

# RE-POST | ES 166 | A Journey Toward Ordination | Women in Community of Christ | Becky Savage Part 2

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

priesthood, call, church, women, ordination, ministry, conference, testimonies, mission

## SPEAKERS

Brittany Mangelson, Becky Savage, Blake Smith

### **Blake Smith** 00:26

Welcome, Project Zion Podcast listeners. In honor of the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in Community of Christ, we're reaching back into the archives and revisiting some great episodes on the topic. This is part two of a two part series featuring hosts Brittany Mangelson and former president Becky Savage. It started as a single conversation, but there was so much material to cover that it spans two episodes,

### **Brittany Mangelson** 00:54

Brittany Mangelson here. This is going to be part two in my conversation with Becky Savage, who is a former member of Community of Christ's First Presidency. And we are talking all about the ordination of women in Community of Christ. So our first episode that we did together goes over the history from the beginning of the church through 1984, which is when Doctrine and Covenants 156 was presented to the church, and that section of scripture provided for the ordination of women. And so part two, just picks up exactly right where we left off. Enjoy the continued conversation. Thanks.

### **Brittany Mangelson** 01:33

All right, so Becky, let's just get into Section 156. If I recall correctly, you were at that conference. So I'm just wondering what your experience was like being in the chamber, when those words were read, and in the aftermath. I don't really want to direct your comments too much. I just want you to share whatever you want about this moment in history, and just continue the conversation.

### **Becky Savage** 02:04

So I was one of the un-ordained delegates to the 1984 World Conference, and we were gathered in the Auditorium chamber when President Sheehy came to read the Words of Counsel. And it's always a great expectation, when words of counsel are brought before World Conference, you don't know what they're going to be and it's all kind of this very special time, prayers brought, special prayers are offered in anticipation or preparation for the Words of Counsel to be read. It had the preference of calls of leaders to the new offices in the church and all that. That's done. And then it opened with paragraph

three, and talks about servants have been diligently working in planning the building of the Temple. Now, for generations, people have been anticipating the building of the Temple as the center place. And so when it was read that, finally the building of the Temple in the center place, and it says let this work, continue edit accelerated rate, there was this, "Oh!", it was kind of this. I didn't think about it that much. It wasn't that big a deal on my radar, but the people around me were ecstatic about this, they can now go ahead and build the temple, what a great thing does was, and that they could move forward with the building of the Temple, was such a wonderful blessing for so many in the chamber. So the instructions were already given, there was this great need for a spiritual awakening that's going to engender, will be engendered by the ministries experienced within the walls. So people tend to forget that Section 156 starts with this wonderful blessing of building of the Temple and the purposes for the Temple. It then follows with a section about what the ministries of the Temple are to be and an admonition to say that great blessings are pending from this building of the Temple. And Paragraph 4B talks about priesthood. And it says priesthood offices already provided for in my church have always had the potential for supplying blessings. So here it's talking about some of the functions that will be expanded and given additional meaning, as the purposes of Temple Ministries are revealed more fully, and these are just coming to more fruition now. So this is 1984, and we just received at our last World Conference, last couple of World Conferences, expanded expectations for the Evangelists, Ministry of Evangelists with additional blessings that can be performed by Evangelists, I think there's additional ministries that have also come as a part of the understandings of Temple and Temple Ministries. And then it talks about the purposes of the Temple, dedicated to the pursuit of peace, reconciliation, healing of the Spirit, strengthening of the faith, preparation for witness, the wholeness of body, mind and Spirit, providing for leadership education for priesthood and member. So priesthood and member, member meaning disciples, place for meaning of the Restoration, with healing and redeeming agents, given new life and understanding. And then talks about the planning should go forward. And then there's this additional following is also presented as the voice of the Spirit. And hearing here, "oh, my people" regarding my holy priesthood. So then there's this whole paragraph seven about the holy priesthood and talking about how the power of the priesthood has been in place for the from the earliest years as a blessing and salvation of humanity. And then talking about how priesthood has been misunderstood for this purposes of calling and help out some have taken pride etc, and have not lived up to their calling to magnify their calling, or to become, have become inactive. So even before we get to this issue of women in priesthood, there's this admonition to the men of priesthood, to step up to their commitment to their calling in priesthood, and what they are expected to do in their priesthood to have an abiding faith and the desire to serve in humility, and to function more fully. And that the administrative officers should be following the provisions of the law and making sure people adhere to it. And then the Prophet says, "I've heard the prayers of many about who should be called." There was this hush. "Now who should be called to share burdens and responsibilities? Now, if we go back to an early principle in Community of Christ of 'All are Called', I say to you now, as I've said in the past, that all are called according to gifts which have been given them. And this applies to priesthood as well as all other aspects of the work. So this is not, it's not a calling. Yes, it's a calling to priesthood, but we're also calling all members and disciples to other, to all other aspects of the work. This is a call to mission for all people, all who are engaged in the worship the church." Then you could drop a pin and it would have been heard in the chamber, for sure. "Therefore, do not wonder that some women of the church are being called to priesthood responsibilities. And this is in harmony with my will. And where these calls have been known to my servants, they, they may be processed, according to provisions." Now, in my

research, in the archives, there were letters in the early 70s of administrators who were sent calls for women to the priesthood, which we know because of General Conference resolution had not been processed, but those who had been coming since the early 70s, of official calls of women to priesthood office, which had been denied because of the General Conference resolution. So here is the, "Therefore, do not wonder that someone in the church are being called and it is in harmony with my will." So we have the provision in the whereas is that it has to be a provision by revelation directed ordination of women, and divine recognition of women as pertaining to the priesthood of either order. And then never less, now there's a prerequisite that's being added for the first time in terms of what happens before one who is called to priesthood to get actually be ordained. Ordaining of women to priesthood, let this be done with deliberateness. But before they're laying on of hands, they have to be specific guidelines and instructions. And that includes what it put in place that there has to be prerequisite courses taken before an ordination can be done. Now, the School of the Restoration had been offering priesthood courses for men for years. And this had been a place for study for many, many years. But there had never been a prerequisite requirement of courses before one was ordained. So it's not until women are called to priesthood, that there is a requirement put in place that you have to take coursework before one is ordained. I say that women knew all along that education is necessary. Education and training is necessary to be prepared to bring the most, the most of one's already divinely given giftedness, to its greatest fruition. So women were the ones who were fully aware that the training prepared one to be the best one could be at the beginning of one's ministry. So yes, it took the women coming to ordination, time of ordination to actually put in place, Temple School courses that helped to prepare more fully, people being ordained into their priesthood offices. But then it talks about remember, in many places, there's still uncertainty and misunderstanding about the principles of calling and giftedness. So this idea of who is called, and how do you understand giftedness and its purpose and is calling, obviously calling has a divine component, it also has an administrative responsibility, and is calling for a lifetime or is calling for a period of time is the calling and is for serving, calling to priesthood for serving the needs of the people. And if one's calling does not serve the needs of the people, is that calling them not needed at a particular for, you know, it's only for that period of time in which the needs of the people are being met. So calling has this whole sphere, multiple spheres of layers of meaning to it, that is also impacted by an individual's giftedness that has purpose and richness that develops over time as well. So then the admonition for the saints to have courage for the task of theirs to bring to pass the cause of Zion and prepare themselves with much study and earnest prayer. Yeah, this was read and then reread, because one reading was insufficient to grasp the complexity of the multiple layers of counsel that were given with this particular Words of Counsel. It was, it was monumental. I looked down the row of seats that I was in, and there were people crying, there were people grasping each other's hands. There were people reaching to seats ahead of them and holding shoulders. There were individuals who got up and left the chamber when it got to the section of therefore do not wonder that some women of the church or have been called are being called. There were conversations out in the hallways, of distress. And in the break, there were people who clustered together in prayer, because there was there was rejoicing but then there was also distress for those that they knew would not accept these Words of Counsel, as coming from God because of the scriptural admonition that many adhered to that women would not serve in the church in priesthood callings. And so almost immediately, there was a sense of, there would be loss because of this bold, new guidance for the church. And yet, there was great joy. So it was just such an interesting place to be. And I'm, I'm a pretty extreme introvert. So for me it was, it was

