

ADOC Task Force Recommendations

Bishop Steve Wood charged our Task Force with “making recommendations to our diocese regarding how we can best fulfill the commitment made by the College of Bishops [in 2017] in Victoria ‘to work earnestly toward a far greater release of the whole church to her God-given mission’--especially discipling and equipping ‘female [members], lay and ordained, to fulfill their callings and ministries in the work of God’s kingdom.’”

We believe that the overall impediment to fulfilling this charge is a lack of understanding and implementing the biblical notion of the priesthood of all believers. Therefore, we begin by answering the question: *What do we mean by the phrase, “the priesthood of all believers?”*

The Priesthood of All Believers

What is “the priesthood of all believers?”

In 1 Peter 2 the language of Exodus 19 is adopted as the “kingdom of priests” is expanded to include all of the baptized. Peter identifies two aspects of this priestly vocation—in Christ, (1) the Church is set apart to offer spiritual sacrifices and (2) to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The charge to be a “royal priesthood” requires us to maintain the essence of the Church’s collective witness, while demonstrating the crucial role of every individual.

As the priesthood, the Church has a prophetic role among the nations. 1 Peter picks up on the corporate nature of this God-given mission by referring to the community as a chosen race, a holy nation, and a people for God’s own possession. However, the individual aspect of this priestly vocation is well-established throughout 1 Peter. This direction is not intended to foster individualism, but instead to demonstrate life within the community as essential to the Church’s collective witness. First, he displays the manner in which we conduct ourselves as crucial to our corporate witness—that evildoers “may see your good deeds and glorify God.” Second, he reminds us that *each* are given gifts and mandated to serve one another as stewards of God’s grace.

Offering Spiritual Gifts

The Levitical priesthood was renewed and fully realized in Christ as the great High Priest (Heb 4:14). Though Christ’s own priesthood is unique, the Church is invited to partake, or share, in His ministry. The Church carries on the priestly role of sacrifice, offering spiritual sacrifices of:

- Ourselves to God—our bodies (Rom 12:1), faith (Phil 2:17) and our praise (Heb 13:15).
- Ourselves to serve one another (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10).

In 1 Peter 4 we are urged to use our gifts in service to the Body, by the strength of God and for His glory. This service is marked by love, exercised in hospitality and to be carried out without complaint. The saints are to be equipped for this work of ministry, and released to use their gifts to serve in these ways:

- Proclaiming the gospel (Mark 1:14-15, 22)
- Intercession (1 Timothy 2:1; Romans 12:12)
- Ministry/ Service (building up the Body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12)
- Prophecy, Teaching, Mercy, Healing and Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The Priest within the Priesthood

Presbyters/ Elders are appointed from within the Body (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). Mark describes the manner in which Jesus called leaders from among the crowd, casting it not as a decision of the individual, but as willed by God. Particular gifts are associated with this calling; however, they represent but a portion of the many essential gifts that make the body grow. Though the English word *priest* has become synonymous with *presbyter*, it should not imply that the entirety of the priestly ministry of the Church can be fulfilled in this one office. The Priest is set apart to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4). This is accomplished when we:

- Lead members to consider their individual contributions as significant to the whole Body
- Help them discover the ways in which the Spirit has gifted them to minister
- Equip them for service
- Release them for ministry

It is recognized that the Office of Priest involves oversight, and that such authority can lead to the abuse of power. Anticipating this, Peter reminds us that elders should not lord their authority over others; they should not be domineering or prideful. Instead, such leaders are to be an example of humility among the flock. The priesthood of all believers is compromised when clergy:

- Fail to acknowledge each person as having an essential gift
- Assign value based on age, gender, ethnicity, skill, or gifting
- Fear releasing the laity for the work of ministry
- Resist extending authority to carry on the work

Valuing Every Person

The mission to which we are called requires the participation of all believers—each has been given gifts by the Holy Spirit for ministry (1 Cor 12). Paul states that God has composed the Church in such a way that all parts are dependent on the others—to the extent that we cannot function as one body apart from the participation of each member.

