



## THE CASE OF LUKE 2:36-39 AND THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN PRIESTHOOD IN METHODIST CHURCH NIGERIA

Emmanuel Adetunji (Ph.D)

Department of Religious Studies, Lead City University Ibadan, Nigeria.

Email: [adetunji.emmanuel@lcu.edu.ng](mailto:adetunji.emmanuel@lcu.edu.ng); Tel: 08130598955

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4862-5864>

### Cite this article:

Emmanuel Adetunji (2023),  
The Case of Luke 2:36-39 and  
the Challenges of Women  
Priesthood in Methodist  
Church Nigeria. African  
Journal of Social Sciences and  
Humanities Research 6(4), 10-  
21. DOI: 10.52589/AJSSHR-  
CW4RA1TB

### Manuscript History

Received: 21 May 2023

Accepted: 10 July 2023

Published: 10 Aug 2023

### Copyright © 2023 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article  
distributed under the terms of  
Creative Commons Attribution-  
NonCommercial-NoDerivatives  
4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND  
4.0), which permits anyone to  
share, use, reproduce and  
redistribute in any medium,  
provided the original author and  
source are credited.

**ABSTRACT:** *The issue of women's priesthood has been a challenge to Christendom in general and the Methodist Church in Nigeria in particular. Little attention has been given to the efforts and contributions of women ministers. Likewise, they have been denied many of their priestly functions as co-workers in the service of God in terms of conducting the Eucharist, baptism, and solemnisation of marriage. The study is empirically based on the findings from 960 respondents out of 1200 questionnaires administered. Findings revealed that Methodist Church Nigeria had ordained more than 50 full-time female ministers promoted to the post of Presbyters. However, despite this, there exists a numerical disparity between male and female priests, including gender differences and disparity in functions that female priests could perform. Using Luke 2:36–39 as the theoretical basis for analysis, the study suggests the need for the Methodist Church (Nigeria) to allow female ministers to use their God-given talents without any discrimination or undue hindrances to promote the gospel's spread.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ordination, Women Priesthood, Methodist Church Nigeria, Luke 2:36-39



## INTRODUCTION

There have been controversies over the role of the man and the woman in society at this age. More people are convinced that traditional ideas about the sexes must be completely reviewed. The view, barely contested for thousands of years, that men and women are fundamentally different in nature and therefore have different tasks in life often prompts vigorous opposition.

Ogba (2006) posits that the full participation of women in the sacred ministerial functions of the Church today has been a perpetual problem, especially among the mainline churches. This has plunged people into serious disagreements, often leading to scorn in families (between husbands and wives) and friends and relations.

Women who favour women's ordination have faced questions that always end in disgust. A careful look into the problem revealed that it emanated from the fact that the Christian Church was initially set up in a pagan world of three cultures (namely: Jewish, Greek, and Roman) where women have habitually been despised and demeaned by men. Hence, in these cultures, which had long been established before Christianity, women were regarded as simpletons and inferior beings. This is probably because of the belief that a woman was responsible for the fall of man such that mankind is brought into perpetual suffering. For this reason, women are often described as the devil's gateway. This view about women has often led to the exploitation and unacceptability of the services and contributions of women both in the private and public lives of the populace, especially men.

Ogba (2006) concluded that to worsen the situation, Christianity came to Africa, where women are seen as second-class citizens who exist mainly for the purpose of procreation. This attitude, in turn, inculcated in women the inferiority complex mentality. With the emergence of the Christian era, and as people turned more and more to Christianity, the idea that women are inferior gradually began to be unpopular, particularly concerning the long-purported axiom that "women's office is in the kitchen." This is to say that the degradation of women that was prevalent in the Ancient Pagan World crept into the church. A good example of this attitude includes the early church fathers like Tertullian, Thomas Aquinas, and others who made derogatory statements. "He spoke of women as the mothers of all ills," "Women are misbegotten males." All these derogatory statements, it would seem, were only directed in the name of sexual discrimination and discouragement to women to prevent them from involving themselves in any form of activity that will tend to place them over and above men, especially as it concerns involved in the sacred functions of the church since it is the only profession (priestly roles or duties) that is still seemingly close to them.

