

'God's Call Is Not a Gender Issue; It's an Obedience Issue,' Says Assemblies of God's First Female Exec

Women continue to face challenges—both inside and outside the church. Through the years, various denominations have both supported and denied women the right to seek ordination or other credentials for professional ministry.

But Dr. Beth Grant, the first female executive presbyter of the Assemblies of God (USA), says there's a powerful link between Pentecost and women who are empowered by the Spirit and called by God to the work of the ministry.

Her own denomination has a long history of women in ministry, Grant, the co-founder of Project Rescue, a ministry devoted to restoring victims of sexual slavery, says.

"It's great to look back at the beginning of the history of the Assemblies of God. ... [the denomination] was comprised of powerful pioneer women who were called to pastor, to evangelism, to missions. Many places in the world, there were women who were the first ones to go into countries—many of them single women—who were incredibly courageous. And so we had this great legacy."

Grant's words about the legacy of women in ministry mean a great deal to me. My own grandmother was ordained as an Assemblies of God minister in 1914, the very year the denomination was formed.

"And so from the very beginning, the Assemblies of God has had very much as a part of who it is, the recognition that when the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—is moving, there are women

and little girls, as well as men and boys, who stand up and say, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,'" Grant says. "'He has anointed me; He's called me to preach. He's called me to teach.'"

Grant says Dr. George Wood, who later served as the denomination's general superintendent, contacted her some 20 years ago because the percentage of credentialed female ministers in the Assemblies of God had dropped to just 15%. "And he said, 'Considering our history and our theology, what is going on?'" she recalls.

"And so his heart was to initiate something which would encourage women ministers to step up and become credentialed, not because that's where ministry comes from," Grant says. "That credential doesn't give us a call, and it doesn't empower us, but in a sense, it acknowledges and recognizes, 'We see God's hand on your life.'"

In response to Wood's request, Grant started a task force to call out and empower women in ministry. Today, "We are to a point where 30% of the credentialed ministers in the Assemblies of God are female," she says.

"I feel like also, it's a part of something I see God doing, and what I feel is a prophetic movement in our nation's history and our world," she says. "What I feel passionately, the more I look at Scripture: The call of God is not a gender issue. It's an obedience issue."

For more from Dr. Beth Grant on how Spirit-empowered women can make a transformational difference in the world, listen to this entire episode of the *Strang Report* podcast at this link. Subscribe to the *Strang Report* on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast platform, and please share this article and podcast with friends and family who want to know more about women in ministry. {eo}

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