a time for reflection, not that I didn't agree with it, because I had already a very deep conviction that women were already bringing the ministry equivalent to priesthood. Without the, without ordination, they were already giving everything that was equivalent to priesthood ministry other than what was sanctioned, needing ordination, in order to give and serve the sacraments. But so, I had no question that this was of God, but I was needing to understand more fully what it meant for the church as a whole. My dad was in the Council of Twelve, and served as the apostle for the local jurisdictions, local stakes of the church. And he and his colleagues had been obviously dealing with, with this and its ramifications for the church, and had to deal with the ramifications of this for the church for many, many months in the years ahead. So he was dealing with the distress of that, he had this adult child that was in a local area, but far enough away from the central church congregations, I didn't have to have quite as much immediate contact, as he did with those who are most distressed, but it was difficult times for the church leaders in the immediate aftermath. The Conference dealt line by line, as they do with all Words of Counsel that come before the Conference in the various council's orders of the Conference, and as a delegate, we had our delegate's session. The process is to allow discussion or debate about each of those areas that in we voted line by line, you set the document as a whole. So there was prolonged discussions, certainly about this particular document that was brought before the Conference. It was ultimately accepted for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants. And then there's a there's a procession that happens at Conference once the document is accepted. And the President of the church, you saw this, is brought up through the, through the chamber, to the front of the Auditorium. Oh, what is it?

**Brittany Mangelson** 18:36

Sorry, what was that?

**Becky Savage** 18:37

What is it we sing? There's a song that we sing.

**Brittany Mangelson** 18:40

"We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet"? Was that?

**Becky Savage** 18:42

Yeah, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet. Yeah. That's what we sing for President Veazey, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" I think is the old, the original.

**Brittany Mangelson** 18:51

Yeah.

**Becky Savage** 18:53

So quite the pomp and circumstance, those celebratory experiences. The boldness of President Smith, Wally B. Smith, to bring this to bring this revelation to the church is profound. He is such a meek and mild person, very humble. Even while I was in the First Presidency, he still had an office in our suite and would come weekly, he was still serving as Chair of the Hunger Committee and several other committees and he would come and still work in his office. He is just such a humble person, kind, respectful. I mean, he can make difficult decisions, obviously, but the angst that he had to have gone

through to bring this to the Church, during the time the Church was going through so much change and societal change and social change and theological change and knowing that there would be distrust and discord and animosity from friends and colleagues that he had known for so many years, had to have caused him many, many sleepless sleepless nights. And yet, as a prophet, leader of the Church, he could not deny this as prophetic words, and boldly stood through all of the discussions and dialogue and distressful communications. I've read some of the, there's the trans-, they actually do a word for word transcript of what is said at Conference made literally a word for word transcript. And some of the things that were said are just awful and disrespectful, even in the midst of what we hope is, well, you hope it's a respectful communication, it's not. And he respectfully stood before the Conference through it all. And still, even to this day, confirms that the Holy Spirit's guidance in bringing these words. So as a person, as a woman, who had a very gifted mother, who brought ministry, side by side with with my father for multiple years serving in the field as a minister, and then as an apostle, there was no doubt in my mind that women would be were ministering, bringing ministry whether they would ever be priesthood. I, I didn't know growing up, but when the when the document came and it said they were called to be priesthood, I was like 'Yes, they are. Of course they are.' So I had the wonderful opportunity twenty years later, doing my thesis, to open letters written by women and some men who gave their testimonies of their experience being in the chamber or first hearing the Words of Counsel. So in the archives of the women's ministry commission did a three-part study, they asked women to write their personal experience of hearing the Words of Counsel, and they had the first women who were ordained write their testimonies, as well. And then they did some studies. So in 2005, I'm opening those letters for the first time out of the archives. So I've got the letter opener and opening their letters for the very first time, the first reader of those experiences, and the experiences were some of what I said, you know, silence, joy, joy and grief, for what was going to come testimonies or affirmations of their own sense of call. The sense of finally, you know, this is come, etc. So it was just all of these affirmations of sense of call, etc, that was happening. Wonderful, wonderful experience of being able to open those letters. So anybody who ever gets a chance to open something new out of archives, it's a pretty neat experience to be able to do that. It's like, you know, history, opening those letters for the first time,

**Brittany Mangelson** 24:10

I can only imagine.