Although, at present, it seems that the church has begun to accept the involvement of women in the Ordained Church Ministry, in most cases, they have been taught wrongly so that they have the impression that men only have the right to make any useful decisions in the church. Women's contributions sometimes are not taken seriously, even by their fellow women. Most obstacles regarding their full participation in the church's affairs often come from women themselves. While efforts are being made to emancipate and bring women to equality with men, especially in the church ministry, some women, even the educated and influential ones among them, sometimes oppose the movement on the ground that, naturally, women should remain inferior. Reflecting on the attitude of this group of women at the 1988 Lambeth conference, Marshall (1988) said



yet not all the women at Lambeth were in favour of the ordination of women. Women Against the Ordination of Women (WAOW) distributed packets of materials to Lambeth participants. “YES” to the Ministry of Women – “NO” to Women Priests was their succinct slogan.

Werner (1990), however, opined that the nature and roles of men and women are among the oldest of issues, yet they are always topical. It is, therefore, no surprise that the New Testament pays such close attention to the relationship between man and woman and handles it, showing remarkable awareness of the principles at stake. The issue of the attitude of Christians to the distinctions between males and females is as old as Christianity itself. However, it must be said that discourse relating to this has become particularly acute in this century, since the biblically determined relationship between the sexes and, with it, the traditional forms of association of men and women have been radically questioned in a way never known before in history. The agitation for the ordination of women into the priesthood today is still increasing. Ministers, theologians and biblical scholars are still posing serious questions regarding the historical exclusion of women's ordination in the ministry of the Church. This question has only recently assumed an urgent status.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew society featured prophetesses such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Deborah (Judges 4:4), and the New Testament contains records of female evangelists, Deaconesses, and prophetesses beginning with Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:36-39) and the woman of Samaria (John 4:28-29), and “fellow labourers” with the apostles including Euodias and Syntyche (Philippians 4:3), Phoebe, a servant (deaconess) of the Church in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1), and Priscilla (Romans 16:3). Even medieval Europe had ordained Abbesses who sometimes were given the same authority as men – the rights to hear confession, preach, read the scriptures in public; administer ecclesiastical and religious ceremonies involving both men and women and who were invested with cape, mitre and stole (Joseph, 2002).

Although many human societies, including Nigeria, have had great female leaders in both the secular and the religious sectors, such women have been regarded and categorised as exceptional or “iron ladies”. Many potentials and ideas have been wasted due to cultural discrimination by the concept and practice of a sexual hierarchy that makes females subordinate to males. In the history of Nigeria, such women as Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Idia of Benin, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Madam Tinubu of Egba land and Efunsetan Aniwura, *Iyalode* of Ibadan, who have, in their time commanded the respect of both men and women, fall into the category of the strong and exceptional. With the issue of human civilisation, the rise of female education and the freedom of women to compete with men in politics and business, women have proven that they are not inferior to men, nor are they incapable of achievement of leadership positions (Oderinde, 2002).

There have emerged movements for women’s liberation, and some theologians now see the question of women's ordination as part of women's rights. This study examines the problems and challenges of women Priests in the Methodist Church, Nigeria and relates it to the part played by Anna, the prophetess in Luke 2:36-39. Anna was a prophetess who participated and was given full recognition as a minister at the circumcision ceremony of Jesus Christ in the temple in Jerusalem. Alongside Simeon, she ministered effectively on this memorable occasion without any discrimination. This could be a model for partnership between male and female priests in the church.



## Biblical Concept of Women's Ministry

A woman is generally defined as an adult female being. The Genesis account described the woman as a help mate for the man (Gen.2:18), although generally speaking, Jewish culture never treated women as helpers "fit for him" but as property. It is noted that some women with outstanding potential are generally respected. Deborah is an example of such a woman. This culture continues in the New Testament times, even in the ministry of Jesus. However, the ministry of Phoebe, Priscilla and other women in the New Testament cannot be overemphasised. Although not much is known about these women, Nichols (1990) attested that Paul and his congregations were aware of these outstanding women. Moulder (1979) explained that the early fathers generally viewed women as "the devil's gateway", "the weaker vessel", "slow of understanding", "unstable in mind", "liable to deception", and "the one whose disobedience had ruined the man, the image and glory of God, requiring the death of God's own son for atonement." They held a very unfavourable view of human sexuality and saw strict asceticism as its antidote. They portrayed the woman as a subtle and dangerous creature, "whose heart", according to Ecclesiastes 7:26, "is snares and nets" and "whose hands are as bands" from which the unwary can't escape.

