

Expecting Ministry Wives: An interview-based analysis of the expectations upon ministry wives in the Sydney Anglican Diocese in the 1960s-80s. What were the expectations placed upon them, did they change and if so, how and why?

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One evening in late 1964 about twenty women gathered at Moore College. They were wives and fiancées of some students of the College. They came to evenings such as this one, which were held quarterly, to share fellowship and receive guidance on what it meant to be a ‘ministry wife’.¹ On this particular evening the speaker was Alison Reid, wife of John Reid, then rector at Gladesville and later Bishop Reid of South Sydney.² The women were encouraged: ‘you’ve got to remember you’re *not* the unpaid curate’. One of the young women present that evening, Jan Livingstone, reported this remark to her father-in-law, who was a Sydney Anglican clergyman. He replied, ‘you’ve got to remember you *are*’. This episode displays the tension surrounding what was expected of ministry wives³ in the Sydney Diocese in the 1960s-80s. This tension arose because these expectations were beginning to change. This change, while perhaps not radical, was still significant. Yet it has been largely underappreciated or left unaddressed by historians. For example, Janet West (herself a Sydney Anglican) in her work *Daughters of Freedom* includes one of the few examinations

¹ Christine Jensen, ‘Interview Regarding Expectations of Ministry Wives (1960s-80s)’, May 2, 2014, 9; Jan Livingstone, ‘Interview Regarding Expectations of Ministry Wives (1960s-80s)’, February 20, 2014, 1.

² Jan Livingstone, ‘Re: Question: Alison Reid’, May 27, 2014.

³ The use of ‘ministry wives’ is used to include not only Rectors’ wives, but also women married to assistant ministers, college students and men involved in other para-church roles (e.g. as theological lecturers, leading Anglicare etc.)

of expectations of ministry wives in the 1960s-80s. In this brief subsection, she suggests that nationally expectations of ministry wives lowered somewhat in the 1970s ‘largely as a result of the women’s movement’ (emphasis mine).⁴ She goes on to suggest that in the Sydney Diocese this change was even less noticeable: ‘there appeared to be little change from traditional roles of helpmeet and bridge between clergy and congregation’.⁵

However, on analysis, it appears that the expectations ministers and parishioners had of ministry wives in the Sydney Diocese (and indeed, the expectations the wives had of themselves) did adjust significantly from the 1960s to the 1980s, even if they continued to have the same general shape as those of the previous generation. Hospitality became less about appearance and more about substance. Leadership became less characterized by formality and more by mutual lay involvement. Parishioners’ ability to access the ministry family become more measured and the involvement of the ministry wife became more flexible as some wives returned to the workforce. Further, while these changes were certainly due in part to the women’s movement, they were also due to other changes in Australian society, in Christian ministry and in the Sydney Diocese in particular.

SOURCES

There is a noticeable lack of written sources on the issue of ministry wives in the Sydney Diocese in this period. What commentary there is tends to be brief (e.g. West),⁶ incidental in the context of some other discussion (e.g. Mothers’ Union, women’s ordination etc.) or is the

⁴ Janet West, *Daughters of Freedom: A History of Women in the Australian Church* (Sutherland, N.S.W.: Albatross Books, 1997), 396.

⁵ West, *Daughters of Freedom*, 394.

⁶ e.g. West, *Daughters of Freedom*.

American pastoral variety and thus contains few concrete details for our context.⁷ This lack of sources necessitates reliance upon interviews. Rather than surveying a large number of women, the approach selected has been to choose four women with a variety of experiences and interview them in depth. These women are Jan Livingstone ('Livingstone'), Delle Roberts ('Roberts'), Ann South ('South') and Christine Jensen ('Jensen'). The weakness of this approach is that by virtue of being in ministry for so long and being willing to talk about the topic, these women are more likely to represent the 'success stories' of ministry wives. Others were approached who had less positive experiences and did not wish to participate directly. Thus these sources, whilst very helpful, need to be understood in context and with due weight given not only to their own experiences but also to the experiences of their friends and peers.