Valuing Every Gift

All members, lay or ordained, should find value and fulfillment in using their gifts for the building up of the Church. Paul states that God has given greater honor to positions that lacked it so that there should be no division (1 Cor 12). He says, "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose." Therefore, we cannot consider one part of the Body as less honorable or weaker than the others. Because the whole Body cannot function as one except for the participation of all parts, none can be considered "any less a part of the body." When we fail to recognize individual members for their appointed contributions and the necessity of their particular gifts, ordination becomes the only available means of affirming the value of each individual contribution. In this case, we forfeit the diversity of gifts needed for the growth of the body.

General Suggestions for Developing a Culture that Values The Priesthood of All Believers

The priesthood of all believers must be understood and valued on every level. When everyone understands this one concept:

- Vision changes
- New language is adopted
- People are unified around a common purpose

This begins with the Rector and works its way down to every member of the congregation.

Language Needs to Change

Are we looking for *volunteers* or for people who have spiritual gifts, passions, callings, and experiences?

Imagine a Church in which everyone has a place and can identify that place knowing that he or she was chosen by God, and that each was chosen for a God-ordained purpose: to impact the kingdom.

Questions Need to be Asked

- How do we see and value people in our congregation?
- Do we maximize the strengths of and resources in our people?
- Do we celebrate all the gifts?
- How do we help people understand their gifts and connect them with places to contribute well?

- How do we do ministry? We must equip, train, encourage, and release people into ministries, then offer support as needed.

Without Understanding The Priesthood of All Believers

A lack of understanding the priesthood of all believers creates all kinds of problems within the Church.

- 1) Instead of considering that each person is a member of the Body of Christ with God-given gifts and callings meant to fulfill the work of ministry, the Church uses less efficient means of doing the work of ministry (or narrowing the scope to simply completing needed tasks) such as “signup sheets” and the enlistment of volunteers.

When spiritual gifts are developed and released a church should see a continual flow of new ministries and new opportunities to serve, rather than merely filling empty slots within existing ministries.

- 2) A church that does not understand the need to build on the priesthood of all believers may rely on the same 20% of its congregation to do the work of ministry, which leaves 80% of the spiritual gifts and resources of a church untapped.

This is not good for the 20% because they are more susceptible to burnout, as well as being placed in areas to which they may not be well suited. This is also unhealthy for the 80%, as they remain unaware of their spiritual gifts and purposes and are denied appropriate opportunities to contribute.

- 3) Certain groups may be disqualified or overlooked on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or education.
- 4) Rather than first identifying spiritual gifts and callings, the church may be more affected by gender bias in determining where a person is best suited to serve. For example, it may be assumed that women are better at working with children, serving on altar guild, or providing prayer ministry, while men are more equipped for leadership and finance. Not only are gifted individuals overlooked in this scenario, but leadership decisions made on behalf of the whole church are influenced predominantly by men. Thus, the voices of a large segment of our people are underrepresented in the making of key decisions.

Specific Suggestions to Achieve a Greater Release of Women (and Men) in Leadership and Service in ADOC

- **Promote**
 - *The creation of a role* (either paid or volunteer) in each parish for the purpose of gifts assessment of all members, and for lay ministry placement both inside and outside of the parish (e.g., “Based on your S.H.A.P.E.¹, Habitat for Humanity appears to be a great fit for you.”) Develop a focus on identifying spiritual gifts first in order to move past gender-based stereotyping while avoiding a pattern of seeking simply to fill an immediate need, instead seeking to equip men and women to fulfill the ministries for which they are gifted and to which they are called.
 - *A culture that values women* in our parishes and reassess this regularly, inviting anonymous feedback from women.

- **Educate**
 - *Rectors* regarding the need to be intentional in raising up women leaders. Intention is required to equip women for leadership in the church. We must desire diversity among leadership, not for the sake of diversity alone, but because diversity mirrors the image of God as male and female.
 - *Churches in our diocese* about the importance of the female voice.
 - *Clergy within ADOC* by instructing them to read Developing Female Leaders by Kadi Cole, to be discussed at two consecutive monthly clergy gatherings. Task Force members could help shape these discussions including implementing small groups. This would present an opportunity for hearing stories of gender-based wounding, for repentance from sexism, and for praying together for Jesus to lead us into a church in which both men and women are encouraged and equipped to serve in positions of leadership. We also recommend Half the Church: Recovering God’s Global Vision for Women by Carolyn Custis James; she does not take a position on ordination but raises the bar for women in the ministry of the church and the world. This could be helpful for men who may not be enthusiastic about reading a book on developing female leaders but who are open to being challenged about their views of women in the church and about the injustices suffered by women in the world.
 - *Congregants and clergy* by establishing a list on the ADOC website of podcasts and YouTube videos created by female leaders in the ACNA, lay and ordained (e.g., Erilyne Barnum, Tish Harrison Warren, Summer Gross, etc.) as well as teaching on women in leadership (the Task Force is willing to suggest resources if desired by Bp. Wood.)

