

Reimagining Women's Ministry and Leadership in Light of the Eucharist:

A Palestinian Anglican Perspective

by

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To the women of Jerusalem

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Abstract

Reimagining Women's Ministry and Leadership in Light of the Eucharist:
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Hosam Elias Naoum

This project's purpose was to highlight gender inequality within Palestinian society in general and the local Anglican Church in particular. In the context of the project, women initiated conversations centering on women's roles in the church with the potential to open the local Anglican Church to a fuller vision and experience of God. Through the women's prophetic imagination and re-imagination of their own stories, they move their families and their church community toward gender justice and equality.

Women at St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem, engaged in conversation to reflect on the ministry and leadership of women in their own patriarchal and male-dominated context. As an ethnographic study, the project focused on the lived experiences of Palestinian Anglican women within the church and the wider community. The conversation, referred to as "table talk," was the foundational act of ministry for the theological discussion and reflection of this project thesis. Feminist approaches to anthropology, ecclesiology, spirituality guided my theological reflection on the women's table talk.

This unprecedented project at the Cathedral has the power to transform the whole community's vision and experience of God. In short, this project thesis is a major pastoral step within my context where the church as the body of Christ moves into the fullness and wholeness of God's Kingdom, fully affirming both women and men as made in God's image.

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I am grateful for Archbishop Suheil and Shafeeqa Dawani for their support and encouragement. This thesis is part of the vision of the Diocese of Jerusalem, particularly the ministry of women within the Diocese and beyond. I am thankful for the love and care of my parents and parents-in-law, who offered outstanding support for me and my family during my travels and other study-related engagements. Susan Lukens and Joel Kelling have offered invaluable advice, support, and assistance throughout my studies, and Della Wager Wells, who was a present companion during the writing process, has my special appreciation. I am also grateful for the women of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, who both inspired and lived the project, and to whom, together with all the women of Jerusalem and beyond, I dedicate this thesis.

Most of all I thank my beloved wife Rafa, whose love and support nourishes and sustains me, and my remarkable children, Wadi, Laurice, and Krista, who through their

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wisdom and gentle presence, were like guardian angels on the way. Our household is the very place where I experience the fullness and wholeness of God's image.

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24.15b NRSV)

Hosam Elias Naoum, Maundy Thursday 2019

Chapter One

Introduction

*We chant beautiful words in vain...words of freedom and liberty. If you, men of the East, keep the core of slavery in your homes, represented by your wives, and daughters, will the children of slaves be free?*¹

Palestine is beautiful from a distance, but up close and personal it could get suffocating sometimes. Being born and raised a Palestinian woman...is a constant struggle. On one hand, you want to save this imprisoned land and people you belong to, and on the other hand on several occasions they're the reason you need to be saved. In short, it's not easy.

~ Waad²

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, whose indigenous culture is Middle Eastern Arab, reflects both a church and a society that are still strongly patriarchal and gender exclusive. St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem (SGC) has a unique place within the Diocese, and not only because it is the Diocese's mother church, situated in the mother city of Christianity. SGC's singularity is further highlighted by Jerusalem's own location of identity as the crossroads of the world. The city draws to its holy sites not only those of the Abrahamic faiths, but all those, religious and secular, either in conversation or disagreement with them. Standing at this intersection between East and West, Orthodox and Protestant Christianity, religious and civil society, SGC both attracts, and offers hospitality, to people of different cultures and diverse backgrounds from all over the world.

This global presence in Jerusalem is also represented at SGC, with women and men from diverse provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion, both lay and ordained, visiting — and sometimes working on a longer-term basis — with SGC and its ministries and institutions. The presence of Anglicans of other cultures — ordained in particular — cannot help but have an impact on how Palestinian women in our cathedral parish view themselves. As such, within the dynamic of patriarchal exclusivity, the St. George's Cathedral community

¹ May Ziade, a Lebanese-Palestinian Poet and translator (1886-1941), is the first Arab feminist writer.

² Babyfist, "Women on What it Means to Be a Woman in Palestine."

is defined by the way it serves both local Palestinians and global Christians. This rough juxtaposition of SGC's patriarchal Palestinian culture with its hospitality (which is also *very* Palestinian) to global Christians is the crucible in which prophetic imagination can take root and flourish.

I have come to see the ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem in general — and the Cathedral in particular — as incomplete. I believe that *both* women and men have unique gifts to offer to their congregations, and that both are equally needed for the development, transformation, and growth of the ministry of the church. Yet for multiple reasons, some outlined above, women are not now able to realize their ministry fully in the same manner that men do. Palestinian Christians are similar culturally to their neighbors — secular *and* religious — in the Muslim and Jewish communities, particularly in the area of gender exclusivity. The social and cultural reinforcement of gender exclusivity, particularly across religious, ethnic, and political divides, leaves patriarchal attitudes unexamined and unchallenged and allows women's limited function in leadership to persist. Women are very active in the life and ministry of SGC, but there is a great potential for their deeper participation.

The main themes that emerged from the Congregational Study of SGC completed as part of my Doctor of Ministry studies were the ministry of reconciliation; the Eucharist (or liturgy); and the ministry and leadership of women. These findings encouraged me, after further consultations with some women and men in the congregation, to focus on the ministry of women in the area of ministry and leadership in liturgy and worship, particularly relating to the Eucharist. Women's leadership is a critical and unique topic, both for me as a leader in the church and for women who, through this opportunity, will seek a deeper engagement and open a conversation about their own ministry and leadership at SGC and in the wider church.

As a Palestinian, I exist in a difficult and oppressive political reality. Yet my SGC

congregational study has required me to confront, not without discomfort, the question of whether I myself could be a part of a system within the Palestinian political reality that limits the freedom of women. My own journey of transformation, the change in how I perceive and understand women's leadership — is foundational to this Project Thesis. I am a person who refused to receive communion on my first encounter with a female celebrant in South Africa during my junior year at seminary in 1994. I fully own that. However, fifteen years later I had the privilege of serving under the leadership of a woman priest as an honorary associate in the United States, and that is also part of who I am.

My hope is that women and men in my congregation will be ready to embark on a similar journey of transformation. As I have alluded to above, the religious and political environment in the holy city of Jerusalem is fraught and divided on many fronts. My thesis is that among the contextual divisions and difficulties that the Anglican Church faces in Jerusalem, a central, if not *the* central, issue is the unfulfilled role of women in ministry. I place the unfulfilled role of women in this critical position because, with the full participation of women in all areas of ministry and leadership, the church's capacity for reconciliation and healing is limitless. We are the body of Christ — all of us. When we attempt to limit participation within the body of Christ to male-only leadership, we have attempted as human beings to define God. We have attempted as human beings to limit how God loves, works, and acts. When the body of Christ reflects *all* of its members, we walk in the kingdom of God. My intention is to open a conversation about women's leadership among some women in my congregation that will continue and grow in the future.

This introductory chapter consists of three parts or sections. The first part provides an overview of the act of ministry (or the project) carried out among the women of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. The second section will offer a description and an overview of the context of ministry in which this project thesis was carried out. The third part of this

introduction provides an overview of the remainder of this thesis by briefly stating the contents of each chapter.

Act of Ministry Overview

Throughout my thesis, I will refer to the *act of ministry* and *the project* interchangeably, where both mean the conversation that took place among a group of women at SGC. The project was conducted over a period of one month and was divided into three main parts. The first part was the activity of the focus group of nine women who met for three sessions over a period of two weeks. The second part was the journals that members of the focus group wrote for two weeks reflecting on their conversation. The third part was the personal interviews that I conducted with three women outside the focus group. The act of ministry's participants are all Palestinian women from Jerusalem who, with the exception of one woman, were all Anglicans/Episcopalians.³ I have used a qualitative research methodology, approached through ethnographic hermeneutics, for the project. The cultural study of leadership and ministry of Palestinian Anglican women in Jerusalem is the focus of my research.

The conversation among the group of SGC women on the theme of women's leadership within church ministry and the wider community is the starting point of this project thesis. I then explore this initial conversation more fully, using sociological and theological theories and debates. Throughout my thesis, I refer to this conversation as table talk. As an image, table talk joins the conversation and the table where the conversation takes place in a space of prophetic imagination as the eucharistic table around which we all gather as members of Christ's body. In other words, the table as an image encompasses two dimensions: the table as a space for conversation among women at SGC; and the table as a

³ In the Diocese of Jerusalem, the terms Anglican and Episcopal mean the same thing. However, the formal name of the church in Jerusalem is "The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East."

sacrament, where the body of Christ gathers around the celebration of the Eucharist.

Imagining and reimagining, and telling and re-telling, God's story and the women's story create an opportunity for women to reclaim the full potential of their leadership as human beings created in the image of God.⁴ This table talk centers the women's conversation on the Eucharist — God's Table — where God's people, as the body of Christ, gather in unity, fellowship, and equality, to celebrate God's abundant love for the world.

The subject of table talk lies at the heart of my project thesis. Though I facilitated the act of ministry, I did not lead the conversation. I realize that this conversation belongs fully to women as they imagine their own ministry and leadership potential in church and the wider community. I walked alongside the women and listened to their experiences and stories. Through this project, women will lead and engage in an intense study, discussion, practice, and reflection on their ministry and leadership within the church and society. This endeavor will enable them to revisit their own perception and understanding of their situation, and will empower them to challenge their context and culture, which will enable them to reimagine their role in the ministry of the church. In other words, women will assess their place within ministry, and in the process, they will begin to reimagine their goals for involvement. My hope is that this conversation will take them to a new level of understanding or awareness of themselves and their relationship with Christ.

The Pauline community in Galatia and Corinth help us frame the social context of community in relation to women's ministry. St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians addressed the societal structure within the community at Galatia, and his main focus was the unity of the people of Galatia both as a community of believers and as a society. Paul underscores this unity between different ethnic, class, and gender groups, when he writes, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of

⁴ See Genesis 1.27.

you are one in Christ Jesus.”⁵ Paul’s ministry of reconciliation permeates deep into the social structure and the cultural dimension of his ministry. This ministry is to be understood in the light of the oneness — or togetherness — in Christ, who unites all people to himself within the body of Christ — the church.

Similarly, the church in Corinth was facing a challenging time with divisions (1 Cor. 1-4), including some abuses of the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11.17-34). Grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his salvific and redeeming work, Paul calls the church at Corinth to renewal through engaging in the ministry of reconciliation, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”⁶ Paul’s writings in our modern context might seem to support a patriarchal culture. However, in the context of the early church, Paul was progressive and encouraged inclusion over and against the traditions of his patriarchal society.

One of the contextual divisions and difficulties that the church faces in Jerusalem is the unfulfilled role of women in ministry. Cultural taboos and societal values and standards have all contributed to, and still affect, the theology and practices of the people of SGC in and outside the liturgy. By creating a group of women who will engage in the study, reflection, and praxis in and around the ministry of leadership and sharing in the Eucharist, the congregation at the Cathedral will be called to revisit, reimagine, and reshape its identity as the body of Christ. My hope is that participants will feel affirmed to see beyond the limitation of their culture, which is the product of patriarchal and male-dominated society, thereby enabling them to reevaluate their leadership potential in church ministry and beyond.

⁵ Galatians 3.28 NRSV.

⁶ 2 Cor. 5.17-18 NRSV.

This also means that my own edge of competence will be challenged. As a male leader in a patriarchal society, specifically as the Dean of SGC, I need both to allow, and participate in, a challenge and reevaluation of my own leadership and authority. My expectation is that the group of women will help me to understand the joy and sorrow, hope and despair, and loss and gain of ministry as it stands and as it moves beyond the ordinary. Most importantly, this research will allow me to listen carefully and attentively to the narrative, experience, and needs of women who engage in the field of reconciliation and leadership and to journey alongside them as they engage this ministry for the first time.

Consequently, both the women who are involved in this act of ministry and I are putting ourselves in a risky position. Opening a conversation about women's leadership is unpredictable and may result in further pain and frustration. For example, what if these women discern that their leadership in ordained ministry must be recognized? Neither the bishop nor I have the sole power to grant this for them. Where does this leave these women? And what does this mean for *me* when, through this journey, my own theology has expanded to conceive of a full body of Christ and a kingdom of God reflecting the fullness of humanity? It is important that women who are involved in this exercise — and I — remain aware that we are just beginning a conversation that will continue in the future.

Context of Ministry Overview

The Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr in Jerusalem is the “mother church” of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Seat of the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, serving as the home to many pilgrims and visitors from around the world, and particularly from the global Anglican Communion.⁷ Located in Jerusalem and in the Holy Land, SGC

⁷ The Mission Statement of the Cathedral is as follows: “*The Anglican Cathedral of Saint George the Martyr in Jerusalem is a space of pilgrimage, worship and nourishment for all who come to share the life of the community. The Cathedral, through its local and global ministries, seeks to promote the virtues of Hospitality and Friendship to all people of faith everywhere. Reconciliation is a Christian tool that helps the Cathedral and*

naturally serves as the spiritual home and space of worship, particularly on Sundays. In its role as Anglican pilgrimage site and religious home, the Cathedral maintains a delicate balance. On the one hand, the identity, context, ministry, and mission of the Diocese and the local indigenous Palestinian congregation is expressed and respected. On the other hand, the Cathedral engages in the ministry of hospitality and friendship toward all visitors, worshipers, and pilgrims who come through its doors. This interrelated equilibrium of respect is essential for the ministry of the Cathedral, the Diocese and the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican church has been struggling with the issue of women's leadership for a long time. The ministry and leadership of women, and particularly the ordination of women, been controversial within the Communion, even as women's ministry has brought abounding joy, fulfilment, and blessings. Naturally, SGC, as the focal point of Anglican pilgrimage to the holy lands, is a likely stage for this conflict. With diverse cultures, theologies, and ecclesiologies from the breadth of the global Communion converging in the local context of conservative, patriarchal culture, different views, at the very least, surface in conversations and deliberations. At least several times a year, and with increasing frequency, we are in the position of clarifying for visiting female deacons, priests, and bishops that the Diocese does not recognize women's orders. This is always a difficult and painful conversation that simultaneously respects and preserves the feelings of some, as I have discussed above, and wounds and fails to respect the holy orders of others, as well as impairs the hospitality that is a competing core value of Palestinian culture.

This is not the first time that the "ordination of women" has been brought up and mentioned at the Cathedral or within the Diocese. In almost every group that I speak to about the ministry and mission of the Diocese of Jerusalem, someone either asks about the

the Diocese to minister to the people of God everywhere so that Christ may increase within the Diocese and from the Diocese to the whole world."

Diocese's position on women's ordination, or — more directly — when specifically the Diocese will ordain women. The fact of the matter is that the Diocese of Jerusalem is a conservative diocese, and here in the Middle East — a patriarchal and a male-dominated society and culture — things take a long time to change. In some cases, they never do change. The Canons and Regulations of the Diocese neither allow women's ordination nor permit female clergy from elsewhere in the Anglican Communion to exercise their ministries within our congregations. Very few churches in the Holy Land permit women to celebrate the Eucharist, and most of these places are in or around holy sites.

The Anglican presence in the Holy Land began in 1841 with the first Protestant missionaries. Though Anglicanism is a Western church originally, the Anglican/Episcopal Church in the Holy Land remains deeply rooted in an Eastern culture and context. The conservative position of the Diocese regarding the ordination of women derives from cultural and societal imperatives rather than any theological interpretation. There is still a largely patriarchal approach to society within the Holy Land, particularly in religious societies, whether they are Jewish, Christian or Muslim. Despite the noticeable positive development of women's rights and their status in society, the religious communities in the Holy Land have not yet adopted such developments and have chosen to maintain their cultural status quo.

The Protestant churches in the Middle East in general, and the Holy Land in particular, are the most progressive group among the other religious denominations and affiliations, and the religious communities around us continue to apply conservative, if not fundamentalist, pressure.⁸ The Orthodox Jewish community and the Muslim community are both very conservative and do not allow women to occupy any leadership roles. The situation is the same among the traditional churches in the Holy Land: both Catholic and Orthodox

⁸ Reformed Judaism is the most progressive religious community in Israel, ordaining women Rabbis and empowering women's ministry, as does Reformed Judaism in the United States. However, Reformed Judaism is not a recognized religion within the State of Israel, where only Orthodox Judaism is recognized.

families are also traditional and do not allow the ordination of women. The Anglican Church in the Holy Land works carefully to maintain close relationships with mainline churches and other faith communities. The ordination of women within the Anglican Church in the Holy Land could complicate the already delicate and sensitive relations of interfaith relations and ecumenism.

The theological and biblical discussions in regard to the ordination of women have never had a serious airing within the Diocese of Jerusalem. In spite of this, some discussion has taken place over the last three decades at the Provincial level within the Episcopal Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East that led to the approval of the Central Synod of the Province to the ordination of women in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf.⁹ As a result, the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf (which are predominantly expatriate communities) has three women clergy who serve in the Diocese. The agreement within the Central Synod was to let each diocese decide for itself in regard to the ordination of women. This was a turning point and an important step in the life of the province, yet there is still a long way to go for the other three dioceses, which are largely indigenous.

Thesis Essay Overview

This essay consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of my act of ministry, the ministry context, and this thesis essay. Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Five make up the main body of this thesis. I have adopted the work of Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, in order to construct the thesis. Osmer provides four questions, or tasks, that help researchers in their reflection, analysis, and interpretation when it comes to practical theology. These questions or tasks are: *What is going on? Why is it going on? What ought to be going on? And How might we respond?*¹⁰ These overarching questions are the

⁹ The Episcopal Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East encompasses four dioceses: Jerusalem, Egypt, Cyprus and the Gulf, and Iran. This province was created in 1976.

¹⁰ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

titles, and the respective foci, of Chapters Two through Five. Chapter Six then serves as the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter Two will present the act of ministry as a whole. The project was carried out among a group of women from SGC in Jerusalem who gathered around the table in community and conversation to reflect and reimagine their ministry and leadership within the church and the wider community. The second chapter provides a description of the participants, the methodology of ethnographic hermeneutics as a tool of qualitative research and inquiry, data analysis, and the interpretation of the main themes. This second chapter will try to answer the first of four overarching questions — *What is really going on?* This task helped me, as researcher, to gather information that assisted me in discovering patterns and dynamics as I listened to the women's conversation relating to women's ministry and leadership. This task is descriptive in nature.¹¹

Chapter Three will address the next overarching question: *Why is it going on?* through social behavior theory. The third chapter contains four different sections. The first section presents an ethnographic reflection on the transformation of women's status in church and society within the Middle East in general and Jerusalem in particular. The second part addresses the theme of women's status in patriarchal society and male-dominated culture embedded within the context of SGC in Jerusalem and across the Diocese of Jerusalem. The third section focuses on the themes of gender equality and justice within women's rights movements in the Arab world, and how the Arab culture perceives women's roles within such culture. The last section sheds light on the theme of feminism and the way in which the women's liberation movement and thought is perceived within the Palestinian context. This task is interpretative in nature and seeks to provide an understanding of why these patterns

¹¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

and dynamics are occurring.¹²

Chapter Four tries to address the third overarching question: *What ought to be going on?* The purpose of this chapter is to reimagine the table talk or the act of ministry theologically, especially the way in which the project has informed my theology. This is what Osmer calls the “Normative Task” of theological reflection and the construction of ethical norms.¹³ The fourth chapter consists of three parts. The first section focuses on feminist anthropology and the understanding of the image of God (*imago dei*) as the foundational image for gender equality and justice. In other words, this section aims to present the theology behind women as the full bearers of the image of God. The next section focuses on the theme of prophetic imagination and praxis and the ethical dimension of women’s leadership and ministry within the church. The final section of the fourth chapter explores feminist ecclesiology and the spirituality of inclusion and embrace incarnated in the eucharistic Anamnesis. Women’s memory and story-telling are major components of their path of liberation and transformation.

The fifth chapter is a central piece of this thesis. The aim of the fifth chapter is to bring together Chapters Two, Three, and Four in order to lead me into the pragmatic task of this thesis. Osmer’s final question or task is: *How might we respond?* The nature of this question is participatory and evokes some movements toward prophetic action and embodiment. The fifth chapter is divided into four sections. First, reflecting on the subtitle “Table Talk, God’s Talk,” I revisit the act of ministry by reflecting on the women’s experiences and stories by relating them to God’s story — the Bible. Second, focusing on the theme “Gathered at the Table, Going Out to the World,” I address the significance of the liturgy, and particularly the Eucharist, and how men and women as a community gathered

¹² Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

¹³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

around the table participate in God's mission in transforming the world. Third, I explore the pragmatic task of leading change through reflecting on servant leadership as the means of transformation and change. Fourth, and as a way forward, I will present the challenges and hopes of the desired transformation, and succinctly suggest some action steps.

Finally, Chapter Six serves as the conclusion of this project thesis. For the first time in my context, this essay provides an opportunity for women and men to look faithfully at women's ministry and respond to God's call for justice and equality for all. The journey of transformation that the community at St. George's Cathedral has begun brings new light to many aspects of our patriarchal society, and invites us to reach out to life in its fullness and wholeness. The image of God imprinted in us is God's gift to the whole of humanity. Christians are called to gather around the table in the spirit of servanthood, where all are equal members of Christ's body. In short, we are called to be the leaven in the Kingdom of God, transforming the church through our faithful witness.

Chapter Two

Initiating a Table Talk and the Act of Ministry: What is Really Going On?

The second chapter focuses on the “Research Project” or the “Act of Ministry” of this thesis; namely, the conversation among Palestinian Anglican Women in Jerusalem about women’s leadership within the Cathedral Church of Saint George the Martyr and the wider community. This conversation is guided and informed by the women’s understanding of reconciliation and the Eucharist, with specific focus on remembrance or “Anamnesis,” the remembrance that connects the past and the future in the present, through the Eucharist.¹

This conversation is about a journey of reimagining women’s own ministry within the church, and how such in-depth discussions could open new horizons and countless opportunities for the women involved, and for future generations. The first section of this chapter presents a description of the project — its design, the selection of participants, data collection, and implementation. My role as the researcher and my position within the women’s conversation presented significant opportunities and challenges arising from my own gender and role in the church. My position as dean, which in the Diocese of Jerusalem is directly dependent on my gender, allows me to provide a forum for this conversation, and to be an observant listener. In the next section, I will briefly introduce the methodology of “Hermeneutic Ethnography,” which will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis. The third section offers a detailed analysis of the data collected during the project. I will also outline the main themes that emerged from the collected data, offer an interpretation of the themes, and show the interrelation among them.

¹ I will discuss Anamnesis in more detail in Chapter Four, with a specific focus on how the community is called to reenact, remember, or reimagine Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection within a communal liturgy, particularly the Eucharist. Also, I will discuss the extent to which the Eucharist can be a place that reflects God’s fullness and abundance, and where it does not reflect full inclusion and participation, especially when it comes to women’s leadership and celebration at the Table.

Project Description and Participation

When I first decided to write on women's leadership and ministry, I realized that I myself needed to walk alongside these women and be on the listening side of the conversation. I made it clear to myself and to the participating women that I was not leading the conversation. Rather, I was only facilitating it; it was the women who were to lead the conversation. Before I describe the procedures and implementation of the project, I will begin by explaining the process of identifying and recruiting women to be participants in the project.

The parish of Saint George's Cathedral in Jerusalem is relatively small. There are about fifty families represented by a majority of women, including many elderly widows. A lot of what happens at the Cathedral depends on these women, who are very active in organizing social events and various church activities. Therefore, despite the small overall size of the congregation, it was not very hard to identify and choose from the pool of women to invite to engage in the project. In order to gain a wide spectrum of generational understanding, the main criterion for recruiting was age, which ranged from 35 to 90 years. This range of ages was intended to present a multi-generational perspective of women's ministry and leadership through those who participated in the conversation. Table talk did not reveal any specific age-linked perspective on women's ministry, however, I did find a link between women's broader cultural exposure through travel and education to their openness to women's ministry. Another dimension was the prerequisite that women participating in the conversation should in one way or another be active participants in the life and ministry of SGC.

While I was writing my Project Thesis Proposal (PTP), I shared the work I was doing in and around my thesis with some of the women in my congregation, and expressed the need for some women to help me carry out the project. I received significant support from many of

the women in this initial conversation who expressed their willingness to help me with the project in whatever way possible. Following my return from a residency at VTS during the summer of 2018, I sent out letters of invitation asking ten women to be part of a focus group where the conversation about women's ministry and leadership was to take place. Ten women initially agreed to be part of the project. Later, however, one of them asked to be excused because of family commitments that came up. Ultimately, nine women committed to the project and later signed a consent form.²

Returning to the project design and procedure, it is important to note that in regard to the data collection, the project consists of three main categories: the focus group, the journal writing of the focus group, and personal interviews. The initial design of the project was discussed as part of the PTP; however, it is important to reemphasize the main components of the project and the procedures undertaken. I will begin with the presentation of the focus group, the first category of the project, which was the main activity and the foundational base of my project. The focus group met for three sessions over a period of two weeks at the end of August 2018. Through the conversations of the focus group, the women had a remarkable discussion about their role and leadership in the ministry of the church and the congregation, especially in their conversation about the Eucharist.

The first session was carried out in two parts. The first part served as an introduction to the project, where I presented my PTP. I prepared a document which explained the project in order to facilitate the conversation and to keep it focused on the topic of my thesis.³ The document consisted of a timeline for the work of the focus group; biblical texts and references reflecting on the themes of leadership, the Eucharist, reconciliation, and gender equality; clear guidelines and tips on how to have a productive conversation; and suggested

² See Appendices 1 and 2 for consent forms.

³ See Appendix 6 for focus group guidelines.

questions to help initiate the conversation. This document also included instructions and the expectation that the participants keep a journal for the duration of the project. The second part of the session was an open conversation among the women around the table focusing on the topic that was presented to them in the introduction. In the second session, I was a silent observer throughout the session, except for interventions early in the process to guide the format for the discussion.

The second and third sessions were combined as one long session on a Sunday afternoon following a service of Holy Eucharist. For scheduling reasons, the women agreed to have one long session instead of having two separate sessions. In fact, this turned out to be of benefit to the conversations and to the research as a whole. All eight women were in attendance, the discussion was focused, and the conversation was deep and intimate. All sessions were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

The women's "table talk" or conversations and the writing of journals were complementary.⁴ As the second phase of this project, the women were invited to write their journal entries following each meeting of the focus group. Because writing a journal is not common practice among most of the people of my congregation, I did some guiding and teaching on journaling, and the participating women were very receptive and appreciative of my endeavor. The outcome of writing journals exceeded my expectations. I received a fair amount of material in the form of written journals, almost equivalent to the data collected at the conversation sessions. This provided the women with a separate space to reflect, articulate, and express themselves privately beyond the discussion table.

The last category of this project were the personal interviews.⁵ Three interviews were conducted with three women following the conclusion of the conversational sessions and the

⁴ The phrase "table talk" is an image that I will use throughout this thesis. It connects the conversation among the women and the Table in the Eucharist. This was explained in the Introduction in more detail.

⁵ For the interview questions see Appendix 5.

submission of journals. After transcribing the conversations and journals, and following an initial review and analysis, I decided to randomly select women in order to further contribute to the overall discussion and data collection of the whole project. Eventually, two women were invited from the SGC congregation, and a third woman was invited to be interviewed from the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem. The goal behind conducting these interviews was primarily to explore the same topic with women who were not influenced in any way by my introduction or intervention of the first two categories of this act of ministry. By the first week of October, all the recorded audio material was transcribed, and this phase of the project was completed and ready for the next step — the data analysis and interpretation of the main themes that came up from the conversations up until that phase of the project.

Ethnographical Approach: Introducing the Methodology

The study design of this project thesis is based on ethnography as its core data collection method, using qualitative research. Creswell describes ethnography as a study that focuses on a cultural group, where it “is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group.”⁶ In this research, the project focuses on a group of Palestinian Anglican women who live in East Jerusalem. All of the women participating in the project share the same culture, language, denomination, and context.⁷

The project that the women were invited to participate in as a group enabled them to revisit their own perception and understanding of their situation, and empowered them to challenge their context and culture. Through table talk and conversation, the women reflected on the way they thought about themselves by shaking up these perceptions. My hope was that

⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 68.

⁷ All of the women are Anglican except one woman who is Lutheran.

their conversations would transport them to a new level of understanding and awareness of their relationship with Christ and with themselves. Ethnographic research will assist in describing and interpreting of cultural patterns and meaning within this group of Palestinian Anglican women of Jerusalem. According to Creswell, ethnography has schools or subtypes that have “different theoretical orientations and aims, such as structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, cultural and cognitive anthropology, [and] feminism.”⁸ Because women’s experiences and perceptions are the focus of this study, I will interpret this research through the lens of feminist ethnography.

There are many forms of ethnography. In this project, I will emphasize two main types or forms of ethnography: realist ethnography and critical ethnography. Realist ethnography, according to Creswell, is an objective presentation of the situation, where the researcher remains in the background and reports what is observed and noted from participants. In other words, the researcher reports objective data “uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, and judgement.”⁹ Creswell adds that “[t]he ethnographer produces the participants’ views through closely edited quotations and has the final word on how the culture is to be interpreted and presented.”¹⁰ It is worth noting that my role as an ethnographer, or more appropriately a researcher, is on two levels. First, as an outsider, I play the role of a listener and observer to the group of women who are engaging in this project. Second, I consider myself an insider and part of the system in which women live and have their ministry. It is important to keep the balance between the two in order to keep the integrity and authenticity of the project.

The second form, critical ethnography enables the researcher to include an advocacy perspective within the study. According to Creswell, the critical approach is “in response to

⁸ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 69.

⁹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 70.

¹⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 70.

current society, in which the systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders.”¹¹ Researchers seek to address the inequality, dominance, and injustice within the situation in which the study is conducted. A critical ethnography researcher “will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization.”¹²

There are various ways one could conduct ethnographic research. Creswell suggests an approach which includes elements of both the realist ethnography and the critical ethnography. After determining that ethnographic research is the appropriate methodology for the study, the following procedures for conducting an ethnography should be implemented: identify the participants in the sharing group or the focus group; select the theme or the issue to study about the group; determine the type of ethnography, critical or realist; gather information and data; analyze the data and identify the themes and their interpretation; present a holistic cultural portrait, including the views of the participants (emic) and the views of the researcher (etic).¹³ Similarly, Osmer describes ethnographic research goal “as the creation of a cultural portrait. This offers a detailed, holistic description of a community, including specific events and patterns of practice and meaning, noting the way they hang together in a coherent whole, as well as tensions and fissures.”¹⁴

In addition, Creswell points out procedural sub-questions that relate to: the description of the context or situation; an analysis of the main themes; and the interpretation of cultural behavior. The sub-questions are: What is the social situation to be studied? How does one go about observing this situation? What is recorded about this situation? What is observed about this situation? What cultural domains emerge from studying this situation? What more specific, focused observations can be made? What taxonomy emerges from these focused

¹¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 70.

¹² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 70.

¹³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 70-72.