To assist this discussion, it is worth briefly introducing the four interviewees. Roberts married her husband Vic in 1959 while she was working as secretary to the head of the Home Mission Society. They ministered together at the Anglican parishes of Lindfield (Vic as curate, 1959-61), Dural (Vic as rector, 1961-64) and then Bournemouth and Dagenham in the UK (1964-67). On returning to Australia, her husband became General Secretary of the South American Missionary Society until 1976. Roberts then served alongside her husband while he was rector at Northbridge (1973-78) and at Mosman (1978-1984), and then Archdeacon of the Wollongong Region (from 1984). Livingstone worked as a teacher until her children were born and then ministered alongside her husband at the Anglican parishes of Hunters Hill (1965-69), Rooty Hill (1969-74), Green Valley (1974-79), and then Normanhurst until 1987, when her husband became director of CareForce (now Anglicare), at which point Livingstone became Diocesan President of Sydney Mothers' Union. South worked as a TAFE teacher of

⁷ Jill Briscoe, *Renewal on the Run: Embracing the Privileges and Expectations of a Ministry Wife* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1973); Wallace Denton, *The Minister's Wife as Counsellor* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965).

fashion design before resigning to serve alongside her husband Jim at St Matthew's Manly (1968), Port Kembla (1969-70), Green Acre (1971-73),⁸ and then Emu Plains (1973-2006), during which time she became extensively involved in ministry wife support and mentoring in the Diocese. Jensen studied at Moore College (1967-70) and taught at Abbotsleigh (1969-70), before having her children. Meanwhile she served alongside her husband Peter at Mascot (1969), Broadway (1969-76), Moore College (1973-76 and 1980-2001) and in the intervening period at St Andrew's North Oxford in the UK (1976-1980).

OVERVIEW OF EXPECTATIONS UPON MINISTRY WIVES

As Roberts recalls, in the 1950s and early '60s the expectations of the ministry wife were 'very specific' and did not tend to change when the new clergy wife came.⁸ Even if these expectations became more fluid in the '70s and '80s, they continued to fall into four broad categories. A ministry wife was expected (1) to show hospitality, (2) to take leadership in some form, (3) to be accessible to congregation members, and (4) to otherwise be involved in and supportive of the church's ministry.

The most commonly expressed expectation was that ministry wives should show hospitality. In the 1950s and 1960s, this hospitality was to be of a certain frequency and certain standard. For Livingstone, the first shock of ministry was the frequency of hospitality: 'you had a cup of tea after everything. I didn't expect that. I didn't realize that you had refreshments after everything'.⁹ Such hospitality included Sunday lunches, afternoon teas, Sunday School parties, end of year functions and so forth. The standard of hospitality was exemplified by women such as Livingstone's role model Mrs Sherlock (at Hunter's Hill) with her 'lovely

⁸ Delle Roberts, 'Interview Regarding Expectations of Ministry Wives (1960s-80s)', March 7, 2014, 3.

⁹ Livingstone, 'Interview', 2.

suppers’;¹⁰ Jensen’s role model Mrs Kerle (wife of Bishop Kerle) who would first scoop ice-cream into a glass serving-bowl before placing it on the table;¹¹ or Mrs Ailsa Knox.¹² Livingstone remarked of Mrs Sherlock that despite health difficulties:

she was the most beautiful, lovely minister’s wife you can imagine... She was always opening her house for people. So I thought that’s what you do, so that’s what I did. That was really her - she showed me how to do it.¹³

The standard expected for this hospitality meant that for Sunday lunch, barbecue chicken and salad would not do.¹⁴ South noted that for some ministry wives of the 1950s, the standard seemed to be ‘perfection’ – ‘I’ve always got to dress in a certain way... behave in a certain way...have so many people for afternoon tea during the week ...’.¹⁵ The emphasis could be on appearance over substance: ‘hospitality became more important for some than bible study... that was an expectation, that they’d be very proper’.¹⁶ Thus ministry wife evenings at Moore College in the ’60s seem to have focused upon fulfilling ‘the domestic role’, covering topics of cooking and house cleaning.¹⁷

The second central expectation of ministry wives was that they would assume some form of leadership role. This did not need to be ‘up-front’ speaking but rather *organizational* or at least *relational* leadership. Organizational leadership in the 1950s and early ’60s (and in

¹⁰ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 2.

¹¹ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 3.

¹² Jensen, ‘Interview’, 2; Marcia Cameron, *An Enigmatic Life: David Broughton Knox - Father of Contemporary Sydney Anglicanism* (Brunswick East, Victoria: Acorn, 2006), 204.

¹³ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 2.

¹⁴ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 13.

¹⁵ Ann South, ‘Interview Regarding Expectations of Ministry Wives (1960s-80s)’, March 18, 2014, 24.

¹⁶ South, ‘Interview’, 24.

¹⁷ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 12.

some places into the '70s and '80s) meant that the minister's wife was generally expected to lead the Mothers' Union, the Young Wives' Fellowship, the Women's Guild or the like.¹⁸ This was particularly the case for the Rector's wife, who had a clearly distinct level of responsibility compared to the curate's wife, and heightened by the fact that married curates were only just becoming more common.¹⁹ These women's groups operated quite formally, 'along the didactic line of one person being the teacher'.²⁰ Each of the interviewees showed the initiative to start new ministries – South started Women's Fellowships at Port Kembla and at Emu Plains along with women's bible studies. Livingstone started two playgroups at Rooty Hill and led the women's ministry there. At Green Valley she began a weekly Mothers' Union.²¹ Jensen used her role as lecturer's and then principal's wife to restructure the women's fellowship at Moore College and introduce small group bible studies. Similarly, Roberts introduced a new study group at Mosman, and later took up opportunities to teach further afield with CWCI.²² None of these women recounted feeling 'pushed' into these activities, but this may be because their tendency to initiate alleviated any sense of unmet expectations from parishioners.²³ However, in some cases, such as St Barnabas' Broadway in the 1960s, there was no structured women's ministry and thus the expectation that the ministry wife would display organizational leadership to some extent fell away, particularly if there was a Deaconess to do the visiting.²⁴

However, even if there was no expectation of organizational leadership, there was certainly an expectation of relational leadership. That is, that the minister's wife would have more

¹⁸ Jensen, 'Interview', 7.

¹⁹ Roberts, 'Expectations of You and Other Ministry Wives (1960s-80s)', March 7, 2014, 1.

²⁰ Roberts, 'Interview', 1.

²¹ Livingstone, 'Interview', 2, 15, 17.

²² "Christian Women Communicating International" Roberts, 'Interview', 7, 10.

²³ Livingstone, 'Interview', 4.

²⁴ Jensen, 'Interview', 5.

wisdom and knowledge and be a model for other women.²⁵ The attitude was ‘well her husband’s got a theological degree, and whether she has or hasn’t she must know more than me’. It was also expected that she would cope better with challenges and be ‘more spiritual’.²⁶ Some wives recounted that how they disciplined their children and how their children behaved became public knowledge.²⁷ Some even reported being seen as ‘set aside’ by God, such that He would look after them more than other women.²⁸ This relational leadership would often express itself in the habit of visiting, particularly in the 1950s and ’60s – either the minister’s wife visiting women of the parish, or vice versa.²⁹ It sometimes meant that ministry wives were asked to lead bible study, or attend one. However this was not always the case. For example, Jensen does not recall Ailsa Knox attending the women’s bible study meeting at Moore College in the early ’70s.³⁰ Even if its shape was somewhat variable, this relational leadership role was unavoidable: ‘you might say “well that’s not my job, I’m just my husband’s wife” [...but...] people will see you as being a leader, whether you want it or not’.³¹ Even in the ’80s, when expectations of organizational leadership had lessened, this relational leadership was still expected.³²

Thirdly, there was an expectation that the congregation would have significant access to the ministry household. This included the ‘open house’ phenomenon, where parishioners felt at ease to enter the rectory, since they saw it as quasi-public church property. South recounts that at Manly in 1968 parishioners came in and would knock on their bedroom door, saying ‘Aren’t you guys up yet?’, and on one occasion parishioners had breakfast in the South’s

²⁵ South, ‘Interview’, 17.