¹Rees, E. (2008). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- **Provide**

- *Opportunities* by recruiting gifted women, lay and ordained, for parish, diocesan, and provincial committees and ministries. Ask them to serve as lectors, ushers, etc. Consider what men might be gifted to serve in roles thought to be for “women only”. Exercise creativity (e.g., replace the ladies’ Altar Guild with a sign-up for families/ households; promote the need for men on prayer teams, in children’s ministries and hospitality ministries, etc.). To bridge the initial gap, ministries could begin incorporating equal numbers of men and women to work toward achieving balance as well as considering spiritual gifts.
- *Resources* via the creation of a diocesan conference entitled **Leadership Initiative** (for women, lay and ordained, senior high school age through retirement), led by Christian women for those who want to learn the basics about leadership. Also, we should offer an annual workshop at Synod entitled **How to Serve on a Vestry** for men and women, newly elected or considering serving on a vestry, and led by current Wardens/ Vestry members of diocesan churches. Topics to include: *The Basics of Robert’s Rules, How to Read a Financial Report, Vestry Responsibilities, Staying Connected to Jesus, Introduction to the Constitutions and Canons of the Diocese, and Communicating as Men & Women in Leadership.*
- *Encouragement* for women, who are more hesitant than men to use their leadership gifts in the church lest they be thought of as “too masculine.” Women are more hesitant to serve when they lack female role models; they are less likely than men to try something they do not know how to do or have not seen a woman doing.²
- *Mentoring* for women in the ordination process by pairing each with an ordained woman of the same holy order in order to provide support and guidance in a journey that is more challenging for women than for men.
- *Accountability* through creating a new Diocesan Task Force by February 2020 to assess how we are doing every 2-3 years.

In the ADOC Canons and policies, women are not prohibited from serving in leadership positions such as senior wardens, associate pastors, or worship leaders; neither are men prohibited from serving as children’s ministry directors or parish administrators. Yet the gender breakdown among the thirty churches in the diocese does not reflect the kaleidoscopic beauty of “the priesthood of all believers” mindset. The data³ from information published on individual ADOC church websites are as follows:

- 1 of 13 youth leaders are women
- 2 of 8 senior wardens are women
- 9 of 10 parish administrators are women

² Cole, Kadi. “Developing Female Leaders.” YouTube, interview with Larry Osborne, 3/11/19, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quDSZVbdpuk&feature=share>

³ Spreadsheet available upon request

- 19 of 19 children’s directors are women
- 12 of 42 assisting clergy (deacons included) are women

This is not because women are any less gifted than men in higher-level leadership but is because women: a) are more hesitant to offer to lead, b) are not given the opportunities and training, and c) they do not see it modeled⁴.

Biblical and Theological Rationale for Women in Leadership

Jesus’ intention in setting up his church as a “*kingdom of priests*” (Ex. 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:10) was not a new innovation; it was simply restoring to humanity something that once belonged to them but had been lost. The priesthood of all believers finds its roots in a task originally given to humankind in Genesis 2:15 – The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to “...*work it and keep it*”: two verbs later used to describe the work of the priests in the tabernacle and temple (Num. 3:6-8; Ezek. 44:14). Human beings, made in the image of God, were created to be God’s representatives and *priests*, ruling his creation on his behalf. This task, of course, was too great for man to do alone, and so the LORD made a helper fit for him: he created woman. And *together*, they were to rule and serve the creation, acting as the LORD’s priests for the flourishing of the world.