¹⁴ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 51-52.

observations? Looking more selectively, what observations can be made? What components emerge from these observations? What themes emerge? What is the emerging cultural inventory? How does one write the ethnography?¹⁵ These questions will guide the discussion around the data analysis and interpretation of the main themes. The findings of the project will enlighten my path as I go deeper in understanding the situation in which the women live. Moreover, my own assumptions and cultural identity will inevitably be part of the presentation. Ethnography can be described, in other words, as a dance between the people and the researcher in order to achieve the best results.

Moreover, ethnography is a form of hermeneutics that seeks to understand the situation from within. Swinton and Mowat point out that ethnography “is hermeneutically grounded in that it takes account of the intersubjective nature of understanding, the role of language in constructing meaning, and the role played by the...observer’s own horizon in the hermeneutical conversation.”¹⁶ They also add that, “ethnographic study seeks to capture the ‘strange in the familiar’. Its purpose is to challenge and complexify situations and accepted views of the nature of truth and reality and, in so doing, to ‘render the familiar strange’.”¹⁷

Data Analysis and the Interpretation of Main Themes

Working on and analyzing the data collected during the project was an exciting and stimulating process. This process was not only interesting, it was also essential to the research as a whole. Swinton and Mowat state that, “[t]he analysis is always the heart of any research project. It is that point in the research process where the mass of data that has been generated begins to be formed into meaningful units that will illuminate the complexities of the situation.”¹⁸ It is important to note that the analysis of data in this project began simultaneously with the collection of the data and was an ongoing process until the

¹⁵ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 112.

¹⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 157.

¹⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 158.

¹⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 165.

completion of both the project and the writing process as reflected in this section of the thesis.

The process of the analysis of data is intertwined and deeply connected to the research question. My project aimed at starting a conversation among women with the assumption that the conversation will continue in the future. The research question revolved around women's ministry and leadership within the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and SGC in particular. The research question served as a compass for reflection upon and analyzing the data: 'How do women at SGC reimagine their ministry and leadership? In other words, through "table talk" and conversations, women will begin to reflect on the way they think about their leadership and ministry and shake up these perceptions. Throughout the data analysis and reflection, the research question remained relevant and robust.¹⁹

Moreover, Osmer provides four questions that help researchers in their analysis and interpretation. These questions or tasks are: *What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?*²⁰ Answering the first question requires gathering information in order to help the researcher discern patterns and themes in a particular context or situation. The second question guides the researcher towards a better understanding of the situation and explains these patterns or themes, drawing on social sciences. The third question invites the researcher to use theological concepts in order to construct ethical norms to guide people's response. The final question requires a pragmatic task. The researcher has to determine strategies of action in order to bring about transformation. The remainder of this chapter concentrates on answering the first question, while the other three questions will be addressed in subsequent chapters. According to Swinton and Mowat, practical theology is a "critical, theological reflection on the practices of

¹⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 165.

²⁰ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world."²¹ This means that practical theology "does not simply seek after knowledge for knowledge's sake. Rather, the knowledge gathered...is intended to increase our knowledge and understanding of God and to enable us to live more loving and faith-filled lives."²²

Transcription, Significant Statements, Patterns and Themes and Interpretation

The transcription of collected data for this study and that of the focus group, journals and interviews is the product of my act of ministry. It is important to note that all this data was collected in Arabic, and I translated it into English. The translation process required a significant effort. Translation is not only a difficult and time-consuming work, but there is also the of adding my own interpretation of what was said or written. I made a great effort to be faithful and preserve the original meaning of data.

Following the translation of the texts and the audio recordings, I divided the texts into the same categories mentioned above: the focus group conversation of the three sessions; journals of week one and two, the three personal interviews, and the written statements of the focus group on women's leadership. I began to read and re-read these texts over a period of three weeks in order to draw out the significant statements, themes, and images within the data. First, I identified the most significant statements and put them together in one document. In all, 102 significant statements were identified where I also included the citations from the data. Again, I read and reread these statements in order to codify the themes and patterns.²³

Many themes and patterns were raised throughout the project. The conversation of the women addressed various issues related to their experiences within the church and the wider

²¹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 7.

²² Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, xiii.

²³ See Appendix 3 for Themes and Pattern Statements.

community in and around women's leadership of Palestinian Anglicans in Jerusalem. Ultimately, I correlated seven themes or patterns of the data collected. These themes and patterns are: feminism and liberation; gender inequality; theology and culture; patriarchal society; memory and remembrance; reconciliation; and transformation and change. There were other themes that were briefly discussed by the women, such as secularism, volunteerism, education. I will not discuss these themes for two main reasons: they were not common themes among the three categories of the project; and, though these themes are relevant and real to the women's context, they will not help me focus on the main argument of my project thesis about women's leadership and ministry. This is how I organized the seven themes which I will explore in detail below, beginning with feminism and liberation.

Feminism and Liberation: A Voice to the Voiceless

*...women did not have a say and were voiceless; including myself.*²⁴

This act of ministry empowered women to talk about otherwise unspeakable issues in their lives, and provided the space for them to express their emotions, feelings, and opinions about women's leadership, rights, and potential in church ministry and within the community. Nora stated that "[t]he topic of the dialogue and the conversation among women in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem is **unprecedented** [my emphasis] in that it covers a spiritual aspect of Palestinian women that is absent in the frequent and multi-layered discussion about and among women within the framework of the socio-political and economic context that these women live in."²⁵ In other words, this project did not only offer the space for an open and honest conversation, it was also the first time women discussed this topic within the church context. There was a strong desire and thirst from those who participated for women

²⁴ Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

²⁵ Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

to be heard and listened to.

Dalia noted that “[w]omen have ambitions and the church needs to listen to their dreams.”²⁶ Women have dreams and ambitions in regard to participation and leadership, however, these dreams remain only dreams as they are not shared more widely and they are then either repressed or forgotten. The leadership of the church should listen to these dreams. Helena added that it is not only that the church does not provide the space for the sharing of these dreams, also, “[w]omen lack the confidence and the courage to have big dreams and ambitions as a result of the opposition they face.”²⁷ One of the obstacles that women face in order to be heard within the community is the opposition women face on many levels. This itself results in a lack of self-confidence. Women have the potential to dream, accomplish and achieve their dreams. Ellen said that “[w]omen are powerful; they are able to accomplish whatever they want.”²⁸ Haya adds, “[w]omen are patient, resilient, and courageous.”²⁹ The perception among many women and men in this context is that men are the ones who oppose and prevent women from achieving their full potential and participation in the ministry of the church and the wider community. I was surprised to hear and read from participants in this act of ministry that men are not the only ones who oppose and prevent women, but also women themselves.

Lubna expressed her feelings regarding the behavior of some women saying, “I always get angry when I see women who oppose other women in church ministry and leadership. They don’t believe in themselves or in other women.”³⁰ Similarly, Nora, in one of her journal entries, described the disappointing attitudes of some of her female colleagues (where she heads the institution) writing, “[w]omen staffers were not supportive [of me] and

²⁶ Dalia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

²⁷ Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

²⁸ Ellen, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

²⁹ Haya, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

³⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

showed an internalization of misogyny and perhaps displaced the oppression placed upon them [to me].”³¹ Rania stated that “women’s liberation comes through women’s support for each other. By oppressing each other, women support the existing reality.”³² Nora added in one of the focus group sessions that “[w]omen are unconsciously brought up to think [and behave] like men.”³³ They are oppressed women without realizing it.”³⁴ There was an agreement among participants in the focus group that women should be given the opportunity and the support to be not only themselves but all they could be. Marian expressed her frustration and said, “[p]eople [both men and women] need to support women in their leadership roles and not to stand in their way because they are women.”³⁵

There was a strong feeling among the women that leadership belongs to all. Both men and women, if capable, should be given the opportunity to participate equally and fully. Ellen expressed her opinion in this regard saying, “leadership should happen in participation between women and men.”³⁶ Haya also added, “[i]t is important that women participate alongside men in church, because women, like me, were created by God and in God’s image. Women and men are part of the same creation; one cannot exclude half of creation!”³⁷ This is one of my favorite statements that brings together the themes of inclusion and embrace embedded in the image of God and creation. Dima also noted that “I am in favor of a full cooperation between men and women as equal partners in mission.”³⁸ Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with how women were not only underrepresented and excluded on many levels, but also how their voice was and is not heard when it is represented. As Haya stated,

³¹ Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

³² Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018.

³³ It seems to me that Rania is saying that women are raised to see, and judge themselves, as men judge them — as less, inferior, and limited, thus, accepting patriarchal norms.

³⁴ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

³⁵ Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

³⁶ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

³⁷ Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

³⁸ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

“Women are not only underrepresented in church committees, but they are also voiceless.”³⁹

To this effect, Dima stated that “I am so disappointed to see how women are excluded from full participation in the leadership of the church.”⁴⁰

Haya shared her experience in one of last year’s official church meetings where she was shocked at how men undermined her presence and ability to contribute to the discussion. One man approached her during the discussion of the financial report and asked her if she was able to read the documents or whether she needed to ask her husband to read it for her. She noted, “...women did not have a say and were voiceless; including myself.”⁴¹ Lubna also spoke about women being voiceless and their desire to be heard, saying, “...now women will fight for their rights to be heard,” and adding, “[w]omen are not heard as much because men’s voices can be louder [than women].”⁴² There is a profound frustration among women because they are excluded from participating in church ministry as equal partners in God’s mission in the world. Marian stated clearly that, “[m]en and women are partners; we need to work together.”⁴³ Women do not need to be heard for the sake of being heard, rather, they demand that their voice is heard and they are equal partners in decision-making.

Marian said that her “role as a woman is to contribute to the conversation and to be part of the decision-making.”⁴⁴ Similarly, in one of her journal entries, Marian suggested that “[w]omen’s inclusion, representation and recognition by church members, as well as giving the space for them to participate in the various decisions, policy making and leadership roles within the church is an important step to be carried out through the Church Council and bodies.”⁴⁵ In addition, Dima noted that the responsibility falls on the church leadership “who

³⁹ Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁴⁰ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

⁴¹ Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018 and Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁴² Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁴³ Marian, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁴⁴ Marian, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁴⁵ Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

do not allow women to be part of the decision-making within the bodies/committees of the church.”⁴⁶ For me, it was impressive how women articulated what is on their hearts and their feelings of anger, frustration and disappointment with the situation as it stands. What was interesting is that very little was said about what should be done to transform the situation.

I will discuss in more detail the theme of change and transformation later in this chapter. However, it is important to note that I saw that there is a repressed energy and a buried desire among women to speak up. Samia noted that women “need to move beyond what is traditional [the norm] and create and reimagine a new and effective role.”⁴⁷ Despite the fact that some women expressed their desire to see their situation change other women held back and did not wish to upset the system. Lubna eloquently articulated how some women feel about their situation and their feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. She said, “[w]omen themselves can be an obstacle if they give up and say that we cannot break this wall. Instead of taking a step forward they take a step back.”⁴⁸ I want to investigate what is it that really holds women back from breaking the wall and shattering the glass ceiling.

Moreover, I was surprised as to how some women participants reacted to the feminist movements. For example, Nora, whom I regard as a strong advocate to women’s causes, spoke sternly against feminism. She said, “I prefer talking about women’s leadership than talking about feminism. This issue really irritates me.”⁴⁹ To some extent, Lubna had the same view. She stated that “[f]eminists stand for a good cause, but sometimes they take it to an extreme...I have many feminist friends, but I think it is too much. They take it too far.”⁵⁰ However, in the same interview she implicitly and modestly described herself as a feminist, when she said, “it is only people who believe that God is a man who object to women

⁴⁶ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

⁴⁷ Samia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁴⁸ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁴⁹ Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁵⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

becoming pastors. I am not the greatest feminist, but I am with arguing that God is God and not male and female. God is beyond gender.”⁵¹ I hear in Lubna a feminist who has a deep commitment towards the dignity and equality of women. But I am intrigued as to what ways in which she disagreed with feminists.

Furthermore, in my opinion, there are some women within the focus group who are clearly feminists. For example, reflecting on women’s ministry and leadership, Ellen expressed, “[i]f women are called to the ministry, there is no [earthly] power or authority that should stop them from fulfilling their calling.”⁵² Lama was not sure about how far women could go in church leadership and stated that “I find it difficult to see a woman bishop or priest at the altar and administer the Bread and the Chalice...The issue of purity is important. I respect ordained women, but I am not 100% convinced about it...I am against the ordination of women.”⁵³ In response to Lama’s statements on women’s ordination, Haya wrote in her journal saying, “I was surprised when I heard at our last meeting that women cannot be ordained because of biological reasons. This role was given to women by God and should be seen as a strength not a weakness.”⁵⁴

I concluded that all of the women are keen to empower themselves and other women in order to attain their rights both in church and the wider community. However, some women are prepared to go further than others. Issues of freedom, fair representation, inclusion, and the effective participation of women will give voice to voiceless women and be listened to and appreciated. According to Lubna, in order for women to be equal partners with men in church and society, “[b]oth men and women need to be liberated.”⁵⁵ In other words, women need to have the self-confidence and courage to believe in themselves and

⁵¹ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁵² Ellen, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁵³ Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁵⁴ Haya, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

⁵⁵ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

other women. They need to support other women where they have leadership roles, and equally not oppress them because they are women. Men can see this as an opening of access to the women's talents and resources, multiplying the capacity and reach of organizations and bodies with male-only leadership. They can also see women's leadership and inclusion as a gracious offer to help carry the weight, rather than as a loss of their exclusive power, and make room for women's effective participation and representation in the ministry of the church, its bodies and committees. Moreover, policy-making and decision-making should not be exclusive to men. Women are equal partners in the mission and ministry of the church since they make up at least half of the church, and so should be equal partners in the church's mission and ministry. Ellen asserted that "[w]omen have to fight for their freedom to lead; no one is going to offer it to them on a plate."⁵⁶

We can see from this first theme how women became engaged with the conversation. There was a desire to sit around the table and talk about their dreams, frustrations, and hopes. I will write in more detail about feminism and women's liberation from a theological and sociological perspective in subsequent chapters. The next identified theme is profoundly connected to feminism and liberation of women, that is, Gender Inequality.

Gender Inequality: In Search for the Image of God

*In the Eucharist this morning, we all saw three men at the Altar and there was no female representation there.*⁵⁷

All of the women who participated in the act of ministry agreed that women are not treated equally by at least some men and women. It seems probable that this is more prevalent in the wider community and society than within the church itself. The texts of Genesis 1.27 and Galatians 3.28 are fundamental biblical statements that speak of the

⁵⁶ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁵⁷ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

equality of human beings in general, and between men and women in particular. However, human beings are always tempted to find excuses to condone injustice, interfering with God's will for us all to live in dignity and justice. Culture is often regarded as a major justification for the tendency of communities to oppress women and place them on the periphery of society. Later, I will discuss in detail the themes concerning culture and context in which SGC women live.

Although gender equality is closely tied to feminism and women's rights, I have decided to treat it as a separate theme. Treating this theme separately enables me to focus on the issue of justice and the desire of women to present their case and talk about "*what is really going on.*" Nora expressed her view of gender equality and wrote, "[t]hose who do shatter the glass ceiling often face gender discrimination resulting from social and cultural stereotypes clouded by pandemic of gender bias."⁵⁸ This means that as long as women are under the radar and do not compete with men's roles in the public sphere they will be safe. Women who go beyond the norms of the society and culture will face discrimination, oppression, and injustice. Many women are not happy with the way they are treated, while others prefer not to stir the waters.

I have noticed that some of the older female participants are among those who belong to the latter group. Although these women are strong leaders and have managed to prove themselves without upsetting the system, they choose to remain on the periphery. Rania stated that "the problem is not simply how men marginalize women, rather, it is about how women marginalize themselves."⁵⁹ Manal is a very strong leader in the community, but her views on leadership within the church take a different stance. In one of the focus group sharing sessions, Manal said, "[w]omen need to know their limits in ministry."⁶⁰ Other

⁵⁸ Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁵⁹ Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018.

⁶⁰ Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

women differed in their views. For example, Ellen noted that “[w]omen can have a calling for ministry within the church; God equally calls both men and women.”⁶¹ The church is all about God’s ministry and mission in the world, and both men and women are participants in the ministry. Therefore, who should decide for women to participate or not to participate, but women themselves?

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Lubna’s comment about people who believe that God is male gendered and use this argument to justify their objection to women’s ordination and ministerial leadership. Lubna added, “[t]o go deep into God’s traits, we can say that God has no gender and God is Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit cannot be male or female.”⁶² Similarly, Marian argues that “[w]e can emphasize the fact that God created both male and female equally in His image, yet different in biological functions. Women are not created to compete with men or men to compete with women, rather, to complete each other.”⁶³ Women and men are two parts of a whole. However, how many people in the church in Jerusalem believe that?

Marian addressed the issue of inequality in the church and said in a journal entry that “[w]omen are still not given the space they deserve inside the church. So far, in our Palestinian Anglican Church community we have no freedom for women to become deacons or priests.”⁶⁴ Likewise, Lubna made her position clear by stating that “[g]ender justice is important for us as women in the church.”⁶⁵ Helena also asserted, “[w]e want equality between men and women in the church. However, the reality is different and men monopolize leadership positions. We need to change this reality.”⁶⁶ Helena is right in saying that there is an urgency for change. However, where can this change begin?

Women realize that they are treated as second class within the church, when it comes

⁶¹ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁶² Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁶³ Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁶⁴ Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁶⁵ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁶⁶ Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

to leadership. Lubna suggested that “[t]here should be more awareness on women’s issues in our churches. Women are really secondary in our congregations.”⁶⁷ Raising awareness and education are important aspects of change and transformation. More will be said about this theme later in the thesis. Another important element in raising the awareness of men and women about gender equality is to have a gender policy (and the associated conduct) in the church. To that effect, Marian wrote, “I think that the church leaders, both men and women, need to address a gender [equality] policy that promotes justice and nonviolence towards women in the church.”⁶⁸ I believe that gender equality requires affirmative action in order to amend the situation. Three years ago, I made the suggestion to the Vestry to take a courageous step in electing a gender-balanced Vestry. They elected new Vestry members with the composition of 50% men and 50% women.

Gender equality and justice, equal participation and rights, and equal opportunity for all is God’s will for us human beings.⁶⁹ The female participants believe that they deserve more and better. However, they are deeply committed to the place to which they belong. They profoundly love their culture and community and feel responsible for its well-being even if it is on the expense of their own freedom and rights. This led us to our next theme, the Patriarchal Society.

Patriarchal Society: Power, Bias, and Privilege

*The institution I worked in and the wider community and society expect me to act like a man; they expect me to forge a new self.*⁷⁰

The physical/biological makeup of human beings enables males and females to inhabit different roles. Men in general are physically strong while women are able to bear children. However, because of their strong physical stature, males, since the earliest primitive

⁶⁷ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁶⁸ Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁶⁹ For some biblical texts on gender equality, see Genesis 1.26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:11; and Galatians 3.28.

⁷⁰ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

communities, often exercised dominance over females. This dominance was not seen as a negative thing, rather, the motives were women's protection and survival. For good or ill, this meant that men were the leaders, decision-makers, and power holders. We live in the twenty-first century where our lives have changed from the lives of those primitive and archaic communities. Today, we are governed by laws and regulations, human rights, and ethics – both religious and secular. Machines and technology bridge any gaps in physical strengths. Do women still require men's protection? Can we guarantee that excessive power does not lead to bias and dominance? More than that, can we guarantee that the dominance of men does not lead to the exclusive privilege of men?

Nora's comment that the institution she heads and her wider communities expected her to behave like a man in order to succeed in her role as a leader describes the reality of the community in which Palestinian Anglican women dwell. Marian asserted that “[w]e live in a patriarchal and male-dominated society.”⁷¹ Helena added that “[the concept of] women as leaders are not welcomed in our patriarchal society that is used to ensure men are in such positions.”⁷² Similarly, Haya expressed her disappointment with this culture and society saying, “[a]s a woman who lives in the Middle East, I often find myself struggling to prove myself [to others], because in our society, women are viewed to be emotionally weak and second class.”⁷³ It is clear that women are aware of the societal injustice they live in. In the past women refused to talk about their situation for different reasons, mainly because in the not distant past men were even more dominant. Today, however, women are prepared to talk about their circumstances and criticize them. Lubna is a woman who is determined to go all the way in church leadership. However, this was not the case when she was a child. She noted, “in my childhood, I never asked myself why there were no female pastors in our

⁷¹ Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁷² Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁷³ Haya, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

church. I thought this is the way it should be.”⁷⁴

For centuries, women begrudgingly accepted the situation they live in. Helena described in her journal that Eastern culture has “imposed on us the phenomenon of the exclusive leadership of men...we have accepted this situation as it is and took it for granted that this is the way things ought to be.”⁷⁵ Women who participated in the project were aware that they were touching a complicated and difficult issue, however, they were prepared to take the risk and open up themselves and become vulnerable. Dima stated that “ministry and ordination should not be exclusive to men. I don’t understand.”⁷⁶ Lubna described some women in her congregation who are worried about being criticized or blamed for not doing the “right thing” and said, “[w]omen don’t want to say [or do] anything to upset the system.”⁷⁷ The reality is that the more men have dominance and power over women, the greater that gap between men’s privilege and women’s lack of privilege. That is why many men are comfortable with how things are, and are not happy when they are challenged. The comfortable always are in favor of the status quo.

Women who live in a patriarchal society which is dominated by powerful and privileged men either accepted the way things are or try to act like the men they have observed if they find themselves in leadership roles. Manal, who is the very successful leader of an institution, said, “I never wished to be a man or act like a man during my many years of leadership.”⁷⁸ Nora, who also refused to forge a new version of herself or act like a man, wrote, “[a]s a woman leader, my journey was set within a shocking and unexpected situation. It was a narrow path with obstacles embedded in the patriarchal, clan-governed social construct/ social setup that operates in the society at large and Jerusalemite society in

⁷⁴ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁷⁵ Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁷⁶ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

⁷⁷ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁷⁸ Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

particular.”⁷⁹ Nora had to suffer because she decided to swim against the current. Dima noted that the “society we live in does not respect women enough to regard them in leadership positions.”⁸⁰ Marian also shared her experience of church leadership in a patriarchal society and noted, “[w]hen we talk about the Anglican Arab Palestinian women’s leadership in the church, no one can deny that the patriarchal society and the cultural expectations act as a barrier to many women’s dreams.”⁸¹ Rania suggested that in order for women to fulfill their dreams “women need to believe in themselves and have a space of their own... Women are creative and productive, and not merely consumers while men deciding for them.”⁸²

I felt that some of the women who participated in the project were disappointed with the church. For them, the church failed to speak out against gender injustices and discrimination towards women, and also assimilated with the environment around it. Lubna stated in her interview that the “church has been hindering women from accepting the call [to ministry]. I don’t think it is about who is called, but about culture and society.”⁸³ There is a tendency within the church to blame the culture it dwells within for its behavior.

Alternatively, some women and men suggest that the narrative of gender justice and equality is a Western innovation and does not belong to Middle Eastern culture and society. Manal, for example, alluded to that understanding when she said, “we live in a patriarchal society, and it is governed by tribal and clan systems. Our cultural structures are different to that of Western countries.”⁸⁴

The desire for women’s leadership in a patriarchal society faces serious challenges. Women have a sincere desire to contribute to their church and communities, and at the same time, they do not want to disrupt the system. Male-dominated societies exclude women from

⁷⁹ Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

⁸⁰ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

⁸¹ Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

⁸² Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018.

⁸³ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁸⁴ Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

privileges, such as positions of leadership, which should belong to both men and women.

Many Christians in patriarchal and male-dominated societies believe that their culture derives from the culture of the Bible, and is therefore given by God. This leads us to our next theme: Theology and Culture.

Theology and Culture: God's Story and Our Story

*The main challenge that faces women's leadership is society, culture, and the mindset of people. The Bible is often quoted to support such culture.*⁸⁵

The theme of theology and culture brings us to one of the most important themes of this project. Although the women did not easily articulate their thoughts theologically, they still clearly stated the influence and impact of their culture and the context in which they live on their leadership. It was obvious from this theme, and from the other themes we discussed earlier, that culture plays a central role in shaping theological understanding within the Palestinian society. Therefore, theology and culture are not simply related, but profoundly intertwined.

Christians around the world are diverse in cultures and in theologies. The first time I came across this reality was during my first year in seminary in South Africa. Terms, such as enculturation, contextualization, and indigenization meant a lot for the people of South Africa, especially during their time of struggle against apartheid. Their theologies did not only speak about their culture, but also reflected their context of struggle against oppression and their striving for freedom and liberation. Anglican women in Jerusalem have their own context and culture. And out of this culture they spoke and shared their stories and theologies.

The cultural situation in Jerusalem — and the wider Middle East to a great extent — is unique to the region. The culture or cultures of the Bible are deeply connected to the Holy Land and vice versa. Even after more than two millennia, the culture of the Holy Land today

⁸⁵ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

is still intertwined with biblical traditions and culture. Biblical images, metaphors, and symbols are embedded into Palestinian culture and geography, both past and present. However, for the past century or so, people in this region have been exposed to other cultures, particularly to that of the West. Modernization, globalization, and secularism became topics of interest to many people in the area. The Anglican women of Jerusalem have also been affected by these developments and began to ask questions about their own situation. They are in a place where they are prepared to break open their culture and ask difficult questions in order to understand God's will for them in the here and now.⁸⁶

During the project, women met around the table to discuss women's leadership in the church. One of the outstanding questions that was asked was: "How do [women] respond to difficult texts in the Bible? For example, how can we as women respond to Paul's writings about how women should be silent in church."⁸⁷ Marian also added, "did the way in which the Bible depicts women in both the Old and the New Testaments derive from cultural norms or religious beliefs?"⁸⁸ Following up on this question, Marian wrote in her journal that "the problem is that the Christian Scriptures contain some passages that affirm absolute inequality between men and women."⁸⁹ I was surprised to hear and read these questions raised by some women. In their opinion, some texts in the Bible do not fully reflect God's nature of love and inclusivity. Why should women not speak in the church? Today, even in Jerusalem, we cannot imagine the church without women's contribution.

Some women have noted that while their contribution is remarkable, men hold the positions of power and leadership. Lubna stated that "[t]he main challenge that faces women's leadership is society, culture, and the mindset of people. The Bible is often quoted

⁸⁶ "Break open" implies that the women will challenge the established norms of behavior in their Palestinian culture.

⁸⁷ Dalia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁸⁸ Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁸⁹ Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

to support such culture.”⁹⁰ Stating her opinion, Lubna suggested that “Jesus and Paul did not intend to have most of their disciples and followers to be men with few women around them. This was the cultural influence of their time.”⁹¹ Dima also noted that “our context is different from that of the Bible. The Bible needs to speak to our time and context.”⁹² On this point, Lubna concluded that “[a]t the end of the day, it is not what we want or what the society wants, rather, it is what God wants from us.”⁹³ The women involved in the project have a great respect and veneration for the Bible. At the same time, they feel that the biblical texts are not static; rather, they speak to every time and place. In our case, biblical texts speak for the same place, yet, for a different time.

Women’s leadership is a controversial matter in Middle East. People may accept women in civic leadership roles, however, even among some women, there is zero tolerance for women’s leadership within the church of all denominations, especially in ordained ministry. Lama, who does not accept women’s ordination, noted that “the ordination of women might be normal and accepted in the West, but here in the Middle East it is different... the culture is different.”⁹⁴ In the same way, Marian asked “How far can we go with women’s ordination in this culture? Can we accept women to ordained ministry?”⁹⁵ Dima was prepared to challenge both her family and culture. She stated that “I was rejected by my family because they consider me a liberal person. I think outside the box and stereotype of this culture.”⁹⁶

Many of the women were very hesitant about how far they could go with their leadership skills and gifts. Culture is a significant part of their makeup. In this regard, Nora

⁹⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁹¹ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁹² Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

⁹³ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁹⁴ Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁹⁵ Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁹⁶ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

said that “many women are brought up to reject women’s leadership.”⁹⁷ Conversely, she stated, “our culture and society accept women in all professions, why not to accept them as priests?”⁹⁸ This question raises many other questions. One important question would be, why does the church not empower women in leadership roles, while the culture does? Also, which culture are we blaming for hindering women from entering Holy Orders? Is it the culture of the Bible or Palestinian culture? Or are both responsible?

The theme of theology and culture is a very important topic for our discussion. Culture and theology will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. The ethnographic approach of this study is embedded in context of Palestinian Anglican women in Jerusalem. The cultural study seeks to explain the contextual theologies of these women. Theologies are expressed in the form of culture and context, hence the terms, contextualization and enculturation. Language, symbols, images, and metaphors are grounded in the culture in which theologies are expressed and communicated. In the case of this project, the dynamic is expressed through women’s past and present experiences, narratives and stories, lived in the light of God’s narrative and story — the Bible. Memory and Remembrance help people to imagine and reimagine their past and present into the future. This is our next theme.

Memory and Remembrance: Naming the Unnamed

I have become primarily interested in the study of the function of memory (at both neurological and social/communal levels) ever since I began witnessing my mother’s declining access to her memory. I have observed that her waning memory is altering her perception of the world and her own identity. Her gradual forgetfulness regarding events, names, and even the prayers that she used to say is causing her both an anxiety she has not felt before and a separation from the world around her and from her past, including the past of her family. What is so upsetting is that this dwindling memory, which in this case is due to physical factors, is causing her a state of alienation and “exclusion” from her present, her past history, and clouding her future. With a loss of memory, one tends to lose his/her sense of self. Memory binds the silk threads of the web of life for us. It creates an intricate design that boosts our lives at individual, communal

⁹⁷ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁹⁸ Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

and spiritual levels and this is what makes us human. The Bible frequently reminds us to “remember.” When we remember or re-collect the events or people in the Bible, we surpass the boundaries of time and space and transcend the mundane world of our everyday lives and renew our lives with God. When we reflect upon the meaning of these narratives in the Bible, we create a spiritual bond with God that is hard to erode. Nowadays we can (and often do) rely on technology to “remember” for us, and we inflate our pride and ego in this process of remembering. We can search any topic or retrieve any kind of information that we have stored in a computer’s memory. However, what we need to assert is that remembrance of the lives of people, and especially women, in the Bible is an active “human” mental process, and the spiritual connection or bonding created in the process cannot be replaced by any [hu]man-made machine. Remembrance is an act that constitutes our communal identity although it is primarily an individual process. Just as our collective memory of our heritage makes us who we are as Palestinians, so our collective memory of the narratives contained within the Bible help us ascertain who we are as Christians or Anglicans. We, as Anglican women, constitute our identity through our remembrance of those unnamed (or named) women in the Bible. The texts that we reflect upon become the medium through which we remember, and the process of remembering becomes communal. We remember with others, and they remember with us. We remember other people and events from the past with other people who are around us nowadays. The meaning of our lives as Christians becomes apparent in the communal act of remembrance. *In our remembrance we do not only literally construct the past but transform our understanding of the past and the present, and this is our primary responsibility [my emphasis].*⁹⁹

The act of ministry carried out with and among Anglican Palestinian women in Jerusalem is embedded and ingrained in the Eucharist. As part of this study, women were invited to participate in a table talk — a conversation in light of the Holy Table, or the Eucharist. The Eucharist, for both women and men at SGC, is one of the most important elements of the ministry for the Cathedral. The community gathers around God’s Table in order to celebrate God’s hospitality and to participate in and reenact God’s reconciliation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Bread and the Wine. The last two sessions of the women’s conversation were preceded by the Sunday Service and thus placed them in the context of the Eucharist.

