



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 31, 2020

*Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand;
and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.
Exodus 15:20 NRSV*

Over the past month, we have observed Women's History Month in the United States, a time for celebrating, honoring and reflecting on the contributions of women to history. At the same time, we are living through the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we give thanks to God for all the faithful women throughout history, named and unnamed, who have shaped our lives of faith. This year in particular, we celebrate 50 years of [Lutheran women being ordained](#) in the United States, and we continue to celebrate 40 years of women of color being ordained and 10 years of LGBTQIA+ people being able to serve openly.

We also renew our long-standing commitment to engage in the work of gender justice and declare these beliefs in our church's recently adopted [social statement](#) *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*. We recognize that women and girls in particular suffer harm and injustice based on sex and gender, including the scourge of gender-based violence addressed in our ELCA [social message](#) and through our participation in the World Council of Churches' [Thursdays in Black campaign](#).

This year, there are a number of milestones we observe such as the 25th anniversary of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) to advance women's rights; the 20th anniversary of [UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on women, peace and security](#); the 10th anniversary of the establishment of UN Women and the fifth anniversary of the global [Sustainable Development Goals](#), which include a cross-cutting gender perspective and help support our intersectional approach to gender justice with, for instance, racial and economic justice. As Lutherans, we celebrate these milestones even as we lament the slow pace of progress and the gaps that remain. Our work together, and with ecumenical and interreligious partners and other stakeholders, must and will continue.

As we reflect on all that has been achieved by women and for women, let us recall the vision of Miriam, who led all the women in praising God. As we celebrate the women who have made history in our church and society, let us honor them by working for gender justice until all people experience abundant life and flourishing, as God intended.

God's blessings,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop