

We encourage readers to learn more about the women who are named in “Proof of the Pudding,” about their lives and their contributions. These notes provide some information and point toward additional sources. None of the entries are exhaustive, though some are more complete than others. The women are listed here in order of appearance.

**Margaret Sittler Ermarth** (1909-1974) was a member of the Lutheran Church in America’s (LCA) Commission on the Comprehensive Study of the Doctrine of Ministry and the subcommittee on the ordination of women and author of *Adam’s Fractured Rib* (Fortress Press, 1970). At the LCA’s 1970 convention, she made the motion that authorized women’s ordination. She was a professor of history at Wittenberg University (Springfield, Ohio). Her brother was theologian Joseph Sittler. The Wittenberg alumni magazine published [a short biography](#) in 2009. [Transcript of her address](#) to the LCA convention.

**Constance F. Parvey** (1931-2011, ordained 1972) began her work in campus ministry at UniLu in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1955 and earned her BA in Divinity from Harvard Divinity School in 1962. During her tenure with the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (1978-82) she directed its project on the Community of Women and Men in the Church. Later she served in a parish in Vermont and returned to campus ministry at MIT. UniLu posted [Pastor John S. Kidd’s sermon](#) at her funeral. [Parvey’s papers](#) are housed at Harvard.

**Elizabeth Platz** (1940- , ordained 1970) a graduate of Gettysburg Seminary, was already engaged in campus ministry at the University of Maryland when she was the first woman ordained in the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). CBS produced [Light Unto My Feet](#), a documentary about Platz. [See her biography on this site.](#)

**Barbara Andrews** (1935-1978, ordained 1970) was the first woman ordained by the American Lutheran Church (ALC). She had been involved in campus ministry at the University of Minnesota as a lay worker, but sought ordination in order to move into hospital chaplaincy. [See her biography on this site.](#)

**Dawn Proux** (1943- , ordained 1974) one of the students, enrolled at Luther Seminary, whose announcement of her intention to seek ordination promoted ALC President Frederik Schoitz to ask the Lutheran Council in the USA to make a study of women’s ordination. She made the case in favor in the April 1970 issue of *Scope*. She was the third woman ordained by the ALC

**Beverly Burkum Allert** (1943- , ordained 1974) one of the students enrolled at Luther Seminary, whose announcement of her intention to seek ordination promoted ALC President Frederik Schoitz to ask the Lutheran Council in the USA to make a study of women’s ordination. She was the fourth woman ordained by the LCA in 1974. News coverage indicates that she was married to a pastor. [Link to Getty Image of her ordination](#). In the storymap photo of delegates to the 1988 ELCA constituting convention, she is the person on the right.

**Marianka Sasha Fousek** (1930- ) one of the three women who served on the LCA Commission on the Comprehensive Study of the Doctrine of Ministry. She earned her doctorate from Harvard Divinity School in 1960, worked as an editor at Concordia Publishing House, and taught at several colleges including University of Miami, Oxford, Ohio. Her publications include *The Eclipse of Lutheranism in 17th-Century Czechoslovakia* (Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

**Sister Anna Melville** (1905-92) one of the three women who served on the LCA Commission on the Comprehensive Study of the Doctrine of Ministry. She was a Deaconess in the [LCA community](#) and served as the Directing Sister for the Motherhouse and Training School in Baltimore (1957-62). She is pictured in several photos from the [LCA Deaconess Album](#) on the ELCA Flicker site. She was interviewed for the “Your Life of Faith as a Lutheran Woman” Oral History Project; the transcript is in the ELCA Archives.

**Marge Barth Wold** (1919-2014), author and Executive Director of American Lutheran Church Women (ALCW), one of the two women appointed to the ALC Task Force on Women’s Ordination. She studied Bible at Luther College, earned an M.A. in Theology, organized and administered several pre-schools at congregations served by her husband, Pastor Erling Wold. Her book, *The Shalom Woman* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1975) offered an early, biblically based feminist theology. The ELCA Archives contains transcripts of oral histories from 1985 and 1992 (“Your Life of Faith as a Lutheran Woman”). Luther College [In Memorium](#).

