jubilee Exhibition. The movement for women's suffrage was driven largely in Adelaide by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Hannah was one of the signatories to the Women's Suffrage Petition of 1894 which led to South Australia being the first to give women the rights to vote and to stand for parliament.

Hannah, who incidentally was my great-great-great-grandmother, seems to have been an incredibly resourceful and strong woman – perhaps even a bit ferocious – but whose life was founded in Christ, giving her resilience and meaning, and fuelling her campaign for justice. Now, Hannah may not have been overly impressed to have one of her descendants 'abscond' to the Anglican Church, given her words written on the departure of her Baptist pastor to a congregation in Melbourne who had lost their own pastor to the Church of England. She wrote:

Their Pastor he has left them,
and turned aside to see,
If in the Church of England
He could more happy be.
We will not ask the reason,
the wherefore or the why,
that their once much loved Pastor,
Should pass the Baptists by.
He knows his Lord and Master
In Jordan was baptised,
And is he now ashamed to stay
with those who are despised?
'Tis not the rich and learned,
alone who enter heav'n,
it is the poor despised, Whose sins are all forgiven.

I can only hope that she might have come around eventually!

Hannah models a priestly attitude, which is clearly evident in the forgiveness she demonstrated for her husband in a poem written after his death. A priestly attitude of largeness of spirit, a lack of resentment or need for revenge, and an offering of love, especially considering her husband had not all that long before totally disowned her. Allow me to read for you:

Memory of My Late Husband

And now the day arrived,
my husband knew he must,
lay his poor mortal body by
to crumble into dust.
Twas on God's holy day;
I read in God's own word
Salvation's come to day,
I knew my prayers were heard.
Soon after that I said,
"Oh John, can you lay hold
On Christ, the living head
Of His own Church and fold?"
He quickly turned to me,
and unto me did say,
"I would, indeed I would,
If I only knew the way."
And then to him I said,
"Jesus, Himself, is near,
Waiting to receive you,
to hear and answer prayer."
That prayer of his, God heard at once;
The answer quickly came,
For he received joy in his soul
That kindled to a flame.
God did His spirit pour
On him that very day,
And in that very hour
Washed all his sins away.
For Jesus' precious blood
Had cancelled every sin,
And through His cleansing flood
He was made pure and clean.
"Thank God, I'm saved," he said,
"I see the shining way,"
Then up he raised his dying head
Towards realms of endless day.
"There is joy in Heaven," he said,
There is joy in heaven today,
There is joy in the presence of the angels

O'er one sinner that repenteth today."
"Saved at the eleventh hour," he said,
"Bless the Lord, oh my soul,
Saved by grace through faith alone
In Jesus Christ, God's much loved son
From sin and sorrow now set free,
Ever in heaven with Christ to be."

Remember how John had treated Hannah and such forgiveness and magnanimity was offered in return; through Christ and through Christ's example.

Hannah was not able to be a priest in her time. But clearly, she ministered to others. But of someone who achieved so much within the strictures of her time and gender, we could ask the question: what could she have achieved had she not experienced the barrier of being a woman? There is another question that goes along with that and that is: how much of her priestliness, her surrender to Christ, her offering of love and forgiveness was due to being a woman in the first place?

This example of love and forgiveness speaks to me of the unique ministry that women can provide, to men and to women.

In my career I have followed a passion for people and community, working in community development for local government, and as a case manager with long-term unemployed families – being alongside them as and guiding them to set goals and overcome barriers to employment and education. The need to meet people where they are without judgment and even without my own agenda, has been critical in those roles, and is something that I bring into my priesthood as well. Community development – and I firmly believe this is part of our role as priests – community building requires us to facilitate, inspire, implement – and then get out of the way as the community takes the credit for what is achieved.

We need to do more to recognise and celebrate the gifts that being a mother, a wife, a daughter or whatever else it is that gives us our unique make-up and life experience brings to the role of priest. In the same way that being a father might, or being female, being a carer, being a minority, and any of the other aspects of being human. That is why we need all the diversity of our humanity in vocation – we all have gifts to share. Without which we are not whole. Individually none of us can be the perfect priest, and in that sense our priesthood is a joint venture – with each other, and with the body of Christ.