**Becky Savage** 24:12

Pretty, pretty neat. I also then opened some of the letters of the women who were first ordained. And that was an interesting process because I started reading their testimonies. And they started falling out, in these, I started making, I ended up making three piles. There would be a testimony of someone who said that she, in her call, knew ahead of time that her calling, she knew in her own inner self that she was called her particular office. So there's this pile of affirmations, internal sense of affirmation of her call, so there's this pile of those who had a self-knowing of a personal call, and then there's another pile of no affirmation of sense of call whatsoever, this surprise of someone coming to pastor coming to them and indicating that they have a call to a particular office and this surprise and shock and disbelief about the sense of call. And then some were kinda in this, a few that are kind of in this middle of, well, I knew there were women who were called, and I understood and recognized others to have a sense of call, and I've been doing some ministry, and I'm okay with that. And I could go either way, you know, so a

few in the middle, but pretty much they fall one or the other, there's very self assurance of a sense of call. And then there's no sense of call whatsoever, and needing the affirmation of others to confirm that sense of call. And they really kind of fall out in those two piles of letters. So very poignant letters and testimonies of calling of the first women and of their experiences in their ordination process or their confirmation process. And this is where some of the distress happened. So women who were in more of the outlying areas, would have, some had some very positive experiences in terms of acceptance of their call in their local congregation, without any kind of distress from other members. But there were women who were in congregations or districts or stakes, where there was a lot of opposition to their calls as first women. And some of those testimonies are very distressing. Now, there's not large numbers of those, but certainly enough to raise concerns with administrators, church leaders, about processes that were necessary, put in place to help protect the process for affirming. So this is how it goes. A call is, comes to a local leader, pastor, in terms of recognizing the giftedness of someone in terms of a call to priesthood office. Administratively, that is communicated to the next jurisdictional level. So there's administrative approvals that happen before the individual is ever approached in terms of that call, and administratively, those things are approved before the pastor or supervisor, whoever that person is, approaches the individual. So all of that approval is done first. Let's say the pastor then goes to the individual to present a call. And the individual then has up to a year to make a decision about accepting their call to their priesthood office or not. It is a confidential process of consideration, usually allowing one to share with their spouse, if they're married, or the significant other about their call. And, once the person accepts the call, and makes the decision to accept a call, there's also a next step, a common consent process that involves the local congregation and/or Mission Center, also approving their call, because we serve those in our, we accept our call to serve those in our local congregation or Mission Center, or the World Church, depending on the level in which the priesthood call is. So those that we serve, also agree to accept that call for the individual. So it's at that jurisdictional level, where there was people that were voting against the calls for women. And some of that happened pretty aggressively, particularly in some of the local areas around Headquarters in the Independence area. So and it happened out in some of the outer jurisdictions as well, where individuals who are against the calls of some of the first women would get inactive members to come to that Conference to vote down the woman's call to their priesthood office. And those if you could imagine you've made a commitment as a first woman to a call to priesthood. You've, you know, made that spiritual discernment process, then approved through all the jurisdictional levels, and now you're going before your local congregation, your local district or your local stake, for those that you're going to serve and people are standing for and against you, making testimonies or statements for or against you, and they make a vote in your presence. And there were those who were voted down. So anyway, and boldly, some, you know, didn't ever go back for a second, but boldly, many went back for a subsequent Conference and were voted in to their office. So oh, the early years, oh, my goodness. So, ultimately, having taken the new courses and scripture study, Intro to Scripture, Intro to Caring Ministries, and an intro to the particular office, that one was called to for ordination, and then the women were into new ministry. Now, if you think about this, as first generation ordained women in Community of Christ, we've watched the ministry of priesthood. But we've watched as non-priesthood members. It's different when you're a priesthood member. You, you know, the nuances of ministry. So, for example, the first time I was to serve Communion as an ordained elder, you gather in the back and organize for how the emblems are to be, the prayers to be said, and the emblems are to be set up and set up and the prayer to be said, and then how you to serve. Well, it all kind of makes sense. But if you've never really

