



## Celebrating 40 years of bearing witness to women's call to ministry

The Movement for the Ordination of Women was birthed in Sydney in 1983 by women and men passionately committed to the Anglican faith but despairing of the Australian Church's exclusion of women from ordained ministry on the grounds of their gender.

The pivotal text for MOW members was, and is, Galatians 3:28: *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* We believe that, in Christ, we are all equal

with one another.

In most dioceses, women clergy are now a given – deacons since 1986, priests since 1992 and bishops since 2008. In 2018, Bishop Kay Goldsworthy was installed as the first female archbishop in the Anglican Church in Australia.

Over the last forty years, twenty of the twenty-three dioceses of the Anglican Church have moved to ordain women priests, the most recent being the Diocese of the Murray (South Australia) on 12 August 2023. The Anglican Church of Australia *Directory 2022/23* shows there are 154 active women deacons, 410 active women priests and 7 active Episcopal bishops.

There are many provinces in the Anglican Communion world-wide that permit the consecration of female bishops. Gafcon Australia notes, 'ordained women have been involved in GAFCON from its inception, and ordained women serve in our leadership' (<https://www.gafconaustralia.org/faq/>). There are 3 female bishops in GAFCON.

MOW is not only about securing the ordination of women. From its early days it was also concerned about the way the Church regarded all women – in its language, lectionary readings and liturgy and in excluding them from its decision-making bodies.

MOW continues to encourage the Church to make full use of the ministries of women, to promote women's perspectives in theology, to honour the breadth and diversity of women's ministry and to promote theological learning and discussion. Above all, MOW remains committed to challenging and transforming the Anglican Church of Australia and its role in the community.

On 17 September 2023 MOW celebrates its Sydney pioneers at Christ Church St Laurence, 814 George Street. The Most Reverend Kay Goldsworthy AO, Archbishop of Perth, will preach at the 9:00 and 10:30 am services, the latter livestreamed at <https://ccsl.org.au>. The Venerable Dr Colleen O'Reilly AM, Sydney-born, a founding member of Anglican Women Concerned and MOW Sydney, ordained in Melbourne in 1995, will deliver the Dr Patricia Brennan AM Lecture after lunch.

To learn more about MOW or to support our activities, visit <https://mowatch.com.au/> or contact the Sydney Convenor ([convenor.sydney@mowatch.com.au](mailto:convenor.sydney@mowatch.com.au)) or the national President ([president@mowatch.com.au](mailto:president@mowatch.com.au)). A major conference will be held in Brisbane in November 2024 to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MOW as a national organisation.

Women were significantly involved in the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Women such as Phoebe, Priscilla, Euodia, Junia, Nympha and Syntyche were influential in the early church. These women and many others served as deacons, teachers, benefactors, workers 'in the Lord', and leaders or co-leaders of house churches, as evidenced in the following table prepared by The Rev'd Professor Dorothy Lee, FAHA.

When MOW started in Sydney, it was a prophetic movement as there were few opportunities for women to exercise their call to ministry. But the role of prophet is a difficult one, an outsider, calling for justice. Many women have left the diocese in order to maintain their faith, to train for ordained ministry, or to experience women's ministry elsewhere. Sydney women have enriched the faith lives of many dioceses as workers 'in the Lord', following examples set by women in the early church; Sydney Diocese is much the poorer for their going.

### **WOMEN WORKERS ACROSS THE PAULINE CORPUS**

From Dorothy Lee, *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament* (2021)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Identity</b>
Phoebe	Rom 16:1–2	Letter-bearer; deacon, benefactor; Corinth
Priscilla/Prisca	Rom 16:3–5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19	Friend and missionary with Paul; worked with him; ministered in Ephesus
Mary	Rom 16:6	Hard worker in gospel; nothing else known
Junia	Rom 16:7	Outstanding apostle; possible eyewitness of Jesus's ministry?
Tryphaena	Rom 16:12	Worker "in the Lord"; probably(twin?) sister of Tryphosa
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Persis	Rom 16:12	Worker "in the Lord"; described as "beloved"
Rufus's mother	Rom 16:13	Has acted as spiritual mother also to Paul
Julia	Rom 16:15	Unknown
Nereus's sister	Rom 16:15	Unknown
Chloe	1 Cor 1:10–11	Informal report to Paul; head of house church?
Euodia	Phil 4:2	Possible dispute with Syntyche or advice; co-leader of church (bishop or deacon?)
Syntyche	Phil 4:2	Possible dispute with Euodia or advice; co-leader of church (bishop or deacon?)
Nympha	Col 4:15	Probably leader of church in her house
Apphia	Philm 1–2	Letter addressed to 'our sister'; co-leader of house church?
Claudia	2 Tim 4:21	Leader in church in Rome; possibilities for identity?
Lois	2 Tim.1:5	Timothy's grandmother; commended for teaching him faith
Eunice	2 Tim.1:5	Timothy's mother; commended for teaching him faith