The view of the woman has continued into the contemporary debate about the ordination of women. Chesterton's work, as quoted by Mascall (1972), revealed the view of clergymen on women's ordination: "... they are not militant enough .... They do not create a revolution; what they do is create anarchy, and the difference between these is not a question of violence, but a question of fruitfulness and finality." The woman is still accused of being the vehicle of temptation for man. However, some feminists question this view of women as unjust and deriving from the androcentricity of women's culture. The question of hermeneutics, exegesis and the authority of the Bible has even been raised in the consideration of the issue of the ordination of women.

Williams (1938), as quoted by (Mascall, 1972), noted that there is a well-known, though mysterious, affinity between religious emotion and sex emotion and the stimulation of the sex emotion. Williams goes on to note that "the efficient in any form of divine worship should not be such as to convey the very slightest avoidable suggestion of the kind which we have indicated to the imagination of any present". He expressed the view that men are much less likely than women to be an involuntary sex-related emotional cause of distraction during public worship. Williams claimed that this observation is an immune table fact of nature, like the law of gravity, which modern progress cannot abolish. He adds that rather than implying the moral superiority of men over women, this fact is based on some kind of greater weakness and susceptibility on the part of men. Writing in the same vein, Herbert (1981), a Baptist minister, noted that. In contrast, the average woman is not unduly affected by the appearance of a man standing in a pulpit, "if a woman stands there, men, being men, will often find that their thoughts are less on the word spoken than on the speaker".

The biblical story of creation and the curses imposed on Adam and Eve have become a prototype for male and female differences. On the one hand, God's formation of Eve from Adam's side sends all males on a quintessential search for wholeness, found only in marriage and the unity of husband and wife (*Yevamot* and *Niddah*). On the other hand, Eve's role as a helpmate, her designation as the mother of all life, and the hierarchical basis of her relationship with Adam (Genesis 3) have been used by the *rabbis* as proof of the distinctions between male and female roles (Nelson, 1993). The Bible uses different language when describing the giving



of the *Torah* at Sinai: “speak” to the women – in a soft tone, and “talk” to the men – in a harsh tone (*Mekhilta*, Exodus 19:3). The women were asked before the men because it is the nature of men to follow the opinion of women (*Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer*). The women refused to contribute their jewellery to the golden calf, thus exhibiting greater faith than the men (*Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer*), and the women loved the land of Israel more than the men, prompting one commentary to bemoan the fact that Moses sent male spies and not female ones (*Kli Yakar*). The daughters of Zelophehad, who demonstrated their love of the land by requesting a portion, epitomised the constructive nature of the women of that generation who built up what the men had destroyed (*Numbers 27:10*) (Nelson, 1993).

Several commentaries have analysed women’s exemption from some time-limited positive commandments. Abudarham (fourteenth century) explained that a wife was subservient to her husband to meet his needs, and their marriage would suffer if her husband demanded something from her while she was performing God’s commands. Other authorities have said that females were freed from time-bound laws to use their nurturing nature to manage the home and children without time constraints. The nature of a woman to find all her honour within (*Psalms 45:14*) strengthened the concept that women controlled the private sphere while men dominated public life.

### **The Priesthood of Women in the Methodist Church Nigeria**

The church comprises women who are mature in age and experience and who, after training, are appointed to pastoral or vocational work among the women members of the church. These consist of categories of workers as may be so designated by Methodist conferences from time to time. To become a priest in the Methodist Church, Nigeria, “admission of candidates for training and entry into the ordained ministry shall be in accordance with Methodist procedure. Constitutionally, after the candidate must have heard the “call,” he must have the following specified qualification. The person must be a fully accredited lay preacher. His candidacy must pass through the prayerful scrutiny of the Leaders/Council Meeting of the local congregation, the Quarterly Meeting of his circuit, the Synod of his Diocese, and finally, he must enjoy acceptance by the conference. After the above five qualifications, he will undergo (3) three years of training in one of the Methodist Theological Colleges, and to become a full priest, the candidate further studies at Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu, with an annual examination after which he will now be ordained into the priesthood order. This is called probation because he will be watched in all ramifications of life to know whether he is fit enough to be ordained or not” (M.C.N.Constitution).