²⁶ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 12.

²⁷ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 12; South, ‘Interview’, 12.

²⁸ South, ‘Interview’, 5, 17.

²⁹ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 5; c.f. Denton, *The Minister’s Wife as Counsellor*, 33.

³⁰ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 26; Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 7.

³¹ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 23.

³² Jensen, ‘Interview’, 25.

kitchen while they were still in bed.³³ These expectations arose because their predecessors had had an 'open house policy'. Even in the 1970s at Emu Plains, one parishioner continued to use the rectory bathroom because she preferred it to the church one.³⁴ In 1991, in a study of 30 Sydney Diocese Anglican clergy wives, lack of privacy in living in the rectory was still recorded as a significant difficulty.³⁵

Finally, there was an expectation that the minister's wife would be involved and generally supportive. For Livingstone, this manifested in her perception that she should attend everything. And very happily she did – Mothers' Union, Young Wives, dinner parties, the tennis club, play dates, even the elderly 'Friends of St Stephens' meetings at Normanhurst.³⁶ For others, constant attendance was not required. Rather what was expected was that the rector's wife in particular would be 'part of the overall life of the church family. If the rector's wife is not seen to be involved, that causes criticism'.³⁷ Of course, there were certain acceptable reasons for a ministry wife to have a lower level of involvement – in particular, the presence of young children.³⁸ If a wife had young children, then frequently the only expectation was that she would take care of them and 'be welcoming in the rectory', attending other events only as she was able.³⁹

Thus generally ministry wives in the 1960s-80s were expected to be hospitable, show leadership, be accessible, and be involved. Even though the shape of how the expectations

³³ South, 'Interview', 2.

³⁴ South, 'Interview', 12.

³⁵ This study entitled 'A Sociological Study on the Role of the Clergyman's Wife in the Sydney Anglican Diocese' was conducted by Catherine West as an unpublished honours thesis. Despite requests to the university department, library and the author herself, it was not able to be obtained and so we rely on accounts of the findings from secondary literature. West, *Daughters of Freedom*, 394–5.

³⁶ Livingstone, 'Interview', 2, 3, 18.

³⁷ Roberts, 'Interview', 7.

³⁸ South, 'Interview', 8; Jensen, 'Interview', 17.

³⁹ Roberts, 'Interview', 3.

were fulfilled changed over the period, the four general categories remained. In part this may be due to the evangelical convictions that underpinned these expectations seen in passages such as Titus 2, Romans 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9 and 1 Timothy 3. Interestingly, Roberts comments that while in the UK in 1976 she noticed a difference between the ministry wives who were at ‘biblical’ churches (and tended to be highly involved in the ministry) and those who did not understand the ‘need of forgiveness’ (and appeared less involved in guiding and leading their women).⁴⁰ This suggests that that either the expectations themselves, or the willingness of women to meet them, was grounded to some extent in evangelical notions of service, leadership, activism and hospitality.

FACTORS THAT CHANGED EXPECTATIONS UPON MINISTRY WIVES

Given this overview of the common or general expectations of ministry wives, what factors most contributed to them changing and how did they change? Four types of factors shaped and altered these expectations: firstly, changes in society; secondly, changes in ministry methods; thirdly, changes in the Sydney Diocese; and finally the differing sources of expectations specific to the woman herself.