MOW AGM EUCHARIST, ADELAIDE 2018

Sermon preached by the Rev'd Pirrial Clift in St Stephen's Chapel.

The Readings: Numbers 27:1-11; Luke 10: 38-42

We are so used to hearing this lovely story and hearing that the life of contemplation and prayer is the 'better part'. Religious houses have used it for centuries to justify having lay sisters or brothers to do the manual work, thus setting the professed free for longer hours of prayer. Preachers have used it to emphasise the importance of prayer. The church has used it to put ordinary people down – teaching that contemplatives were/are higher up the so-called ladder of perfection.

Far be it from me to cast any doubt on the centrality of prayer in our lives; however, I suspect there is more to this story.

Jesus, Mary and Martha were not alone; there were others there, probably disciples, for verse 38 begins – *Now as they went on their way*. Also, *Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying*. My guess is that Jesus spoke to his disciples, who were probably also sitting at the Lord's feet, which presents an interesting picture, because to have a woman sitting there amongst the men was unusual to say the least. If indeed Jesus WAS alone, and he was speaking *only* to Mary, that is astounding. Either way, Mary took a student's/disciple's posture – this was how people were taught – remember Paul saying *I sat at the feet of Gamaliel*, letting his hearers know that he was taught by Gamaliel.

Mary was not just sitting there dewy-eyed, gazing lovingly at Jesus, she was *listening*. She 'listened to what he was saying'. This spunky young girl, (I assume she was young, as girls were married at puberty usually) had taken her place as Jesus' disciple! Mary dared to approach a man known abroad as a prophet, a great teacher, and even perhaps the Messiah – and dared to say by her actions that she too could learn; she, who was denied formal teaching in her culture because she was female.

Jesus defended her right to be a disciple. As he defended the right of the woman who anointed him with perfume, and defended the woman who wept over his feet; just as he accepted the ministrations of women who followed him around the countryside. When he raised the widow's son to life outside the gates of Jerusalem, it was because he had pity on HER, not the son! He broke tradition time and again and touched women outside his family circle, and allowed them to touch him. Wherever he went women were received with dignity – including women known as sinners like the woman 'caught in adultery' and the woman at the well. Women boldly, daringly, shockingly approached him: *my daughter has a demon, or if I only touch the hem of his garment*.

When Jesus said to Martha *leave her alone... she has chosen the better part*, whether or not he was commenting on prayer, I believe he was also publicly elevating her to equal status with the male disciples. *The better part* then, could well be interpreted as discipleship.

Numbers 26 describes a census taken of all males over the age of twenty before Israel crossed into the Promised Land (v. 2). As part of the list of the various clans, we read that *Zelophehad ... had no sons, only daughters* (v. 33). As the census was concluded, God instructs Moses, *Among these shall the land be*

apportioned as shares (v. 53). ‘Among these’ refers to the males listed. Zelophehad’s daughters were not counted in the census and therefore were not to receive any land. The daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. We might expect that women in those days would react by keeping silent, keeping close to their tents and out of sight.

Reading chapter 27 verses 1-2. Then the daughters of Zelophehad came forward. Zelophehad was son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph, a member of the Manassite clans. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

Let me read what Tamara Cohn Ashkenazi, a Jewish writer, says: *Let’s imagine the scene: the Israelite camp is formed of tribes, each of whom has a determined place, with the Tabernacle in the middle; and in the centre stand the main authority figures, all of them men: Moses, the priest Eleazar, and the chieftains. Imposing as this structure may have been, the five sisters decide to claim their rights. Together, they go out of their tents, without being called by anyone, to the place where only the high-ranking men congregate, to the place where the Tablets from Sinai rest in the Ark, to the place of holiness and authority, to a place where women do not go. These men must have been overwhelmed when they saw such a startling, unprecedented situation!*

v 3 and they said, “Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin; and he had no sons.⁴ Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father’s brothers.”