**Evelyn Streng** (1919-2014) vice-president of ALCW, one of the two women appointed to the ALC Task Force on Women’s Ordination. She was a delegate for the Lutheran World Federation's Consultation on Women in Bastad, Sweden, in 1969 and active in ecumenical work. For more than four decades she taught several natural sciences at Texas Lutheran College. The Evelyn Streng Memorial Lectures in Contemporary Issues are delivered annually at Texas Lutheran. The transcript of a 1985 oral history for the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism is housed in the ELCA Archives. [Obituary](#).

**LaVonne Althouse** (1932- , ordained 1974) was the editor of *Lutheran Women*, the periodical of Lutheran Church Women. She wrote the implementing motion that followed the LCA’s positive vote for women’s ordination. She perceived her calling to pastoral ministry as a teenager, earned a theological degree from Union Seminary in the 1950s, and was finally ordained at age 42. In addition to serving several Pennsylvania parishes she edits [The Woman’s Pulpit](#). She was interviewed for the “Your Life of Faith as a Lutheran Woman” Oral History Project; the transcript is in the ELCA Archives.

**Janith Otte** (1947- , ordained 1977), a graduate of Valparaiso University, enrolled as an M.Div. student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, but finished her degree at Christ Seminary-Seminex. She was the first woman ordained by the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches on Reformation Sunday. Following her resignation from the clergy roster in the mid-1980s she became a psychotherapist.

“Breaking Away,” an autobiographical essay, is included in *Lutheran Women in Ordained Ministry, 1970-1995*, edited by Gloria E. Bengston (Augsburg, 1995).

**Lydia Rivera Kalb** (1943- , ordained 1979), a graduate of Wagner College, Mundelein College/Loyola University, and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), was the first Hispanic woman ordained in the LCA. She was a member of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church which prepared the way for the formation of the ELCA. In addition to serving West Indian, Latino, Euro-American, and African-American parishioners in the Chicago area, she held administrative positions at LSTC including directing its Multicultural Center. She contributed to [God’s Faithfulness on the Journey: Reflections by Rostered Women of Color](#) (ELCA).

**Earleen Miller** (1935-2014, ordained 1979) was a leader of Baptist Sunday School and worked with Jewish Vocational Service prior to attending Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She was the first African-American woman ordained by the LCA. She served parishes in Gary, Indiana; Greensboro, North Carolina; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chicago, Illinois; and Columbus, Ohio. She was the preacher for a gathering of International Black Lutherans in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Beverly R. Wallace evokes Miller’s memory in “Sometimes,” a poem in [God’s Faithfulness on the Journey: Reflections by Rostered Women of Color](#) (ELCA).

**Asha George-Guiser** (1957- , ordained 1982) was the first Asian-American woman ordained by the LCA. She is mentioned in *Soaring Crane: Stories of Asian Lutherans in North America* (Augsburg, 2003), by Edward Yee. Since the mid-1980s she has practiced marriage and family counseling. She continues to preach: [a sermon](#) from February 2019

**Maria-Alma Copeland** (1931- , ordained 1985) was the first African-American woman ordained by the ALC. In addition to earning her M.Div. from Luther Seminary, she did graduate work in Japan. She was the worship presider at the constituting convention for Women of the ELCA in 1988. She has served on the Federal Chaplaincy Advisory Board. In 2018 she published her autobiography, titled [The Reverend Dr. Maria-Alma Rainey Copeland Story: Soli Deo Gloria! \(To God Alone the Glory!\)](#).

**Kwang Ja Yu** (1946- , ordained 1985) was the first Asian-American woman ordained by the ALC. She has served parishes in Dallas, Texas and Chicago, Illinois, as a district representative with Lutheran Brotherhood, and was the Director of Ecumenical and Cross-cultural Programing for Women of the ELCA. In 1996, she wrote about the church as [“A Community of Proclamation and Service”](#) for the Metro Chicago Synod.

**Marlene Whiterabbit Helgemo** (1947- , ordained 1987), a member of the Ho-Chunk Tribe, was the first Native woman ordained by the ALC. In addition to being pastor of All Nations Indian Church of the United Church of Christ in Minneapolis, she is a leader in Native and ecumenical activities. That work includes serving on the Boards of the American Indian Business Development Corporation and the

[Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#) and as President of the Minneapolis Council of Churches.

