

It's God's Idea!

What's right with this picture?

Women evangelists, missionaries, and pastors appeared prominently in early photographs, revival reports, and testimony pages in A/G publications. They formed a big part of our Pentecostal roots.

Women preachers? It's God's idea! Jesus first declared himself as Messiah to the Samaritan woman at the well. With that message she became the first female evangelist, and "many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39, NIV).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ commissioned Mary Magdalene to go and tell the disciples the news of the resurrection. I like to think of Mary as the first female missionary or "sent one." God delights to bless and gift unlikely people and uses them for His glory.

Later the New Testament account speaks of the disciple Dorcas, whom God raised from the dead in Joppa (Acts 9:36), the female apostle Junia (Romans 16:7), and Phoebe, minister of the church in Cenchræa (Romans 16:1). The teacher Priscilla, who with her husband Aquila, partnered in ministry, helped plant the church in Ephesus, and taught Apollos "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:19-26, NIV).

AGTS has trained many husband-wife teams as well as single women and men in its nearly 30 years. Two husband-wife teams serve as faculty and administrators at the Seminary, Paul and Dene Wood and Jay and Cheryl Taylor. In the last five years 10 couples, 15 single women, and six men have completed Global Missions Track cross-cultural practicum assignments. Last fall, the first Assemblies of God husband-wife chaplain team, Raylene and Eric Cochrane from AGTS, was commissioned as Navy chaplain candidates in the U.S. Navy.



At AGTS Dr. Barbara Cavaness teaches and helps prepare students for intercultural ministry.

Nearly 50 percent of A/G college students are women. From 1993 to 2001, the percentage of female students at AGTS has increased from 17.7 percent to 33.8 percent. Many of them are potential answers to the shortage of pastors and need for missionaries. Female graduates are finding positions as foreign and home missionaries, professors, Chi Alpha pastors, chaplains, church planters, pastors, and presbyters. For example, 1978 AGTS alumna Deborah Gill was recently appointed as the national director of the Division of Christian Education and commissioner for the Commission on Discipleship. God is opening the doors for those He has called and anointed for ministry.

The job of evangelizing the world is far from complete, and men cannot get the job done alone. If leaders will affirm and involve today's gifted women and not simply praise yesterday's stalwarts of the faith, who knows what can be accomplished in the kingdom of God? People of the 21st century include single parents, working women, professionals, divorced persons and singles, multiple ethnic groups, and so on. This is a postmodern, post-Christian picture of people who need the gospel message contextualized for their situation. As Pentecostals, we believe that it is God who divinely calls and supernaturally anoints people—both women and men—for ministry. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not gender specific. Let's get back to our roots.

The A/G position paper on women in ministry concludes, "As we look on the fields ripe for harvest, may we not be guilty of sending away any of the reapers God calls. Let us entrust to these women of God the sacred sickle, and with our sincerest blessings thrust them out into the whitened fields." AGTS continues to welcome women called to spiritual leadership, because it IS God's idea. ®

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