Back to Ashkenazi: *“How does Moses react? The following verse states: “Moses brought their case before God” (27:5). Moses discloses his inability to assess the claims of these sisters. He takes the case to God, who responds by unequivocally supporting the sisters’ demand and even by promulgating a new and permanent law to secure inheritance for any daughters in such circumstances (27:6-8). Thus, the sisters’ claim leads to the law of inheritances being changed forever.*

The achievement of Zelophehad’s daughters was a landmark in women’s rights regarding the inheritance of land, from those days up to now. In addition the story of these five women offers a compelling lesson for all those who believe that their destiny is fixed or that divine justice has abandoned them. It encourages us to think differently—and provides a message of hope for all those faced with obstacles. Perhaps the most important legacy of Zelophehad’s daughters is their call to us to take hold of life with our own hands, to move from the place that the others have given us—or that we have decided to keep because we feel immobile—and to walk, even to the most holy centre, to where nobody seems to be able to go.

Like Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, MOW has challenged the interpretation of God’s word in a different era. People like Patricia Brennan and Alison Gent left the places where women were restricted and fought for the rights of women in the church – even up to the most holy centre (to Christians, the altar where the eucharist is celebrated). As God spoke through Moses to support those courageous women, and Jesus supported the women of the New Testament, so the Holy Spirit is within us and will support us in our continuing – from Zelophehad’s daughters until now – our *continuing* work in gaining the

right to claim an equal inheritance as Daughters of the Most High God, for ourselves and for future generations of women. Like Zelophehad's daughters, like Mary of Bethany, we need boldness and courage to claim our right to be counted equal in our discipleship of Jesus Christ, and fit to enter the Holy place.

We offer thanks to God for the gains that have been made, and for the strength and patience and courage of women past and present who have stepped out of their tents to fight for justice.

And we go on. Somehow, we go on. In the power of the Holy Spirit we go on.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can either ask or imagine, to him be glory, both in the Church and in Christ Jesus. (Eph 3:21)

God's peace be with you.

Mother Pirriall Clift

BOOK LAUNCH BY LAVINIA GENT

***Woman, the Church's Buried Talent* by Lesley McLean**

I thank you all so much for coming today and I thank Lesley for putting into print that part of my Mother, Alison's story, which for many years was also the story of the Movement for the Ordination of Women.

Her wicked children often referred to Alison as an Eye Specialist – I did this, I think this, I said this, and I believe this – so please forgive me if this launch speaks too much of this 'I' but reading this book evokes so much of my journey with her that it necessarily touches on so much of the life we shared as seen from my perspective.

When I was a child. I had no ambition to be a priest. Dad was a priest and I was happy being my brother's acolyte. Yes we did play mass. We had a 1960s fireplace so Charles was the priest (back to the people) and I was the server. Mum and Dad were our congregation and we had sultana wafers and claret in an egg cup. I was happy to serve but what I really wanted to be was a cat. Mum helped me to be one. She took a cork, charred it on a gas ring and drew on me whiskers and a nose. She pinned a tail made out of pantyhose to my trousers and set down a saucer of milk next to the fridge for me to lap up. There is no doubt in my mind that if I had told Alison that I wanted to be an astronaut, she would have enabled me to be that too.

Alison was a fierce advocate for me, as her only daughter, to have the right to do things that my brothers did, or at least to have the choice to do them. During the 1970s, she told the Master of the all-male St Mark's College where my father and brothers had all resided, that if it were not open to me by the time I left school there would be, and I quote, 'Hell to pay'. I left school in 1981. St Marks' opened to women in 1982. I chose not to go but the timing thrilled her.

Threats, letters to the Editor, protests, badges, and placards were the weapons of Alison's fight for the rights of all women. Placards especially – the pithy statement declaring her thoughts to the public. She would have thrived on Twitter. Placards to me meant a last minute dash to the newsagent, followed by a

creative mess of margarine containers, paint, and hand-cut sponges covering the elegant family dining room table at Rose Park. *Woman – the church's buried talent* is a famous one but my favourite was the one she hauled down Hindley Street to protest against the exploitation of topless women waitresses. It was a classic – *I'd be arrested, if I were bare breasted*.