Part of the introductory session to the act of ministry was to present the topic of the project thesis and its relation to the Eucharist. First, the project was to be carried out in light of what is most important to the congregation and the cathedral community. Second, the

⁹⁹ Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

conversation was to be informed by the liturgical and spiritual framework. Third, the session was designed to help deepen the women's understanding of leadership and ministry through focusing on a specific part of the Eucharistic liturgy. Dima described the celebration of the Eucharist as "important for the people of St. George's. The community gathered around the Sacrament as the Body of Christ and in the communion of the saints."¹⁰⁰ Gathered around the Table, the women were nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ and were able to talk and reflect on their leadership potential as part of the Body of Christ.

Three specific parts of the Eucharistic Service were suggested to the participants in the project in order to select one part and incorporate it into their conversation. These were: the exchange of the Peace; the Anamnesis; and the Fraction. After explaining briefly the meaning of each one and how it could possibly fit into the discussion, the women decided to look at the Anamnesis in detail (four preferred the Anamnesis, three were in favor of the Fraction, and two were in favor of the exchange of the Peace). Anamnesis in the Eucharistic Prayer entails the recollection and remembrance of God's salvific actions in the person of Jesus Christ, namely, his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. In other words, the people of God remember and retell the story of Jesus Christ to live into the Paschal mystery. Helena noted that "remembrance and memory are connected to story-telling and the passing on of the faith and traditions."¹⁰¹

Writing in one of her outstanding journal entries, Nora offered a personal experience to describe the importance of memory and remembrance. The physical and health condition of her mother, after being diagnosed with dementia, caused her mother and the whole family a grave amount of suffering and anxiety. Nora writes that her mother's dwindling memory did not simply make her anxious, it also led to her feelings of exclusion and alienation from

¹⁰⁰ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

everything and everybody around her. Nora wrote that her mother's "waning memory is altering her perception of the world and her own identity."¹⁰² In other words, the memory loss that Nora's mother suffered made her lose not just her individual identity and selfhood, but also her communal identity and relationships. All her past has been erased, and her present and future are uncertain and clouded.

Nora asserts that "[r]emembrance is an act that constitutes our communal identity, although it is primarily an individual process."¹⁰³ This meant that her mother's personal and individual situation had an impact on the whole family. Likewise, for the Palestinian Anglican women in Jerusalem, the collective memory of the community is very important for the formation and reshaping of the identity of the community. Collective memory is about shared and communal stories that bind those people together who share one community, a common destiny or goal, and one faith.

The biblical texts help people to reflect and remember the history of their ancestors within the community of faith. Nora adds, "[t]he texts that we reflect upon become the medium through which we remember, and the process of remembering becomes communal."¹⁰⁴ For her and other women in the community, stories about women in the Bible, both named and unnamed, constitute an identity they claim through the remembrance. Similarly, Ellen asserted that women "have to pay attention to the stories of women in the Bible and the role of women played in the history of God's salvation. We need to remember these women more often."¹⁰⁵ Nora wrote, "[w]hen we do remember or re-collect the events or people in the Bible, we transcend the boundaries of time and space and the mundane world of our everyday lives to renew our lives with God."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹⁰³ Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

As a group reflecting on the text of Mark 14.3-9 and the story of the anointing woman, the participating women found it to be eye opening. They knew the story well but never read it from a woman's perspective before. Marian, for example, said that "the story of the anointing woman in Mark's Gospel is very interesting. The phrase "in memory of her" [Mark 14.9] made me think."¹⁰⁷ Marian placed herself in the story and imagined how she would have felt if Jesus was to say the same words about her. Helena also wrote a similar reflection in her journal. For her, "remembering some biblical stories of women, such as Mark 14.3-9, helps us to reimagine the role of women in our present time."¹⁰⁸ Culturally, this story brings to mind how women are often neglected and ignored. The woman in Mark 9 was not mentioned by name; she was left unnamed. In the Palestinian culture and society, women are often not called by their own name. Samia noted that "in our culture people avoid calling women by their names: when a young woman is still at home she is called as the daughter of X; when she gets married, she is called the wife of X; when she has a son, she is called the mother of X; and even when her husband dies, she is called the wife of Late X. Why aren't women called by their names?"¹⁰⁹

The Anamnesis within the Eucharistic Prayer serves as an act of remembrance of the work of Jesus and God's story as the people of God gather around the Table. The Table is a space where all are included within God's embrace and hospitality, lifted out of alienation and estrangement. Memory and remembrance pave the way for those who participate in the Eucharist toward the re-enactment of God's reconciliation. Marian noted that "in reconciliation, we go through memory, where we can be sure that there is no hope for a

¹⁰⁷ Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹⁰⁸ Helena, Journal of week, September 8, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

peaceful tomorrow without engaging both in the pain of the past and the call to forgive.”¹¹⁰

This comment carries us forward to the next theme, which is Reconciliation.

Reconciliation: Gathered Around the Table

*Mothers are gatherers...A mother is a person who is effective and gathers the whole household around the table...The table reconciles and offers fellowship and unity within the one body.*¹¹¹

Reconciliation is a central theme in the Christian faith tradition. The Second Letter to the Corinthians states clearly what Christians mean by reconciliation as a doctrine.¹¹² Saint Paul describes the salvific works of Jesus Christ as an act of love by God through which God reconciled us to God-self and called all Christians to the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, the Eucharist, whenever it is celebrated, becomes a reenactment of God’s reconciliation in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the breaking of Bread and the drinking of Wine around the Table. Reconciliation was another central theme or pattern that showed up in the conversation among the female participants in the project.

Placing reconciliation within the Eucharist, Samia wrote that “I see reconciliation in the breaking of bread. As one body of Christ we take His Body and Blood in memory of His passion and death. We ought to engage ourselves with works of charity because we all share a common humanity.”¹¹³ For Samia, the act of remembrance in the Eucharist reconciles us with the whole body of Christ around the Table. Moreover, for her, “the ministry of reconciliation is about sharing the Good News of God’s salvation and forgiveness. It is about transforming relationships and seeking forgiveness.”¹¹⁴ Through forgiveness and reconciliation, relationships are transformed and a new reality realized. In the same manner, Lama noted that “[r]econciliation is a process of rebuilding relationships with one another.

¹¹⁰ Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹¹¹ Dalia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹¹² 2 Corinthians 5.11-21.

¹¹³ Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

The Bible teaches us that reconciliation must be a priority.”¹¹⁵

The women were aware that reconciliation could potentially happen on many levels and dimensions; reconciliation could be political, social, or spiritual. Marian stated that “reconciliation is one of the most important aspects of development and progress [of the human family]... Reconciliation can be political and social in nature, but the most powerful reconciliation is the atonement of God of human sins in Jesus Christ on the cross.”¹¹⁶ I was surprised that the women did not speak about the current political and social situation in Jerusalem, and more specifically, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They may have mentioned it in passing, however, the conversation did not go beyond brief reference. In speaking of reconciliation, the women’s focus was limited to the biblical narratives and what these texts meant for them as women who engage in leadership in church and society.

Reflecting on the meaning of reconciliation in their own life experiences, the women concluded that there are four dimensions to reconciliation: reconciliation with God; reconciliation with others; reconciliation with oneself; and reconciliation with creation. Of all these different dimensions, reconciliation with oneself seemed to be what matters most for the female participants. For example, Nora said, “reconciliation begins with oneself. I need to reconcile with myself and to learn my own conviction and the direction of how to approach the wider community. I don’t need reconciliation with other women and men, but to know my purpose in life.”¹¹⁷ For Nora, reconciliation with oneself helps women realize their full potential and gifts in leadership. She went on to say that “women need to be reconciled with themselves in order to overcome any obstacles and see how best women can serve the church through their gifts of leadership.”¹¹⁸

Some women reemphasized the importance of reconciling with oneself, while others

¹¹⁵ Lama, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹¹⁶ Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹¹⁷ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹¹⁸ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

also spoke about reconciliation in relation to God and others. Samia stated that “reconciliation is with God, oneself and others.”¹¹⁹ Lubna also noted that “women need to reconcile with themselves and with men around them.”¹²⁰ For Lubna, reconciliation with men meant the liberation of men and women and accepting each other’s leadership as equal partners in mission and ministry. One woman related to creation in her reflection on reconciliation and wrote, “the other dimension of reconciliation is my relationship to creation...God created human beings and made them stewards over creation. Therefore, it is our responsibility to care for our environment and nature as an act of faith.”¹²¹

Reconciliation encompasses all of life for us as Christians. The women were able to identify four dimensions through which they engage in God’s mission in the world. These dimensions seek to bring about transformation and change to the whole of humanity; for both men and women alike. In her reflection on biblical texts about reconciliation,¹²² Haya affirmed that “the way I read the text about reconciliation is that in order for that to happen we need to be open-minded renewed in our thoughts and actions, and look at matters from different angles. It is easier said than done.”¹²³ For Haya, it is essential for women to see reconciliation as an invitation to go beyond the familiar and bring about transformation. This leads us to our next and final theme, that is, Transformation and Change.

Transformation and Change: It’s About Time!

*The role of women [in leadership] could be effective within the spirit of teamwork of committed and dedicated people who desire transformation and change for the better and the common good.*¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹²⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

¹²¹ Ellen, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹²² See 2 Corinthians 5.11-21 and Matthew 5.21-26.

¹²³ Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

¹²⁴ Dalia, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

Reflecting on some of the themes discussed above, female participants in the project strongly felt the necessity for a positive change of their reality. Issues of gender inequality, male-dominated society and patriarchal culture, and the necessity for freedom and liberation, caused some of the women to reflect critically on their situation. Transformation and change is a theme that speaks to the reality and context of these women, and therefore should involve more than a cosmetic change or quick fixes. What I found encouraging is the determination of these women and their desire to bring about change in the area of church leadership. Women believe that it is about time for them to experience effective participation and representation in policy and decision-making committees and bodies within the church leadership and hierarchy.

The willingness and desire for women to change their reality is not new. For many years, women have been reflecting on their situation and longing to be more involved in the life of the church and the community to which they belong. However, the circumstances around them, including church and community leaders, did not empower them to speak up and express their desire for change. It is evident that the Diocesan Women's Movement has for the past ten years encouraged women to come forward and advocate for their cause. For example, during the Diocesan Synod that met in early November 2018, some women suggested that it is about time for the first woman to be nominated for ordination selection. Two of the women that made this call were part of this project that was carried out at SGC.

Culturally, women were able to articulate the reality they live in regarding their leadership roles and participation in the life and ministry of their church and the wider community. Nora described the role of women in leadership in church and society to be "very traditional and in need of change and transformation."¹²⁵ By traditional, Nora referred to the male-dominated society and the patriarchal culture that rules the way men and women ought

¹²⁵ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

to relate in matters of leadership and the holding of power, privileges, and positions. Change as a process needs to address both stakeholders, i.e., both men and women. Moreover, Nora stressed the importance of women's internal transformation in the whole process of change. She said, "in order to bring about change, women need to begin with themselves. We need to have an internal monologue."¹²⁶ Women see the importance of self-transformation before they engage with others and the wider community.

Female participants suggested that women in general have more responsibility, in the sense that they have to work on changing and transforming the mindset of men and women themselves. Samia noted that, because women within Palestinian culture are brought up to think like men (as in accepting patriarchal norms), women "need to work on transforming the mentality of women who are prejudiced about women's leadership and potential."¹²⁷

Likewise, Dima asserted that "we need to change the mindset of men and women towards women's fulfillment and affirmation."¹²⁸ In the same manner, Helena stated that "our self-confidence and determination as women will help us bring about change and transformation within our communities. It will enable us to make positive change even if we are challenged by the standards, values and traditions in which we were raised."¹²⁹

Women were ready to speak up openly and honestly about their feelings toward their limited leadership role in the church. Nora, for example, wrote that "women aspire to the transformation of women's roles and the ministry of the church as a whole and in the community around it."¹³⁰ The desire for change was not the only thing that women noted. They were confident that women are able to embark on such a process. Nora stated that "women are able to make change."¹³¹ Later, she added that "women have to come to terms

¹²⁶ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹²⁷ Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹²⁸ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

¹²⁹ Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

¹³⁰ Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

¹³¹ Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

with their beliefs, what it is that they want, and the role they may assume in the church.

Women have to believe that they are capable of effecting change.”¹³² In other words, women are confident that they are capable of making change and transforming their reality, however, they also realize that the path to change is not a straightforward journey, but is strewn with obstacles and challenges.

For a long time, women were afraid to challenge themselves and the culture around them. They were careful not to break the rules and to maintain the status quo of the culture that oppressed them. Women were not previously ready to take the risk and break open their culture and speak up about their reality and feelings, especially their leadership potential, skills and gifts. These were some of the reasons why women did not previously challenge the existing reality and attempt to introduce change. Having the desire and the confidence to begin the process toward transforming their reality does not eliminate the challenges that stand in their way in accomplishing the desired new reality. Nora noted that “transformation in women’s roles is going to be long and painful, especially so, given that all the decision makers and those in leadership positions are men.”¹³³

Finally, the women agreed among themselves that transformation and change needed to be authentic and from within their culture and context. Samia strongly expressed that “we do not need to appropriate another culture to our own context. Transformation is a gradual and an ongoing process and it has to be contextual and speak for our own situation.”¹³⁴ This statement has an essential point that presents the importance of contextualization and enculturation of women’s affirmation and empowerment. However, one can easily fall into the trap of demonizing foreign culture only for the sake of maintaining the status quo.

¹³² Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

¹³³ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

¹³⁴ Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

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Women and only women can decide how and when the campaign for transformation and change should be launched.

Chapter Three

Reconsidering Table Talk Sociologically: Why is it Going On?

The previous chapter of this thesis focused on the engagement of a group of women from the congregation of St. George's Cathedral in a conversation about women's leadership in the church and society as an act of ministry. The act of ministry tried to answer the question "*What is really going on?*," the first of four overarching questions in my inquiry. I identified seven themes through the analysis of the data that reflected the reality of the experiences of women at SGC in Jerusalem. These themes are: feminism and liberation; gender inequality; theology and culture; patriarchal society; memory and remembrance; reconciliation; and, transformation and change. This chapter will address the next overarching question: "*Why is it going on?*" Turning to social theories and sciences, this chapter will reflect on the different themes sociologically. Furthermore, through the reflection on these various themes, I will address the 'Why' question and present the different arguments related to the question. In this chapter, I will argue that human development and flourishing will not be complete unless both women and men have equal opportunity to participate fully in the community to which they belong. This chapter consists of four separate sections. The first section presents an ethnographic reflection, demonstrating the critical requirement for an imaginative transformation through storytelling and remembrance for women generally and for Palestinian Anglican women in Jerusalem in particular. The second section will address the theme of women's status in a male-dominated or patriarchal society in which SGC women live, with a specific focus on the intersectionality of influence in the Palestinian culture of East Jerusalem. The third section sheds light on issues of gender inequality, liberation, and feminist movements or the rising of women, within the Arab world. The final section will focus on the theme of feminism and how this concept of

women's liberation plays out in the Palestinian context through the lens of the socio-political reality of Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Ethnographic Hermeneutics: A Call for Imaginative Transformation and Remembrance

Through ethnography as a pastoral practice, we encounter persons and communities of faith in greater fullness. We hear stories and songs that move us, and move us forward toward greater justice and wholeness in the world. We discover images and words with which to co-author the future, and we develop the shared communal capacity to engage in ministries of transformation. These are the gifts of God, given for people of the world.¹

In Chapter Two, I discussed ethnography as an approach in relation to the study of the group of women at SGC in Jerusalem. In a religious community setting, ethnographic inquiry has two leadership roles: first, the pastoral role of listening (especially to the voices of the voiceless), observing and being present, and second, the interpretation of a context and the prophetic role of change and transformation.² Through ethnographic research, I was able to hear women's stories, voices, and experiences. People in general do not like change, and people in conflict situations resist change, especially those who are in power. People who call for change and transformation should be prepared to be surprised and be moved by the situation and the context in which they engage the community. People, particularly those who belong to communities of faith, "gather together in the bold hope that they can help generate transformational, faithful, and life-giving change in this world."³ In other words, women and men are called to enlarge their perceptions of God and creation and to imagine and reimagine a more just and equal social structure. Therefore, a pastoral practice of ethnography, Mary Moschella asserts, "can engender conversations that transform the way things work within a faith community and beyond it."⁴ In other words, through listening to women's stories and experiences, ethnographic hermeneutics creates a space where life-giving change and

¹ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 255.

² Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, viii.

³ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, xviii.

⁴ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 4.

transformation can be realized. Nora stated that “[w]omen aspire to the transformation of women’s roles and the ministry of the church as a whole and the community around it.”⁵

Our human lives and experiences are embedded in stories, narratives and memories. These enable us to “describe the range of possibilities that we can imagine for our lives.”⁶ Listening to the stories of women within the congregation has two main benefits. The first is that the power of unspoken prejudice and stereotypes, of hidden undercurrents, can be neutralized when brought out into the light. The act of ministry of the women’s project at SGC in Jerusalem did not end discrimination against women or, through the act of ministry itself, achieve their equality with men. However, women were able to share their stories honestly and openly with each other and their pastor, implicitly validating their lived experience.

A second benefit is that ethnographic researchers get to know the people they work with in a different manner.⁷ Indeed, though I have been at SGC for over 14 years, I learned a great deal of new things about the women in the congregation. Listening to their stories and memories was a life-giving experience.

Many scholars claim that storytelling is the main way through which human beings build and understand their experience of life. Stories are the imaginative process of self-interpretation. Moschella argues that “[i]nviting someone to tell her story is a way of calling forth her power to imagine or to “compose” her own life.”⁸ The power of the sacred story, or God’s story and symbols, converges with our human stories, challenges our way we think and how we perceive the world and allows us to imagine new and alternative visions and actions.⁹ Referring to the work of John Savage, Moschella notes four levels of storytelling and

⁵ Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018.

⁶ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 5.

⁷ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 9.

⁸ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 144-5.

⁹ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 152.

listening: recollecting and re-membering something in the past; the expression of feelings of the past; one that describes the present; and understanding a deeper meaning in one's own story while telling the story.¹⁰ Conversely, Saba Mahmood disagrees with the tendency toward the "objectification of the religious imagination"¹¹. Instead, she believes that reflection, rather than imagination, is part of a pedagogical process. Mahmood argues that "[s]uch pedagogical process depends upon including self-reflection in the child about her movements and thoughts — and their relationship to an object called God — all of which require some form of reflection about the nature of the practice."¹² This means that conscious deliberation is an integral part of any pedagogical process, rather than a shift from the unconscious performance of tradition to a critical reflection upon it.

Religious imagination and political imagination, though they are intertwined, belong to two different faculties. Mahmood goes on to argue that political imaginary is possible "[i]f the desire for freedom from social conventions is not an innate desire...but assumes a particular anthropology of the subject, then it is incumbent upon us to analyze not only hierarchical structures of social relations, but also the architecture of the self."¹³ The religious imagination, Mahmood states, has two conflicting accounts: the first, where human beings are only partially responsible for their own practices and actions, and the second, an imagination where human beings are entirely responsible of their actions. Mahmood is interested in "how these two accounts affect women's ability to survive within a system of inequality and to flourish despite its constraints."¹⁴ Religious imagination could be referred to as religious thinking (in Arabic: *ijtihad*) which also means interpretation or exegesis. This state of imagination opens new doors for men and women to open questions connected with

¹⁰ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 160.

¹¹ Religious imagery or imagination will be discussed in more details in Chapter Four of this thesis.

¹² Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 54.

¹³ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 152. *Imaginary* is the specific term that Mahmood uses.

¹⁴ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 168.

women as they embark on reading and interpreting sacred texts. Such imagination and interpretation would establish a new narrative toward women nourished by the tradition.¹⁵

Religious practices, when they become a habit or a routine and are unconsciously enacted, express the community's *habitus*.¹⁶ According to Moschella, "A *habitus* incorporates the aspects of cultural life that we have learned so well that we have forgotten that we learned them at all."¹⁷ *Habitus* implies that the social memory of a community has become the reality of how things were, are, and will always be. Therefore, all aspects of the life of the community become habitual and predictable for the people. This state of social or religious practice does not welcome change easily. People are threatened by change and do not have the courage to risk it. Change could mean loss for them; this may include a space, a practice, a relationship, or even history and identity.¹⁸ Mahmood noted that in some religious traditions, such as Islam, tradition is regarded as "discursive," that is, the religious tradition's pedagogical practices reflect an intertwined relationship between the past and the present, and the engagement with sacred texts.

However, reflection upon the past is essential for the understanding and re-shaping of the present and the future. Mahmood states that "the past is the very ground through which the subjectivity and self-understanding of a tradition's adherents are constituted."¹⁹ Furthermore, rituals as religious practices or worship are "both enacted through, and productive of, intentionality, volitional behavior, and sentiments."²⁰ In other words, rituals are not merely theater where religious practices are performed. Rather, rituals create a space "where the self comes to acquire and give expression to its proper form."²¹

¹⁵ United Nations, "Human Development Reports," 129.

¹⁶ For Moschella *'Habitus'* means the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions of a given group within society.

¹⁷ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 52.

¹⁸ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 55.

¹⁹ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 115.

²⁰ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 131.

²¹ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 131.

Additionally, the power to transform is intrinsically “related to the power to speak to and for the world.”²² Through his work *Adaptive Leadership*, Ronald Heifetz *et al* argue that “exercising adaptive leadership requires distributing significant losses. The people you are asking to make changes experience your initiative as a threat to something they value. What they value might be some deeply held beliefs about right and wrong or about the way the world works or should work.”²³ Identifying these potential losses is essential in order to help people survive them. Some of these potential losses are: identity, competence, comfort, security, reputation, time, money, power, control, status, resources, independence, righteousness, job, life, etc.²⁴ Similarly, in the context of many non-Western cultures, such as Africa and the Middle East, many men and women are resistant to having a conversation or sharing stories about gender; rather, they tend to act dismissively in order to avoid sharing stories. Adichie states this is because “thinking of changing the status quo is always uncomfortable.”²⁵ Any desired change within our communities concerning women’s liberation and equality involves both women and men. This is to say that the rise of women in the Arab world will not be possible unless women see themselves as “basic agents in bringing about change and not passive recipients of assistance offered by development.”²⁶ This enables women to become effective forces for political change in their own context and beyond.

Moschella lists a few terms or phrases that describe the work of religious leaders in promoting personal and social change: growth, healing, emancipatory praxis, liberation, resisting, empowering, and nurturing. All of these point to the religious leader’s role “as an agent of justice-oriented transformation. Ethnography is a good tool that can spark such

²² Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 152.

²³ Heifetz, *Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 96.

²⁴ Heifetz, *Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 96-97.

²⁵ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 40.

²⁶ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 59.

transformation in persons, communities, and social systems.”²⁷ Ethnography as a pastoral practice enables us to fulfill the prophetic call to “love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6.8).”²⁸ In other words, social research, such as ethnography, can help us better understand the pastoral objectives, such as improving the congregation’s spiritual and emotional health and the community’s openness to new viewpoints, ideas, and transformation.²⁹ Mahmood makes an important contribution to how people, both as individuals and as a community, have to approach change and transformation. She states that

[i]f the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes “change” and the means by which it is effected), then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity.³⁰

Ethnography, as a social action that leads to both epistemological and pragmatic dimensions, helps us understand the urgency for change and transformation. Pastoral ethnography is a calling to prophetic understanding and action.

I was moved when I read some of the work of Arab women around the subject of gender equality with a particular reference to memory. One book written in Arabic is entitled *Zaman al-Nisa’ wal-Dhakira al-Badila* (1996).³¹ In this book, both men and women have written about the importance of re-reading the Arab history, taking into account the social and cultural formation of gender for political ends. Researchers asserted that “[t]hese efforts are not restricted to epistemological or academic goals that take knowledge as an end in itself. Rather, they consider academic enquiry to be an expression of life and are interested in participating positively in cultural and social reality, with the goal of bringing about

²⁷ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 11-12.

²⁸ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 23.

²⁹ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 43.

³⁰ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 14-15.

³¹ “Women’s Time and the Alternative Memory” (1996).

change or development towards a more equitable and balanced cultural and social life for all members of society.”³² Reinterpreting Arab history from the perspective of gender reminds us all of how women were mostly excluded from official historical record for reasons related to the dominance of a multi-layered and masculine conceptual and moral construct. These scholars believe that “the marginalization of women and the limited public space open for their contributions have led to the misrepresentation of history and of the collective memory.”³³ Collective memory is essential for the formation and shaping of people’s identity, and their connectedness and coherence as members of the same society or community. This process of re-reading and re-understanding could be called the feminization of memory.³⁴

The Intersectionality Influence of the Palestinian Male-dominated Society

*Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.*³⁵

*Culture is the defining mark of human life.*³⁶

This section will discuss and analyze the cultural and societal context in which Arab women, including women in East Jerusalem, live. Generally speaking, the culture within the communities of the Palestinian Territories, including those inside Israel, are predominantly male-dominated or patriarchal societies. Arab communities in the Holy Land are not dissimilar from the rest of the Arab world in their lack of gender equality, where women face substantial discrimination and exclusion from many aspects of Palestinian familial and societal life. East Jerusalem women, like many other Arab Israelis, face intersectionality of influence deriving from their own family and patriarchal society, on the one hand, and the

³² United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 130.

³³ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 130.

³⁴ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 130.

³⁵ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 46.

³⁶ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 25.

official institutions of the state, on the other hand.³⁷ In her book *Theories of Culture*, Kathryn Tanner defines culture to be an entire way of life that encompasses social habits, institutions, rituals, artifacts, categorial schemes, norms, and values. She goes on to state that culture, as a human creation, is “a construct that describes the total body of beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, sanctions, values and goals that mark the way of life of a people.”³⁸

This part of the chapter will present three main arguments. The first two reflect the work of Khawla Abu-Baker, a contemporary Palestinian feminist. The third argument reflects the specific reality of women at SGC in Jerusalem and the environment they inhabit. The first argument made by Abu-Baker suggests that Palestinian society in Israel, East Jerusalem, and the Palestinian Territories “is characterized by both traditionalism and modernity, conservatism and change that are experienced simultaneously, integrated within its daily life and in the main these processes coexist in harmony.”³⁹ Abu-Baker goes on to argue that it is difficult to comprehend these dynamics without understanding the intersectionality between the official institutions of the State of Israel and the institution of the Palestinian society. She noted that “[i]ntersectionality related to the influence of the intersection between practices of systems of oppression,⁴⁰ hegemony and discrimination.”⁴¹ The second argument made by Abu-Baker is that “outside factors, represented by state institutions, act together with internal factors represented by patriarchal figures in Palestinian society to exert different forms of systemic and institutionalized oppression, both overt and covert, on individuals and groups in Palestinian society that shape policy regarding social stratification and gender within it.”⁴² Institutional oppression, whether official or social, occurs when laws, customs, and practices,

³⁷ East Jerusalem is part of the West Bank, and most Palestinians in East Jerusalem live under the Israeli authorities with a special status and a permanent residency. Whereas, Arab Israelis have a full Israeli citizenship; though they share the same ethnic background as East Jerusalemites.

³⁸ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 27.

³⁹ The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 453.

⁴⁰ Although Arab Israelis have full citizenship within the State of Israel, however, on many sociopolitical levels, Arab Israelis are regarded as second-class citizens.

⁴¹ The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 453.

⁴² The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 453.

fail to achieve equality for all members of a certain social or ethnic group. The third argument in this section is closely related to both previous arguments. I will argue that Anglican women in East Jerusalem belong to the same Palestinian society, and share with their Muslim neighbors significant cultural traditions and norms, other than their religious affiliation.

The historical, cultural, geographic, national, and religious situation in East Jerusalem is unlike any other in the Holy Land. The reasons for this complex reality are not the focus of this paper, however, understanding some of these aspects of Jerusalemite life generate “unique acculturation and socialization processes.”⁴³ There are at least six main factors that influence the cultural makeup of East Jerusalem. First, since 1967, East Jerusalem has been under the occupation of the State of Israel. Occupation imposes Israel’s institutions, laws, and culture, which are predominantly Western and therefore different, if not alien, to the traditional Palestinian culture. Moreover, Palestinians in East Jerusalem do not in any way participate in the political life of the State of Israel.

The second factor relates to the political situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the years, East Jerusalem, though it was entirely connected to the West Bank prior to 1967 under the Jordanian Regime, gradually became isolated from the rest of the Palestinian communities. Although under Israeli occupation, East Jerusalemites regard themselves Palestinian in identity and nationality. This means that East Jerusalem, like many other Arab and Islamic countries, including the Palestinian Territories since the 1990s, was witness to an ongoing Islamic awakening that had a direct impact on both society and culture of East Jerusalem. Third, Palestinians are exposed to the rest of the Arab world mainly through media, literature, music, and other cross-regional influences, rather than direct interaction and contact. In addition to the Arabic language and literature, there was a significant influence on

⁴³ The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 454.

the Palestinian mentality, family values, and political activism.

Fourth, East Jerusalemites have been formed and affected by globalization, particularly through young people, who, through travel or access to technology and other means of communication, are exposed and connected to the whole world. Fifth, the international presence in Jerusalem contributes to the cosmopolitan and diverse nature of the city. The Palestinian community of East Jerusalem is affected in one way or the other by expatriate cross-cultural experiences, mainly through diplomats and employees of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Finally, the religious character of Jerusalem, a place that is sacred for the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — is a powerful factor that affects the cultural makeup of East Jerusalem. SGC women, including many Palestinian Christians, see themselves culturally to be closer to Muslims, while they share almost two-thirds of the Bible with their Jewish neighbors. Additionally, there are significant cultural and traditional characteristics that Christians share with Muslim and Jews which are predominantly male-centered.