As both male and female are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), the restoration to this priesthood naturally falls to *both* male and female. Male and female *together* rightly image the LORD God. This is crucial to recognize. Women find their identity as *image bearers of God* and *not in relation to men*. Men and women were to rule and serve God’s creation together, as *co-rulers, co-stewards*. Man and woman’s relationships to God (Gen. 1:26-28), to the creation (Gen. 2:15), to one another (Gen. 2:18-24), and to themselves (Gen. 2:25) were central to their carrying out of the LORD’s mission.

But when the serpent convinced the first couple to choose for themselves how best to rule as image-bearers of God (Gen. 3:1-6), all four of these relationships dissolved. Adam became focused solely on protecting himself, to the neglect of his wife (Gen. 3:10); relationships between men and women were divided (Gen. 3:12); mankind’s dealings with the creation suffered (3:17-19); and humanity’s once-good relationship with the LORD came to an end (Gen. 3:23-24). Power struggles, murder, violence, and self-aggrandizement increased until they became normative, culminating in humankind uniting around making a name for themselves to the exclusion of their God-given mission (Gen. 11:4).

The five-fold promise of “blessing” God offered to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 contrasts sharply with the five-fold “curse” that appears in Genesis chapters 3-11 (3:17; 4:11; 5:29; 8:21; 9:25), signifying that God’s plan through Abram’s family centered on restoring all that was lost in the fall. This is why Abram’s descendants, the nation of Israel, are themselves referred to as a “*kingdom of priests*” (Ex. 19:4-6). They were called to be God’s representatives, God’s priests to

⁴ Cole, *ibid*.

the world, in fulfillment of humankind's original calling. And yet their broken relationships with themselves, with one another, with the creation, and with the LORD continually impeded them. Tasked with being the LORD's witnesses (Is. 43:10), Israel never would fulfill her calling. This "*kingdom of priests*" needed a priest of her own, someone who could stand in Israel's place as a priest to the world *and* as a priest to Israel herself (Is. 49:6).

Jesus Christ became that priest (Heb. 4:14; 7:26). In himself, he restored both Israel's and humanity's calling to what they were always intended to be: human beings made in the image of God ruling God's kingdom as his priests. Jesus perfectly restored all that was lost in the fall, most notably mankind's relationships with the LORD and with one another. By breaking down "*in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*," he restored mankind's broken relationships by creating "*in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and reconcile[d] us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility*." (Eph. 2:14-16). Jesus' peace is aimed specifically toward uniting groups of people who have felt the effects of the fall in their relationships: relationships between nations, between social and economic classes, and between genders. In Christ now, though, "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise*" (Gal. 3:28-29).⁵

The significance of this fact cannot be overstated. The fall introduced to God's once-good world rejection of others, exclusion, unequal opportunities, and intimidation. Jesus, "*in his flesh*," has dealt decisively with all of this, and has set up his church to be the new humanity who lives out Jesus' kingdom reality *now*. Jesus commissions his followers to be *his* witnesses in the world (Acts 1:8), "*that [they] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (1 Pet. 2:9). And the self-justifying reasons people come up with to reject, exclude, and intimidate others are some of the darkest places there are.

To highlight Jesus breaking down of the dividing wall of hostility, the gospel writers continually point out how inclusive and respectful Jesus was *with women*, which was a very unpopular cultural decision. Then comes the real shock: it was to a group *of women* that the angels entrusted the task of being the church's *very first witnesses*, reporting to the disciples themselves that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. In other words, Jesus entrusted *women* with the task of first sharing the greatest news the world has ever known.

The new humanity that Jesus has come to create takes its cues from our original calling as human beings, made in the image of God. Created male and female, our task, *together*, is to rule and serve God's kingdom as his priests. To live out that reality now, as his church, demands that men and women *together* take up that charge as they were originally called to do. Sadly, the rejection, exclusion, and intimidation that many women still experience from men in the church undermines the new humanity Jesus died to create. *Both men and women* are

⁵ Paul here is not eradicating gender distinction; his point is that, in Christ, no nation, economic class, or gender can view itself as superior to another on that basis. In his flesh, Jesus has broken down "the dividing wall of hostility" and we now recognize we are acceptable in God's sight only from what Jesus has accomplished, and not because of our nationality, economic status, or gender.

needed for the church to rightly image God to the world. And it is the conviction of our task force that this reality needs to be addressed in order to bring healing and wholeness to our churches, and from our churches to the world.