She marched with placards, stuck them to her ancient Volkswagen, and as she grew older, sat in folding chairs outside all-male ordinations Australia-wide. I remember her one year sitting on the highest step outside St Peter's Cathedral as people filed in, her protesting words painted plainly for all to see. An elegantly dressed man and woman spied her and yelled out at her 'TROUBLEMAKER!' The young woman next to her looked quite distressed on Alison's behalf. Alison's lips pursed and she gave them one of her famous death stares. Surprisingly, the couple approached and kissed her. 'These' she explained resignedly to her fellow protestor 'are my children'.



The MOWatch demonstration at General Synod in Brisbane in 2001. Alison is subverting the demonstrating of clearly printed placards with her own, less distinct one

I am grateful of course to Lesley, for her devotion to Alison in life and on paper. Lesley met Alison through their common parenting at St Andrew's School, Walkerville – her daughter and I were in the same class. In my eyes, the McLeans were the coolest. Dave as an architect had built a cubby house, with a sink, and it had a plug! I made do with a space under a wattle bush at home. They listened to Jesus Christ Superstar. My Mother listened to Fauré's Requiem in a darkened room and wept for her marriage while Dad was at the pub. The McLeans taught me what it was like in the 'real' world where parents were young (mine were about the age I am now but I thought them terribly old) and you could watch

contemporary American TV without comment. Here it was that Lesley's journey with Alison began.

The lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, had a unique association with the diarist, James Boswell, who famously followed him around and wrote down his every word – well almost. He was described as Johnson's constant companion and recorder and so to our Family, Lesley was known affectionately as Boswell. Lesley's rôle as such has not always been a comfortable experience. Our perspectives of our parents have by choice and circumstance varied. Timothy, my oldest brother was born in 1947 and I did not leave home until 51 years later in 1998.

As an aside, people asked me what it was like at 33 to be living by myself for the first time. I was a little nervous and lonely. Alison was living by herself for the first time at 77 and loved every minute of it. It could be a little disconcerting however. The phone rang at 5 one morning waking me from deep sleep. Knowing it would be Mum, I was deeply concerned. 'Lally, dear. I've just woken up and the light is so strange that I can't tell if it's 5 am or 5 pm.' 'It's 5 am, Mum.' 'Well it's lucky you were up then!'

I as daughter and closest observer can attest much of this book that my brothers cannot. And it is such an important book – both a history and a lesson. It is meticulously researched, having its roots in Dr McLean's doctoral opus on Alison, *No Coward Soul*, and importantly, it is not a hagiography.

I am conscious that there are people here today who never met Alison and that there are some who remember her only as an old difficulty. The old war horse, Winston Churchill springs to mind. (Yes, Ma did like to smoke cigars.) This book is a testament to why Alison was feisty and difficult. She fought. She was scarred.

I quote Lesley:

'Alison's or any other person's failings, whether it be, in her case, her irascibility and unreasonableness, need not be the sum of their worth.' Lesley continues. *'I suggest that it is rather their ability to recover, to forgive, and to renew friendship that is the true measure of worth. Despite 'not suffering fools gladly', Alison's comment "it doesn't matter what you do, you're in trouble", did not express resignation but rather the reality that is the life of an outsider. She was aware that her sisters in the faith, who were seeking and have received ordination, faced the danger of being drawn into a 'system of goodness'. The awareness evoked her empathy, rather than her condemnation, for, she said, "women priests are not popular unless they do what people think they should".'*

I acknowledge and thank you brave and courageous women and men who took up what must have seemed at the time an unwinnable fight. There is a set of hand bells at St Peter's Cathedral engraved with the names of our South Australian women pioneer priests. And I think of them whenever they are rung (which for some is uncomfortably often). They are a reminder of the struggle and a celebration of the victory. They also ring for the wonderful people whose names are recorded, and unrecorded, in this book as members of a great movement.