The Palestinian culture is a traditional one. The role of women is perceived to be mainly at home and within the nuclear and extended family. In other words, the private sphere belongs to both men and women, despite the upper hand men have over women within most Palestinian families following traditional principles. The public sphere belongs strictly to men, creating the male-dominated society within Palestinian culture. This phenomenon is common to all Arab states. Women are restricted within a framework, which is controlled by the male power structure. This dynamic subjects the Palestinian women's narrative to that of men in power, who have turned a blind eye to women's social problems, resulting in the limitation of women's self-determination in employment to household work or to limited cases of actual material need.⁴⁴ Women in Arab culture are perceived to be weak and in need

⁴⁴ United Nations, "Human Development Reports," 127.

for protection and patronage. Palestinian men's chief concern, both within the family and broader society, is reputation and honor, and they tend to prioritize their honor over any concern for the well-being of the women in their families. This priority creates the context for the gender-related moral dynamic in Palestinian culture: a women's perceived moral misconduct may cause a societal and familial crisis, while men's misbehavior goes unnoticed. This issue is one of the main reasons for violence against women, who are always accused and blamed for any disgrace, dishonor, or harm to reputation the family faces. One problematic issue with gender in a traditionalist society is that it predetermines how we should be, rather than acknowledging and affirming how and who we are as human beings. People want to lift the heavy weight of gender expectations and free themselves to become their true selves.⁴⁵

Mahmood argues that many Muslim juristic traditions assume that women "are the objects of sexual desire and men are desiring objects," and therefore sexual ethics are critical to the integrity of Eastern culture.⁴⁶ Arab Christians have similar ethics and share many of these Eastern traditions because of the environment they inhabit. Therefore, the assumption in most Arab societies is that women's sexuality poses a danger to the sanctity of these communities. This perception not only excludes women from full participation in the community, but also deepens the dominance of men over women. Men have exclusive access to social relationships in popular culture. Similarly, feminist scholars, Mahmood argues, have pointed out that "these kinds of arguments assign the burden of maintaining a community's purity and integrity to women, a task that necessitates their subordination to men, who are entrusted to oversee and control women's sexuality and mobility, as well as their access to a community's symbolic and material resources."⁴⁷ Moreover, it is men who have benefited

⁴⁵ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 34.

⁴⁶ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 110.

⁴⁷ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 112.

from women's modernity. Men became richer and benefited from women's financial income. Despite her achievements, a woman's role at home has not changed; she is expected to do all the work at home and when she is unable to do so, she asks another woman to do the work. Abu-Baker calls women's modernity a "neo-patriarchy" through which men have ensured that women's role and position within Palestinian culture and family is reinforced and maintained.⁴⁸ Actually, neo-patriarchy improved the status of men and left women further behind. Women's modernity through higher education and employment did not dramatically alter women's status or role in Palestinian society. Rather, female modernity in a Palestinian context is not that different from the old traditional society, other than its "modern decor."⁴⁹ Both traditional patriarchy and neo-patriarchy promote patriarchal ideologies which objectify women's bodies and subject them to male-oriented systems, thus refuting and distorting women's own individual and communal experience.⁵⁰ Palestinians are called to move from the language of ownership to the language of partnership.⁵¹

Women in Palestinian society, partly because of the modern educational system, belong to a relatively modern society. Under the Israeli law, it is compulsory to finish Grade 12 at school, therefore, both boys and girls are educated. Also, Palestinian women are exposed to the world of educated and working women in Israeli society and the expatriate community. Today, many Palestinian women occupy senior positions within the private and governmental sectors. However, women are underrepresented in leadership positions and posts of decision-making. Most Palestinian men believe in traditional leadership and exclude women from leadership positions, where men are satisfied with women's representation in "a declarative and symbolic manner."⁵² There are more women than men in the world. Women

⁴⁸ The Taos Institute. "Gender Policy in Family and Society," 459.

⁴⁹ The Taos Institute. "Gender Policy in Family and Society," 461.

⁵⁰ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 158.

⁵¹ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 30.

⁵² The Taos Institute. "Gender Policy in Family and Society," 457.

make up more than 52% of the world population, yet most of the positions of power and prestige are occupied by men. Adichie quotes a Kenyan saying: “The higher you go, the fewer women there are.”⁵³ Men have enjoyed the modernity of Palestinian women more than women themselves. Fathers, brothers, and husbands have accepted women’s access to higher education and a limited access to certain jobs — provided that the men maintain control through their patriarchal supervision of women — as a financial benefit to themselves.

Moreover, the establishment of NGOs in the Palestinian areas, including East Jerusalem, further introduced modernity within these communities. Either overtly or covertly, these NGOs have advocated for democratic principles and equality for all, including gender equality and the rights of women. Some organizations have promoted feminism and used feminist language openly and appointed women to manage these institutions.⁵⁴ However, women’s NGOs, funded by Western organizations, have been accused of colonialism and trying to break up the Palestinian family and the traditional social structure by convincing Palestinian women to adopt the value of gender equality between men and women. This was not only seen to be directed against Palestinian traditional society, but also against religion. This accusation of equating feminism with colonialism has significantly harmed the dream of many women to achieve their own full potential and societal equality. Palestinian feminists eventually became targets for social and political attacks.⁵⁵

During their table talk, women at SGC in Jerusalem discussed the importance of education and socialization. The way Palestinian people are raising their children—both boys and girls — is critical to the formation of their identity and ideology. The socialization of children is the same as the passing on of traditions and norms of any given culture. Adichie asserts that “[g]ender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we

⁵³ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 17.

⁵⁴ The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 457.

⁵⁵ The Taos Institute. “Gender Policy in Family and Society,” 459.

should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently.”⁵⁶ If we raise our children in ways that promote equality between sexes, fifty or a hundred years from now we will have a different society — a happier society.

Gender Inequality and Development: Women’s Liberation Movements in the Arab World

*In Arab countries [including Palestine], women have far fewer opportunities than men do to acquire essential capabilities and to utilise them effectively on a board front. They are also more widely deprived than men of their civil and human rights. In human development terms, such deprivation is seen as the main characteristic of “the marginalization of women”.*⁵⁷

I begin the argument of this section with a solid fact: human development for the whole community, society, and nation is dependent on many social, political, economic, and other factors, among which is the progress of women who make up half of the population.⁵⁸ Conversely, the decline of a nation is the product of many various elements, among the most important is the subordination of women’s status. Qasim Amin has argued that “the inferior status of women in [the Arab world] is one of the most formidable obstacles to the promotion of our welfare.”⁵⁹ In other words, the equality between men and women contributes to the development and flourishing of the whole human family. This includes freedom and justice for all. The United Nations Report of 2005, titled *The Arab Human Development Report: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, suggests three main organizing principles for the rise of women: enjoyment of human rights, guarantee of equality of opportunity, and

⁵⁶ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 25.

⁵⁷ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 69.

⁵⁸ The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) series contends that “human development” means that human beings, by virtue simply of being human, are entitled to respect for their intrinsic human dignity and have an innate right to a life of material and moral dignity. This entails equal opportunities to acquire human capabilities and utilize them effectively to achieve the highest possible level of well-being for all. It follows that all forms of discrimination among humans are rejected regardless of the criteria of discrimination. United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 58.

⁵⁹ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 57.

guarantee of full citizenship rights for women.⁶⁰ My argument in this section is about the positive relationship between development and gender equality. In other words, I will argue that gender equality and equal opportunities between genders will enhance human development and fulfilment.

Enjoyment of human rights suggests that all women in the Arab world should enjoy all aspects of human rights equally with men. In the context of human development “the rise of women” encompasses the liberation of women from the legal and institutional constraints that limit them to an inferior social status. Moreover, it enables them to advance and develop their capabilities to achieve their full potential.⁶¹ The second organizing principle, the guarantee of equal opportunity, entails the full participation of women in all spheres of life, whether political, social, economic, or religious. This will enable Arab women to enjoy all material and moral components of human welfare, thereby closing the gap between sexes. This principle entails a “lifelong acquisition of knowledge, starting with complete equality in this respect between girls and boys.”⁶² Adichie similarly poses a number of questions to that effect, “[w]hat if, in raising children, we focus on *ability* instead of gender? What if we focus on *interest* instead of gender?”⁶³ This approach therefore focuses on the human person rather than the gender identity. The last organizing principle is the guarantee of full citizenship rights for women. The development of the human family as a whole is contingent on the respect of human rights and the dignity of every human person, particularly for women on the basis of equal rights with men.⁶⁴ The United Nations Report of 2005 stated that “[n]o infringement of women’s human dignity or their effective citizenship rights can be justified

⁶⁰ The phrase “rise of women” is the Arabization of the English term “women’s empowerment” where the first connotes women’s struggle for their own rights, rather than women waiting for men to empower them to achieve their freedom as the latter phrase suggests. Moreover, the term empowerment focuses on the individual rather than the community as a whole or as collective empowerment.

⁶¹ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 55.

⁶² United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 55.

⁶³ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 36.

⁶⁴ My later argument in the next chapter will speak the language of “justice” instead of “rights.”

on the grounds of gender. In this context, it should be noted that temporary affirmative action to facilitate women's attainment of the decision-making positions from which they have long been excluded is not equivalent to discrimination in rights of citizenship."⁶⁵ Seeking equality between men and women does not deny the differences between them.

Inequality between men and women originates in their bio-psychology and certain long enforced socio-historical differences.⁶⁶ The relationship between man and woman since primitive times has been one of mutual cooperation to enable the survival of the species. However, male muscle development and other physical differences between the sexes, such as women's child-bearing capacity was turned into gender-based discrimination in rights and duties. Across time, thinkers posed an existential question about gender equality: "Is discrimination against women the result of culture or nature?" Scholars such as Condorcet and La Cluse stated that there is nothing in nature that allows discrimination; rather it is a consequence of social existence. It took centuries to "achieve the first international text demanding the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women."⁶⁷ In other words, the various differences between men and women are by no means reasons for inferiority or superiority of one sex over the other, nor does the equality between them deny these differences.

Women are different from men, and men from women. That does not imply that either sex is deficient. On the contrary, these differences should be seen as an advantage rather than a deficiency — in other words, as "helps, not hinderances."⁶⁸ Moreover, neither denying differences nor exploiting them helps human beings in achieving a desirable development. Some of these differences "may have emanated from biology, but they have been

⁶⁵ United Nations, "Human Development Reports," 56.

⁶⁶ United Nations, "Human Development Reports," 57.

⁶⁷ United Nations, "Human Development Reports," 57.

⁶⁸ Palmer, *The Company of Strangers*, 144.

consolidated and exaggerated by inherited culture to benefit men.”⁶⁹ Therefore, respecting these differences is essential to gender equality. Additionally, ensuring the dignity of both men and women and making the most of their differences is “a strong basis for human advancement.”⁷⁰ The rise of Arab women, although not sufficient, is a necessary condition for such human advancement.

The rise of women in the Arab world is a necessary state for the liberation of women. It is not surprising, though, that this process is not an easy or a straightforward one, especially in a male-dominated society, where power, prestige, and positions are overwhelmingly in the hands of men. Although women are not passive recipients of such development, the rise of women entails the full participation of women as basic agents in bringing about their freedom and liberation. Also, men are active agents, for better or worse. One of the main challenges that faces the rise of women in the Arab region is the claim of many sociopolitical powers and leaders, who are predominantly male, that such a concept has been imposed on their society by the West and “did not arise from the reality or the need of Arab women, which were assumed to centre on strengthening the role of the family as opposed to the individual as society’s basic building block.”⁷¹ This resulted in many actively resisting gender sensitive development. These “ambiguous (external) efforts have led many Arabs to stigmatise the endeavour to liberate women as a task taken from the agenda of Western imperialism.”⁷²

The Arab world in general, and the Palestinian context in particular, suffered and is still suffering from imperialism, neocolonialism, and injustice. On the one hand, this devastating reality permeates various aspects of life, on the other, the same reality prevents the people from seeing the goodness of some external (some of which is Western) experiences. For example, some people in the Middle East, because of suspicion, would

⁶⁹ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 56.

⁷⁰ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 56.

⁷¹ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 60.

⁷² United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 62.

boycott any idea or endeavor that comes from the West. Although this rejection of Western knowledge and experience may sometimes be justified, such rejection could lead to missed opportunities for development and liberation. Mahmood notes that Western reflection on developing countries such as Egypt and other Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) could fall into two common categories: neocolonialism or the inferiority of non-Western cultures and the ignorant Western critique of Islam and Arab culture. She argues that “colonialism rationalized itself on the basis of the ‘inferiority’ of non-western cultures, most manifest in their patriarchal customs and practices, from which indigenous women had to be rescued through the agency of colonial rule.”⁷³

Feminism between the East and the West

...whenever the situation of Arab women is raised as an issue, the ensuing debate tends to be heated, defensive and attended by a volley of questions. Is the Arab women’s liberation movement at odds with the demands and needs of society as a whole? Is it anti-male? Do Arab women activists have an authentic agenda drawn from the reality of Arab societies? Are Arab feminists merely imitating women’s liberation movements in the West? How is one to interpret Western interest in the situation of women in the East? Do women’s liberation movements work against the interests of the Arab family? Is there a hidden agenda to destroy the Arab family? Do demands for women’s rights seek to undermine religion? Finally, is there such a thing as an Arab women’s movement committed to bringing about wide-scale social change?⁷⁴

Women’s liberation movements around the world in general, and in the Arab world in particular, are faced with suspicion and often a source of threat, especially for men in positions of power and influence. Adichie states that “[s]ome men feel threatened by the idea of feminism. This comes, I think, from the insecurity triggered by how boys are brought up, how their sense of self-worth is diminished if *they* are not ‘naturally’ in charge as men.”⁷⁵ On the surface, some men and women claim that these women’s movements are driven by a Western agenda and seek to destroy the social fabric of Arab culture, particularly the interest of the Arab family (as a system), which is one of the pillars of Arab culture and the support of

⁷³ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 189-190.

⁷⁴ United Nations, “Human Development Reports,” 123.

⁷⁵ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 42.

the community. Moreover, women's liberation movements and women's civil and sociopolitical activism are perceived by some people within Arab culture to undermine religion, and thus the cultural fabric of the Arab society. In other words, any societal change that encompasses the status of women and their equality could threaten both the Arab family structure and religious belief and practice. Similarly, Elizabeth Bucar states that any feminist project that focuses on religious communities is problematic for two reasons: "There are historical-political reasons to be concerned with a feminist approach to understanding religious women. It is a well-known narrative in gender and postcolonial studies was co-opted by those in the West who used the excuse of "protecting brown women from their brown men" to implement a wide range of agendas that had little to do with improving women's lives."⁷⁶

Reflecting this reality, and as an example, an Iranian female activist, Shahla Habibi, is very suspicious and is intimidated by the Western terminology and agenda of Western women's movements. Bucar noted through her personal encounter with Habibi, that "Habibi not only weaves her own beliefs about women's primary duties as mothers and wives, but also snipes about how Western women can be too professionally ambitious and neglectful of their families."⁷⁷ Habibi refused to be called or referred to as a feminist or an Islamic feminist. Her argument about refuting the feminism as a Western approach is twofold: she opposes both Western feminist assumptions about women and the Western feminist ideology that differs from her understanding of the natural roles of women. I agree with Bucar in concluding that the reality is that feminism is limited to stereotypes and prejudices.⁷⁸ As a non-Western feminist who wished to refute stereotypes, Chimamanda Adichie describes herself as "a Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men."⁷⁹ Through this definition,

⁷⁶ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xv-xvi.

⁷⁷ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xii.

⁷⁸ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 3.

⁷⁹ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 10.

Adichie tries to explain and demonstrate that feminists, unlike most stereotypes within most cultures and contexts, could be women who are happy and not angry, not exclusively Western women. Most importantly, feminists are not women who hate men because they are men.

Bucar noticed that there are some dissonances between Western and Eastern cultures and people may neglect the cross-cultural diversity of women's needs and roles which results in mutual mishearing, misreading, and misunderstanding — an act of mutual ventriloquism. In other words, it should not be taken for granted that women agree on what is considered women's equality and empowerment.⁸⁰ Unlike Habibi, Mahmood suggests that feminism is a reality whenever there is a challenge to discrimination against women, she writes, “even in instances when an explicit *feminist* agency is difficult to locate, there is a tendency among scholars to look for expressions and moments of resistance that may suggest a challenge to male domination.”⁸¹

Feminism is part of human rights in general; however, feminism is specific to women's rights. Adichie argues that “to choose to use the vague expression *human rights* is to deny the specific and particular problem of gender. It would be a way of pretending that it was not women who have, for centuries, been excluded.”⁸² Similarly, according to Saba Mahmood, feminism:

offers both *diagnosis* of women's status across cultures and a *prescription* for changing the situation of women who are understood to be marginalized, subordinated, or oppressed. Thus, the articulation of conditions of relative freedom that enable women both to formulate and to enact self-determined goals and interest remains the object of feminist politics and theorizing. Freedom is normative to feminism, as it is to liberalism, and critical scrutiny is applied to those who want to limit women's freedom rather than those who want to extend it.⁸³

⁸⁰ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xiii-xiv.

⁸¹ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 8.

⁸² Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 41.

⁸³ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 10.

Cross-cultural differences are not the only challenge that face women's liberation movements around the world. Diversity within the same culture, tradition, theology, and even among the feminist politics of individual women, could exist contextually and biographically. In other words, the differences and diversity within the same culture or local context tends to be the most challenging. This is clearly manifested and reflected in the various narratives of moral life within a certain religious community. Similarly, this was clearly reflected within the SGC women's focus group discussions, which exhibited conflicting views about feminism and women's roles within the Palestinian community. Bucar stated that "[t]his understanding of overlapping, complex systems of ethical knowledge may be helpful for a thick description of moral agency, but it greatly complicates how to isolate specific contributions of women to a community's ethical understanding."⁸⁴ The political project of feminism is not prescriptively defined, static, or predetermined, rather it requires to be constantly negotiated and reimagined within specific contexts.⁸⁵

Feminism/feminisms are both ethical and theological despite the criticisms they face within religious communities. Bucar argues that "the concept of woman remains relevant to the production of ethical knowledge within religious communities not only because of the gendered anthropologies of male clerics, but also because of the moral praxis of religious women."⁸⁶ Bucar understands feminism to entail "any system of thought that challenges stereotypes that misrepresent women's experiences."⁸⁷ According to Bucar, three distinct feminist approaches are noteworthy: feminist description, feminist analysis, and feminist politics.

Feminist description seeks to answer the question *what is going on in a particular women's context?* This goes hand in hand with the discussion in Chapter Two that addressed

⁸⁴ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xiv.

⁸⁵ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 38.

⁸⁶ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xvi.

⁸⁷ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xvi.

situation and gendered experiences of Anglican women in Jerusalem. This aspect of feminism can be supported through social sciences such as ethnography, which seeks to reflect women's experiences and context in their own words.⁸⁸ Feminist analysis goes a step further and attempts to answer the question *why women are like they are?* which is a question that this chapter also seeks to answer. According to Bucar, this approach “searches for reasons between actions and beliefs of women, as well as for external factors that create and influence these actions.”⁸⁹ Feminist analysis goes beyond women's self-reflection and intentions. The final approach in this group is the feminist politics which are “a form of action that attempts to reshape the conditions of women's individual or collective experience.”⁹⁰ This approach will correspond with Chapters Four and Five of this thesis as they seek to answer the questions: *What ought to be going on?* and, *How might we respond?* Feminist politics normally begin with a prospective or normative claim, such as women are equal to men, and a prophetic agenda — for example, that women ought to be treated equally to men, through experiences such as women's leadership.

Women in traditionalist religious communities, such as the communities of the Holy Land, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, “are not only determined by but also contribute to the ethical and political landscape in their respective religious communities. Many women in fundamental religious communities tend to reaffirm the teaching of their religious male-leaders, while only a few criticize and innovate their teaching.”⁹¹ Bucar suggests that though the religious leadership of Catholics and Shi'i Islam tend to control women within religious structures, “clerical authority provides the tools for a wide variety of feminist politics.”⁹² Therefore, one poses few questions about the reality of women who live under patriarchal

⁸⁸ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xvii.

⁸⁹ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xvii.

⁹⁰ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xvii.

⁹¹ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xx.

⁹² The case is not that different for the Anglican Church in Jerusalem. Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xx.

leadership: “how exactly do [clerical leaders] construct their visions of women? What are their gendered moral anthropologies? How do they attempt to convince women that their vision of women’s proper roles is the correct one?”⁹³ In short, a feminist is a person who believes in the social, political, economic, and *religious [my addition and emphasis]* equality of the sexes.⁹⁴ I add religion as an aspect of feminism to reflect women’s lack of equality in my own context.

This chapter presented the complexity of the social context in which women at SGC in Jerusalem live. The dominant culture of the Arab world permeates into whole of life as Palestinian women know it. Patriarchy and neo-patriarchy shape how both men and women perceive family life and society. The male-dominated culture of Jerusalem and the wider Arab world hinders gender equality and places women on the periphery of social and domestic lives. Transformation and change within such culture is a shy process within certain social and cultural pockets within the Arab world, which neither society nor religion seem to endorse or support.

The next chapter will present the religious and theological reflection on women’s status within creation in general, and Christian community in particular. Feminist reflection, reading, and re-reading of theology, biblical texts, and spirituality will offer a fresh and more just reality to God’s knowledge and presence in the world. The virtues of feminism apply to all of humanity; both in church and in the world.

⁹³ Bucar, *Creative Conformity*, xx.

⁹⁴ Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 47.

Chapter Four

Reimagining Table Talk Theologically: What ought to be going on?

The church as a community of interpretation offers its members images, concepts, and narratives that school their imaginations and nurture the capacity to interpret God's action in the events of their lives and world.¹

Models of good practice offer congregations help in imagining how they might do things better or differently.²

The previous chapter focused on gender inequality between men and women within Palestinian society, a subset of the broader Arab society. Women's experience and life in the male-dominated culture reflect the reality of women's subordination, oppression, and marginalization. Despite the richness and legacy of patriarchal culture, male dominance over women and children, both within the family and in the public sphere, impairs the status of women and limits the development of the whole community. Human rights within society and culture aims to eliminate injustice in order to achieve equal opportunities for women and men. This chapter will turn to the theological and biblical understanding of women's ministry and leadership in the church and the wider community within a patriarchal society. The main force that drives this chapter in and around the theological discussion and reflection is SGC women's conversation around the table. Their engagement shaped my theology on many levels, especially after listening to their stories, experiences, and needs.

Reflecting on my act of ministry project with a group of SGC women in Jerusalem, together with the sociological analysis in the previous two chapters, this chapter will answer the third overarching question: "*What ought to be going on?*" In other words, following both the descriptive and interpretative tasks of this research using theological concepts, we turn now to the normative task as we move towards theological interpretation and the constructing

¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 141.

² Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 152.

Christian ethical norms. These norms will guide and direct our practice and informs the way we respond.

This chapter is divided into three sections, focusing on the following themes: (i) Christian and Trinitarian anthropology, (ii) Christian Ethics, (iii) feminist theology, and (iv) feminist ecclesiology and spirituality. My initial reflection addresses the concept of the image of God (Latin, *imago dei*) and how this biblical concept informs the church's theology and practice with regard to women's ministry and participation. This was a central theological theme within the act of ministry.

Next, I will focus on prophetic imagination and praxis. An ethical reflection on the concept of justice, imagination, and discernment opens a new horizon and opportunities for women's leadership. Finally, I will explore feminist theology, ecclesiology, and spirituality of embrace and inclusion.³ This section will also focus on *Anamnesis* within the Eucharist and the role of memory in women's liberation and the transformation of existing realities.

These three sections aim to address and reflect the way in which the church in general — and the church in the Middle East in particular — can most usefully approach women's leadership and ministry. Moreover, these different sections will bring together women's experiences and stories and place those experiences within a theological framework, including, in Rosemary Radford Ruether's words, experience of God, of oneself, of the community, and of the world — all in an interacting conversation.⁴ The themes of feminist theology, prophetic imagination, and Anamnesis reflect the women's discussions within the act of ministry in order to articulate theologically *what ought to be going on*. These three themes will serve as a tool box for the rest of this thesis as it seeks to address women's

³ Elizabeth Johnson provides a useful summary of feminist theology: "feminist theology engages in at least three interrelated tasks: it critically analyzes inherited oppressions, searches for alternative wisdom and suppressed history, and risks new interpretations of the tradition in conversation with women's lives." Elizabeth A Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 29.

⁴ Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 12.

ministry and leadership within the context of Jerusalem. Feminist theology addresses the forgotten theological narratives and the participation of faithful women in God's story. Prophetic imagination provides the arena for cultivating new possibilities and opportunities for women to re-read, re-write, and re-imagine their ministry in a new light. Anamnesis, incarnated in the Eucharist, is the tool through which women re-member their stories and participation in God's mission to the world and re-shape their identity within the community of faith.⁵ Both women and men are created in the image of God. Through prophetic imagination and ethical reflection, women and men created in God's image seek to transform their realities. A feminist approach to theology, ecclesiology, and spirituality transforms the reality of women and men into inclusion and equality, where women's memories and experiences embedded in the Eucharist are at the heart of such transformation.

In this chapter, I explore the experiences and narratives of women as window into wholeness and fullness in the human encounter of the Divine, whose image is equally imprinted in women and men. While the theologians discussed in this chapter are rooted in the various disciplines of anthropology, ethics, eschatology, ecclesiology, spirituality, and anamnesis, they share the feminist approach in their analyses and theology. Michelle Gonzalez brings the important perspective of feminist Christian Anthropology to the discussion, while Natalie Watson views the topic through a lens of feminist ecclesiology. Joan Chittister's approach is through feminist spirituality.

All of these theologians offered me great insight about the importance of equality and justice within the human family, especially as we Christians engage with our own history, theology, and praxis in the here and now. Their interrelated views through the spectrum of their various disciplines have informed my re-imagination of the ministry and leadership of

⁵ I will address Anamnesis and the role it plays in relating women's stories and experiences to God's story of salvation and redemption in the next chapter.

women through reconstructed, holistic paradigms in relation to the image of God and the body of Christ — the church.

A Christian Feminist Anthropology: Women as Full Bearers of God's Image

*So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*⁶

*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.*⁷

*As verily as God is our Father, so verily God is our Mother...*⁸

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*⁹

*You made us in your image, and taught us to walk in your ways. But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away; and yet, as a mother cares for her children, you would not forget us.*¹⁰

This part of the chapter concentrates on the theological understanding of the image of God in relation to human beings. Christian anthropology is part of the Doctrine of Creation. For centuries, the two creation stories in the Book of Genesis 1-3 have captured both theological and popular imagination.¹¹ The first story in Genesis 1.1-2.4a, especially the statement in verses 26-27, offers one of the most common characters of human beings. Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God: the person as a whole is the image of God.¹² Adrio Konig argues that because “all have the same human nature, all are equal. Christians will therefore work for an open, free, just society in which people have equal rights and opportunities.”¹³ However, contrary to the spirit of this statement, male Christian

⁶ Genesis 1.27 NRSV.

⁷ Galatians 3.28 NRSV.

⁸ Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1413).

⁹ Matthew 23.37 NRSV.

¹⁰ Episcopal Church, *Enriching Our Worship*, 60.

¹¹ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 69.

¹² Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 107.

¹³ Konig, “The Broken Image of God,” 109.

theologians have argued for centuries that the creation of men and women in God's image does not necessarily lead to an egalitarian relationship between sexes.¹⁴

Although the statement in Genesis 1.27 presents women and men as created in God's image, women are perceived as possessing deficiently — or in a lesser way — the image of God. For centuries, in many cultures, men have been perceived to reflect the image of God, while women have been viewed to reflect an imperfect image.¹⁵ This theological anthropology views women's bodies as a barrier causing distance from God, implicitly anthropomorphizing God as male, thereby limiting and diminishing God's wholeness by imposing human categories and forms. Feminist theologians argue that the Christian tradition has constructed some damaging and oppressive understandings of women. Michelle Gonzalez states that “[w]omen traditionally have been seen as inferior to men, linked with corporality, and second-rate compared to the more spiritual and rational male, leading to their subordination under male authority.”¹⁶ In other words, feminist theologians argue that Genesis 1.27 is central to an egalitarian anthropology and an equal understanding between men and women as they stand before God. Jann Clanton states that “[i]f a woman, like a man, is made in the image of God, then God's image includes the feminine as well as the masculine, and men and women stand in equal partnership.”¹⁷ This inclusive understanding of God and human beings leads to equality between men and women in both church and the wider community.

Two figures, Plato and Aristotle, deeply influenced early church theologians and writers, represented a wider view of women and argued toward a dualistic view of humanity: a body and a soul. With regard to the soul, both men and women have equal natures; with regard to their bodies, women are inferior to men. Gonzalez describes Plato's view on gender

¹⁴ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 83.

¹⁵ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 2240.

¹⁶ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 227.

¹⁷ Clanton, *In whose Image?* 1.

equality and says, “[w]omen’s souls are equal to men’s, it is only their bodies that one finds a hierarchy of being.”¹⁸ Aristotle also claimed that men are more fully human than women.

Women are associated — by Aristotle — with nature and men with reason. Aristotle’s hierarchical understanding of society is based in his view that women are deficient.¹⁹

Augustine of Hippo held similar views to those of Plato and Aristotle. To a large extent, women had to reject their own womanhood in order to reflect their creation in God’s image.

Moreover, Gonzalez notes, “[e]xclusion of femaleness at the divine level remains basic in Augustine’s God-language.”²⁰ In the patristic era, the image of God in human beings was

defined, until Augustine, as the image in terms of Christ who is the true image of God (2

Corinthians 4.4; Colossians 1.15; Hebrews 1.3). Augustine is the progenitor of the image of

God as trinitarian.²¹ Christian anthropology delves into the nature of the human person,

mutual human relationships, and human-God relationships. Christian anthropology is

trinitarian because the image of God is perceived to be relational and communal.²²

Understanding the creation of women and men in the image of God from a trinitarian

perspective, however, reveals an equal — not hierarchical — relationship between male and

female.²³

Going back to Pauline narratives, most theologians argue that Galatians 3.28 reflects an egalitarian Christology. The cited Galatians verse should be read in the light of Genesis 1.27. The text in 1 Corinthians 11.2-16, however, seems to evoke the second creation story in Genesis 2.4b-25, on the one hand, and the culture in which Paul found himself, on the other hand. Reading this text from 1 Corinthians, especially verse seven, implies that only man is created in God’s image and man has dominance over the woman. Kenneth E. Bailey argues

¹⁸ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 596.

¹⁹ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Locations 662-667.

²⁰ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 942.

²¹ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 1180.

²² Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 301.

²³ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 409.

that for Paul “the issue is gender *distinctions*, not gender *subordination*.”²⁴ Bailey states that if the text is read in its context embedded in the second creation story and original Greek text, then “Paul the Middle Eastern male chauvinist disappears. In its place Paul emerges as a compassionate figure who boldly affirms the equality and mutual interdependency of men and women in the new covenant.”²⁵ Daniel Boyarin similarly argues that there is no contradiction between Galatians and Corinthians on the question of gender. However, he realistically presents Paul to be holding a middle ground view. He notes that Paul on gender

represents then neither the more misogynistic trend of such thoroughly Hellenized Jews...nor a breakthrough in the politics of gender as some Christian feminists would have it. His picture of the relations of married people seem most like that of Palestinian Judaism in general, a moderate, “benevolent” domination of women by men, or rather wives by husbands, one which neither permits cruelty to women nor entirely surpasses the subjectivity of women.²⁶

Theologians, such as Wayne Meeks, Daniel Boyarin, and Miroslav Volf, agree that “Paul’s ideal is a state of androgyny, a cancellation of gender and sexuality.”²⁷ In other words, Galatians 3.28 serves as the representation of Genesis 1.27 that seeks to convey an androgyny which exists at the level of the spirit. At Corinth there were problems related to worship and social challenges that Paul had to deal with. What I found fascinating in this text is the way in which Paul was addressing existing women’s leadership in worship in a new community context that is divided by cultural diversity, i.e. the blend of Greco-Roman and Jewish communities. But is this enough?