**Karen Bloomquist** (1948- , ordained 1974) was the fourth woman ordained by the ALC, serving parishes in California and New York City. She earned her Ph.D. from Union Seminary, was among the earliest women seminary faculty members (at both LSTC and Wartburg), and was Dean of her alma mater, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS). She provided theological leadership as Director for Studies at the ELCA and in the Department for Theology and Studies of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Her [Seeing-Remembering-Connection: Subversive Practices of Being Church](#) (Cascade, 2016) includes an autobiographical preface.

**Barbara K. Lundblad** (1944- , ordained 1980), a native of Iowa, worked in youth ministry in the Twin Cities of Minnesota before earning her M.Div. from Yale Divinity School and taking a call to a parish in Manhattan. A noted preacher, she taught homiletics at Union Seminary, was a regular contributor to Day1 (formerly The Protestant Hour), and delivered the Beecher Lectures in 2000 which inform her *Marking Time: Preaching Biblical Stories in Present Tense* (Abingdon, 2007). She presents herself in this [Profile](#) on the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries page.

**Gracia Grindal** (1943- ), a poet, translator, and hymn writer, has contributed to several Protestant hymnals including as a member of the Hymn Text Committee for the Lutheran Book of Worship. She served on the ELCA Task Force for the Study of Ministry. In 1984 she left the Luther College English Department to join the faculty at [Luther Seminary](#). Her scholarship focuses upon hymnody, Norwegian-Americans, and women: all three are present in *Preaching From Home: Seven Lutheran Women Hymn Writers* (Fortress, 2017).

**Gail Ramshaw** (1947- ), an insightful theorist and skilled practitioner of liturgical language, contributed to inclusive lectionary readings and worship resources. She was President of the North American Academy of Liturgy and taught religion at LaSalle College. In addition to her scholarly work she published autobiographical essays *Under the Tree of Life: The Religion of a Feminist Christian* (OSL 1998, revised 2004) and children's books. [A brief author's biography](#).

**Christine Grumm** (1950- ) has been a leader in Lutheranism both in the USA and internationally. After serving as a member of the transition team to bring the ELCA into existence, she was elected at its first Vice President. She served for four years as Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation. Trained as a health care educator, she worked for Planned Parenthood and the Women's Funding Network prior to founding [her own consulting firm](#) in 2011.

**April Urling Larson** (1950- , ordained 1978) was elected bishop of the LaCrosse Area Synod in 1992, the first woman Lutheran bishop in the USA and second in the world. [See her biography on this site](#).

**Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl** (1950- , ordained 1977) was elected bishop of the South Dakota Synod in 1995, the second woman Lutheran bishop in the USA. The previous year 12.3% of the pastors in that synod were women. She served two terms. Like April Larson, she was a graduate of Wartburg Seminary. After her terms ended she headed the ELCA project on malaria. In a [2015 interview](#) with the Argus-Leader she reflected on her work and changes in the church.

**Margaret Payne** (1946- , ordained 1984) was elected bishop of the New England Synod in 2000, the third woman Lutheran bishop in the USA. She served two terms. A graduate of Muhlenberg College and Princeton Seminary, she had served parishes in New Jersey and Massuchettes. Previously she was Assistant to the Bishop of the New Jersey Synod. After her terms she assumed the directorship of ELCA Mission Support. She addressed the [2015 Western North Dakota Synod Assembly](#).

**Elizabeth Eaton** (1955- , ordained 1981) earned her M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and served parishes in Ohio prior to her election as bishop of the Northeast Ohio Synod in 2006. In 2013 she was elected as the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, the first woman. [See her biography on this site](#).

**Patricia Davenport** (1955- , ordained 1981) was elected bishop of the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod in 2018, the first African-American woman. She worked as a church secretary and administrative assistant prior to attending Lutheran School of Theology at Philadelphia. She founded Spirit and Truth Worship Center. At the time of her election she was Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop of the synod. [See her biography on this site](#).

**Viviane Thomas-Breifeld** (1952- , ordained 1980) was elected bishop of the South-Central Wisconsin Synod in 2018. She was the second African-American woman to be elected just hours after the first, Patricia Davenport. A graduate of McCormick Theological Seminary, she has been active in community affairs, campus ministry, and chaplaincy, as well as serving in parishes. [See her biography on this site](#).

