

IV. ATTITUDINAL CLIMATES IN DIFFERENT CONGREGATIONS AND REGIONS

Survey findings in the chart below indicate that the size of a congregation makes a difference in the attitudes of both clergy and lay members toward the leadership of women in these congregations.

- **In 2002 the larger the membership of the congregation, the less willing diocesan respondents are personally to have a woman as their rector. Respondents from the larger congregations, particularly clergymen, are even less likely to perceive that most in their congregation would be willing to accept a woman as rector.**

Chart 12

NUMBER OF ADULTS ATTENDING CHURCH SERVICES

Diocesan Respondents Only in 2002

% saying “Very Willing” to have a Woman as Rector

# of Adults Attending	MYSELF		MOST IN CHURCH	
	Wmn	Men	Wmn	Men
a) <u>Under 150 adults</u>				
Total Diocesan Respondents	76%	71%	46%	42%
Clergy	93%	83%	70%	41%
Lay persons	74%	67%	43%	42%
b) <u>150- 349 adults</u>				
Total Diocesan Respondents	71%	63%	36%	28%
Clergy	97%	64%	53%	22%
Lay persons	70%	63%	35%	29%
c) <u>350+ adults</u>				
Total Diocesan Respondents	66%	56%	26%	22%
Clergy	85%	49%	42%	19%
Lay persons	67%	63%	26%	22%

Clergy, particularly women, are more willing than lay persons on the average to approve of a woman serving as rector of their congregation. The size of the congregation makes more of a difference in how clergywomen and lay persons perceive that “most” in the congregations would react to a woman as rector than on their own opinions. Clergymen, however, in the larger churches not only are least apt to perceive that most in the congregation would accept a woman as rector, they are less likely than clergymen in the smaller churches to strongly approve of a woman as rector (or next rector) of their congregation.

Further analysis showed that having an ordained woman on the pastoral staff of the larger congregations significantly reduces, but does not eliminate, the decline in proportions saying that most in their congregations would be willing to have a woman as senior rector. This may be because clergywomen in the larger congregations are more likely to be associates than rectors, and hence may not be seen as appropriate for the senior rector position.

- **Diocesan respondents from the Northeast are more likely to endorse women’s ministry as church leaders than respondents from the South. Respondents from dioceses in the Northcentral and West regions reflect more mixed attitudes on these and other issues relating to women in the church.**

Regions of the country have their own culture. The South has been portrayed as more churched and theologically conservative than the Northeast generally. This survey’s findings suggest that this portrayal holds for the endorsement of women’s leadership in the Church as well as the use of inclusive/expansive language for worship services.

Chart 13									
REGION OF THE UNITED STATES									
	Northeast		NorthCentral		West		South		
	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	
%“Very willing” for a Woman to be:									
1) RECTOR									
You	81%	74%	73%	69%	79%	72%	49%	39%	
Most Others	48%	40%	36%	37%	45%	37%	16%	11%	
2) BISHOP									
You	83%	68%	66%	62%	66%	59%	45%	32%	
Most Others	52%	40%	23%	29%	24%	26%	10%	5%	

Chart 14									
REGION OF THE UNITED STATES									
	Northeast		NorthCentral		West		South		
	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	<u>Wm</u>	<u>Mn</u>	
% “Agree”									
Use inclus. lang, in church	58%	50%	52%	56%	56%	56%	32%	35%	
% “Agree”									
Diocese should fund programs for wmmn’ s ministries	56%	38%	52%	37%	55%	43%	48%	31%	

Respondents in the South are less likely than those in other regions to: 1) personally endorse a woman as rector or bishop, 2) perceive that most in their congregations would, 3) approve of the use of inclusive/expansive language referring to humans in church services. However, respondents from Southern dioceses do not differ significantly from women and men in other parts of the country in whether they think their diocese should develop and fund programs to assist women being more involved in ordained or lay ministry. Women are more in favor than are men of their dioceses for doing this in all regions of the United States. Women in the South, however, have a more uphill battle in getting their dioceses to assist women’s ministries than in other parts of the country. More respondents in the South than in the other regions feel that: “Most congregational and diocesan leadership positions should be filled by men.” Respondents in the South are also more likely to agree that: **“A woman would have a better chance of being priested if she went to a diocese other than this one.”**

Congregational characteristics are not randomly distributed among regions. Further analyses indicate that the Northeast congregations have more women in leadership positions. Congregations in the Northeast represented in this survey are *somewhat more likely* to currently have a woman as rector and to have a larger proportion of women on the vestry compared to those responding from the other three regions combined. In part this may be because the Northeast dioceses as a group have smaller congregations in less populated areas on the average

than do the dioceses in the South. The South, in contrast, stands out in being *more likely* to have members responding who are in larger congregations, which are *significantly less likely* to currently have a woman as rector or woman in any other clergy position (e.g. assistant minister, vicar, interim) than the other three regions combined. Congregations in the South, as well, have the fewest women on their vestries as compared to those in the other three regions. The Northcentral region stands out from the other regions in having congregations, which are *significantly more likely* to be located in urban and suburban areas than congregations in the other three regions combined. The West does not stand out from the other three regions combined on any of these church characteristics as it is quite diverse.

Regional location of diocesan respondents is not a major influence on the kinds of missions they endorse. However it is interesting to note that the South stands out from all other regions combined in its respondents being *somewhat less likely* to see each of the following as an important priority for the national church, their diocese, or congregation:

- “Legislation affecting USA families, welfare reform, medical care.
- “Homophobia and heterosexism”
- “Ecology and the environment”
- “Deployment and compensation of ordained and lay professional women.”

Region is similarly not a major influence on the kinds of educational experiences wanted. Here again it is interesting to note that only the South stands out from all other regions combined in respondents’ being *somewhat less likely* to be interested in workshops on “social advocacy for economic reform” and *somewhat more likely* to be interested in those on “marriage enrichment”.

- **Certain Episcopal Church mission and ministry priorities are viewed as in accord with the goal of equal status for women in the Church whereas other priorities are seen as conflicting with that goal, whether in practice they do or do not.**

Whether a particular mission and ministry priority of the Episcopal Church is seen as “in accord with the goal of equal status for women in the Church” depends on the constituency which supports it. In illustration, those who endorse taking “special efforts” to see that “there are young (under 35) persons serving in congregational and diocesan leadership positions” or those who support the ordination of “more ethnic minorities”, are quite likely to be the same persons

who also endorse goals of getting more women in leadership positions. In other words, those who have what some would call a “feminist” orientation are not against increasing youth or ethnic minority participation in the Church. On the contrary, they share a common goal of increasing the diversity of the leadership pool of the Episcopal Church. However, some persons concerned with getting more men to participate in congregations may be apprehensive that “if women move into more of the leadership roles in the church, men’s participation will drop.” Those who believe this last statement to be true (it is not) are also likely to be the same persons who are least willing to have a woman be their rector or bishop. This is an area where education might help overcome some resistance to women in leadership.