All that is said about election into priesthood order in Methodism may seem to be similar to what Christ said:

Truly, truly, I say to you he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs on by another way that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. John 10:1-3 (R.S.V)

This is to say that when one claims to have heard the call from God to do His work, one must pass through certain procedures specified by his denomination. There is no doubt that the Methodist Church follows Christ’s example by including women in the ministry of the Church. However, the specific roles that women play within the Methodist Church must be examined.





## DEACONESSES

The word “deaconess” is a translation of Greek *diakonos* which simply means “servant” or “one who ministers” to another, a masculine noun which was used both by men and women with two distinct meanings. Paul, for example, speaks of himself and of his co-workers and *diakonoi* (servants), ministers of Christ, of the Gospel and of the new covenant (1 Corinthians 3:5; 11 Corinthians 3-6). He also speaks of his apostolic work as a *diakonos*. Female deacons were needed in the early centuries when the sexes could not mingle freely. In the contemporary Methodist Church, they perform varieties of services in the care of women, including providing assistance during water baptism. The candidate for baptism enters the pool almost naked; the deaconess plunges her into the water three times and completes the anointing by rubbing oil over her entire body. Also, female deacons are indispensable in the burial of women, the catechising of women, and caring for sick women at home. They never function as heads of the community but perform roles auxiliary to the pastors, elders and bishops (Akintunde, 2005).

### Challenges of Women's Priesthood in the Methodist Church, Nigeria

It is evident that there are encouraging trends in the Methodist Church Nigeria on women's priesthood. New perspectives gained from the study of the scriptures and from reflection on the course of history are being translated into concrete realities. Some churches are still at the initial stages of investigations, organising conferences, and establishing informal study groups which focus on women in ministry. Other churches have moved this to definite legislation which grants women equal status with men in church leadership. But Methodist Church Nigeria has gone beyond women's ordination to the presbyter's office. In particular, there is the need to search for ways to actualise the local churches and ideals that are written in the MCN Constitution. Ministers and theological institutions are the people who have the most influence in this area. Ministers belong to the task of educating the congregation and implementing policies. To theological institutions falls the responsibility of sole training future ministers so that they will be competent to redress the balance of ministerial function as they enter the spheres of churches in MCN.

Obviously, the women's priesthood is faced with certain challenges that cannot be over-emphasised, as there is no gain without pain. Though many seem to pretend that the challenges are not there, they are obvious in the ministry, family and the community at large. However, some of the prevailing problems or challenges are discussed below:

#### Women priests cannot solemnise couples in marriage

In MCN, no matter the age or years of travel (the years of serving the church) by a female priest, she cannot be allowed to either solemnise or give marriage blessings to a couple.

#### Women priests cannot conduct Eucharistic service (Holy Communion), which is the highest service in the church

In truth, some women priests so desire and even try to influence the church's authority to give permission to them to conduct the Holy Communion Service, but this will certainly remain a mirage as some part of the church's doctrine can never be altered.



### **Women priests cannot conduct infant baptism, let alone adult baptism**

This seems to be yet another secret headache to women priests in Methodist Church in Nigeria. Unfortunately, nothing can be done to it, as the church's authority is not totally vested in one person but upon the church's highest governing body (The Conference), which constitutes all categories of leaders and is dominated by male priests and male laities.

### **Male ministers are given preferential treatment over female ministers in terms of promotion**

In Nigeria's Methodist Churches, the experience to date has been that the promotion rate of male priests cannot in any way be compared with that of female ones. Also, no matter how many years a woman must have spent in the church's ministry, the order of procession and recession during services usually have female/women priests at the front (reverse order) of their male counterparts.