Gonzalez suggests that this text in 1 Corinthians is solely informed by patriarchal view of humanity.²⁸ The text implies that women have to be liberated from their sexuality and their bodies in order to be regarded as fully human and fully reflect the image of God. This text serves as an example of how the early church interpreted the Book of Genesis and the

²⁴ Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 300.

²⁵ Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 300.

²⁶ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 190-191.

²⁷ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 183; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 195; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 182.

²⁸ See also Ephesians 5.21-33 for Paul’s discourse on Christian households.

creation stories. This interpretation paved the way and shaped sexist understandings of the subordination of women which continued through the centuries.

In order to overcome this subordination and marginalization of women, it is essential to include women's experience and narratives. Feminist theologians struggle toward full humanity as a normative principle for women and their experiences that is "used as a corrective to overcome centuries of privileging men and naming men's experiences as normative for all of humanity."²⁹ Haya, a project participant, eloquently stated her view on women's place in church and in creation: "[i]t is important that women participate alongside men in church, because women, like men, were created by God and in God's image. Women and men are part of the same creation; one cannot exclude half of creation."³⁰ Women and men must represent a vision of full human equality where both male and female reflect the image of God.

Moreover, feminist theologians, such as Gonzalez, note that Christian anthropology should reflect on the ground the status of women within the created order as full human beings without "buts" or "however." Christian theology on creation, notes Gonzalez, "cannot claim that male and female are equal while simultaneously associating women with those attributes of humanity that are devalued by that tradition. Feminist theologians reject this hypocrisy."³¹ Human beings are all equal before God, and therefore should be treated equally, without inferiority, subordination, domination, or marginalization. The image of God that has been used and interpreted to marginalize women and discriminate against them, is also a statement and an image that can be employed "to fuel justice, human rights, and social transformation."³² An egalitarian understanding of the image of God is the foundation of feminist theological anthropologies. However, in order to achieve this reality of the human

²⁹ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 1976.

³⁰ Haya, Journal of Week 1, September 8, 2018.

³¹ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 2278.

³² Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 2290.

person within the church and society, “the underlying patriarchal world view that has shaped the Christian tradition must be challenged and transformed.”³³ The patriarchal view of the human being not only led to a patriarchal anthropology but also to the limited patriarchal understanding of God. Gonzalez notes that “the two feed off each other, especially in the context of the *imago Dei*.”³⁴ In other words, a transformation of the patriarchal view of humanity will lead to a transformation in the understanding of the Divine, because a patriarchal anthropology informs a patriarchal concept of God and vice versa.

One of the fine statements made by Lubna, a project participant, is that God transcends gender classifications. She notes, “to go deep into God’s traits, we can say that God has no gender and God is Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit cannot be male or female.”³⁵ Feminist theologians argue that in order for women to reclaim God’s image fully, they must dismantle the male human being as the paradigm of the image of God. An exclusive male-dominated construction of the image of God is based on the hierarchy that values men at the expense of women. Gonzalez writes, “[t]he value system underlying this theological notion must be completely deconstructed and reconstructed using a critical feminist hermeneutics.”³⁶ In other words, in order for men and women to live out this inclusive vision as equal bearers of the image of God, they must be confronted with both male and female images and language — of equal value — about God. Feminist theologians suggest that one way the church can transform the patriarchal constructions of God is through Christology.

Christology, or the doctrine of Jesus Christ, is central to the Christian understanding of the image of God. Gonzalez notes that “Jesus Christ’s ministry and message became the basis of our reworking of theological anthropology in order to offer an inclusive, egalitarian

³³ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 2364.

³⁴ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 2375.

³⁵ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

³⁶ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 2569.

vision.”³⁷ As Christians, our spirituality and praxis are informed by the image of Christ (Latin, *imago Christi*) that is embedded in the liberating message of Christ, especially to those who are on the periphery within the community. The understanding of *imago Christi*, like *imago Dei*, must be liberated from patriarchal influences and views that “wield Christology as a weapon to deny the full humanity of women.”³⁸ Ruether also affirms the prophetic principle of transformation of patriarchy, writing:

feminism must not use the critical prophetic principles in Biblical religion to apologize for or cover up patriarchal ideology. Rather, the prophetic-liberating traditions can be appropriated by feminism only as normative principles of Biblical faith which, in turn, criticize and reject patriarchal ideology. Patriarchal ideology thus loses its normative character. It is to be denounced, not cleaned up or explained away.³⁹

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a new creation dawned upon humanity and the whole of creation. Paul writes, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”⁴⁰ The new creation represents the restoration of the image of God in humanity which was distorted by sin. That’s why Galatians 3.28 has to be read in the light of Genesis 1.27. Paul writes, “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.”⁴¹ This is the new creation that was brought to us by Jesus Christ, where all are equal and one before God.

One of the ways in which Christians can achieve an inclusive understanding of *imago Christi* is to search for biblical stories in which Jesus transforms the human person and society during his earthly ministry and apply them in today’s context. Clanton notes that “[t]he Bible does not limit God to masculine images. God as Father is not the only image in

³⁷ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 2627.

³⁸ Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, Kindle Location 2711.

³⁹ Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 23.

⁴⁰ 1 Cor. 5.17 NRSV.

⁴¹ Galatians 3.28 NRSV.

Scripture. Faithfulness to the complete biblical revelation leads us to include other images.”⁴²

There are two images in the New Testament⁴³ that portray a female image of Jesus or God.

The first is in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 where God is portrayed as a mother hen. The second is in Luke 15:8-10 where God is depicted as a good woman looking for her lost coin.

Bailey asserts that the parable of ‘The Lost Coin’ in Luke is in harmony with Genesis 1.27, where the three parables in Luke 15⁴⁴ are seen as a continuation of the same theology of inclusion.

The story of the good woman who loses the coin is a critical part of the whole chapter. Genesis 1.27 “makes it clear that both male and female are created in the image of God, and if this is true, then the nature of God necessarily encompasses the nature of males and females.”⁴⁵ For Bailey, doing theology involves two delivery tools, concepts and metaphors, and they have to be embedded in language, context, and culture. He also points to the gender inclusivity Jesus brings to his stories, especially the parable of the Lost Coin, where God is presented as a woman. Jesus in these parables challenges his own culture when he uses a non-patriarchal image for God. Moreover, the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son breaks open the culture of honor when he humiliates himself and does the walk of shame. Jesus uses images of his culture to transform it. God is spirit; he is neither male nor female. Yet God is a father who acts like a mother.⁴⁶ Similarly, the image of the mother hen reflects the feminine

⁴² Clanton, *In Whose Image*, 20.

⁴³ Old Testament texts that portray God as female: Hosea 11:3-4 God is described as a mother; Hosea 13:8 God is described as a mother bear; Deuteronomy 32:11-12 God is described as a mother eagle; Deuteronomy 32:18 God who gives birth; Isaiah 66:13 God as a comforting mother; Isaiah 49:15 God compared to a nursing mother; Isaiah 42:14 God as a woman in labor; Psalm 131:2 God as a Mother; Psalm 123:2-3 God compared to a woman.

⁴⁴ Luke 15 contains three parables: The Parable of the Lost Sheep or the Good Shepherd vv. 1-7; The Parable of the Lost Coin or the Good Woman vv. 8-10; and The Parable of the Prodigal Son or the Good Father vv. 11-32.

⁴⁵ Bailey, *Jacob and the Prodigal*, 93.

⁴⁶ Bailey, *Jacob and the Prodigal*, 147. Rembrandt’s painting of the *Return of the Prodigal Son*, now displayed at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, portrays the father with both masculine and feminine attributes. For example, the father’s right hand is feminine, whereas the left hand is masculine. Moreover, the returning son, upon embracing his father, leans on his father’s womb — another feminine image — a symbol of mercy and compassion (the root of the word womb in Hebrew and Arabic is the same for mercy, i.e., *rahma*). As children of God we relate to God as a compassionate mother and father. See Appendix 8 for this part of Rembrandt’s painting.

concern that Jesus expresses for Jerusalem. Jesus reflects Her (God's) gentleness and desire to draw humanity into relationship with God.⁴⁷ Such accounts reflect the inclusivity of God's reality that transcends either gender or human expression, and transforms an exclusive contextual understanding of God as a male patriarch who, in the Palestinian culture, would not associate himself with women. Miroslav Volf notes that whether "we use masculine or feminine metaphors for God, God models our common humanity not our gender specificity."⁴⁸ Henri Nouwen eloquently states that "when God created man and woman in his image, [God] saw that "it was very good," and, despite the dark voices, no man or woman can ever change that."⁴⁹ The unity of humanity as God's very good creation calls upon the human race to represent God on earth through relationship and fellowship embodied in God's image.⁵⁰ For God, men and women are equally saved, equally spirit-filled, and equally sent to the world, so that God's name is glorified, rather than claiming the superiority or inferiority of one sex over the other.

Trinitarian anthropology, as I mentioned earlier in this section, is relational and communal. Gonzalez argues that "[i]t is through our relationships that we most concretely reflect God's image. This trinitarian notion of the image of God also gives us a theological grounding for relational anthropology."⁵¹ Relationality is the essence of our human nature as well as the image of God. However, the language that describes the doctrine of the Trinity has been problematic for feminists. The Trinity reflects hierarchical and male images: Father and Son. Feminists suggest the principle of mutuality as the basis for an egalitarian model of community. Gonzalez states that "[t]he image of God calls us to be in relationship and community with one another as we mirror the relational life of the trinitarian God."⁵² Created

⁴⁷ Barton, John, and John Muddiman, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 946.

⁴⁸ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 172.

⁴⁹ Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 51.

⁵⁰ Cahill, "Humanity Before God," 55.

⁵¹ Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 2727.

⁵² Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image*, Kindle Location 2801.

in the image of God, women and men can grow into God's image through our relationship with the Divine, our sisters and brothers, and the rest of creation. In other words, the search for the image of God in humanity must be in forms and directions of relationships. Lisa Cahill adds that "God intends humanity as a 'being-in-relationship.'"⁵³ As Christians, we are to follow the liberating and prophetic message and ministry of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Among the very few theologians who reflected prophetically on the theme of God and gender through imagination was Julian of Norwich, an English mystic.

I want to remind the reader that during the fourteenth-century, Julian of Norwich, developed completely the image of a feminine Christian divinity. In her vision of the Trinity, Julian saw three properties: Fatherhood, Motherhood, and Lordhood. "God, Almighty, is our kindly Father; and God, All-Wisdom, is our kindly Mother; with the Love and the Goodness of the Holy Ghost: which is all one God, one Lord."⁵⁴ Julian in her writings expresses the unity and inclusivity of the Godhead. The feminine image of God helped Julian and other medieval Christian theologians and writers to describe the tender, nurturing qualities of God.⁵⁵ Similarly, Gregory of Nyssa, bishop of Lyon in the fourth-century, is another example which can be regarded as an exception that proves the rule. In one of his reflections on Romans Chapter Eight, Gregory speaks about the transformation of the bride into a lily using a feminine image:

Having thus become a flower, the soul is not injured by thorny temptations in her transformation into lily; she forgets the people and the house of her [sc. false] father and looks to her true Father. Therefore, she is named *sister* of the son, having been introduced by the Spirit of adoption into this relationship and released from fellowship with the daughters of the false father. And so she becomes still more sublime and gazes at the mystery through dove's eyes. I mean she does this by the Spirit of prophecy.⁵⁶

⁵³ Cahill, "Humanity Before God," 62.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Clanton, *In Whose Image*, 45.

⁵⁵ Clanton, *In Whose Image*, 46.

⁵⁶ Sarah Coakley, "Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa," 439.

It is striking to read such an interpretation and exegesis of Romans. Sarah Coakley notes that “Gregory superimposes the *female* “sister” on the Pauline narrative of adoptive sonship through the Spirit.”⁵⁷ Therefore, Gregory presented a gender-modified reflection on the Trinity and undermines the purported hegemony of the three-males analogy within the Trinity. Both Julian of Norwich and Gregory of Nyssa reached a gender-balanced view of God through prophetic imagination.

Prophetic Imagination and Praxis: An Ethical Reflection and Transformation

*Feminist theology is one of the vehicles through which women express a critique of existing theology and religious practices, and contribute creatively towards the unfinished dimension of theology.*⁵⁸

This section will focus on ethics in feminist theology and prophetic imagination. Drawing on the main features of feminist ethics, first, I will consider the virtue of justice and how it is related to the cause of women, both in theory and in praxis. Second, I will discuss prophetic imagination in relation to women’s lived experiences and their desire for the transformation of the patriarchal church and society. Among the theologians and ethicists that I will consult in this section are: Wilma Jakobsen, Samuel Wells, Mary F Bednarowski, Walter Brueggemann and others.

The main principles in feminist theology, as set forth in the previous section of this chapter, can be summarized in four points. First, women’s experience is substituted for men’s experience. Second, patriarchal history and theology are deconstructed. Third, the analysis of Scripture and tradition is done from a woman’s perspective. Fourth, relationality is made central to all that feminist theology stands for.⁵⁹ These principles alone are sufficient to demonstrate why feminist theology is viewed with considerable suspicion in the Middle East

⁵⁷ Sarah Coakley, “Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa,” 440.

⁵⁸ Ackerman, “Faith and Feminism,” 197.

⁵⁹ Jakobsen, “Ethics in Feminist Theology,” 148.

and in many other parts of the world, particularly, the southern part of the globe or developing countries. This suspicion is generated among those who fear feminist theology's challenge to traditional patriarchal culture and the male hierarchy of the church. Also, feminist theology is perceived as a concept that matters to middle-class white American women and has no place in the Middle Eastern context.⁶⁰ However, feminism or womanism is gaining more and more support among women and men in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine. Although Palestinian women are marginalized on the basis of their gender, many more people in Palestine, men and women, are also oppressed on the ground of their ethnicity and religion.

Despite the fact the Wilma Jakobsen speaks for the context of South Africa, I believe that she, to a large extent, also speaks for the context of Palestinian women. She argues that women in developing countries should be as contextual as possible, and not simply mirror white western thinking. Jakobsen notes that “[t]he needs and experiences of first-world women are not necessarily these of third-world women. We must seek that which is uniquely our own in our complex society, and forge a feminist liberation theology and feminist ethics that understand the interstructuring of oppression in our land.”⁶¹ The empowerment or rising of women in the Arab world is not significant. However, some countries, such as Lebanon, Tunisia, and Palestine, witness a growing awareness of the rights of women within society. The Arabic term for feminism or womanism is ‘*nasawiya*’.

Nasawiya is a movement that seeks justice for women within the male-dominated and patriarchal society of Arab culture. Within the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, a women's movement (Arabic, *al-Haraka al-nasawiya*) began in 2007 under the leadership of Shafeeqa Dawani. The movement's main objective is to empower women in the field of leadership and

⁶⁰ Jakobsen, “Ethics in Feminist Theology,” 148.

⁶¹ Jakobsen, “Ethics in Feminist Theology,” 149.

to encourage women's full participation in decision-making and policy-making within the Diocese. The activities of the women's movement within the Diocese of Jerusalem are limited to a few regional and diocesan workshops and congregational gatherings; activities for which we praise God. However, the movement has not yet developed discourses of feminist theology (Arabic, *lahout nasawi*) or feminist ethics (Arabic, *akhlaqiyat nasawiya*).

Traditionally, ethical reasoning has concluded that all people are equally free to make moral choices. However, traditional ethics disregards the status of women as autonomous human beings, capable of making moral decisions. For centuries, traditional ethics have denied women's full moral agency, anticipating that men would make moral decisions on women's behalf, often without even consulting with them. Feminist ethics challenge this aspect of traditional ethics demanding full participation and full moral agency of women.⁶² In addition, moral agency in places such as the Middle East belongs to the community as a whole and not to individuals as independent moral agents. Relationality is central to feminist theology and ethics; no human being is self-contained or is an island. Moral decisions should not be made by individuals in isolation. Moral agents are most effective when they are in community. Jakobsen affirms that "Women are made in the image of God and thus moral agents in their own right."⁶³ In affirming that women are made in the image of God, the well-being of women is the cardinal concern in moral decision-making. Like in feminist theology, women's experience is central to feminist ethics; bearing in mind the diversity of women's experiences.

Following the reflection on women's experiences, feminist ethics require an analysis of the roots of oppression. Feminist ethics have to be grounded in an ethics of justice in order to carefully examine the various expressions of women's oppression within all aspects of life.

⁶² Jakobsen, "Ethics in Feminist Theology," 149.

⁶³ Jakobsen, "Ethics in Feminist Theology," 151.

Male-dominated society and patriarchal culture objectify women by regarding them as possessions of men — as a daughter of a father or a wife of a husband. Political and social structures affect women's personal lives. Women tell their life narratives, experiences, and stories to each other, and by sharing them they discover the commonality of their experiences that reflect their subordination and oppression.⁶⁴ Jakobsen describes the sharing of stories as “a moral activity,” because it affirms women's dignity and human worth in a society that does not do so.⁶⁵ One of the main lines of defense for equality as a moral activity is the virtue of justice.

Justice means the equality of all people. As stated earlier, all human beings are equal before God and thus created in the image of God. Justice is one of four Cardinal Virtues.⁶⁶ A virtue is a personality trait that is, “a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing.”⁶⁷ According to Peterson and Seligman the virtue of justice has three interpersonal strengths: citizenship, fairness, and leadership.⁶⁸ Fairness is what I am most interested in with regard to our discussion of gender equality and equal opportunities. Fairness refers to the equal treatment of all people, and it is “the bedrock of any system of justice.”⁶⁹ Fairness entails setting aside one's own stereotypes and prejudice in deciding how to treat other people — not to diminish them but to elevate them. In other words, fairness is “the product of moral judgment — the process by which people determine what is morally right, what is morally wrong, and what is morally proscribed.”⁷⁰ Having said that, fairness maintains that everyone should get her or his fair share, and respect, because people are ends

⁶⁴ Jakobsen, “Ethics in Feminist Theology,” 151.

⁶⁵ Jakobsen, “Ethics in Feminist Theology,” 151.

⁶⁶ The other three Cardinal Virtues are: temperance, fortitude, and wisdom.

⁶⁷ Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 87.

⁶⁸ Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 355-428.

⁶⁹ Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 362.

⁷⁰ Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 392.

in themselves. No one deserves to be discriminated against because of her gender, ethnicity, religion, or class. Jesus said: “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”⁷¹ Jesus’ teaching centers on fairness and justice to all people, and through preaching justice for all, Jesus addresses relational issues and how human beings can live together in mutual equality and fairness.

Informed by the Christian trinitarian tradition and the understanding of the message and mission of Jesus Christ on justice through the cross, Volf presents four points of gender identity. First, human beings exist in duality of gender with equal dignity. Man is not superior, and woman is not inferior. Second, the construction of gender identities on the ground of gendered bodies goes in both directions. Third, each gender identity is fashioned and refashioned in relation to one another, i.e., relational. Relationality is an inclusive view of humanity. Ackerman argues that “[r]elationality, the opposite of alienation, apathy and exclusion, is understood as the practice of love and justice between people.”⁷² Finally, all the three previous points are carried out by a sacrificial love. Volf describes the mutual creation of men and women “to be “created” out of a “rib” of the triune God and the “wounded side” of the Crucified.”⁷³ Therefore, our Christian understanding of gender identity and equality derives from the creation and re-creation of the world; through faith in the Trinity and the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The world we live in is a world with competing justices. In the context of the Holy Land, for example, what justice means for a Palestinian is different, competing, and even contradictory, to what justice means for the Israelis. For Palestinians, justice means liberation, self-determination, and freedom, through having their own state. For Israelis, however, justice means security and violence-free existence. Likewise, traditionally, men’s

⁷¹ Mark 12.31 NRSV.

⁷² Ackerman, “Faith and Feminism,” 202.

⁷³ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 190.

justice has been seen as men's dominance for the sake of men and women. Women, however, see their subordination as an act of injustice, hence the competing justices. What determines the true justice? Is the justice of the dominant the dominant justice? Volf suggests that God's universal justice transcends human justice. Christians, for example, are limited to a culture, a tradition, and are inside an interest group. Also, unlike God's knowledge, their knowledge is limited and distorted. Therefore, their moral judgments about what is just and fair in concrete situations are inevitably particular and cannot be universal.⁷⁴ Moreover, Christians simultaneously inhabit two worlds—they are “in God” and in “the world”—the world of the biblical traditions and the world of their own culture.⁷⁵ The hybridity of our lives as Christians “makes our beliefs and practices fluid, open to change, enrichment, and to potential agreement on such important matters as justice.”⁷⁶ Volf adds that embrace (inclusion) is part and parcel of the definition of justice. Embrace is “about love *shaping* the very content of justice.”⁷⁷ Because, if human beings are created in the image of God and belong together as a community of love, then loving embrace defines what justice is.⁷⁸ Therefore, the search for justice among so many competing justices requires prophetic and moral imagination or discernment in the power of the Holy Spirit for a better community and humanity.

Walter Brueggemann, in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, suggests a different way of looking at the prophetic movement within the Bible. Brueggemann invites his readers to be creative, innovative, and contextual as they delve into the text. Prophetic imagination is a useful way in which the reader is invited to share in the freedom of God to transform societies they live in and offer new beginnings of hope and newness. Prophetic imagination

⁷⁴ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 198-199.

⁷⁵ John 17.6-19.

⁷⁶ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 210.

⁷⁷ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 220.

⁷⁸ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 225.

transports the prophets and the communities beyond the ordinary and reasonable.⁷⁹ In other words, prophetic imagination goes beyond the practical and realistic and brings about an alternative thought.⁸⁰ This was also clearly stated in the thesis of his arguments regarding prophetic imagination and ministry which is, on the one hand, “to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”⁸¹ On the other hand, prophetic imagination calls the whole community to a dismantling criticism that paves the way for a new reality embracing social action and practice through compassion and justice. The author puts an emphasis on practice and action because “prophetic imagination is intimately connected to concrete practice.”⁸² Therefore, prophetic imagination calls the community as a whole to reimagine its calling and ministry. In the case of a male-dominated culture and context, the church must allow room for such imagination, discerning God’s will for women and men as they live out the ministry and mission of God in love and justice.

One of the main challenges of imagination is the fact that, like our language, our imagination is limited. During his earthly ministry, “Jesus presents God’s generosity by using the imagery that his culture provides, while constantly transforming it.”⁸³ Samuel Wells notes that there is too much of God, and we as human beings have difficulty, because our “imagination is simply not large enough to take in all that God is and has to give.”⁸⁴ What is critical in Wells’s view is our need as a church for the combination of imagination and community in order to discover God’s abundance in our midst. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all

⁷⁹ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, xv.

⁸⁰ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 39.

⁸¹ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 3.

⁸² Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 121.

⁸³ Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, 131.

⁸⁴ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 7.

generations, for ever and ever. Amen.”⁸⁵ Like Jesus, Paul encourages his readers to expand their imagination in order to access God’s abundance away from scarcity and limitations.

Wells argues that our estrangement from God arises from two sources: perversity and lack of imagination, or sin and ignorance. In other words, there are two dimensions to the coming of the Kingdom of God: “the overcoming of sin and the fulfillment of potential.”⁸⁶ Women and men must overcome the sin of inequality and oppression and fulfill their potential if they wish to live in a transformed church and a renewed world.

Instead of prophetic imagination, Osmer describes the process of divine revelation and human shaping of the word of God as prophetic discernment. Prophetic discernment draws on “specific theological traditions to critique popular and official theologies and the way of life justified by these theologies.”⁸⁷ This process involves the interpretation of specific social or political conditions, events, at specific time and space. According to Osmer, “prophetic discernment is the task of listening to this Word and interpreting it in ways that address particular social conditions, events, and decisions before congregations today.”⁸⁸ It is also the activity of exploring God’s guidance in the midst of challenges, events, and decisions of life. This can be achieved through listening to Scriptures or prayerful reading of the Bible, truth-telling to help distinguishing God’s voice from other voices, and loving discipleship through relationships and community. For Osmer, these are central practices in order to achieve theological and ethical interpretations and reflections.

As Christians we crave tools that help us to cultivate and expand our imagination. Osmer notes that “[t]he church as a community of interpretation offers its members images, concepts, and narratives that school their imaginations and nurture the capacity to interpret

⁸⁵ Ephesians 3.20-21 NRSV.

⁸⁶ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 31.

⁸⁷ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 135.

⁸⁸ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 135.

God's action in the events of their lives and world."⁸⁹ One important aspect of ethical interpretation is "an ethic of equal regard,"⁹⁰ which is based on the creation stories and the ministry of Christ that emphasize the dignity, equality, and worth of all human beings. Osmer continues to say that in the creation stories, "human beings are portrayed as created in God's image and, thus, as worthy of respect in personal relations and of fair treatment in social [and church] institutions."⁹¹ Jesus' ministry is full of teaching about following the Golden Rule and loving one's neighbor.⁹² In other words, the concept of *imago Dei* and Jesus' teaching about loving one's neighbor as oneself is best captured in an ethic of equal regard. In essence, an ethic of equal regard states that all human beings are equal in dignity and worth; not greater or less than one another, but fully equal. This is best reflected in the loving relationships and mutuality in personal and communal relationships and practice.

In addition to theological and ethical interpretations, Osmer adds "good practice" as his next approach to normative task in seeking to answer the overarching question: *what ought to be going on?* Osmer states that "[m]odels of good practice offer congregations help in imagining how they might do things better or differently,"⁹³ or as Brueggemann puts it, an "alternative thought."⁹⁴ Moreover, good practice is more than a model; it is epistemological in nature. Good practice "yields knowledge that can be formed only through participation in transforming practice."⁹⁵ Elaine Graham developed three central arguments about transforming practice within Christian congregations: first, new knowledge and values can only be formed through transforming practice; second, transforming practice is directed toward human liberation and love that strive to dismantle the structure of domination,

⁸⁹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 141.

⁹⁰ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 151.

⁹¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 151.

⁹² The Golden Rule as set forth in Matthew 7.12 provides: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (NRSV).

⁹³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 152.

⁹⁴ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 39.

⁹⁵ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 153.

including the oppression of women; and third, transforming practice reveals God within one's context and circumstances.⁹⁶

In her feminist theology of transforming practice, Graham developed three criteria with which to assess transforming practice: first, the Christian commitment to freedom and love. Good and transforming practice is about liberating praxis. As Denise Ackermann states, "feminist theologians choose to work in praxis-oriented theology."⁹⁷ Second, liberating practice in feminist theology gives special priority to women's experience and the reshaping of social practice concerning gender. In a male-dominated culture, Christian communities must make space for women's experiences and leadership, thus, creating new practices of gender identity, relationships, and roles. Third, women's experience must emerge reflexively — through the reflection of the community — out of particular and local practice in a specific context.⁹⁸ Similarly, Ackermann notes that "liberating praxis is the ongoing struggle against oppressive structures that exploit people and rob them of their full humanity."⁹⁹ In other words, the community is called to prophetic imagination and discernment to transform the reality of women within the community.

In her work *The Religious Imagination of American Women*, Mary Bednarowski presents various discoveries which summarize the various theological and ethical interpretations discussed earlier in this section.¹⁰⁰ Women discovered and are still discovering the extent to which they have been excluded from histories and from having a voice in the theological formation of their traditions. Also, though women have been absent from the public practices of their religious communities, Bednarowski writes, they have been present in private ways, which have been unrecognized and undervalued and must be recovered.

⁹⁶ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 155.

⁹⁷ Ackermann, "Faith and Feminism," 197.

⁹⁸ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 158.

⁹⁹ Ackermann, "Faith and Feminism," 202.

¹⁰⁰ Bednarowski, *The Religious Imagination of American Women*, 4-6.

Women have been excluded from religious leadership on the basis of the theological rendering of women as less fully human than men, thus having less participation in communal and religious life.

Moreover, women's experience and context are central for their reimagined narratives. This means that women have learned something else from their experience that calls them to question what was previously the norm and the accepted. As in my context, feminist theology has been perceived as a white middle-class product that is irrelevant to women in developing countries. There are different women's experiences; sometimes within the same culture or context. This led women in different contexts to have different types of women's theologies, such as, womanist, goddess, *mujerista*, *nasawiya*, and others.

Women's exclusion from full participation is not merely by social arrangement. Women's exclusion is embedded in the theological interpretation of how the universe operates. In the West, there is not only a prophetic tone to women's religious imagination, e.g., a rise against injustice, but a highly speculative and creative quality as well. This is not the first time that women have discovered the extent of their subordination and exclusion. Women's theological work is not limited to the matters of gender equality. Rather, it involves other issues, such as ecology, and ethnic and race discrimination.

The previous three paragraphs reflect women's experience and presentation from an American perspective. However, there are many similarities with women's experiences around the world. Women's movements around the world, including Middle Eastern countries, agree on fundamental issues within Bednarowski's arguments, such as the exclusion of women from public and religious participation, and the importance of women's voices, experiences, and stories in changing the mentality and narrative around them. It is intrinsic for women in the Middle East to continue on the path of re-discovery in order to reimagine their natural place in society and the church they belong to. Helena, one of the

women at SGC, said, “Eastern culture has imposed on us the phenomenon of the exclusive leadership of men...we have accepted this situation as it is and took it for granted that this is the way things ought to be.”¹⁰¹

Anamnesis and the memory of women: An Ecclesiological Reflection on the Eucharist

*The church all too often merely reflects the patriarchal societal structures and customs within which it functions. Hierarchies of power, a separation of the laity from the clergy, and preaching and teaching based on men’s experience and insights of the world, all give rise to a male clericalism which makes it difficult for the church to live out its prophetic calling. Feminist theology suggests that new models for church and ministry are required which, while acknowledging differences, are inclusive and sensitive to patterns of injustice and discrimination.*¹⁰²

Feminist Ecclesiology

The process of reimagining the church and ministry in feminist theology and ecclesiology demands our reconsideration of patriarchal theologies. Natalie K. Watson notes that “[w]e need to think about the story of the church and the story of the community of women, men and children who grapple with the story of God and seek to tell it through their lives.”¹⁰³ In other words, the history of the church should be re-read and re-written through prophetic imagination and practice. Both men and women are integral to the body of Christ. However, women, particularly in my context in Palestine, have been excluded from full participation in the church, and their theological significance has often been based on the patriarchal paradigm. Introducing feminist ecclesiology explores women’s experiences of being in the body of Christ and reclaiming the church so that women can rebuild the church as a meaningful, open sacramental space where everyone’s presence is celebrated. Women are equal and yet different parts of the body of Christ.¹⁰⁴ In expressing their experiences,

¹⁰¹ Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018.

¹⁰² Ackermann, “Faith and Feminism,” 204.

¹⁰³ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ See 1 Corinthians 12.12-27.

women realize their power and their being in the image of God. Feminist ecclesiology tries to answer the overarching question: “what does it mean for women to rethink what it means to be church?”¹⁰⁵ Reading the history of the church is just one way that we can perceive women’s suffering, marginalization and oppression — simply for being women. Anne E. Carr asserts that while women, as baptized members, “had surely been present and active in its life, including its reflective life, this presence and activity had been either effectively erased in the texts of the past or denigrated in assertions of women’s ontological, moral, intellectual, bodily inferiority and supposedly natural subordination to men.”¹⁰⁶ In short, women have been excluded from most of the church’s meaningful moments.

