Women’s Ordination

Until 1976, women were not allowed to be priests in the Episcopal Church. But pressure to allow women to be ordained had been growing for a decade.

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On September 7, 1975, four more were ordained — at St. Stephen and the Incarnation.

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"In a service that ranged from solemn prayer to joyous hugs and bursts of spontaneous applause, a woman celebrated holy communion in an Episcopal Church here yesterday for the first time in the history of the denomination."

- Marjorie Hyer, The Washington Post

Because the ordination of women had not yet been approved by the Episcopal Church, the then-Bishop of Washington, William F. Creighton, wrote Bill Wendt five days prior, directing him to not allow Alison Cheek to celebrate the eucharist.

Bill Wendt was charged with violating church canons and his ordination vow to reverently obey his Bishop.


Ordained in Unconsecrated Service in Washington Led by Retired Bishop

By Kenneth A. Briggs

WAS, Sept. 7 — Four women were ordained to the Episcopal priesthood today in an unconsecrated service that appeared certain to increase the prolonged conflict over the issue of women’s ordination.

The Right Rev. George W. Barrett, retired Bishop of Rochester, officiated at the service at the Empire and the Incarnation Parish Church. The service was intended to expand the requirements of canon law, linking the approval of the Bishop of the Washington Diocese.

"I am not worthy," the congregration shouted, "nor inclined to find out, established opinions."

Shortly after the 1975 ordination, the House of Bishops banned Bishop Barrett from acting as a minister for a period of time.

"It took the greatest of courage," said the Rev. Lee McGee, one of the four women Barrett ordained. "He stood in very small company at that time and endured censure for years."