1. Changing society

From the late 1960s and 1970s, second wave feminism, and with it a more general shift in attitudes to the role of women, triggered a variety of sociological impacts on Australian society. Firstly, regarding employment and education, women became more likely to enter and remain in the workforce. In 1966 the marriage bar was removed from the Commonwealth

⁴⁰ Roberts, ‘Interview’, 4.

Public Service Act, allowing women to keep their jobs once married. In 1974 the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme increased the accessibility of tertiary education. Thus, in 1976, 54% of women aged 18-34 were working, although this proportion tended to drop around 23 years of age and then increase again from age 31.⁴¹ In 1987 for the first time the proportion of women surpassed that of men in higher education.⁴² Women were investing more in their education and in their careers.

Secondly, regarding the family, there was a shift in attitudes to medical ethics.⁴³ The ‘holistic trinity’ of sex, marriage and reproduction, which underpinned traditional conceptions of family life, was beginning to change in the context of debates over divorce, birth control and abortion.⁴⁴ The Whitlam years of 1972-75 saw the implementation of the outcomes of these debates. Abortion was effectively decriminalized, homosexuality became more acceptable and no-fault divorce was introduced in the Family Law Act of 1975. The years which followed saw increased rates of divorce (even beyond the spike in 1976), cohabitation and children born out of wedlock.⁴⁵ Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* of 1970 called for women to reject the assumptions and expectations that were constricting their lives. And, more generally, there was a new emphasis for all people on the importance of personal autonomy and individual conscience.

One may ask how these changes in society impacted ministry wives and the expectations upon them. Two key impacts are notable.

⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Young Adults: Then and Now’, *Abs.gov.au*, Online: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40April+2013>.

⁴² Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Young Adults: Then and Now’.

⁴³ Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1987), 276.

⁴⁴ Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers’ Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 187.

⁴⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Family Formation: Trends in Marriage and Divorce’, *Abs.gov.au*, Online: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf>.

Firstly, these changes encouraged more ministry wives to remain in, or return to, the workforce. In 1967, one rector's wife wrote in the Mothers' Union publication *Mia Mia*: 'if a woman marries, God has ordained that she be wife and mother, a full time occupation calling for the exercise of all her talents and energies'.⁴⁶ However, the increased equality in education and the workplace, particularly from the 1970s, gave ministry wives another sphere of service and for some, a way of alleviating some of the burdens and difficulties of being a ministry wife. However, it was not a simple side step to take. Even in the late '70s and early '80s there was still a stigma and a 'guilt' which lingered for ministers' wives who also chose to work outside the home and church.⁴⁷ South recounts that 'those of us who were working were highly criticized by some of the girls who piously thought they were not working', even though South and her friends worked due to financial reasons.⁴⁸ She recounts, 'they used to say things like "are you sure you want to be in ministry because the Lord would have called both of you, not just one" and I said "well tell me about your financial status"'.⁴⁹ Of her four peers who continued to work throughout their husbands' ministries, South is confident they would have faced criticism.⁵⁰ Having said this, South herself resigned, not due to pressure from others, but rather due to a desire to serve in ministry alongside her husband, something she is unsure she would have done if Jim was not a minister.⁵¹ By 1991, the percentage of Sydney Anglican ministry wives who were working (33% based on a sample of 30), was still significantly below the national average of 53.2%.⁵² Thus, whilst changes in society did

⁴⁶ Various (anonymous contributors), 'Remembering That We Have a Deaconess Order in Our Church, Do You Think Women Should Be Ordained in the Priesthood?', *Mia Mia - The Magazine for Australian Members of the Mothers' Union*, March 1967, 90.

⁴⁷ South, 'Interview', 5.

⁴⁸ South, 'Interview', 3.

⁴⁹ South, 'Interview', 3.

⁵⁰ South, 'Interview', 4.

⁵¹ South, 'Interview', 13.

⁵² West, *Daughters of Freedom*, 294.

increase the likelihood of ministry wives working outside home and ministry, it did not place them on par with their female peers.