### **Intra-gender conflict that is, female against female ministers in the church**

As it is with the feminine nature, most women tend to feel more important than others. Even in the church's ministry, this tendency is manifested as female priests strive for so many irrelevancies amongst themselves. Unfortunately, still, some do it with their male counterparts, particularly when it seems that they have "human connections at the top," so to say. Notwithstanding, such is always made to put their hands where they should be (as the Yoruba people would put it).

### **Gender discrimination in some local churches in Methodist Church, Nigeria, is evident**

It is not new that some local churches in Methodist Church, Nigeria, will never allow women priests to pastor their churches no matter how spirit-filled they are or their level of education, influence, wealth, position or power. Hence, despite the priesthood of women in the church, there is a great restriction on how far a woman priest can go in displaying her potential.

### **The Emphasis of Luke on the Role of Women in Birth Narrative**

A close examination of Luke's gospel by Metzger (2005) portrays his emphasis on the role of women in the narratives of the birth of Jesus Christ. This is, in fact, the only section where the roles of women are far more powerful than in the rest of the gospel. It is the only section where women fully gave speeches that men did not censure. Perhaps Luke has permitted these women characters to enjoy such recognition because the context is the traditional women's role of bearing and raising children. However, Shaberg (1992) contends that Luke's attention was not on the mothers but on the sons. There seems to be a contradiction in the scholar's submission. While initially accepting the fact of the special attention given to the women, one wonders why the scholar later thought the attention was more on the sons than on the mothers. The notion that Luke has an interest in women is not a debatable issue. A comparison of his gospel with both Mark and Matthew attests to the fact that women are involved in diverse roles in Luke's gospel and are accorded equal recognition at par with men. Fitzmyer (year of publication?) buttresses this fact when he observes that the technique called "pairing" or "step-parallelism" occurs only in this gospel. This implies the narration of a story of a man being quickly followed by that of a woman. The pairing occurs mostly in the discourses of Jesus; for instance, Luke 13: 18-21 refers to a man who planted a mustard seed and a woman with leaven, and 15: 4-10



refers to the kingdom parables. Some healing miracles form pairs. In four, the healing of the man with an unclean spirit was followed by the healing of Simeon Peter's mother-in-law. In chapter seven, Jesus cured the centurion's dying son and raised the widow of Nain's son from the dead.

Therefore, Luke's emphasis on the roles of these women in the birth narratives is one of his characteristics. Similarly, Luke portrays them in their traditional role to bring women in as God's partners in fulfilling his plan of salvation of mankind. He emphasises, right from the outset, God's reversal of the world values. He, therefore, opens what for him is history's most important story, which is the association of Jesus with the least important people in his society. These are Elizabeth, a barren wife, Mary, a virgin peasant girl; and Anna, a widow. If sin and death come into the world through a woman, then it is expedient that the saviour comes through a woman at the appointed time (Gal. 4:4). The active roles of these women depict the fact of their involvement in the ministry of Jesus in the latter time. In the same vein, Luke attempts to confirm the fact that the redemptive work of Jesus is not exclusive to men. Race, colour, gender, or class are no barriers to the redemptive plan of God or necessary for admission into the kingdom of God. Abogunrin (2004:32) emphasises this as he adds:

Jesus came to accomplish a universal redemption... Admission is open on an equal basis to Jews, Samaritans ... sinners, and respectable men and women as well.

Jesus as the redeemer in later years, demands absolute loyalty, which these women exhibited unhindered.

Carson (1997) notes that the reason Anna was called a prophetess is not known and that it might be because she had been the wife of a prophet or because she was employed in celebrating the praises of God (cf.. 1 Chron. 25:1, 2, 4; 1 Sam. 10:5) or because she herself foretold future events, being inspired. Although the Old Testament did include prophetesses, they were much less prominent than male prophets in the Jewish tradition of this period. *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* also believes that it was remarkable to find a woman recognised as a prophetess at a time when no man was recognised as a prophet. Most Bible interpreters also agreed that the name "Anna" is the Hebrew name "Hannah" as found in 1 Samuel 1:2, and the meaning of the name is Grace, and in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, widows who never remarried were considered pious and faithful. If one adds the two numbers given in the text here, seven and eighty-four (taking eighty-four as the length of Anna's widowhood rather than her age), and she was married at the common age of fourteen, one could see her as 105 also.

