

Extraordinary Women in Leadership

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Moderator: Sherry Surratt, Director of Women's Initiatives at Leadership Network
Churches are realizing that women are wonderfully gifted in many leadership areas.

Missy Hannon, Living Hope Church, Seattle, WA (www.livinghopechurch.com)
Executive Pastor

Tell us about your job.

The role includes leadership strategies, communication, implementing vision, launching churches and overseeing multi-site development.

What was it like to go from volunteer to paid staff?

I was excited at first, but concerned about formalizing the role. When it became more critical to the church—overseeing communications, graphics & productions departments, it changed our family schedule. Growing from 2 to 5 services caused family conflict.

Biggest joy in ministry:

Empowering people: creating a pathway for them to serve Christ.

Biggest challenge:

I had to earn the respect of the men I worked with, through communication, one-on-one meetings, ask questions. You can't expect that you're going to be welcome. Your mission doesn't change. The time that you put into gaining their respect is worth it.

How did you earn their respect while forging a new path?

Assess who you're working with. The book *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus at Work* is helpful. I seek to understand those I work with through projects, working with excellence, communication—not just assuming you're on the same page.

What's the best way for a church to encourage women in leadership?

Authenticate every gift & every role. Women are leading, let's be honest about it.

How can a woman leader step up?

Approach your direct report first, and tell them what you dream about doing. If that doesn't work, approach a senior leader. Dream, Pray, be vocal.

What would you say to pastors?

Don't be fearful—it's worth it. It's not an easy path, but God will bless it.

Jennifer Lefforge, Irving Bible Church, Irving, TX, (www.irvingbible.org)
Experience Architect

What is your job?

To get people connected with the mission and vision of the church, helping them with their experience at church. I oversee everything from the cones in the parking lot to the usher team, greeting team, communion supplies, Bible studies and home groups.

How did that happen for you?

I always speak my mind. Sometimes I get in trouble for things that I've said. Instead of firing me, they promoted me. The pastor saw in me a willingness to speak truth.

Greatest joy in ministry:

Helping people to find their passion and then to go out and do it.

Biggest challenge in ministry:

People who are not theologically comfortable with women in Bible teaching roles.

How can a church encourage women in leadership?

It's the same for women or men: constantly be on the lookout for their giftedness. Tell them what you see in them. Find talent, identify it, and point it out. Many will not see it in themselves.

What would you say to a senior pastor?

Put your money where your mouth is. Go out and find the women and educate them to do the job. Give the minorities in your church a voice, including women.

Linda Slaton, Fellowship Bible Church, Little Rock, AK, (www.fbclr.com)
Women's Release Director

What do you do?

I empower women to be difference-makers by helping them to find the work that God created them—and gifted them—to do.

I do it 1) by teaching a class based on my book, *Women on a Mission*, which is self-discovery tool; 2) by meeting with women individually and connecting them up to existing ministries; 3) create new places for them to serve.

Women have a hard time seeing our own gifts. We dismiss them as unimportant because they are so familiar to us.

How did your church come up with this position?

There was a ministry called Kingdom Builders, but it was just for men.

I told the pastor about my class and he said it was exactly what he was trying to do.

What's the biggest change you've seen?

Women are gaining credibility & respect. Visible proof of the difference they are making.

Biggest leadership challenge:

1) Everyone on staff has to buy into a new way of viewing ministry: releasing people to minister, and the staff supports them; a move from high control to a culture of high trust.

2) Helping individual women overcome their fears and insecurities. Women are dying to make a difference. If you affirm and authenticate them, they will run with it.

How can churches help women step up?

Look at the individual instead of your needs. Help them figure out what they have to offer, and God will have a spot for them. Empower them to do what they are passionate about.