served, you've received but you've never served, they're still logistics that go with the serving, that are different that you don't understand if you've not ever done it before. So they're just nuances to that, that as men or young, young boys and/or men, your father, who was a priesthood member, kind of conveys those things to you the in preparation for your coming priesthood ordination, but a father would not ever convey to a child, young girl, or a young teenager, because there was no expectation that you would ever be ordained. I would say to my husband, okay, I'm doing Communion now for the first time. So is there a particular way you hold the plate? Is there a way that you present the plate and/or the, the cups to people in a way that makes it easier for them to get the bread and the wine? I mean, do you hold it in a certain way? Do they, do you shift the, the cup holder around in a way so that they can put their cups in a different position? I mean, it's just little tiny logistics that they seem little right now, but when you're doing it for the first time, they make a difference, because my brain, which needs to have detailed process, wanted to know those logistics. So as the first time person doing the serving for Communion, I wanted to know those specifics. Now, the first time I served Communion, I happened to be on the inner side of the row, where one of our most conservative male members of the congregation was sitting. And because I was set to be on that row, he got up and left. He did not want to be served by a woman. If we'd been thinking appropriately, all they had to do was move me to the other side, and he would have been served by a man. And we did that anytime after that. But, you know, it's those little logistics that we have to make accommodation for as newly ordained women serving and meeting the needs of a congregation that's adjusting to the first women ordained in our congregations. And as men and women serving together, we can do that, we absolutely can make those accommodations once we understand what the needs of the members are within the congregation. And some of those needs weren't evident immediately, and became evident very, very early on, but we just didn't know immediately.

**Brittany Mangelson 34:50**

And so this brings me to another question and you've shared so much with us, Becky. I actually think we'll probably split this into two, a two-parter because the stories in the history that you have shared have just been so good. And I think we have enough content for two full episodes, which I'm deeply, deeply, deeply appreciative of. And so I don't want to take up too much more of your time, but I do want to know, and I'm gonna get choked up now too, as one of the pioneering women to serve the Church in ordained ministry, and as the first woman who was ordained into the Presidency, who was invited to serve in the, you know, one of the most governing bodies, authority, if you will, a counselor to the President of the Church, I would love to hear your testimony of the importance of women in the decision making process, and in ordained ministry in general, call it a testimony, if you will. But just your thoughts on the gravity and the importance of it. I feel like we have, like I shared in our introduction, we have a whole episode with you about your particular journey. And then now you've shared the history and the experiences of others in the church. So I think ending with just some wrap-up thoughts of, of how important it has been in your life and how you have seen the church be blessed. If you could share some of your thoughts on that. I'll stop crying and and let you speak.

**Becky Savage 36:53**

I wish I had President Veazey's words before me, the day after my ordination, when he said to the Conference, quite obvious that we are now First Presidency with a woman. And I want the conference to be aware that we serve as equals, that Becky as woman serves equally, as Dave and I do, as a