I do want to mention my father, the Father, The Rev'd John Gent. My thoughts on Dad are my own but consider. Charles and I were not pawns but certainly players at the time of our parents' divorce and I was Alison's confidante, often unwillingly, after the older boys had left home. Make no

mistake. John was the great true love of Alison's life. When in the middle of a pitched battle with me she would declare 'You're just like your Father!' I grew bold enough to ask 'Which version? The one you love or the one you are angry at?' They were described in their youth as 'love's young dream'. Attractive, fiercely intelligent, eloquent, mostly impractical, and ultimately competitive. She stood by him though, in the face of opposition – familial one suspects, and certainly institutional. Her feminist and clerical aspirations were often a reaction to his attitudes to her chaotic domestic life, her professional disappointments, and her invisible vocation. He told her that he could see no theological objection to the ordination of women but he could never bring himself to rise on the floor of synod and say it publicly. I think he found it culturally difficult in terms of his understanding of the Church, and perhaps personally threatening in terms of his equality with Alison.

Alison's response to their divorce was to ask Archbishop Keith Rayner to officiate at a rite in the Cathedral Lady Chapel, which he graciously did. She moved her wedding ring from her left hand to her right. 'John may have given up on our marriage vows but I never will.' She moved the ring back when he died to indicate that she thought of herself as a widow. She wore it to her grave.

Due to Alison's efforts, interactions with Dad and his second wife, Barbara, were always affectionate and civil though when after Barbara's death, he returned to Adelaide on a visit, he seemed rather disconcerted that we were quite relieved when he almost apologetically told us that he had no intention of returning permanently and remarrying Mum. I think he was a little taken aback by Charles and my response – a heartfelt 'Yes!' Memories of our volatile childhood had convinced us that the Tasman Sea was a comfortable distance for them to be apart. Apparently Dad was a total convert to the woman priest who ministered to him in his nursing home. Parents! Who'd have them?

Alison wished to have some of her ashes taken to New Zealand, amongst other places, to be with his but every time the subject was mentioned, Christchurch suffered a major earthquake. We took it as a sign and instead, took a little part of her ashes to bury in the garden of the old Yorketown Rectory from where during the 1940s, he so lovingly wrote to her at least weekly during their long engagement, talking of parishioners and cats and being together, addressing her as Dear Bud or Son – short for Alison. Her letters to him were apparently not kept but I suspect they were equally affectionate and copious, and far more legible.

My beloved Father in Christ, John Henry Stephenson, when I visited him on his deathbed accompanied by my wonderful Mother in Christ, Jenny Wilson, spoke fondly of both my Mother and my Father. He told me something that I never had known. Dad and his best mate called her Pankhurst, after Emmeline Pankhurst, the great suffragette. A joke for them perhaps but ultimately a grand tribute – a woman who believed in her cause, was fierce in its defence, but was often unpopular for her methods. 'Trust in God' said Pankhurst. 'She will provide.'

The recent decision by the Lutheran Church of Australia not to ordain women is a salutary reminder that this book is not simply a historical document about a movement but a continuing call to battle. Alison was a warrior, and as St Paul so eloquently described it, was not afraid to put on the whole armour of God. Women who choose to don battle dress are not always comfortable to

encounter. Those of you who ever sat at Alison's kitchen table may remember that she had a postcard of Joan of Arc prominently displayed above her stove. Alison admired women who broke the mould as she did.



Jeanne d'Arc – Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1854)

In his pseudo-biography of her, Mark Twain, writes of the Joan to which I think Alison aspired:

She was great in battle – we all know that; great in foresight; great in loyalty and patriotism; great in persuading discontented chiefs and reconciling conflicting interests and passions; great in the ability to discover merit and genius wherever it lay hidden; great in picturesque and eloquent speech; supremely great in the gift of firing the hearts of hopeless men and noble enthusiasms, the gift of turning hares into heroes, slaves and skulkers into battalions that march to death with songs on their lips. But all these are exalting activities; they keep hand and heart and brain keyed up to their work; there is the joy of achievement, the inspiration of stir and movement, the applause which hails success; the soul is overflowing with life and energy, the faculties are at white heat; weariness, despondency, inertia – these do not exist.

I suggested to Alison in the days before she died that she had fought the good fight, she had kept the faith, and maybe it was time to finish the race. She

looked at me and with genuine anguish wailed, 'But I have so much left to do!' She was 89.