Luke 2:36 ff. Ἦν αἰσθητή, as in Mark 8:1; Mark 15:40; also 1 Corinthians 14:38. After αἰσθητή, Luke 2:36, the copula ἦν is not unnecessarily to be supplied, in which case (so usually, as also by Metzger) a point is placed after Luke 2:37; but this αἰσθητή is the subject to which ἀνθωμολογεῖτο belongs as a verb so that all that intervenes contains accompanying definitions of the subject, namely thus: This one, being advanced in great age after she had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, she too a widow up to eighty-four years, who departed not from the temple, with fastings and prayers rendering service to God night and day and having come forward at that same hour, offered praise to the Lord, etc. Observe this—(1) that ζήσασα ... αὐτῆς, Luke 2:36, is subordinate to the προβεβηκ. ἐν ἡμ. πολλ.; (2) that at Luke 2:37, there is to be written, with Metzger, (2005) καὶ αὐτῆ (not as usually, καὶ αἰσθητή), so that the definition καὶ αὐτῆ χήρα ... ἐπιστάσα, Luke 2:37-38, contains a further





description of the woman coordinated with the προβεβηκ. ἐν ἡμ. πολλ.; (3) that καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐπιστᾶσα without any separation links itself continuously to the preceding participial definition; finally, (4) that καὶ αὐτῇ, Luke 2:37, she too, places Anna on a parallel with Simeon; as the latter had come forward a pious aged man, so she also a pious aged woman. προφήτις Plat. Kurt, (1998:244) A; Eur. Ion. 42, 321; LXX. Exodus 15:20; Isaiah 8:3, al. Hebrew מִשְׁנֵי־בְרָכָה, an interpreter of God, a woman with the gift of apocalyptic discourse, Revelation 2:20; Acts 21:9; Acts 2:17. She makes use of this gift, Luke 2:38. ἐπτά consequently a brief and (ἀπὸ τ. παρθεν. αὐτ.) her only marriage, after which she remained in widowhood, which among the ancients was accounted very honourable.

Verse 38. Coming in that instant (aute te hora) at that very time-while Simeon held the blessed Redeemer in his arms and was singing his departing and triumphal song. Gave thanks likewise

She, as well as Simeon, returned God public thanks for having sent this Saviour to Israel. Spake of him of the nature and design of his mission; and the glory that should take place in the land. To all of them that looked for redemption as Daniel's seventy weeks were known to be now completed, the more pious Jews were in constant expectation of the promised Messiah. They were expecting redemption, lutrwsiv; such redemption as was to be brought about by an atonement, or expiatory victim, or ransom price. Luke 1:68.

### **What are the challenges facing women ministers in the Methodist Church Nigeria in the discharge of their priestly duties?**

The number of female students recommended into the ministry between 1999 and 2010.

#### **Methodist Theological Institute, Umuahia and Sagamu**

Umuahia			Sagamu		
Year of Entry	No	Year of Ordination	Year of Entry	No	Year of Ordination
1999	1	2005	1999	-	-
2000	-	2006	2000	-	-
2001	-	2007	2000	-	-
2002	-	2008	2002	1	2008
2003	2	2009	2003	-	2009
2004	1	2010	2004	1	2010
2005	3	2011	2005	1	2011
2006	-	2012	2006	-	2012
2007	4	2013	2007	-	2013
2008	5	2014	2008	1	2014
2009	6	2015	2009	3	2015
2010	7	2016	2010	3	2016

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2016*



## **Assessment on the Priesthood and Women Ordination in the Methodist Church Nigeria from 2005 – 2016**

Below information on the assessment on the priesthood and women ordination in the Methodist Church Nigeria from 2005 – 2016 was gathered by this researcher thus:

2005 - In the year 2005 four (4) male ministers were appointed as presbyters before the official time. The reason is best known to the authority. No female was appointed.

2006 – Three (3) male ministers were appointed before the normal time. No female minister was inclusive.