member of the First Presidency. He made it clear at the very first of that day, that there was to be no difference between male and female. As a statement to the church, he was saying, men and women are equal, and we serve together, we are richer, as we serve together. The church, with women in ordained priesthood positions and roles is richer, because as men and women, we serve together. Women bring a ministry and have a richness in their giftedness that men cannot bring. They bring it in their special way, as individuals, in their own giftedness and blessings that have been given to them as individuals. They bring giftedness as a group as well. A richness and insight, a special spirit that cannot be brought by men. Men bring giftedness and insights and spiritual insights that cannot be brought by women, because of the giftedness brought by God to them. And together, men and women, bless the Church and bring a wholeness, that I think is part of God's plan for us as we journey toward Zion. If we can learn to work together in our giftedness, in our capacity to know what it's like to be the true children of God, in the blessing that God gives us each in our own gender, in our own uniqueness, we can learn to enrich one and the other, we will be even more blessed in our mission. It's just the opportunity we have to learn to appreciate each one's giftedness, and that means woman to woman, man to man, man to woman. That's all of that uniqueness of being humans. Learning to appreciate one another. Now, it's been interesting in the movement since 1985 and the first ordination of women, to see how many women have taken on responsibilities of leadership in local congregations, in our regional level, mission centers and in leadership roles, and major leadership roles of the Church. It has not diminished the roles and leadership responsibilities for men. In some cases, there are places where some had said men had stepped back, but I think it's those individual men have made that decision, not that women have diminished men. Men have every opportunity to continue to bring their rich ministry, along with an beside, side by side with women. And women want to bring the same gifted ministry they have along with men who want to work with them. Are there places still where women are diminished in their ministry? Unfortunately, yes, there are places where that happens. And there's still opportunities for women to learn to be, learn what it is that they have to give. So for example, a couple of years before I left the First Presidency, I was bringing leadership retreat in Central America, and the women there were still introducing themselves, as I am Mrs. Whatever my husband's name is, I mean, it's still back decades, from where we were, I'd say probably 40s to 50s era of where we were in terms of women being recognized for where the status of their husbands were in the church. That's how women got the recognition. But that's just where they were, sociologically, that's, that's where they were. And yet they were open to learning, about Scripture and the role of women in Scripture and what they could be in terms of their own leadership. That's what they were there for, women's leaders retreat, to learn and grow. So internationally, there's still opportunities that overall, women have blessed the church in the priesthood ministries, and are helping member disciples learn that each member and disciple is also a contributing minister to a mission of the Church. So you don't have to be a priesthood, to be a contributing member to the mission of the Church, we all contribute. So if you look at the big priesthood chart that came out in 2013, I think it was, it starts with a member disciple, and then has priesthood offices that we all start first as member. And that's where we fundamentally are first foundationally. And we're all members and disciples first, learning how to be the best responders to the mission of Jesus Christ. Oh, it's been an exciting journey. We've come a long way in a very short time, it's pretty, pretty amazing, considering all that has happened in a denomination that started in 1830, and 154 years moved to women's ordination - 1984, pretty amazing.

**Brittany Mangelson** 43:46

Whew, again, I'm a little emotional. Um, it is amazing. And I think that this identity that has sprung from our earliest days as a Church and to see that prophetic impulse and to see women and men, challenging and working with gender stereotypes, and typical roles, if you will, of women, and questioning and supporting and sustaining I mean, all of these words are just flooding me right now of decades and decades and decades of listening to where God is calling us. And opening the door to women in ministry has opened the door to other avenues of ministry for other, other diversity of people. You know, I think that gosh, had we not ordained women, I don't think we could have come to a place where we ordained and were affirming of the LGBTQ population and and I just see the ripple effect of women's ordained ministry and how from my perspective, it is the most natural reflection of who we are. And it just naturally flows through us. And for me personally, hearing the stories of the men and women who are part of this journey from the earliest days when women were ordained has really helped me heal, with my community, with men in general. And with this perceived power and authority that is seen as very top heavy and just very aggressive and arrogant, if you will. But that precedent Community of Christ is so much more than that, it is servant ministry. And it is, it taps into the giftedness of the individuals and the needs of the congregation or the needs of your field or of your mission center. And I'm just filled with a lot of gratitude right now that so many brave men and women, were willing to have the conversation and were willing to go there, even if the price was high, and the price was high. And I don't want to skirt around that. The reality is a lot of people were deeply, deeply wounded with this decision. But I did, I was able to interview Wallace B. Smith before World Conference 2016. And I was just brand new to this, and sometimes I can't even stand to listen to that interview, because you can tell how nervous I am, but he did say that he doesn't regret it, that it was the right decision, and that the church is on the correct path. And he continued to show his support of the direction the Church is heading now and decisions that we've made in recent years. And it really just sings to me that the Spirit of the Restoration is alive and well and more pertinent today than ever before. So, okay. I don't think I'm crying anymore, which is good.