I think myself a little bit brave today. Talking about my Mother is a very tender thing. We had an extraordinary life together, some of which I won't reveal to you or even to Boswell. A final anecdote reveals something of the difference between historical, academic, and familial perspectives. Our dear Family friend, Bishop Garry Weatherill preached at her funeral and reflected on Alison's final grand expedition the year before she died to see Kay Goldsworthy consecrated Bishop in Perth. To quote Garry:

Alison was quite feeble and she came in a wheelchair, but she was in her best finery, and she had her favourite jewels on and could not stop smiling. She sat there in that grand place listening to speeches, but really, she didn't seem to me to be in a wheelchair at all, she seemed somehow to be floating. And she received people, much like a royal personage would, as they came forward to share memories, and to share congratulations and stories of the struggle. It was clear to me then that Alison was a great matriarch to the women of our church.

Lesley notes:

Alison described the consecration as the completion of her 'life's work'.

For Alison's granddaughter, Alice, the memory of that expedition was slightly different. To paraphrase: We took Grandma to the airport and I put through her hand luggage. 'Did you pack this yourself?' the official asked. Alice looked suspiciously at our frail yet fiendish matriarch but knew that Penny, Alison's devoted daughter-in-law had meticulously packed everything on Alison's behalf. 'Yes' said Alice confidently. 'I did.' This is 2008, remember, with the threat of terrorism still very real. 'Where is your Grandmother going?' 'To the consecration of Australia's first woman bishop.' 'Why then, are there two pairs of scissors in her purse?' She most likely took them in case of loose threads or to recycle envelopes but one also suspects she was happily plotting to stab any dissenter in the buttock from her closely positioned wheelchair. Alison. Never to be bossed around and always ready for a fight.



Alison's last interstate venture, the consecration of the Reverend Kay Goldsworthy to the episcopate in Perth, 22 May 2008. From L, Rev'd Lesley McLean, Sue Henry Edwards, Bishop Kay, Alison, Judy Little, Archbishop Roger Herft, Kathleen Toal and Bishop Victoria Matthews, who led Kay's retreat and was soon to be installed as bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand

Thank you, Lesley, for this opportunity to talk about Alison. I was banned by her from giving her eulogy on the grounds that I'd make her sound funny. She did not, however, specify book launches. It is no mistake that I have made little comment on the politics of this book. Please read it for yourselves. I hope it evokes a sense of how far MOW has come and how far there is yet to travel.

With thanks to Boswell and with pride in Pankhurst, it is with much pleasure that I launch this book.



Lavinia Gent and Lesley McLean at the book launch, 27 October, 2018

Copies of the book are available from the author, Lesley McLean at 0427188604, revlesley@adam.com.au at \$25.00 +\$7 postage and packaging.

A review by Jenny Sorell

When Anglican women were priested at St Peter's Cathedral on December the 5th, 1992, it was the culmination of years of struggle by protest movements in Adelaide such as the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) and Women in Holy Orders (WHO). In "Woman, The Church's Buried Talent" Lesley

McLean skilfully portrays the various ideas, influences and personalities that gave rise to and energised the Protest, while the lively description of the debates within the community via both the media and the pulpit reminds those who lived in Adelaide at the time of its often bitter divisiveness.

The progress towards Ordination is depicted through reference to the life and vocation of Alison Gent, the subject of the author's doctoral thesis "No Coward Soul" which does give rise to a certain amount of academic discussion which may be problematic for the general reader, in particular the section "Language and Grammar". However, as it is confined to the Introduction it can be read as a separate essay with just the main premise being taken from it, namely that the use of language in worship and by the hierarchy of the Church was critical to the debates surrounding the Protest Movement and it was Alison's profound understanding and use of language which acted as a lynch-pin in the successful communication of the Movement's arguments.

A time of great significance in the Anglican Church in Adelaide is played out in the book and with hindsight a confusing contemporary situation has been clarified by Lesley McLean's comprehensive history.

Lu Piper wrote:

What [this book] has done for me is broaden the story. It has been wonderful to read Alison's story and all the struggles that Adelaide endured. I think it holds us today to our resolve not to be complacent in the situation women's ordination has now become. This book should be read by as many MOW-ers as possible

A non-church going friend: Now I understand what it was all about!

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