Traditionally, ecclesiology is placed between theological anthropology and eschatology, i.e., between what it means to be a human being created in the image of God and the last things. Feminist ecclesiology, according to Watson, “has to make the connection between what it means to be human and what it means to live in this world as it is today.”¹⁰⁷ Feminist ecclesiology involves a re-imagination of the prophetic presence in the world and what it means to be a church between this material world and the transcendent world. Liberation and justice discourses take place at this intersection. For feminist theology and ecclesiology to be prophetic, they must cross the boundaries determined by patriarchy. However, Watson suggests that feminist ecclesiology “has to take place both on the brink and within the existing boundaries.”¹⁰⁸ This means that any dialogue on feminist ecclesiology occurs on two levels, one with the traditional male-defined ecclesiologies, and feminist deliberation of the church embedded in women’s experience. Feminist ecclesiology is about telling and retelling God’s story of creation and redemption.

¹⁰⁵ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Carr, “The New Vision of Feminist Theology,” 9-10.

¹⁰⁷ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 10.

Feminist ecclesiology stresses the point that both men and women are equal members of the body of Christ. Watson states that the “enactment, rather than *re*-enactment, of the concept of *ekklesia*, the disciples of equals, is the foundation of...feminist ecclesiology.”¹⁰⁹ As Paul writes, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”¹¹⁰ Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to imagine their life and ministry as a “body” with interdependent limbs and organs instead of being a divided community and congregation (1 Corinthians 1.10-17; 3; 6.1-8).

Mark Branson notes that “they are not any body — they are Christ’s body. That takes some imagination.”¹¹¹ This metaphor or image of the church presents *ekklesia* as one body which has many members that perform various functions, with all members are part of the same body. However, this image of the church can emphasize a masculine dominance within the body of Christ and could suggest that women are required to deny their own bodies and become part of a new, different and male body to obtain salvation. The service of Churching of Women, found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, both a rite for purification and thanksgiving following childbirth, is understood as a rite of readmission of women to the worshipping community after a period of supposed impurity (normally 40 days after childbirth).¹¹² Orthodox churches deny menstruating women Communion (elements of the Eucharist).¹¹³ Lama, one of the women who was part of the project, said, “I find it difficult to see a woman bishop or priest at the altar and administering the bread and the chalice...The issue of *purity* [my emphasis] is important.”¹¹⁴ The Anglican Church in Jerusalem inherited the Mosaic Law regarding women’s purity and its implication on the church life, and the

¹⁰⁹ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 21.

¹¹⁰ 1 Cor. 12.12 NRSV.

¹¹¹ Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*,” 60.

¹¹² Although the *Churching of Women* service is still used within the province of Jerusalem and the Middle East, other provinces around the Anglican Communion, such as The Episcopal Church in the USA, have changed it to the *Thanksgiving for the Birth and Adoption of a Child* — an inclusive order of service. Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 439-445.

¹¹³ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 43.

¹¹⁴ Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

church in Jerusalem is also overwhelmed and surrounded by a majority population of Jews and Muslims whose practices engage these same views.

The church should provide space and the means to realize the liberation of women. One way to achieve this reality is the liberation of the texts that present the church as an institution that marginalizes and oppresses women and excludes them from full participation and representation.¹¹⁵ Women must be fully incorporated into the church. Clericalism, Watson describes, “is a form of power structure which attributes all power of Sacramental celebration, theological knowledge and decision-making to experts...Women on the grounds of their sex are excluded from taking on this kind of power.”¹¹⁶ In other words, clericalism can be perceived as the ecclesial embodiment of patriarchal theologies. Many churches will not abandon clericalism and the institutional structures of the church because of potential injustice. But there is always room for transformation of existing structures, where women and men can flourish. Watson notes,

The burden should not be on women alone to transform the church or even to be content with having received access to what used to be a male domain, but it should be a chance for all people, women and men, lay and ordained, to reflect on their whole existence, every aspect of their lives, and not least their sexuality, to be part of their calling within the church. The problem of the ordination of women is not a question of employment rights, but rather a question of the church living up to its calling to enable all people to be human in the image of the Triune God and to provide space for human beings to develop the full potential of their humanity and enable others to do the same.¹¹⁷

For many women, having a woman preach the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist is an empowering sign of their being a church. Ellen, one of the women participants of the project, expressed her disappointment in not seeing any women at the altar during the celebration of the Eucharist. She noted that “[i]n the Eucharist this morning, we all saw three men at the Altar and there was no female representation there.”¹¹⁸ Many women lack a female role

¹¹⁵ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 31.

¹¹⁶ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 68.

¹¹⁷ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 72.

¹¹⁸ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

model, while others resort to imitating male leadership, thus becoming token males. Feminist ecclesiology places the conversation about ordination in the context of an ecclesiology that challenges the church to be the church of God of all human beings, regardless of man-made and male dominated structures.¹¹⁹

The life of the church centers on the pulpit and the Eucharist, i.e., the preaching of the Word and Sacramental praxis. Traditionally, women have been on the receiving end of the sacraments. For example, the exclusion of women from the celebration of the Eucharist, Watson states, “can still be seen as one of the most powerful manifestations of the attitude the patriarchal church has to women.”¹²⁰ Re-establishing sacramental theology is important in order to affirm women’s bodies as sacred. Watson notes that “the significance of sacraments and sacramentality for this reconstruction of ecclesiology lies in my understanding of sacramental celebration as the embodied interaction between the individual, the divine and the community.”¹²¹ In other words, the sacramental celebration of the Eucharist is the enactment of Christ presence within the body of Christ manifested in the bodies of men and women; both men and women represent Christ’s presence to each other.

The Eucharist represents the hospitality of Christ’s table of companionship for both men and women away from exclusion or alienation. Watson argues that “[t]he Eucharist is essentially communion with each other and communion with the divine; it is participation in the life of the whole church from which no one is excluded, and participation in the life of the Triune God.”¹²² The body of Christ must reflect the radical equality and justice for all. St. Paul continues to say to the Corinthians: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”¹²³ The church is an open community that

¹¹⁹ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 77.

¹²⁰ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 78.

¹²¹ Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 81.

¹²² Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 90.

¹²³ 1 Corinthians 10.17 NRSV.

welcomes all people. Volf asserts that “[b]y breaking the bread we share not only in the body of the crucified and resurrected Lord, but also in the multi-membered body of the church.”¹²⁴

The Eucharist is a holy space where all are invited to a round-table community where all are welcome.

Feminist Spirituality

Feminist spirituality is embedded in both theological discipline and lived experience of women. It seeks to bring about justice and hope for men and women alike. Joan Chittister argues that “[f]eminist spirituality derives from the conviction that the liberation of Jesus came to bring this world yet unaccomplished and that Christianity, captured by culture, is oftentimes more patriarchal than Christian...”¹²⁵ This spirituality calls the church to the Christianity of the Jesus who preceded the patriarchal church. Feminism seeks to transform the assumptions upon which exclusion, domination, hierarchy, and gender inequality lies.¹²⁶ Any spirituality that justifies injustices demolishes the very essence of Christianity.

Feminist spirituality stresses the fact that women and men are equal partners in the human enterprise — “[n]ot one the image of God and the other the temptress of the human race. Feminist spirituality bridges the isolation of both women and men and gives both of them a chance, finally, to be whole.”¹²⁷ As I noted in the previous chapter, male dominance leads to underdevelopment. Jesus said: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”¹²⁸

Elizabeth Newman argues that the Eucharist is an enactment of God’s abundance. She notes that “as the church gathers to receive the extravagant gift of God in the bread and the wine, thus becoming Christ’s unique body, marked by wealth of gifts given so that *all may*

¹²⁴ Volf, *Inclusion and Embrace*, 130.

¹²⁵ Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, Location 572.

¹²⁶ Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, Location 676.

¹²⁷ Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, Location 2124.

¹²⁸ John 10.10b NRSV.

flourish [my emphasis].”¹²⁹ Feminist spirituality stresses that the real development of the human race “depends on the equal partnership of women and men, not the oppression of the one for the indulgence of the other. Feminism makes humans of us all.”¹³⁰ In the same manner, Carr describes a Christian feminist spirituality to be “universal in its vision and relates the struggle of the individual women...to the massive global problem (the sin) of human exploitation, violence, and domination of male over female, rich over poor, white over color, in-group over out-group, strong over weak, force over freedom, man over nature, it sees the whole through the part.”¹³¹ In other words, feminist spirituality, informed by theology and implemented by praxis, seeks to bring justice, hope, and transformation to the whole of humanity.

Feminist Christian spirituality is rooted in the concept of the church (*ekklesia*) of women as the body of Christ. Elizabeth Fiorenza states that bodily existence is central and not peripheral to the spiritual becoming of women as the *ekklesia* and as the body of Christ. She goes on to state that feminist biblical spirituality must continue to be critical and communal.¹³² A critical spirituality seeks not only to name the liberating experiences of women in biblical religion, such as the story of the anointing woman in Mark 14.3-9, but also to keep alive the memory of women who suffered under patriarchal religion. A communal feminist biblical spirituality enables women to reclaim their biblical heritage. Fiorenza states that “the history of patriarchal oppression must not be allowed to cancel out the history of the life, struggles, and leadership of women in biblical religion.”¹³³ The people of God, as body of Christ, are men and women as the disciples of equals. In the story of the anointing woman at Bethany in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus offers to his followers an important commission or

¹²⁹ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 116.

¹³⁰ Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*, Location 119.

¹³¹ Carr, “On Feminist Spirituality,” 55.

¹³² Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 351.

¹³³ Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 351.

commandment concerning their participation in his mission in the world. Referring to the woman, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”¹³⁴ Remembrance and memory are intrinsic to the transformation of the ecclesial and spiritual narratives and theology of the church. One of the four hermeneutical principles that Fiorenza uses in her feminist interpretation is the hermeneutics of remembrance. This principle searches biblical texts for traces of women’s history in the early church in order to reconstruct the activity and centrality of women in the present.¹³⁵

Anamnesis

Christians down the centuries saw in the enactment of the Holy Eucharist as fulfillment of Jesus’ commandment at the Lord’s Supper: “Do this in remembrance of me.”¹³⁶ This sacramental act should never be reduced to a mere liturgical performance. Rather, in the act of performance there is the enactment of the cosmos and a community that is nothing less than God’s act of creation. It is an act of remembrance or Anamnesis where the community is called to enact or remember Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection within a liturgical drama or dramatic liturgy; hence the difference between “play” and “liturgy.” The basic structures of enactment in liturgy and in drama can be seen primarily as part of a larger field that includes the enactment or performance of language, among other elements. When the liturgy is enacted, it is anamnetic or commemorative even if it has a performance structure. McCall uses the term *enactment* over *performance* in order to avoid the technical sense of the style or manner of that enactment, defining liturgy as “the anamnesis of the act of the Triune God, using symbolic means, to enact that Trinity in the lives of the enactors, transforming them

¹³⁴ Mark 14.9 NRSV.

¹³⁵ Carr, “The New Vision of Feminist Theology,” 18. The other three principles are the hermeneutics of suspicion, the hermeneutics of proclamation, and the hermeneutics of creative actualization.

¹³⁶ Luke 22.19; 1 Corinthians 11.24-25.

through faith into the church.”¹³⁷ Liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, enables women and men to transform the reality of the worshipping community through the grace of the Anamnesis.

At the heart of the remembrance is the relationship between the church’s worship and its life and witness in and for the world. The Holy Eucharist lies at the core of the mission and service of the church. Both as individuals and community, we have to remember and anticipate in order to understand more fully our own identities and purpose in the world. In the Eucharist, we remember God’s salvific acts down the centuries, culminating in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The church celebrates the Eucharist and is shaped by taking part in it. The act of anamnesis looks back to an original event of the church through its present performance of its memory of that command. Through that performance, the church is shaped in expectation of the Lord’s second coming. Therefore, anamnesis is a term that connects past and future in the present — all embedded in the liturgy. Thus, remembering has a future dynamic (eschatological hope) that empowers transformation; it is re-imagination rather than reversal of events. Julie Gittoes articulates Rowan Williams’s understanding of anamnesis, writing, “it is through the anamnesis of the Eucharist that the fullness of Christ and its transformative potential is made possible. For Williams, the Eucharist is not a simple fellowship meal; it is not a recollection of a distant historical event; it is not merely a matter of reaffirming corporate memory. It is a place of encounter and transformation.”¹³⁸ Anamnesis as a non-identical enactment in the Eucharist allows the fullness of Christ to be embodied in the church’s mission in and for the world, in the hope of eschatological fulfillment. Nora, one of the project participants, notes that “when we do remember or re-collect the events of the people in the Bible, we transcend the boundaries of time and space and the mundane world of our everyday lives with God.”¹³⁹

¹³⁷ McCall, *Do This*, 103.

¹³⁸ Gittoes, *Anamnesis and the Eucharist*, 130.

¹³⁹ Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

Feminist theology of worship and liturgy is all about the rediscovery of the significant though often hidden and silenced, through the history of Christianity, and as it is emerging in these days. Throughout the history of Christianity, not only women's leadership, authority, and autonomy have been denied, but also the actual voices of women have been shunned and silenced — effectively and systematically. Attempts to free the voices of women in liturgy and worship are routinely met with rejection and hostility. Women have had to stand up for their rights and break the silence. This has brought both an explosion and anger, and celebration and joy, paving the way in many Western countries for the revision of liturgical language and biblical and theological imagery in worship, whether hymns, liturgy, or other forms. In addition, more and more women now have leading roles in worship and are participating more fully in the liturgical life of their communities. The current generation is rediscovering women's traditions as a matter of celebration, as well as realizing how severe their repression has been. Janet Wootton concludes, "When women and other oppressed people of the world are no longer silent but speak and sing and dance, injustice must find its limit, and the community of promise come close."¹⁴⁰

Liturgy and the Eucharist are not simply an intellectual exercise. They are emotional, experiential, and spiritual, and reach far beyond the epistemological or pedagogical aspects of worship life of a community. Worship is a form of engaging with God's mission in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ben Quash describes this ministry as an "involvement with a God who seeks to repair the world (to make all things new)."¹⁴¹ Liturgy empowers the community of faith to deepen their theological imagination. Quash adds, "imagination becomes a key instrument of *finding* that which is able to draw us forward from our given state."¹⁴² Quash draws on Garrett Green's concept of "paradigmatic imagination" to expand

¹⁴⁰ Wootton, *Introducing a Practical Feminist Theology of Worship*, 135.

¹⁴¹ Quash, *Found Theology*, 248.

¹⁴² Quash, *Found Theology*, 258.

on his idea of repair and transformation.¹⁴³ Imagination is about exploring the inaccessible realities of our journey of faith, through images and symbols or even the “collective performance like liturgy.”¹⁴⁴ Through imagination, the work of the Holy Spirit will guide us through the process in order to rediscover God’s will for our context and reality.

When we consider *Anamnesis* or remembering in the Eucharist, two things come to mind: words and action. Samuel Wells suggests that “[i]n the Eucharist, God’s people recall the saving events that transformed the world and their place in it; and they re-enact those events. Both the words and the actions are significant.”¹⁴⁵ For example, the words in the Eucharist identify the hinge of history, i.e., the Last Supper and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In recalling the Last Supper, we remember a previous meal, the Passover, and its corresponding salvific acts, the exodus and the covenant. Wells writes that “[r]emembering the words of the institution, the words in which Jesus identified his future presence in the church, defines the way Christians think about memory. The Last Supper becomes the prism through which Christians perceive the past.”¹⁴⁶ Whenever Christians recall the transforming acts of Christ’s death and resurrection, and point forward to the eschatological fulfillment of the promises of God, their actions may be referred to as prophetic.¹⁴⁷ As I wrote earlier in this chapter, the word *prophetic* embodies social action and liberating praxis.

Similarly, through their subtle yet clear feminist approach, Bieler and Schottroff bring a fresh understanding of the Eucharist as a transformative energy for the church and the world alike. The Eucharistic life is to be seen from the sacramental permeability which regard the human body as a central part of the Eucharist. The Community (*Koinonia*) as the body of

¹⁴³ Quash, *Found Theology*, 259.

¹⁴⁴ Quash, *Found Theology*, 259.

¹⁴⁵ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 201.

¹⁴⁶ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 202.

¹⁴⁷ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 203.

Christ, at and around the table, presupposes the reconciliation of all people. It is God's hospitality to all, especially to the estranged. Imagination is practicing eschatological hope. Imagination enables those around the sacred meal to make the past stories, realities, and memories accessible to them. Imagination transforms "spatial and temporal absence into presence," including the act of remembrance in the Eucharistic liturgy, where imagination transports the community through linear time.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, eschatological imagination enables the community to respond to injustice, suffering, and oppression.

The breaking of the bread in the Eucharist indicates the wholeness of the bread and the healing of the divisions within the body of Christ. Jesus' body is broken for the sake of our broken world. Susan Ross states that,

Feminist theology, as does liberation theology, underscores the relationship of sacraments to justice, and, with the issue of the ordination of women, asks how the institutional church can claim to be a reconciling and healing community given the structural and theological obstacles it has placed in the way of the full equality of women and men.¹⁴⁹

The significance of the sacraments and the rituals is that they permeate into ordinary life. Issues of social justice challenge and affect the ways the Eucharist is celebrated in remembrance of Christ and vice versa. Our personal memory is connected with collective and cultural memory which shapes our collective identity as a community. Bieler and Schottroff argue that "Collective memory is ambitious. It can foster conflict as well as reconciliation; it can lead to collective forgetfulness as well as to truth-telling."¹⁵⁰ Their reflection on remembrance leads us to consider seriously our own reality and situation. As the body of Christ, Christians are called to live out their true identity that is reflected in God's own image. Through prophetic imagination and reconstructing the church's history, Christians

¹⁴⁸ Bieler and Schottroff, *The Eucharist*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 63.

¹⁵⁰ Bieler and Schottroff, *The Eucharist*, 14.

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reach the point of embodying these revelations through pragmatic and lived encounters. To this pragmatic task we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Walk the Talk: How Might We Respond?

...the pragmatic task of practical interpretation: the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable. Practical theology often provides help by offering models of practice and rules of art. Models of practice offer leaders a general picture of the field in which they are acting and ways they might shape this field toward desired goals. Rules of art are more specific guidelines about how to carry out particular actions and practices.¹

*For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
Refrain: and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy!²*

The phrase “Walk the Talk” brings together two main concepts. First, the talk — the conversation of a group of women at SGC Jerusalem and the conversation’s implication on the participating women — on the congregation of SGC, and on me as a leader at SGC. I have referred to this this conversation as the project, or the act of ministry. The second concept is the walk, or the action following naturally from the project. Walking the talk is the phrase I will use to describe the objective of this chapter as I address the last overarching question for this thesis: *How Might We Respond?* How might we respond is Osmer’s language, and it gets to the point that any approach must be practical, accessible, and compelling. I understand Osmer’s point at this stage of my analysis, however, as an invitation to participate in the full flourishing of the Kingdom of God through the inclusion of women and men around God’s table. This question is pragmatic and invites prophetic action and embodiment.

¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176.

² Words: Shirley Erena Murray.

In the second chapter I presented the project of conversation and the immediate outcomes and data analysis that gave direction to the two following chapters. Chapter Three provided the social theory and reflection on women's status within the patriarchal societies in the Arab world, and in Chapter Four, I reflected theologically on the issue of gender equality and the ministry and leadership of women within church and the wider community using feminist approaches.

In this chapter, I will reflect again on the project as an act of ministry and allow it to guide my thoughts and reflections as I write, re-listening to the voices of the women and re-telling their stories and experiences. Moreover, I will listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit as I write and discern where She may lead as we walk the talk in community.

This chapter may seem like a dream, yet we can make it our reality. It may also appear like wishful thinking, but in fact, it is a hopeful and faithful reflection about a way of life for women and men as they engage in the justice of God. This pragmatic task requires the determination of strategies of action in order to bring about individual transformation and societal and ecclesial change. As discussed in earlier chapters, practical theology transcends the epistemological exercise of acquiring knowledge. Practical theology enables us to live faith-filled lives in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The pragmatic nature of this chapter allows us to focus on reimagining actually doing what we said we were going to do. Action can be divided into two main dimensions — short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes. These outcomes will be the themes that make up this chapter, which is divided into four sections. First, reflecting on the theme “Table Talk, God’s Talk,” I will revisit the act of ministry by looking at the women’s experiences and stories and relating them to God’s story — the Bible. Second, focusing on the theme “Gathered at the Table, Going Out to the World,” I will address the power of the liturgy, in particular the Eucharist, and how men and women participate in God’s mission in

transforming the world. I will reflect on the tension caused by the patriarchal view of the Eucharist — where the priest is perceived as the emissary of Christ — versus the community gathered as the embodiment of Christ. Third, I will explore the pragmatic task of leading change, through reflecting on servant leadership as the means of transformation and change. Fourth, and as a way forward, I will present the challenges and hopes of the desired transformation for both the short and the long terms, and briefly suggest some action steps for the Diocese to follow.

Table Talk, God's Talk

Table Talk, God's Talk invites the reader to look in two different directions while standing at an intersection. This means that the purpose of this section is to look back at the act of ministry, presented in chapter two, and re-listen to women's voices and re-tell some of their experiences, all while looking forward into a future grounded in the context of Jerusalem. Reflecting on the experiences and stories of women at SGC in the light of God's story empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, I will re-member and re-collect women's voices in my congregation in light of my sociological and theological research in order to suggest a way into a transformed future for the whole community. In other words, the task of this section is to retell the stories and experiences of women in the light of God's story in order to plant the seeds of a hopeful future where all people, women and men, may flourish.

Helena, one of the participants in the project, noted that, “remembrance and memory are connected to story-telling and the passing on of the faith and traditions.”³ Brad Kallenberg argues that “to be a Christ-follower is to become a character who contributes to the continual telling, retelling, and re-retelling of Christ's story.”⁴ As Christians we are called

³ Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

⁴ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 38.

continually to tell the story of God so that both the world, and we as human beings, are transformed by it.⁵

Telling the story of women at SGC is part of telling the story of God in the world. Remembering their experiences and reflecting theologically on them connects them to the greater story — God’s story. Robert Webber argues that worship is not only about our own experiences as human beings; it is also about God and God’s mission in the world. For Webber, “Worship is both remembrance (*Anamnesis*) and anticipation (*prolepsis*). It has to do with the praise of God for God’s mission to the world in the past, in the present, and in the future.”⁶ Our worship, according to Webber, has three dimensions: it is upward, because it is directed towards God who created and redeemed the world; it is inward, because it shapes us as individuals and as a community as we participate in God’s mission in the world; and it is outward, because it proclaims God’s mission to the world and provides us with a new transformed reality.⁷ The living memory (*Anamnesis*) of the gathered community around the table not only recalls Christ’s self-sacrifice, “but also implores God to remember.”⁸ In the same way Susan Ross argues that “Like all ritual actions, sacraments arise out of a community’s shared memory.”⁹ Therefore, the Eucharist becomes a meal of both remembrance and hope-filled praxis. Bieler and Schottroff define eschatological Anamnesis as “a praxis based on empathy, on embodiment, and on the reciprocity between God and human beings; it is a praxis of remembering painful memories and dealing with them in a courageous and life-giving way.”¹⁰ In the previous chapters, we have looked upward and inward. It is now the task to look outward, especially, as we address the oppression, the inequality, and the injustices that many women experience in our own context — both in

⁵ See the Great Commission in Mathew 28.16.

⁶ Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 161

⁷ Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*, 162.

⁸ Meyers, *Missional Worship Worshipful Mission*, 156.

⁹ Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 48.

¹⁰ Bieler and Schottroff, *The Eucharist*, 162.

church and society.¹¹ In the Eucharist we are not mere listeners to God's story, we are active participants.

The opportunity for conversation that women at SGC had around the table created a new reality in two ways. First, women were able to shape their own experience and narrative of their reality. Second, they realized that their voices, though not fully heard or listened to, are important and should be acknowledged and respected. Haya, another participant in the project, stated that “[w]omen are not only underrepresented in church committees, but also they are voiceless.”¹² Women are not happy with their underrepresentation on church bodies and committees or with the failure of those same leadership structures to hear and take them seriously when they do speak up. This reality has to change. Women have a dream of a new reality where they are fully respected because they are, like men, created in the image and likeness of God, and as such, are full members of the Body of Christ.

Women want this new reality. However, their lack of confidence and the discouragement — and even legal or social prohibition — they receive from some men and women prevent them from living into the reality of the kingdom of God. Helena noted that “[w]omen lack the confidence and the courage to have big dreams and ambitions as a result of the opposition they face.”¹³ Women have the potential to dream, and then accomplish and achieve their dreams. Men must consider these dreams as God's invitation to their own — the men's — wholeness and fullness. Leadership within the church and society are invited into a holy opportunity to see women's equality as a generous offer to help — to share resources, creativity, vast and differing abilities, and new gifts — rather than a loss of male power. Men and women have to dream together in order to achieve such fulfillment. I have a dream that one day we stop dividing or separating the roles in and around the table. In other words, the

¹¹ I will address in the next section the theme of going out to the world and looking outwardly in more detail.

¹² Haya, Journal of Week 1, September 8, 2018.

¹³ Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

church has to acknowledge the gifts of all of God's children, to have equal representation in church bodies and committees, especially governing bodies, such as the Vestry, the Synod, the Standing Committee, and others.

Today, the church, as an institution, has to face its own credibility, integrity, and dignity. Talking the talk is one thing, but walking the walk is another. The Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 61 was anointed to preach the good news to the poor, the oppressed, the prisoners, and the brokenhearted.¹⁴ Jesus appropriated these words to sum up his own ministry in Luke 4.¹⁵ Yet, Jesus did not finish at reading the words from Isaiah, however, he went on to tell the crowd gathered in the synagogue that “today this scripture [from the book of Isaiah] has been fulfilled in your hearing.”¹⁶ Women's dream about their fulfillment is “good news” and it is gospel. Brenda McNeil states that “[i]f we want our church, our group or our institution to be a credible witness of the gospel in this present generation, we will have to experience and proclaim the truth of God's kingdom.”¹⁷ The mission of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah, the mission of Jesus, and our mission today is to acknowledge and see God's image in all of God's children — men and women — in fullness and wholeness. This may be achieved through empowering women to assume positions of leadership within the church.¹⁸ Through such imagination, table talk and God's talk unite; women's dreams and God's will unite. This means that people accept the gospel story by allowing it to shape their own story and life.¹⁹

Such unity between women's experiences and stories and God's story must be embodied in congregational praxis or liberating praxis as I stated in the previous chapter.²⁰

¹⁴ Isaiah 61.1-2.

¹⁵ Luke 4.16-21.

¹⁶ Luke 4.21 NRSV.

¹⁷ McNeil, *A Credible Witness*, 123.

¹⁸ Perkins, “What is Christian Community Development,” 31.

¹⁹ Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 37.

²⁰ See pages 102 and 114.

Van Gelder asserts that the work and ministry of the church as, “an ongoing transformational initiative of the Holy Spirit with a congregation, requires personal and corporate *praxis*.”²¹

Praxis as an ethical approach to Christian life requires a “rhythm between action and reflection.”²² The church is called to be “formed and transformed” in its identity and agency.²³ Praxis is a process of transforming and changing a set of practices and meanings in the church towards wholeness and fulfillment through the guidance of the Holy Spirit living in us for the sake of the world. Our credibility as Christian men and women is amplified “when we cross barriers to bridge the gaps that divide people.”²⁴ Therefore, our credibility, integrity, and dignity as Christians is to bridge the gap between men and women towards fullness and wholeness.

Women’s ministry within the Diocese of Jerusalem has developed significantly in the last 11 years or so. Women began to see practically that their active participation in the life and ministry of the Diocese on all levels is “good news” and gospel. However, the path for equality, fullness and wholeness is still a long and rocky road. The church leadership and particularly the clergy have the responsibility to provide space for women to dream and fulfill their dreams. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in the second-century, argued that “The glory of God is the human being fully alive.”²⁵ How can male human beings — or human beings as a species — be fully alive if women — one half of the human race — are told that they are lesser creatures? Men fail to flourish and thrive in the full glory of God if they do not work actively to include those who are also made in the image of God. Dima, a project participant, argued that “change of women’s status and situation within the church will not come about unless it comes from above; from leaders in the church.”²⁶ Dima, like many other women,

²¹ Branson, Mark L. “Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church,” 115.

²² Branson, Mark L. “Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church,” 115.

²³ Branson, Mark L. “Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church,” 116-117.

²⁴ McNeil, *A Credible Witness*, 124.

²⁵ Yale University, “On Human Flourishing.”

²⁶ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

believes that the progress towards women's fulfillment largely depends on the church hierarchy. However, women, who are currently excluded from leadership positions, can become agents of change and transformation — like the leaven in a loaf of bread.

The Diocese of Jerusalem, particularly the Women's Movement (*al-Haraka al-Nasawya*), is aware of the context in which the church engages in God's mission. The patriarchal church and society hinder the equality of women's leadership and participation. Coming from different backgrounds, experiences and mindsets — clergy and laity, men and women, young and old — the church and societal structures have different views on women's leadership. Some are supportive and call for women's full participation in the church, while others, for cultural reasons, prefer to maintain the status quo of male-only leadership. Women's ordination and full participation at the Table is the ultimate goal for a new reality. I believe that we as a church have the responsibility to bring women's table talk to the House of Clergy and the different bodies of the Diocese. The church must respond to women's voices and listen to their stories and experiences if the church authentically desires that all flourish, develop, and thrive in God's kingdom.

Gathered at the Table, Going Out to the World

Women and men gather around the table as the body of Christ to celebrate their different gifts and talents and participate joyfully in God's mission for the world. We are all invited to share in God's hospitality of the table. In reflecting on the celebration of the Eucharist, Dima noted that “the community is gathered around the Sacrament as the Body of Christ and in the communion of the saints.”²⁷ However, this very table that unites people around the sacrament can also be the place where women are excluded from full participation. Ross argues that, “many women quite justifiably feel excluded in eucharistic

²⁷ Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018.

worship; not only the language is overwhelmingly male, but the iconic significance of the [male] priest as representative of God incarnate leaves them feeling far less than the image of God.”²⁸ The divisions of roles at the table ought not to be on the basis of gender or any other human classification, other than God’s call to this or that role or ministry. The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem welcomes women’s full participation at the Eucharist, but does not allow them to celebrate the Eucharist, thereby excluding them from certain roles.

The Christian practice of hospitality, Newman argues, calls us all to “look critically at certain dominant cultural assumptions that are radically at odds with Christianity.”²⁹ She goes on to say that as long as these assumptions dominate our ecclesial imagination, it would be almost impossible to practice faithfully God’s hospitality. In other words, the church’s faithful praxis at the table ought to be inclusive, and the roles divided according to the abundant gifts God has granted to different members of the body of Christ.