**Becky Savage 47:01**

Pretty darn amazing.

**Brittany Mangelson 47:03**

Yeah, it really is. And do you have any final thoughts? I mean, I feel like I've taken up your whole day. I am so grateful for this gift that you have, have given us in your work and your research and your ability to tell story and your ability to just share your heart.

**Becky Savage 47:20**

I will say just another personal part of the journey. As a part of this research, I started with a book that was written by Sue Monk Kidd, called "The Dance of a Dissident Daughter." So my personal journey, writing the thesis ended up being much more difficult than maybe it would have been if all I was doing was pulling research and reading articles and studying the Herald etc. So, as a woman growing up in Community of Christ, I was a part of the culture. I had to determine or to unravel what I had grown into as a socialized female, and the culture of the time with the culture of the Church, what I had accepted as my prescribed role as a female, and writing the thesis, understanding where women had journeyed, where women were prescribed in terms of their role in the church, and where I had accepted my role in the church to be. Unraveling all of that became a significant part of my journey in seminary and in

writing the thesis. What I came out of that understanding is I had a choice. I had the choice of deciding where I wanted my place to be in the Church, as a woman, as a member, as a priesthood member, as a, an employee of the church as a field minister in the church, as a future contributor with the church, as a wife, a mother, all of those opportunities were laid before me as I fully explored what God had given me as a gift as a female. One who's blessed with God's Spirit of body, mind and Spirit, all of this given fully as a gift by God. So what am I going to do with this vessel that I've now kind of cleared out of all this stuff? How am I going to replant it with this new knowledge, this new awakening of, well, certainly knowledge, but understanding and spiritual insights that I had not had before? And in all of that, I didn't come away with an anger of what writers have done with scripture, what writers have done with the role of women in society, or how women had been pigeonholed into particular roles, or all those kinds of things. Anger wasn't my default, it was more well, this is what has happened in terms of where women have been put. But I now have a choice of where I want to be. And I want to be at a place where I can be open to saying yes to Christ's call to mission. I want to be a part of a community that says we proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love and peace. I want to contribute to a mission of wholeness. I want to be in mission with others who walked this path with these amazing enduring principles and mission initiatives. I want to be an equal partner with those who walk side by side, men and women, who together will go over the bumps in the hurdles and meet the challenges ahead of us. And I want to do that as an equal partner. But that's what I came out of this awesome and difficult journey. And it was a difficult journey, it's not something that you do easily, giving up all of this previous programming of what was right, and/or wrong. And it was a difficult multiple, multi-year, step by step process of making decisions, step by step of what I chose to do, to give up, or to take back based on the steps of that process. So out of all of this, this journey toward ordination ended up being a self journey, toward acceptance of a new mission.

**Brittany Mangelson 52:19**

I was just gonna say, as you were describing that, it sounds like the journey that the church took is also one that especially that first generation of women had to take themselves, when you don't grow up with it, when it's not your norm when your grandma wasn't ordained, that you had to really accept that for yourself and to learn the history and women's, you know, quote unquote, place in the world. And you get to decide does that make you angry and entrenched in in those bitter feelings? Or do you heal and propel in ministry in a way that brings peace and reconciliation to the world? So I'm personally grateful for the path that you took. It's, it's been a joy to get to know you more, and to have you on the podcast and just to hear your story. I think that this is one that is going to do a lot of good and bring a lot of hope to people and just deepen our appreciation of where we have been and where we are going. And it's, to me, really humbling and exciting. And, again, all those words that I, are floating around are still are still kind of floating around. So I just want to thank you, Becky, this has been, this has been a real treat.

**Becky Savage 53:39**

You're welcome. Always good to be with you.

**Blake Smith 53:43**

I'm Blake Smith, and you've been listening to Project Zion Podcast. For more episodes, you can find us at [projectzionpodcast.org](http://projectzionpodcast.org) or on any of your favorite podcast platforms. Thanks for joining us. Have a great rest of your day.