**Norma Cook Everist** (1938- , ordained 1976) grew up in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), attended Valparaiso University, and was consecrated by the Lutheran Deaconess Association. She joined the Wartburg Theological Seminary faculty in 1979; she was the first woman tenured at a Lutheran seminary in the USA. A prolific author and frequent lecturer, she served on numerous committees and task forces. [She describes herself](#) as a teaching theologian.

**Phyllis Anderson** (1943- , ordained 1978), leader in theological education, [was the president Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary \(2005-13\)](#), the first woman to lead a Lutheran seminary in the USA. She attended an LCMS teachers college, earned her M.Div. at Wartburg Theological Seminary, and her doctorate at Aquinas Institute of Theology. She served parishes in Iowa and on a district staff prior to becoming director of pastoral studies at LSTC. Following her tenure as the Director for Theological Studies of the ELCA she directed the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies, Seattle University. The August 2014 issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* is a festschrift for Anderson.

**Kirsi Stjerna** (1963- , ordained 1986) was ordained in her native Finland. She earned her doctorate at Boston University and taught at Gettysburg Seminary before joining the faculty of PLTS. Internationally known, in addition to her work on women in the Reformation era [her scholarship](#) probes issues of [anti-Semitism in Luther's theology](#). Among her publications are her several contributions to *The Annotated Luther* (Fortress Press, 2015-17).

**Mary Solberg** (1947- ) brought her experience as a social worker, advocate for refugees, and activist to her study of ethics at Union Seminary where she earned her Ph.D. She brings Martin Luther into conversation with that experience and feminist concerns. In 1996 she joined the religion department at [Gustavus Adolphus College](#) where she also taught courses on health care ethics, Bonhoeffer, and traveled with students to Central America.

**Deanna Thompson** (1966- ) brings feminism and Martin Luther into mutually critical and constructive exchange drawing upon her nurture in Lutheran community and her study at Yale Divinity School and Vanderbilt University. Following her diagnosis with stage-four cancer the [focus of her scholarship](#) shifted to explore virtual communities and trauma. After more than two decades teaching at Hamline University she returned to her undergraduate alma mater, St. Olaf College, to direct its Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community.

**L. DeAne Lagerquist** (1955- ) has devoted much of her scholarship to topics related to Lutherans, usually in the United States, often women, sometimes [Norwegian-Americans](#). She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. After a brief tenure at Valparaiso University, she joined the St. Olaf College religion department in 1988, just as the ELCA was being formed. She was one of the founders of Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies.

**Mary Streufert** (1966 - ), earned her Ph.D. at Claremont School of Theology and was a Lilly Teaching Fellow at Valparaiso University prior to assuming the directorship of the ELCA Justice for Women Program. She guided the development of the [ELCA social message on Gender Based Violence](#) and of the social teaching statement [Faith, Sexism, and Justice](#). In addition to her ELCA responsibilities she collaborates with The Women in Church and Society (WICAS) program of LWF. Her scholarly interests focus upon issues of language and feminist Christology.

**Ruth Frost** (1947- , ordained 1990) called [by St. Francis Lutheran](#) in San Francisco and ordained *extra ordinem*. With her partner Phyllis Zillhart and Jeff Johnson (First United Lutheran) she founded and directed Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry (LLGM). After relocating in Minnesota she founded Third Act Life Discovery. In 2010 she was added to the ELCA Word and Sacrament roster in a Rite of Reception. [See her biography on this site](#).

**Phyllis Zillhart** (1957- , ordained 1990) called [by St. Francis Lutheran](#) in San Francisco and ordained *extra ordinem*. With her partner Ruth Frost and Jeff Johnson (First United Lutheran) she founded and directed Lutheran Lesbian and Gay Ministry (LLGM). After relocating in Minnesota she began ministry as a chaplain at Fairview Hospice in the Twin Cities. In 2010 she was added to the ELCA Word and Sacrament roster in a Rite of Reception. [See her biography on this site.](#)

**Anita Hill** (1951-, ordained 2001) was ordained *extra ordinem* in 2001 to serve as pastor at St. Paul Reformation Lutheran in St. Paul, Minnesota. Previously she was on the staff of Wingspan Ministry. In 2010 she was added to the ELCA Word and Sacrament roster in a Rite of Reception. The story of her call to St. Paul Reformation is told in a prize winning documentary, [This Obedience](#). Her papers are deposited at the Minnesota Historical Society.