To divide the table, as a practice that allows exclusion of any person, is to miss the wholeness and the fullness of the kingdom of God. The eucharistic table is a space where feeding and nourishing takes place, which is at the very heart of Christian hospitality. Liturgy and worship are seen as “participation in God’s giving and receiving” of God’s grace and abundance.³⁰ God’s grace re-creates us and invites us to live in God’s abundance, where we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in union with Christ both at the eucharistic table and in the world. Limitation — in participation or resources — is not only the opposite of abundance — also actually diminishes the fullness and wholeness of God’s image in us, and as a result, limit and constricts our image of God.³¹ Worship, according to Meyers, “is the locus of mission, a place and time where the people of God celebrate and participate in God’s

²⁸ Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 208.

²⁹ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 14.

³⁰ Newman, *Untamed Hospitality*, 61.

³¹ Women presiding at the Eucharist as full participation.

self-giving love for the sake of the world.”³² Mission is ingrained in God’s own identity and purpose, i.e., “God’s love for the world and God’s desire to restore all creation to wholeness and integrity.”³³ Through worship, the church, as the body of Christ, should joyfully enact God’s reign in liberating praxis in order to offer the glimpse of God’s reconciling love, justice, and mercy for all humanity.

The Eucharist unites all of humanity not only with God but also with each other as members of the one body of Christ. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are one body because they share in the one bread and the one cup.³⁴ Divisions and exclusions at the Holy Meal lead to human divisions within the body of Christ.³⁵ The body of Christ include members who are poor and rich, young and advanced in age, men and women, and people across ethnic, political, and racial divides. The meal could not be the Lord’s Supper unless the people gathered around the table were Christ-like, living to manifest equality and justice before God whom they gathered to worship. In the body of Christ, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus.”³⁶ The church gathers around a table as a community in which divisions of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other human classifications and categories are overcome through God’s reconciling love.³⁷ In other words, using Paul’s argument about the sanctity of the table, I also want to underscore the importance of keeping the sanctity in and around the table. We are in no way to use the table for fostering division or exclusion of women — just because they are women. Susan Ross argues that the jars of ointments, the sacraments, should be broken open, by all human beings, particularly women. She notes, “The horror of Jesus’ disciples at his allowing a woman to anoint him with costly oil is echoed today by the refusal

³² Meyers, *Missional Worship Worshipful Mission*, 2.

³³ Meyers, *Missional Worship Worshipful Mission*, 1-2.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 10.16-17.

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 11.23-34.

³⁶ Galatians 3.28 NRSV.

³⁷ Meyers, *Missional Worship Worshipful Mission*, 158.

of [the church] to allow women to preside at the Eucharist and to act as sacramental ministers.”³⁸ Women should have a direct sacramental access to God and not only through a male mediation. This is one of the most important conversations that the Diocese of Jerusalem should have as women’s leadership is reimagined within the context of the Middle East.

The Eucharist is the most sacred space where God’s presence is celebrated within the community of believers as the body of Christ. In the Eucharist, our presence as human beings is also celebrated in unity, empathy, and equality for all. The community gathered around the table is the body of Christ. Ellen, another participant in the project, noted that “In the Eucharist this morning, we all saw three men at the altar and there was no female representation there.”³⁹ The church in Jerusalem has to look in two directions as it reflects on God’s abundant gifts of giving and receiving. On the one hand, there is the context of the church in Jerusalem — a context embedded in patriarchal and male-dominated society. Therefore, the church’s story and experience cannot be alienated from its cultural setting and beliefs. On the other hand, the church is called to be loyal to God’s story, i.e., the Bible as the Word of God. Lubna, a project participant, noted that “at the end of the day, it is not what we want or what the society wants, rather, it is what God wants from us.”⁴⁰ To please all people is mission impossible. Some people, women and men, oppose the ordination of women and their full participation in the leadership of the church. Lama, a participant in the project, said, “I am against the ordination of women.”⁴¹ Lama, like many other men and women within the Diocese, oppose the ordination of women and believes that there is no room for women’s leadership in church hierarchy, while others dream of seeing women in leadership positions and ordained ministry.

³⁸ Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 9.

³⁹ Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 8, 2018.

⁴⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁴¹ Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

The Pragmatic Task of Leading Change: Servant Leadership of Transformation

Leading change is a process whereby church leaders embark on bringing about transformation and change to the life of the people of God as the body of Christ. At the heart of Christian leadership lies the ministry embedded in servanthood. Seven years ago, on Ascension Day, I was installed as the first indigenous dean of SGC in Jerusalem. Among the many gifts I received on that day was an olive wood sculpture of the foot-washing in John 13, where Jesus is kneeling down next to the table and washing the feet of one of his disciples. As he presented the gift, the donor said to me, “Remember, Hosam, that no matter how far you go in your calling, your ministry is that of service.⁴² Whether you feel down or blissful, remember what Jesus did at the table; you are to serve and not to be served.” Foot-washing is the very DNA of the Table. Samuel Wells writes, “[w]ashing feet is a vital gift of God to his people. It illuminates all three of God’s primary gifts — Jesus, the Church, and the Eucharist — because it embodies the Gospel, shapes the community, and defines mission.”⁴³ Foot-washing is a foundational image for Christian ministry and servant leadership; it is Christ-like servant leadership.⁴⁴

Servant leadership is an important theme in a discussion of change and transformation in the church in general and in the context of Jerusalem in particular. Servant leadership is essential because it is an antidote to all kinds of dominance and superiority manifested in individuals and groups, both intentionally and unintentionally. In other words, servant leadership — or transforming leadership — calls individuals and communities into a process of “deep change.”⁴⁵ The table is the space where such leadership is founded, and it reminds

⁴² See Appendix 7 for the photo of the gift presented to me on the day of my installation as dean.

⁴³ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 216.

⁴⁴ For more biblical text on Christ-like servant leadership see Mark 10.42-45; Philippians 2.5-11; also, Isaiah 52-53, 45 which portray Jesus the Messiah as the suffering servant.

⁴⁵ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176, 196.

us of the role of the table that is “to serve and not to dominate.”⁴⁶

Generally, patriarchal cultures perceive service to be mainly part of women’s job description. Women are the ones who feed and nourish; they are the ones who tend at the table and offer service. If washing the feet of the disciples did not keep Jesus from being a prophet and our great High Priest, then there is nothing, not their gender, not their role at home, that would separate women from Christ-like servant leadership. Women are hostesses, mothers, conveners, and nurturers, powerful positions whose very DNA is servanthood.⁴⁷

Mothers are gatherers who feed their families and honor and include their guests at the Table. Dalia, a participant in the project, stated that “mothers are gatherers...A mother is a person who is effective and gathers the whole household around the table...The table reconciles and offers fellowship and unity within the body [of Christ].”⁴⁸ To divide the table on the basis of gender is to miss the wholeness and the fullness of the kingdom of God. Moreover, it is to miss the wholeness and fullness of the image of God in those around the table. Division and exclusion make us less human and less members of the body of Christ. The table invites the whole body of Christ to do justice for everyone born, because we see the wholeness of humanity through participating fully around the table. The body of Christ cannot and will not develop and thrive unless all of its members flourish. As Paul teaches in his Letter to the Corinthians, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”⁴⁹ In the words of Shirley Murray’s hymn “for everyone born a place at the table,” for God’s grace descends on us all, without regard to gender, race, economic status, ethnicity, or nationality. The gift of sharing food at the table is about participating in God’s revelation of the unity and cohesion within the one body.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Meyers, *Missional Worship Worshipful Mission*, 210.

⁴⁷ Proverb 31.10-31 about the “capable woman” is a fine example of great power and innate virtue coming from subordinate and subservient roles.

⁴⁸ Dalia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018.

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 12.26 NRSV.

⁵⁰ Wells, *God’s Companions*, 212-213.

Servanthood is the foundational image of church ministry and leadership. Ross argues that “[t]he Eucharist has, at its worst, become, unfortunately, a one-man show. Efforts to redefine the nature of priesthood in more servantlike metaphors run up against clerical dominance in the...Eucharist.”⁵¹ The cross of Jesus is the paradigm of Christ’s faithfulness and obedience to God, and Jesus’ suffering evidenced his sacrificial love for all. Jesus told his disciples to take up their cross and follow him (Mark 8.34). This meant that power and authority within the church are to be in the form of a servant, like that of their servant Lord and Master. Osmer presents three forms of leadership: task competence, transactional leadership, and transforming leadership.⁵² Osmer argues that all three forms of leadership are needed in congregations. However, transforming leadership “is most needed, leadership that can guide a congregation through a process of deep change.”⁵³ Transforming leadership is costly and risky because it involves deep change and transformation, and is a painful and risky when carried out faithfully. Osmer states that such leadership “will encounter resistance and conflict, failures and disappointments.”⁵⁴ Yet, it is through Christ-like servant leadership — through suffering, hardships, and challenges — that congregations become the community God wants them to be.⁵⁵

This kind of transformation speaks to the reality and context of women in Jerusalem, and it involves more than a cosmetic change or quick fixes. As I discussed above, women, like men, have full potential to exercise their leadership. Nora, one of the participants in the project, noted that “transformation in women’s roles is going to be long and painful — especially so, given that all the decision makers and those in leadership positions are men.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 208.

⁵² Task Competence: Performing well the leadership tasks of a role in an organization. Transactional Leadership: Influencing others through a process of trade-offs. Transforming Leadership: Leading an organization through a process of “deep change” in its identity, mission, culture, and operating procedures. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 178.

⁵³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 178.

⁵⁴ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 196.

⁵⁵ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 196.

⁵⁶ Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

Nora, like many other women, believes that having women in leadership positions will advance the process of change and transformation. However, other women are careful not to upset the system and prefer a gradual and contextual approach toward transformation. For example, Samia said, “we do not need to appropriate another culture to our own context. Transformation is a gradual and an ongoing process and it has to be contextual and speak for our own situation.”⁵⁷ I believe that there is truth in both statements. There is an urgency for change, but it has to be carefully and contextually performed and led. What really matters here is what women themselves want and how they want this process of change and transformation carried out.

As a leader, I should constantly remind myself to stay on my knees—to listen and tell the story of women and men from the place of servanthood and not from my position of power and authority. This project thesis is a humble attempt to share in the fullness of God and to respond faithfully to God’s calling and mission in the world. I identify with women not by helping them through offering solutions or fixes, but through listening to their stories and experiences. I believe that I am not harmed or lessened by giving away power, but instead am experiencing the fullness of God in myself and all of creation by not trying to limit God’s great plan to a human, patriarchal scale.

SGC is part and parcel of the society and culture in which it is situated. The role of women within the Israeli/Palestinian society has not reached its fullness, although there is huge progress in these matters. But it is important to note that most human rights and women’s rights organizations challenge every aspect of life except that of religious orders and establishments. Religion in the Holy Land and the whole Middle East is a space that is untouchable and unchallenged by social standards and often by law.

⁵⁷ Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

The dominant society which surrounds the Cathedral is a religious one, whether Christian, or Muslim, or Jewish. Each religion perceives equality and freedom in different ways. The secular understandings and measurements of equality and freedom have not found their way into these religions. In the Middle East, religions are the main sources of societal and legal behaviors. The society in which SGC is located is naturally embedded in religious life and practice.

Secular organizations, including governmental organizations, as well as some liberal or progressive religious organizations, struggle to address certain social justice issues, such as gender equality. The religious communities, particularly those who are more conservative, push back against any teachings that seem contrary to their traditional understanding of their holy scriptures. The role of religious communities is therefore critical in the effort of bringing about transformation and change to the wider community from within.

Ronald Heifetz and his colleagues suggest an effective way to bring about adaptive change and transformation into an organization or a system — in our case the church community or congregation — and how to build an adaptive culture. Some of the distinguishing characteristics of an adaptive culture are: that elephants in the room are named; independent judgement is expected; leadership capacity is developed; and reflection and continuous learning are instrumental.⁵⁸

It is the responsibility of the leadership, among which I count myself, as SGC's Dean, to be an example of naming the difficult issues lingering under the surface. Also, it is important that we engage a serious, intentional discussion raising awareness of gender equality within the church and its ministry. The church's leadership should encourage corporate judgment through communal consultations as the Diocese continues to discern its

⁵⁸ Heifetz, *Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, 165.

mission within the Diocese and beyond. One way toward adaptive change is through developing women's leadership capacity within the Diocese, a lay leadership to begin with, in order for the people — both men and women — to be able to visualize women in leadership roles. It is often difficult for people to imagine what they have never seen. Finally, reflection and continuous learning is an essential aspect of any adaptive culture. This may be achieved through monitoring the surrounding environment and context in which the Diocese exercises its ministry, and the ways in which the Diocese internally responds to the changes it faces. Risk taking is always a challenge for the church in the Holy Land but willingness to be courageous in hearing God's word can inspire prophetic leadership and bring about new revelation and social change. The church has the opportunity to lead and model transformation instead of waiting to follow change in the external environment to change. Will this be difficult and risky, and will there be tension and friction? Yes, absolutely. But as the Angel Gabriel told Mary when she wondered how an unmarried teenager might be the *theotokos* – God-bearer, “Nothing will be impossible with God.”⁵⁹

A Way Forward: Challenges and Hopes

The final section of this chapter focuses on two interrelated aspects of the pragmatic task: first, the hopes and challenges that face Anglican women in Jerusalem, and second, the way forward and the next short-term and long-term steps. It is important to note at this stage that this project thesis is a faithful attempt to listen to women and their stories, memories, and experiences. I am in no way trying to offer a solution or attempt to help women in finding answers to their situation of oppression and inequality. Instead, walking alongside Anglican women in Jerusalem, I am attempting to re-tell their stories and put them in an academic framework in order to present a piece of work that portrays, as closely as possible, their

⁵⁹ Luke 1.37 NRSV.

dreams for a hope-filled future where all people may flourish and develop. I will begin first with the presentation of the challenges.

One of the main challenges that hinders women's leadership is that many people — both women and men — are embedded in our Palestinian patriarchal society and mindset. This group represents the majority of people who believe that the existing reality and situation is the way the church should be. This group believes that no one should upset the system or change the status quo. Lubna noted that many women are worried about being criticized or blamed for doing the wrong thing. She said, “[w]omen don't want to say [or do] anything to upset the system.”⁶⁰ Women have great desire to fully participate in church leadership, however, the patriarchal society in and around Jerusalem imposes significant pressure on women to the extent they do not wish to disrupt the system that marginalizes them.

This leads to the related second challenge women's leadership faces: the male-dominated society creates a certain cultural mindset that is very hard to change. Lubna said in her interview that “the main challenge that faces women's leadership is society, culture, and the mindset of people.”⁶¹ Women in such societies are not only marginalized but are also expected to support male dominance. Women and men in a patriarchal society can be complicit in avoiding change. Both are constrained from action by their fear. Women fear risk, and potential cost that transformation and change may entail. Men fear losing their power and authority.

Another challenge is cultural. The society and culture in Jerusalem and the wider Middle East are not only patriarchal and male-dominated, but also, they indiscriminately reject Western cultures and some of their values. Liberation of women and feminism are

⁶⁰ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

⁶¹ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

perceived to be a Western phenomenon and therefore alien to and unwelcomed in Eastern culture and society by virtue of their perceived origin. Women and men within Eastern culture oppose women's liberation and feminism as threats to the family system, which is regarded as the foundation of communal life within the Middle East. Manal, one of the participants in the project, noted that "we live in a patriarchal society and it is governed by tribal and clan systems. Our cultural structures are different to that of Western countries."⁶² Fear of feminism as a potential colonial or new-colonial influence on Eastern communities can itself impair opportunities for women's development.

Another challenge to women's flourishing is the political situation in Israel/Palestine and the ongoing conflict in the Holy Land. I am not a person who blindly blames the political situation for all that afflicts or befalls our communities. However, the political situation in general, and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories in particular, prioritizes political justice over gender justice. In other words, the political reality of Palestinian life dominates the attention and dialogue of Palestinian people, and the necessity to preserve Palestinian culture and identity in the face of occupation and oppression entrenches the status quo and inhibits positive and natural social change within Palestinian society. Moreover, intersectionality and identity give the negative dynamic energy and persistence. Palestinian men see themselves as oppressed victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict as they simultaneously participate as oppressors within the male-dominated Palestinian society.

The last challenge I want to address here is the lack of imagination of women and men within the male-dominated society and the way they engage with the Word of God — the Bible. The culture of the Bible and the male-dominance of theological language and expressions, often contribute to the issues that hinder women's equality within the church and the wider society. Lubna noted that "the Bible is often quoted to support such [male-

⁶² Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018.

dominated] culture.”⁶³ Prophetic imagination and transforming leadership are essential to how Christians in the Middle East approach the Bible in order to bring about deep change and a hope-filled future. Now we turn to the hopes for the desired transformation of women’s situation in Jerusalem and beyond.

Turning to the hopes that could be cultivated within the community in Jerusalem and the wider Middle East, I would like to begin from within the patriarchal society itself. Palestinian society and culture, like all of Arab culture, has many treasures, some on the surface and others more hidden. I will argue that the main aspect of a hope-filled future lies within indigenous culture and the many gifts it can offer through its existing structures. Some aspects of Middle Eastern culture are not patriarchal, and we are not as patriarchal as a body as one might think. For example, social or communal solidarity (*Al-takaful al-ijtima’i*) is one of the most important images and practices of Arab culture. This phrase also refers to the common good (*al-khayr al-a’am*) of the community, expressing the image of the whole community united against individual and collective obstacles facing the community. The whole community stands in solidarity with the needy, the oppressed, the weak, and the marginalized. Social solidarity enables the community to settle differences and to bring members of the one society together. Through empowering both the individual and the community as a whole, social solidarity provides the means for unity, cohesion, and stability with the society. Social solidarity can also be an image for fostering equality among the different members of the community where all can flourish and develop.

Social solidarity is just one example and image among many that Palestinian society can use to bring about change for women. Other social virtues and images, such as hospitality and improvisation, are useful resources for prophetic imagination. They can reframe language — both scriptural and societal — to liberate us from the limitations of our historical human

⁶³ Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018.

understanding and express the real contours and wideness of the kingdom of God. In such communal revelation lies the hope for Palestinian Anglican women to reach their full potential. Both men and women should realize and experience this holy dawning and see their own rich culture in a new light.

One of the biblical stories that can help us reimagine the patriarchal society and consider how we might bring about hopeful transformation from within is the riddle Samson posed for his wedding guests in the Book of Judges 14.10-ff. The riddle was: “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.”⁶⁴ The riddle is embedded in the story of Samson’s killing of a lion with his bare hands after being filled with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ Several days later, Samson passed by the carcass of the lion and saw a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, as well as honey. He took it in his hands and ate as he went. Therefore, the answers to Samson’s riddle “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet”⁶⁶ were a lion — a dominant predator — and honey — a sweet, nourishing food.

The point of this story is simple yet very significant. Out of the patriarchal society (the eater) comes something to nourish and feed (something to eat). Out of the patriarchal society (the strong) comes justice and fairness for everyone born (something sweet). In other words, the patriarchal society and male-dominated culture is the starting point for any hopeful future for all of God’s children.

What is interesting in this story is that Samson gave also his father and mother the honey to eat without telling them where he had found it. "When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.”⁶⁷ Samson’s parents would not have eaten the honey if

⁶⁴ Judges 10.14 NRSV.

⁶⁵ For the whole story see Judges 14.5-9.

⁶⁶ Judges 14.14.

⁶⁷ Judges 14.9b NRSV.

they had known that it was taken from the carcass of the lion. In the same way, many people, like Samson's parents who represent the Palestinian patriarchy, would reject transformation without giving change a chance if they are asked directly if they want it, or if they perceive it as Western. People can be invited to judge the sweetness and not where it came from, otherwise, people will always reject development because they fear the strong and the eater. I turn now to name a few points as a way forward to our discussion and presentation.

As a way forward, I will present short-term and long-term goals toward hopeful future. I must succinctly determine strategies of action in order to bring about change and transformation. In the short-term goals, I would like to present one main objective, i.e., using this thesis as a study document for the House of Clergy, Women's Movement, the Women Focus Group at SGC, and to create a task force in order to follow up the findings, discussions, and reactions that arise from these endeavors. Indirectly, the whole diocese will engage in another table talk where the ministry and leadership of women will be placed higher in the priorities of the Diocese and its ministry. In this way, the Diocese of Jerusalem will embark on a journey of prophetic imagination and transformation.

Another goal is that, the Diocese of Jerusalem, derived from and embedded in the virtue of hospitality, should recognize the orders of ordained women from provinces and dioceses within the Anglican Communion where women are ordained. Allowing ordained women to preside, preach, and proclaim the gospel would be a first direct step that would invite indigenous Anglican women within the Diocese of Jerusalem to imagine their own potential leadership in the church. The inclusion of ordained women from other dioceses specifically recognizes God's hospitality that lies at the heart of the Eucharist. It also engages imagination, dreaming, and prayerful discernment of men's and women's roles around the Table.

Third, we must affirm and empower the work and ministry of the Women's Movement (al-Haraka al-Nasawiya) within the Diocese. In addition to the significant work that the movement has achieved, the Diocese should have a strategic plan of action for the next 10 years. Setting the goals for what the women want to achieve is a critical approach to development and capacity building.

Fourth, related to the Women's Movement within the Diocese, we ought to engage female clergy and laity from our sister churches around the world, especially in the West, in the life and ministry of women in the Diocese of Jerusalem. Women and men within the Diocese of Jerusalem can listen to the stories and experiences of women in such countries, and to the ways that their lives and the lives of those around them have changed for the better through their ministry and leadership, paying attention to the challenges they continue to navigate.

In the long-term objectives, I will suggest some pragmatic measures that ought to be considered as a way forward. This is in no way a strategic plan. Instead, it represents a few strategic ideas through which the church can mobilize the whole system into adaptive leadership and change.

First, we must focus on stories of women in the Bible and their role in ministry and God's mission in the world. Retelling the stories of women and intentionally remembering them with the purpose of refreshing the church's collective memory of women's leadership roles within biblical traditions. For example, we must see anew the roles of Sarai in Genesis 17, Rahab in Joshua 2, the anointing woman in Mark 14, Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1, the Samaritan woman in John 4, the good woman in the parable of the lost coin in Luke 15, Mary Magdalene announcing the resurrection in John 20 and Mark 16, in prophetic imagination of God's broad plan for humanity's flourishing. This can be done during bible study, sermons, theological reflections and literature, church forums and lectures, utilizing special events,

such as Women's Day and Mothers' Day. The church has to develop and practice an inclusive language when describing God and God's divine reality, such as the image of God as a mother. Just as the image of God as father can bring us closer to understanding the nature of God, the image of God as a mother enables us to see ourselves as a people created in God's image.

Second, we must raise awareness and educate congregations in women's rights and gender justice in order to expand thinking that is now fully embedded in the historical context of Palestinian patriarchal society and culture. There is a significant corpus of material on women's rights, including the United Nations' fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of gender equality, that can energize the efforts of the church in raising the awareness of the whole community of believers, including lay and ordained leadership.⁶⁸

Third, we must enable and encourage female theological education and leadership training. This is an intrinsic part of women's development and flourishing in the ministry of the church. Women require the skills and the language to articulate their dreams and desires and express their stories within theological frameworks. Preparing indigenous women to present themselves as credible and capable leaders is the beginning of transformation.

Fourth, we should have a Palestinian Liberation Theology that speaks the language of both women and men and that specifically addresses the stories and experiences of women. The political and societal liberation of the people of God begins at home; it begins with our own liberation as men and women from all bondage and oppression that prevent us from seeing God's image in all of humanity.

Fifth, we can introduce the ministry of Diakonia⁶⁹ as an initial step towards women's entry to Holy Orders. Diakonia, or the ministry of permanent deacons, is a useful way to

⁶⁸ For more information about Sustainable Development Goals, see: United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals."

⁶⁹ For more information about Diakonia see: World Council of Churches, "Diakonia."

encourage women's leadership within the church, which could be a useful experience for the whole church as well as a training field for both women and men. Diocesan institutions, like our hospitals, rehabilitation centers, clinics, and schools, desperately need this kind of servant leadership. These diaconal roles could provide immediate and meaningful women's involvement in ordained leadership while they continue their theological training. The goal of this step would be to provide training and a process to change hearts and minds in relation to women's leadership on an immediate basis, while working towards full equality in Holy Orders.

I would like to end this chapter with a prayer:

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, now and forever. Amen⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Church of England. *The Christian Year*, 35.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The alternative community discharges a modeling mission. The church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately.¹

...commitment to the new city of commons is a commitment of the community of faith to the highest ideals and practices of human flourishing in a pluralistic world.²

And again he said, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.³

I wrote my first academic theological essay back in 1994 when I was a seminarian at the College of The Transfiguration (COTT) in South Africa. My topic was the image of God in the story of creation and Christian anthropology, and I was writing the paper for a Systematic Theology class. I find myself, after 25 years, writing about the same area, though with a deeper reflection on the fullness and wholeness of human life in God. My journey over these years was transforming on many levels, including my understanding of God and God’s people — both men and women, and myself — within the community of faith and the wider world. My journey and pilgrimage were filled with dreams and many moments of prophetic imagination.

Through prophetic imagination, the church in the Middle East is called to faithfully reflect on women’s ministry and leadership. The dominant patriarchal society we live in must be transformed into the likeness of God’s love and embrace, where all people — men and women — have equal opportunities and rights. These, among other themes, were the focus of the conversation of Anglican women in Jerusalem as part of this project thesis. The act of ministry took place around the discussion table, in table talk on women’s ministry and

¹ Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 92.

² Hunter, *To Change the World*, 280.

³ Luke 13.20-21 NRSV.

leadership within the context of the church in Jerusalem and the wider Middle East. The act of ministry in Chapter Two was an attempt to reflect the state of women within church and society, or to answer the question: *What is really going on?*

The research of this thesis, as a qualitative inquiry, was interpreted through ethnographic hermeneutics. Palestinian Anglican women in Jerusalem embarked on a journey of co-authoring the future. Through table talk, the focus group engaged in a deep and honest conversation about their own experiences and the telling of their stories as part of the act of ministry. Moschella argues that “the telling of lives changes lives. The humble journey of listening to the religious and spiritual lives of people through pastoral ethnography can lead to a place of life-giving change within a faith community and beyond it.”⁴ Women are leaders who can co-author the future of the church and the world around them. Through reinterpreting their stories and traditions, women open up paths to prophetic imagination and transformation. Moschella adds,

Through ethnography, as a pastoral practice, we encounter persons and communities of faith in greater fullness. We hear stories and songs that move us, and move us forward toward greater justice and wholeness in the world. We discover images and words with which to co-author the future, and we develop the shared communal capacity to engage in ministries of transformation. These are the gifts of God, given for the people of the world.⁵

Women and men in the Diocese of Jerusalem will journey together in order to co-author the future of the Diocese and the world around it.

The different themes that were identified through the act of ministry paved the way for the discussion and presentation of the social theory in Chapter Three.⁶ The sociological reflection presented a wide range of societal and behavioral theories to explore the social and cultural context of the project. The male-dominated and patriarchal society is the context in

⁴ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 237

⁵ Moschella, *Ethnography As a Pastoral Practice*, 255.

⁶ The seven identified themes were: feminism and liberation; gender inequality; theology and culture; patriarchal and male-dominated society; memory and remembrance; reconciliation; and change and transformation.

which the church engages in God's ministry in the region of the Middle East. Women are struggling to achieve their full potential over and against male dominance and the subordination of women in their communities.

In Chapter Four I presented *What ought to be going on* through a theological reflection on the themes discussed above. As Christians, we believe in God's justice for all people — freedom from all oppression, prejudice and stereotypes. This project thesis is a calling for our community to reflect faithfully on the Word of God and our human experience and narratives in relation to the body of Christ — the *ekklesia* — and the world we are constantly engaging liturgically. Although this is an academic exercise, it is part and parcel of our sacred journey and pilgrimage toward wholeness and fulfillment. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."⁷ Likewise, Paul wrote, "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine."⁸ As Jesus' followers and disciples, we are to embrace his teachings and to seek the fullness and abundance of life, especially in the midst of human shortcomings and limitations.

Women's inequality and unfair treatment within the church and the wider society is a human limitation that is contrary to the divine abundance and fullness given to all of creation. I have argued earlier in this thesis that the image of God imprinted on us all is part of God's will for us to have life in its fullness and wholeness. Therefore, as a missional community, the church is called to bring about transformation within the church and its environment. In the fourth chapter of his book *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel*, John Howard Yoder reflects on the kingdom of God where social ethics are in praxis. His argument is that the church as a community of believers sets a model for mission through which she engages

⁷ John 10.10b NRSV.

⁸ Ephesians 3.20 NRSV.

in the world. He argues that “[t]he church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately.”⁹ The church, according to Yoder, is not called to be chaplain or priest to the world; however, “she is called to be a microcosm of the wider society, not only as an idea, but also in her function.”¹⁰ The church as a believing community has the power to change and reform itself and ultimately the world around it.

The church as a sacrament, according to some Christian traditions, represents the kind of community and society the world ought to be. For example, if in the society we believe in the rights of women or in gender justice, then the church should be the first to treat women fairly and allow equal opportunities for all. In the same way, if in the wider community we call for the overcoming of sexism, racism, ethnic discrimination, then the church should be the space where that becomes the norm, or as Martin Luther King wrote in his 1963 “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” the church should be the headlight, and not the tail light, of the social justice movement.¹¹

The church is called to cultivate “an alternative consciousness,” or another view of what the world is like, especially in relation to the established power system. Men and women within the body of Christ, led by the power of the Holy Spirit, are to have an alternative narrative. Yoder argues that “the creative potential of alternative narrative does not only throw a new light on the majority story [the world].”¹² Also, the story and experience of the minority [the church] is in constant need for repentance. Yoder goes on to write, “[t]here is reason for hoping when there is no reason to hope.”¹³ The church is to be the source for hope for the world at large and the arena for a renewed life.

⁹ Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 92.

¹⁰ Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 92.

¹¹ Martin Luther King Jr, “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

¹² Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 95.

¹³ Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom*, 95.

Yoder offers us a way in which we as Christians can engage the world around us. Similarly, James Davison Hunter suggests a model of engagement with the world which he calls “faithful presence within.”¹⁴ The people of God are called to be a renewed and transformed reality — not to be defensive against, isolated from, or absorbed into dominant culture, but to be faithfully present within it.¹⁵ Faithfulness means being a blessing to the world we live in and transforming it from within. Hunter argues that “[a] theology of faithful presence calls Christians to enact the shalom [or salaam] of God in the circumstances in which God has placed them and to actively seek on behalf of others.”¹⁶ For Hunter, if Christians are not able to “extend grace and love through faithful presence within the body of believers, they certainly will not be able to extend grace to those outside.”¹⁷ Moreover, Christians cannot create a perfect world or a new one; but through their faithful presence, it is possible that they will help to make the world a little bit better.