2007 – Three (3) male ministers were appointed as presbyters by the authority of the church.

2008 - Another four (4) male ministers were equally appointed as new presbyters in the church in the year 2008 but no female minister was considered qualified.

2009 - Two (2) ministers were considered and appointed as presbyters. No female minister was appointed.

2010 - Four (4) male ministers were appointed whereas there was no reason for their appointment. There was no single female minister among them.

2011 - Two (2) male ministers were appointed. No female minister was.

2012 - In the year 2012, no minister, both male and female, was promoted to the office of the presbyter.

2013 - In the year 2015, fifteen (15) new male presbyters were appointed for the fact that they met the requirements of the church. Additional two (2) ministers were still appointed, and no female minister was part of them.

2014 - Seven (7) male ministers were appointed. This time, only one (1) female minister was appointed as the first female presbyter in the Methodist Church of Nigeria.

2015 - Six (6) male ministers were appointed as presbyters, whereas no single female minister was part of them.

In 2012 a female minister was posted to the Methodist Church, Epe. Throughout her stay there for one year, she could not observe Holy Communion Service because all the communicants told her that if she tried to celebrate the Holy Communion, nobody would partake in it. They frustrated her effort until she was transferred to Diocesan Headquarters as an administrator. (personal communication, 2013). Another female minister in Ilesa lamented that church members are not taking communion from her. Likewise, in the Eastern part of the country, a female minister was not allowed to mount the pulpit.



## THE SUMMARY

The summary of the interview revealed that there is a gender disparity between male and female ministers in the Methodist Church of Nigeria. The suggestion to the M.C.N is that both the authority and the entire members of M.C.N should understand that the gospel we preach started from women; even Anna the Prophetess and Simeon played complementary roles in Luke 2: 36-39.

The following are the recommendations that the Methodist Church, Nigeria needs to put in place to guarantee the role of women in the church:

1. The conference of the Methodist Church, Nigeria should undertake a study on the Christian Theology of the human person to dispel all biblical misconceptions that form the basis of opposition to women ordination.
2. Women should be recognised and integrated into the communion of love. The Church should recognise that women also have received the gift of the Holy Spirit just as their male counterparts, and they should be fully integrated into the community of faith through baptism and participation in the Eucharist.
3. That the collaboration of men and women is indispensable for evangelising the world and for renewing the life of the church.
4. Women, in particular, should be given special theological education, which would increase their courage and self-confidence and enable them to free themselves from the societal prejudice and negative stereotypical image which they have come to accept.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abogunrin, S.O. (2004). Decolonizing New Testament Interpretation in Africa, in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa. Biblical studies series.* (4.) Abogunrin S.O. (ed.). Ibadan: Philarem Corporate Publishers
- Akintunde, D. O. (2005). *The Lukean Narratives about Women*; Ibadan, African Association for the Study of Religion, Nigeria Publication Bureau.
- Bruce, M. M. (2005). *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Edmonds: Freiburger Graphische.
- Carson, D.A. (1997), *New Bible Commentary*, 21<sup>st</sup> Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Familusi, M.M. (2014b). *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-2013)* Lagos, Methodist.
- Fitzmyer, J.A. (1981a). *The Gospel According to Luke*, (1) New York; Doubleday.
- Herbert, L. (1981). *All the Women of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Mascall, E.L. (1972). *Women and the Priesthood of the Church Why Not?* Priesthood and the Ministry of Women, Michael Bruce and G.E Duffield. (eds.): appleford, Maircham: Momor.
- Metzger, B.M. (2005). *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Germany: Freiburger Graphische
- Metzger, B.M. (2006) *Methodist News* (2) August edition.
- Moullder, W.J. (1998) "Shahedrin" in Bromily, Isbe: Doubleday.
- Nichols, A. (1990). *The Bible and Women's Ministry*, Canberra: Acorn Press.



- 
- Oderinde, O.A (2012). *Gender Relations Lessons from Jesus Relationship with Women in Mark*, Ibadan: Korem
- Schaberg, J. (1992). "Luke" in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom & Sharon Ringe. Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster: John Knox.