CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WOMEN IN THE PRIESTHOOD

A Statement from Archbishop David Edwards

"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."
— Acts 2:17

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada. On November 30, 1976, six women were ordained as priests, marking a significant moment in the life and witness of our Church.

As we mark this anniversary, we give thanks to God for the women who responded faithfully to God's call, including those who persevered when the Church was not yet ready to recognize their vocation.

The words of the prophet Joel, repeated by Peter on the day of Pentecost, remind us that the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all God's people. The gifts of the Spirit are not limited by gender, and the call to serve God's Church belongs to all whom God calls.

Here in the Diocese of Fredericton, the ministry of women priests has profoundly shaped our life together. Across our parishes and communities, women have faithfully proclaimed the Gospel, celebrated the sacraments, offered pastoral care, provided leadership, and helped the Church respond to the changing needs of the world around us.

Their contributions have enriched our understanding of ministry, strengthened our congregations, and helped us recognize more fully the breadth of gifts God has given to the Church. We are a stronger and more faithful Church because of their ministry.

We also recognize that the journey has not always been easy. Many of the women who first answered God's call to ordained ministry encountered significant opposition, prejudice, and barriers. Their courage and perseverance opened doors for those who followed. Even today, we must remain attentive to the ways in which attitudes and structures can prevent people from fully exercising the gifts God has entrusted to them.

This anniversary is an opportunity not only to look back with gratitude but also to look forward with renewed commitment. The Church is continually called to listen for the movement of the Holy Spirit, to recognize God's call in unexpected places, and to encourage and nurture the vocations of future generations.

To the women who have served, and who continue to serve, as priests in this Diocese, I offer my heartfelt thanks. Your faithfulness, wisdom, compassion, and leadership have made a lasting difference in the lives of countless individuals and communities.

May this anniversary remind us that the Church is at its best when we recognize, welcome, and make room for all the gifts God has given us for the sake of the Gospel.

+David Fredericton