The project represented by this thesis aims to help make the world a little bit better. God is calling for the whole of humanity to live faithfully in God’s image. My prayer is that continuing conversations represented by this project may be the leaven in the world that will raise the kingdom of God toward wholeness and fullness. This prayerful and hopeful interaction of women and men is the leaven in the loaf of the Cathedral. At the same time, the Cathedral will become the leaven in the wider community and the world. The testimony of this thesis is a reflection on how we as Christians are to be faithful stewards of God’s Word and Sacraments in the church and for the world around us. This faithful presence within creates an alternative narrative and alternative consciousness with regard to issues of gender justice and women’s rights within the church and the wider community. Biblically, the parable of the leaven reminds us about the participation of the church in God’s mission in and

¹⁴ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 277.

¹⁵ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 277.

¹⁶ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 279.

¹⁷ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 282.

for the world and her contribution toward life.¹⁸ As one of the shortest parables in the gospels, the parable of the leaven describes the kingdom of God to be like a leaven that a woman took and mixed with large amount of flour until all of it was leavened. Therefore, we learn from this parable that the fullness of the kingdom often has a small beginning. This project thesis is a small beginning to what I pray may rise, through prophetic imagination, to a significant dream.

These small beginnings are forms of responses, such as the suggested steps presented in the final task or question that is addressed in Chapter Five: *How might we respond?* The image of table is at the very heart of this project thesis. The table as an image brought together two concepts: the table as a discussion or conversation among women about their stories and experiences within a patriarchal community; and the table as the Eucharist, where the whole body of Christ gathers to be nourished and fed. As people of prayer, who are fed by the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of nourishing others, we are aware that the grace of God and God's faithful presence among us are not something that we simply keep to ourselves. Our duty and calling is to invite others into that sacred space and to provide an opportunity for them to meet the Holy. The Eucharist therefore is the space where the community of faith gathers in unity, communion, and equality as the body of Christ to celebrate God's abundant love and grace for the world.

The Eucharist as a sacred space should in no way reflect any form of exclusion. The ordination of women is the ultimate reality for achieving justice and equality between genders. The celebration or presiding at the Eucharist should not be exclusive to a certain gender. Therefore, reimagining women's ministry and leadership in the light of the Eucharist should cultivate the creativity of the body of Christ and seek an alternative consciousness and narrative. Like the leaven in the loaf, our Christian call for prophetic imagination and

¹⁸ See Luke 13.20-21 and Matthew 13.33.

transformation begins with a faithful presence from within — from the table, into the world.

We have to remember that the church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately — a space where people may encounter the divine.

The way forward that I suggested for both the short-term and the long-term points the way for the Diocese of Jerusalem to respond to the calling of women to serve Christ in the church and the wider community. The table talk must be extended in order to include the hierarchy as well as the grassroots within the church for a broader conversation. The only way in which the church can ensure that the whole community can flourish and develop is through walking the path of justice and equality. Women and men must realize that the wellbeing, the fullness, and the wholeness of their lives depend on preserving the dignity of all of God's children — away from exclusion, domination, and subordination.

Finally, the whole process of writing this project thesis is a life-giving and hope-filled experience for me personally. My transforming journey that started 25 years ago continues to unfold into creative and imaginative reality, where I see the ministry and mission of God in a new light. The most significant personal change that I have experienced during the writing of this thesis is the opening of my understanding of the meaning of *imago Dei* and *imago Christi* in relation to women in my own family, in the SGC congregation, and among the guests and pilgrims at SGC — the very crossroads of the global Anglican Communion. This understanding has come with a great deal of vulnerability on my part. I have had to recognize my own complicity in my culture. I have had to recognize my Palestinian identity in all of its parts—including a foundational sense of family, place, and faith in a difficult and conflicted political reality. That recognition has not come without pain. I have come to realize that even the good, loving parts of those patriarchal values may permit and even foster an environment that keeps women from thriving and prevents all of our community from experiencing the bounty and fullness of the kingdom of God.

This difficult journey and profound vulnerability has also been a great gift to me. My vision, and now thusly the community's vision, is one of full and equal participation in God's mission for the world through the person of Jesus Christ, who was born, lived, died, and rose for our redemption. In the incarnation, Christ took the form of a slave to reveal the new creation where all men and women are one in Christ — who are created in the image and likeness of God. As the body of Christ, we are called as a community of faith to the ministry of Christ-like servanthood where all are equal around the table.

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**Appendices
Appendix 1**

Letter of Information and Consent

Personal Interviews for Project Thesis

Greetings,

As you may now be aware, I am enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Virginia Theological Seminary. My current assignment is the undertaking of a Project Thesis. Part of my project is to conduct personal interviews. It is designed to explore the richness and diversity of the lives of our congregations, and listen for common themes. This exploration will begin with the interviewing of up to 3 individuals, and this letter is an invitation for you to participate, and be interviewed.

If you agree, I will interview you, take notes and record the interview audio as we go along. You will be asked about your experiences in ministry, and your understanding of women's leadership. The interview will take approximately half-an-hour to three-quarters-of-an-hour to complete, and will be conducted either at St. George's or your home, at a time which is suitable for you.

All the information shared in the interview will remain confidential. Your comments may be anonymously quoted from in the final written report and other supporting material. The common themes that emerge from the collected interviews may be explored in other parts of the study.

Participation in the interview is voluntary, and if you do choose to participate, you are free to answer, or not answer, any questions as you please. I will contact you in the next few days to confirm whether you wish to participate, and if you do, what time and location suits you. If you do choose to participate, please sign and date this letter as confirmation of your understanding and consent. If you decide not to participate in the interview, that is absolutely fine, and I am grateful that you gave it your thoughtful consideration. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (****@j-diocese.org) or by phone (*****005).

Blessings and Peace,

Hosam+

I _____ have consented to participate fully in this interview and research project and understand the parameters of participation and confidentiality as outlined above:

Signature

Date

Appendix 2

Letter of Information and Consent

Focus Group Discussion

Greetings,

As you may now be aware, I am enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Virginia Theological Seminary. My current assignment is the undertaking of the Project Thesis. Part of the process in completing this Thesis is to complete the Project with 8-10 women from St. George's Congregation in Jerusalem.

If you agree, I will take notes and record the discussion of the focus group audio as we go along. You will be asked about your experiences at St. George's, your spirituality, your support systems and the things that matter most to you in life. The focus group will meet four times including a preliminary meeting to introduce the Project.

All the information shared in the group discussion will remain confidential. Your comments may be anonymously quoted from in the final written report and other supporting material. The common themes that emerge from the collected data may be explored in other parts of the Thesis.

Participation in the discussion group is voluntary, and if you do choose to participate, you are free to contribute in whatever way you deem appropriate. If you do choose to participate, please sign and date this letter as confirmation of your understanding and consent. If you decide not to participate in the focus group and the discussion, that is absolutely fine, and I am grateful that you gave it your thoughtful consideration. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me by email (****@j-diocese.org) or by phone (*****005).

Blessings and Peace,

Hosam+

I _____ have consented to participate fully in this focus group and research project and understand the parameters of participation and confidentiality as outlined above:

Signature

Date

Appendix 3

Thematic Statements

Voices of Women in the Act of Ministry (Project)

Theme One: Feminism and Liberation

“...women did not have a say and were voiceless; including myself.”

Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“The topic of the dialogue and the conversation among women in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem is unprecedented in that it covers a spiritual aspect of Palestinian women that is absent in the frequent and multi-layered discussion about and among women within the framework of the socio-political and economic context that these women live in.”

Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“Women have ambitions and the church needs to listen to their dreams.”

Dalia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women lack the confidence and the courage to have big dreams and ambitions as a result of the opposition they face.”

Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Women are powerful; they are able to accomplish whatever they want.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women are patient, resilient, and courageous.”

Haya, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“I always get angry when I see women who oppose other women in church ministry and leadership. They don’t believe in themselves or in other women.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“Women staffers were not supportive [of me] and showed an internalization of misogyny and perhaps displaced the oppression placed upon them [to me].”

Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“women’s liberation comes through women’s support for each other. By oppressing each other, women support the existing reality.”

Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018

“Women are unconsciously brought up to think [and behave] like men. They are oppressed women without realizing it.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“People [both men and women] need to support women in their leadership roles and not to stand in their way because they are women.”

Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“leadership should happen in participation between women and men.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“It is important that women participate alongside men in church, because women, like me, were created by God and in God’s image. Women and men are part of the same creation; one cannot exclude half of creation!”

Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“I am in favor of a full cooperation between men and women as equal partners in mission.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“Women are not only underrepresented in church committees, but they are also voiceless.”

Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“I am so disappointed to see how women are excluded from full participation in the leadership of the church.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“...women did not have a say and were voiceless; including myself.”

Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018 and Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Women are not heard as much because men’s voices can be louder [than women].”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“Men and women are partners; we need to work together.”

Marian, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“My role as a woman is to contribute to the conversation and to be part of the decision-making.”

Marian, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women’s inclusion, representation and recognition by church members, as well as giving the space for them to participate in the various decisions, policy making and leadership roles within the church is an important step to be carried out through the Church Council and bodies.”

Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“[the church leadership] who do not allow women to be part of the decision-making within the bodies/committees of the church.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“Women need to move beyond what is traditional [the norm] and create and reimagine a new and effective role...”

Samia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women themselves can be an obstacle if they give up and say that we cannot break this wall. Instead of taking a step forward they take a step back.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“I prefer talking about women’s leadership than talking about feminism. This issue really irritates me.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Feminists stand for a good cause, but sometimes they take it to an extreme...I have many feminist friends, but I think it is too much. They take it too far.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“it is only people who believe that God is a man who object to women becoming pastors. I am not the greatest feminist, but I am with arguing that God is God and not male and female. God is beyond gender.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“If women are called to the ministry, there is no [earthly] power or authority that should stop them from fulfilling their calling.”

Ellen, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“I find it difficult to see a woman bishop or priest at the altar and administer the Bread and the Chalice...The issue of purity is important. I respect ordained women, but I am not 100% convinced about it...I am against the ordination of women.”

Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“I was surprised when I heard at our last meeting that women cannot be ordained because of biological reasons. This role was given to women by God and should be seen as a strength not a weakness.”

Haya, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“[b]oth men and women need to be liberated.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“[w]omen have to fight for their freedom to lead; no one is going to offer it to them on a plate.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

Theme Two: Gender Inequality

“In the Eucharist this morning, we all saw three men at the Altar and there was no female representation there.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Those who do shatter the glass ceiling often face gender discrimination resulting from social and cultural stereotypes clouded by pandemic of gender bias.”

Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“the problem is not simply how men marginalize women, rather, it is about how women marginalize themselves.”

Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018

“Women need to know their limits in ministry.”

Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Women can have a calling for ministry within the church; God equally calls both men and women.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“To go deep into God’s traits, we can say that God has no gender and God is Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit cannot be male or female.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“We can emphasize the fact that God created both male and female equally in His image, yet different in biological functions. Women functions. Women are not created to compete with men or men to compete with women, rather, to complete each other.”

Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“Women are still not given the space they deserve inside the church. So far, in our Palestinian Anglican Church community we have no freedom for women to become deacons or priests.”

Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“[g]ender justice is important for us as women in the church.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“We want equality between men and women in the church. However, the reality is different and men monopolize leadership positions. We need to change this reality.”

Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“There should be more awareness on women’s issues in our churches. Women are really secondary in our congregations.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“I think that the church leaders, both men and women, need to address a gender [equality] policy that promotes justice and nonviolence towards women in the church.”

Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

Theme Three: Patriarchal Society

“The institution I worked in and the wider community and society expect me to act like a man; they expect me to forge a new self.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“We live in a patriarchal and male-dominated society.”

Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“[The concept of] women as leaders are not welcomed in our patriarchal society that is used to ensure men are in such positions.”

Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“As a woman who lives in the Middle East, I often find myself struggling to prove myself [to others], because in our society women are viewed to be emotionally weak and second class.”

Haya, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“In my childhood, I never asked myself why there were no female pastors in our church. I thought this is the way it should be.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“Eastern culture has imposed on us the phenomenon of the exclusive leadership of men...we have accepted this situation as it is and took it for granted that this is the way things ought to be.”

Helena, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“Ministry and ordination should not be exclusive to men. I don’t understand why is that.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“Women don’t want to say [or do] anything to upset the system.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“I never wished to be a man or act like a man during my many years of leadership.”

Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“As a woman leader, my journey was set within a shocking and unexpected situation. It was a narrow path with obstacles embedded in the patriarchal, clan-governed social construct/ social setup that operates in the society at large and Jerusalemite society in particular.”

Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“The society we live in does not respect women enough to regard them in leadership positions.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“When we talk about the Anglican Arab Palestinian women’s leadership in the church, no one can deny that the patriarchal society and the cultural expectations act as a barrier to many women’s dreams.”

Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Women need to believe in themselves and have a space of their own... Women are creative and productive, and not merely consumers while men deciding for them.”

Rania, interview by author, September 30, 2018

“The church has been hindering women from accepting the call [to ministry]. I don’t think it is about who is called, but about culture and society.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“We live in a patriarchal society and it is governed by tribal and clan systems. Our cultural structures are different to that of Western countries.”

Manal, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

Theme Four: Theology and Culture

“The main challenge that faces women’s leadership is society, culture, and the mindset of people. The Bible is often quoted to support such culture.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“How do we [women] respond to difficult texts in the Bible? For example, how can we as women respond to Paul’s writings about how women should be silent in church.”

Dalia, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Did the way in which the Bible depicts women in both the Old and the New Testaments derive from cultural norms or religious beliefs?”

Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“The problem is that the Christian Scriptures contain some passages that affirm absolute inequality between men and women.”

Marian, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“The main challenge that faces women’s leadership is society, culture, and the mindset of people. The Bible is often quoted to support such culture.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“Jesus and Paul did not intend to have most of their disciples and followers to be men with few women around them. This was the cultural influence of their time.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“Our context is different from that of the Bible. The Bible needs to speak to our time and context.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“At the end of the day, it is not what we want or what the society wants, rather, it is what God wants from us.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“The ordination of women might be normal and accepted in the West, but here in the Middle East it is different... the culture is different.”

Lama, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“How far can we go with women’s ordination in this culture? Can we accept women to ordained ministry?”

Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“I was rejected by my family because they consider me a liberal person. I think outside the box and stereotype of this culture.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“...many women are brought up to reject women’s leadership.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Our culture and society accept women in all professions, why not to accept them as priests?”

Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

Theme Five: Memory and Remembrance

“I have become primarily interested in the study of the function of memory (at both neurological and social/communal levels) ever since I began witnessing my mother’s

declining access to her memory. I have observed that her waning memory is altering her perception of the world and her own identity. Her gradual forgetfulness regarding events, names and even the prayers that she used to say is causing her both an anxiety she has not felt before and a separation from the world around her and from her past, including the past of her family. What is so upsetting is that this dwindling memory, which in this case is due to physical factors, is causing her a state of alienation and ‘exclusion’ from her present, her past history and making clouding her future. With a loss of memory, one tends to lose his/her sense of self. Memory binds the silk threads of the web of life for us. It creates an intricate design that boosts our lives at individual, communal and spiritual levels and this is what makes us human. The Bible frequently reminds us to ‘remember’. When we remember or re-collect the events or people in the Bible, we surpass the boundaries of time and space and transcend the mundane world of our everyday lives and renew our lives with God. When we reflect upon the meaning of these narratives in the Bible, we create a spiritual bond with God that is hard to erode. Nowadays we can (and often do) rely on technology to ‘remember’ for us, and we inflate our pride and ego in this process of remembering. We can search any topic or retrieve any kind of information that we have stored in a computer’s memory. However, what we need to assert is that remembrance of the lives of people, and especially women, in the Bible is an active ‘human’ mental process, and the spiritual connection or bonding created in the process cannot be replaced by any [hu]man-made machine. Remembrance is an act that constitutes our communal identity although it is primarily an individual process. Just as our collective memory of our heritage makes us who we are as Palestinians, so our collective memory of the narratives contained within the Bible help us ascertain who we are as Christians or Anglicans. We, as Anglican women, constitute our identity through our remembrance of those unnamed (or named) women in the Bible. The texts that we reflect upon become the medium through which we remember, and the process of remembering becomes communal. We remember with others, and they remember with us. We remember other people and events from the past with other people who are around us nowadays. The meaning of our lives as Christians becomes apparent in the communal act of remembrance. In our remembrance we do not only literally construct the past but transform our understanding of the past and the present, and this is our primary responsibility.”

Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“The celebration of the Eucharist is important for the people of St. George’s. The community gathered around the Sacrament as the Body of Christ and in the communion of the saints.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“Remembrance and memory are connected to story-telling and the passing on of the faith and traditions.”

Helena, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“My mother’s waning memory is altering her perception of the world and her own identity.”

Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Remembrance is an act that constitutes our communal identity, although it is primarily an individual process.”

Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“The texts that we reflect upon become the medium through which we remember, and the process of remembering becomes communal.”

Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Women have to pay attention to the stories of women in the Bible and the role of women played in the history of God’s salvation. We need to remember these women more often.”

Ellen, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“When we do remember or re-collect the events or people in the Bible, we transcend the boundaries of time and space and the mundane world of our everyday lives to renew our lives with God.”

Nora, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“The story of the anointing woman in Mark’s Gospel is very interesting. The phrase ‘in memory of her’ [Mark 14.9] made me think.”

Marian, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Remembering some biblical stories of women, such as Mark 14.3-9, helps us to reimagine the role of women in our present time.”

Helena, Journal of week, September 8, 2018

“In our culture people avoid calling women by their names: when a young woman is still at home she is called as the daughter of X; when she gets married, she is called the wife of X; when she has a son, she is called the mother of X; and even when her husband dies, she is called the wife of Late X. Why aren’t women called by their names?”

Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“In reconciliation, we go through memory, where we can be sure that there is no hope for a peaceful tomorrow without engaging both in the pain of the past and the call to forgive.”

Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

Theme Six: Reconciliation

“Mothers are gatherers...A mother is a person who is effective and gathers the whole household around the table...The table reconciles and offers fellowship and unity within the one body.”

Dalia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“I see reconciliation in the breaking of bread. As one body of Christ we take His Body and Blood in memory of His passion and death. We ought to engage ourselves with works of charity because we all share a common humanity.”

Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“The ministry of reconciliation is about sharing the Good News of God’s salvation and forgiveness. It is about transforming relationships and seeking forgiveness...”

Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Reconciliation is a process of rebuilding relationships with one another. The Bible teaches us that reconciliation must be a priority.”

Lama, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Reconciliation is one of the most important aspects of development and progress [of the human family]... Reconciliation can be political and social in nature, but the most powerful reconciliation is the atonement of God of human sins in Jesus Christ on the cross.”

Marian, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Reconciliation begins with oneself. I need to reconcile with myself and to learn my own conviction and the direction of how to approach the wider community. I don’t need reconciliation with other women and men, but to know my purpose in life.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Women need to be reconciled with themselves in order to overcome any obstacles and see how best women can serve the church through their gifts of leadership.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Reconciliation is with God, oneself and others.”

Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Women need to reconcile with themselves and with men around them.”

Lubna, interview by author, September 29, 2018

“The other dimension of reconciliation is my relationship to creation...God created human beings and made them stewards over creation. Therefore, it is our responsibility to care for our environment and nature as an act of faith.”

Ellen, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

Haya affirmed that “the way I read the text about reconciliation is that in order for that to happen we need to be open-minded renewed in our thoughts and actions, and look at matters from different angles. It is easier said than done.”

Haya, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

Theme Seven: Transformation and change

“The role of women [in leadership] could be effective within the spirit of teamwork of committed and dedicated people who desire transformation and change for the better and the common good.”

Dalia, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“The role of women in leadership in church and society is very traditional and in need of change and transformation.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“In order to bring about change, women need to begin with themselves. We need to have an internal monologue.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“Women need to work on transforming the mentality of women who are prejudiced about women’s leadership and potential.”

Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“We need to change the mindset of men and women towards women’s fulfillment and affirmation.”

Dima, interview by author, October 1, 2018

“Our self-confidence and determination as women will help us bring about change and transformation within our communities. It will enable us to make positive change even if we are challenged by the standards, values and traditions in which we were raised.”

Samia, Journal of week 2, September 16, 2018

“Women aspire to the transformation of women’s roles and the ministry of the church as a whole and in the community around it.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women are able to make change.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 2, August 31, 2018

“Women have to come to terms with their beliefs, what it is that they want, and the role they may assume in the church. Women have to believe that they are capable of effecting change.”

Nora, Journal of week 1, September 8, 2018

“Transformation in women’s roles is going to be long and painful, especially so, given that all the decision makers and those in leadership positions are men.”

Nora, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

“We [women] do not need to appropriate another culture to our own context. Transformation is a gradual and an ongoing process and it has to be contextual and speak for our own situation.”

Samia, Focus Group, session 3, September 9, 2018

Appendix 4
An Index of Biblical References

Genesis Chapters 1-3

Genesis 1.1-2.4a

Genesis 1.26-28

Genesis 17

Deuteronomy 32.11-12

Deuteronomy 32.18

Joshua 2

Joshua 24.15b

Judges 14.5-9

Judges 14.9b

Judges 14.10-ff

Judges 14.14

Psalms 123.2-3

Psalms 131.2

Proverbs 31.10-31

Isaiah 42.14

Isaiah 45; 52-53

Isaiah 61.1-2

Isaiah 66.13

Hosea 11.3-4

Hosea 13.8

Micah 6.8

Matthew 5.21-26

Matthew 7.12

Matthew 13.33

Matthew 23.37

Mark 8.34

Hosam Naoum

Mark 10.42-45

Mark 12.31

Mark 14.3-9

Mark 16.9-11

Luke 1.37

Luke Chapter 1

Luke 4.16-21

Luke 13.20-21

Luke 13.34

Luke 15.1-7

Luke 15.8-10

Luke 22.19

John 4.1-42

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John 13.1-20

John 17.6-19

John 20.11-18

1 Corinthians Chapters 1-4

1 Corinthians 1.10-17

1 Corinthians Chapter 3

1 Corinthians 6.1-8

1 Corinthians 10.16-17

1 Corinthians 11.2-16

1 Corinthians 11.23-34

1 Corinthians 12.12-27

2 Corinthians 4.4

2 Corinthians 5.11-21

Galatians 3.28

Ephesians 3.20-21

Ephesians 5.21-33

Hosam Naoum

Philippians 2.5-11

Colossians 1.15

Hebrews 1.3

Appendix 5

Personal Interview

Women's ministry and leadership in the church

Personal information

- 1- Can you tell me about yourself and your journey of faith?
- 2- Tell me something about your community of faith-congregation- what is most important to them? For example, Bible Study, Eucharist, fellowship, etc.
- 3- How active are you in the ministry of your church? To what extent are you satisfied or not satisfied?
- 4- In few words, how do you describe or define the ministry of women in your church at the present day?

Leadership

- 5- To what extent do you think women have the space to exercise leadership in the church?
 - a. What are the possibilities and challenges that face women in ministry?
 - b. To what extent culture, or society, or conflict, influence the status of women in the church?
 - c. To what extent does the Bible contribute to the current status of women in the church?
- 6- What is special or unique about women's leadership?
 - a. What are women's characteristics or traits as leaders?
 - b. How does their gender identity or multiple identities contribute to their ministry?
 - c. What is your image for women's leadership? For example, figure, story, painting, etc.
- 7- What is the ministry and mission of women in the church?
 - a. How do you imagine the role of women in ministry in the future?
 - b. How would you describe women's calling? Does it differ in any way from men's calling?
 - c. What are some of the obstacles that hinder the fulfillment of women's leadership in the church?
 - d. How do you imagine transformation and change to women's ministry? Does that differ in any way from the role they could play under different circumstances?

Reconciliation

- 8- What role women play in the ministry of reconciliation?
 - a. With whom do women need to reconcile? What conflicts do women face in ministry?
 - b. To what extent are women included or excluded from playing a leadership role in reconciliation?
 - c. In your opinion, is there any connection between reconciliation and the Eucharist, particularly in remembrance or memorial or the breaking of bread?

Gender and Equality

- 9- To what extent do you think women are represented in church boards, councils, vestries, or synods?
 - a. Is this enough?
 - b. How effective is this representation? Can a woman's voice be heard?
 - c. Do women take part in decision-making? Do they make a difference?
- 10- How do you see feminist movements in other contexts?
 - a. Can women in the Middle East learn from their experience?
 - b. Within our own church context and culture, to what extent women are oppressed and in need of liberation?

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Appendix 6

Focus Group Guidelines

The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East The Diocese of Jerusalem

The Project Thesis of the Very Revd Hosam Naoum
20/8/2018

Thesis Title

“Reimagining the Ministry of Reconciliation and Leadership in the Light of the Eucharist: A Palestinian Anglican Women’s Perspective”

The Thesis Statement

One of the challenges and difficulties that faces the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem is the unfulfilled role of women in church ministry. The aim behind this Project Thesis is to initiate a conversation around the table about women’s leadership in the context of St. George’s Cathedral congregation that will continue in the future.

Timeline and Plan

Introductory meeting to introduce the project and act of ministry and discuss the objectives.
Date: 31/8/2018 at 3:30pm

Two or three other sessions:

2/9/2018 following the Sunday Eucharist 12:30pm-3:30pm

9/9/2018 following the Sunday Eucharist 12:30pm-3:30pm

The women participants in the Focus Group:

- 1- Dalia
- 2- Helen
- 3- Marian
- 4- Manal
- 5- Nora
- 6- Ellen
- 7- Haya
- 8- Samia
- 9- Lama
- 10- Sally (did not participate)

Required:

- A short biography for each woman.
- A short description of the existing status/reality of women’s ministry and leadership
- Signing a consent form for participation in the project

The Introductory Session (31/8/2018)

Part I

- General explanation about the Project Thesis and objectives
- Expectations and Challenges
- Questions and Answers

Part II

- The Ministry of Reconciliation
- The Eucharist -Introduction and structure
 - The Peace (2 Corinthians 5.17-20; Matthew 5. 23-24)
 - Anamnesis (Mark 14.3-9; 1 Corinthians 11.23-26)
 - The Fraction or the Breaking of the Bread (1 Corinthians 10.16-17; Romans 12.4-5; Luke 24.13-35)
 - Which one from the above speaks to us most in the Eucharist?
- Leadership and the role of women in ministry (Galatians 3.28; Genesis 1.27)
- The relationship between the different themes
- Introduction to Session One (2/9/2018)
- Other suggestions

The First and Second Sessions

General guidelines for a fruitful and constructive conversation

- All sessions will be audio recorded
- Please mention your name before you speak in order for me to identify the speaker
- Please do not monopolize the conversation; all should contribute to the discussion
- Listening to each other is an important practice
- Respect all opinions and viewpoints, especially those you do not agree with
- Keep confidentiality and respect the privacy of all participants
- Contribute to the conversation through sharing your stories and experiences related to the topic discussed
- It is important to keep the discussion within the frame of the conversation (focus and go deep)
- Avoid arguments and one-to-one debates
- Think out of the box
- We begin the session with a prayer led by one of the women
- The conversation and the project as a whole is a journey that will empower and strengthen our faith in God and the mission of Jesus Christ
- The aim of this project is to understand deeply the role of women in church ministry and leadership
- This conversation provides an opportunity for women to discuss the different themes honestly and thoughtfully
- The hope is to continue this conversation in the future
- The conversation does not seek to find quick fixes or easy solutions or to underestimate the challenges women face in church and society

Suggested themes for discussion

After I outlined the frame for the discussion, my role ended. Women will lead the conversation. In considering the questions below, women are encouraged to reflect on them. What comes to your mind when you hear this question or that phrase? What is the joy or the desolation that this subject raises? How do I imagine or reimagine this situation? How does this issue reflect my faith?

Here are some questions for your consideration:

About Ministry and Leadership:

- How do I perceive my role as a woman in ministry?
- To what extent women are allowed to participate in church leadership?
- What are the hopes and challenges for women's leadership in ministry?
- To what extent does the Bible influence people's perception about women's leadership and ministry?
- How do you see the role of current church leadership in empowering women's leadership role?

About Church and Society:

- To what extent does Middle Eastern society and culture have on church ministry?
- Is there a gap between the ministry of women in church and that within society?
- To what extent does the sociopolitical situation in Jerusalem affect women's ministry in the church?
- As a Christian woman, how do you imagine your role in church and the wider community?

About Liturgy:

- What is your understanding of the Eucharist?
- How does the liturgy include or exclude women in leadership roles?
- What does the peace/reconciliation theme, Anamnesis, or the fraction mean for me?
- How do the above themes build my faith and spirituality in leadership?

About Reconciliation

- How do I perceive the ministry of reconciliation? Where do we begin? With whom should we reconcile?
- Where are my limits? Who decides where my limits are? How can we overcome limitations?

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Journal Writing

NB: After each session, women will write journal entries to be turned in to me the next session.

What is expected from the journals?

- Any information or contribution you did not have a chance to share within the focus group
- Any new story or reflection you wish to share

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- Any comment, follow up, analysis, idea, or contribution to an idea discussed in the focus group
- The aim of the journal is to allow the women to share their ideas confidentially with me
- You can write the journal in the most comfortable way for you

Thank you all in advance. May the Lord bless us all.

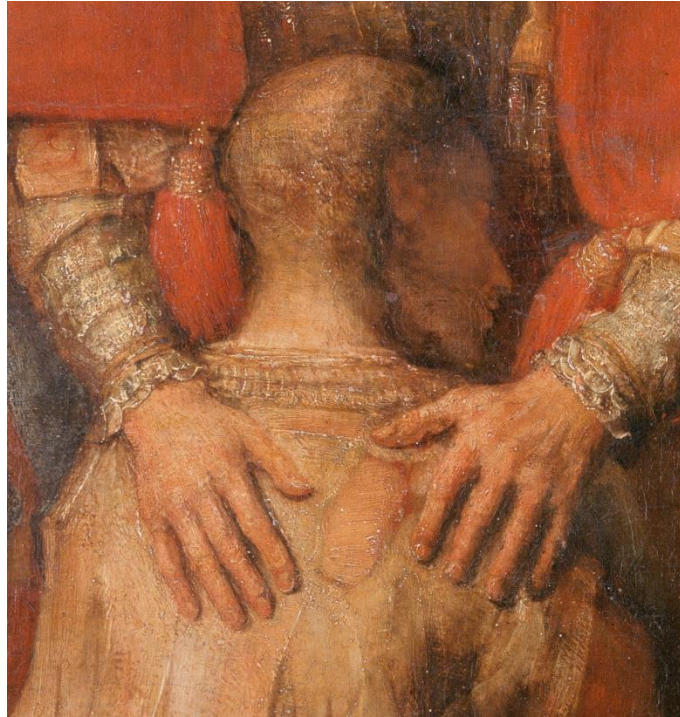
Dean Hosam Naoum
Jerusalem, August 2018

Appendix 7



**The Foot-washing Olivewood Sculpture
(Presented as a gift on the day of my installation as Dean of SGC)**

Appendix 8



Rembrandt's painting of the *Return of the Prodigal Son*