Interestingly, several interviewees expressed the perception that while some ministry wives returned to work ‘quickly’ after children for financial reasons, others did it as a way of coping with the difficulties and expectations of ministry.⁵³ They also suggested that this is what they would have done if they had not wanted to be so involved.⁵⁴ That is, they would have ‘cut themselves off and [gone] to work and [gone] to one bible study a week’.⁵⁵ Jensen explained:

I think it’s quite hard to be a ministry wife because you’re self-employed and you have to be a self-starter. And [for] some people ... it’s easier to go and get a job where your boundaries are defined rather than having to think ‘well, what am I going to do today?’ or to be strategic.

This option of working was not available to the previous generation of ministry wives who had to ‘just put up with it’.⁵⁶

A second impact of these sociological changes on ministry wives was how the rise of individualism provided the social fuel for a theological re-emphasis upon the value of the individual woman in the eyes of God. The ‘new’ thing was that women were ‘beginning to be determined to be themselves’.⁵⁷ This meant that ministry wives were more confident to

⁵³ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 10.

⁵⁴ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 11.

⁵⁵ South, ‘Interview’, 18.

⁵⁶ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 11.

⁵⁷ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 12.

express their own opinions and respond to expectations they felt were unrealistic.⁵⁸ For example, ministers and their wives could ask to move out of the rectory if they felt this was best for their family.⁵⁹ Underpinning these sociological shifts were theological concepts which encouraged women to regain a sense of their own responsibility and value before God.⁶⁰ Thus South remarked, ‘I think God’s called us to be ourselves’ (as opposed to copying some idealised model of a ministry wife).⁶¹

But these changes in society were not the only ones affecting expectations upon ministry wives. They were also affected by changes in ministry rationales and methods.

2. Changing ministry

The 1960s and ’70s saw a shift from more formal ministry structures to more lay-inclusive models, amidst an emptying out of “nominals” from the churches.

From the 1960s to ’80s church attendance nationally, and also in Sydney Anglican churches, lowered proportionally.⁶² It appears that nominal adherents were no longer attending. As South recalls, ‘people started to come to church because they really wanted to come to church and hear the gospel’, not because it was the ‘done thing’.⁶³ This was reflected in Sunday

⁵⁸ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 25.

⁵⁹ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 24.

⁶⁰ Roberts, ‘Interview’, 11; South, ‘Interview’, 3.

⁶¹ South, ‘Interview’, 16.

⁶² Hilary Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 198; Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 65.

⁶³ South, ‘Interview’, 15.

School attendance (a fifth in the 1970s of what it was in the 1950s), and also in numbers of confirmees.⁶⁴

This decrease perhaps triggered, or at least was accompanied by, a move away from formal, structured ministries. Mothers' Union is a key example. Membership in Mothers' Union peaked in 1960 and then steadily declined.⁶⁵ By 1971 even *Mia Mia* recognized MU's characterization as 'the grandmothers' union'.⁶⁶ And the 1974 redraft of MU's aims and objects responded to this shift in its push for inclusivity.⁶⁷ Over time, ministry wives formed less and less of the MU leadership, ultimately seen in 1986 when Mrs Nan Black became the first non-clergy wife MU national president.⁶⁸

But in the place of such formal ministries, new more mutual and lay-inclusive forms of ministry emerged, such as bible studies, play groups and lay training. Theologically this was triggered by a renewed interest in the priesthood of all believers rooted in texts such as 1 Peter 2:4-12 and Ephesians 4:1-16, and actualized in the validation of lay involvement by the Billy Graham crusade of 1959.⁶⁹ The 1960s and '70s saw the rise of the small group bible study, particularly among young mothers.⁷⁰ These groups were endorsed in the 'Looking into the Parish' report for Synod of 1972⁷¹. Thus, Jensen recalls bible studies beginning when she was at Bellevue Hill in the mid '60s.⁷² Roberts recalls introducing small groups at

⁶⁴ Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese*, 297.

⁶⁵ Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008*, 219.

⁶⁶ A. M. Gilbert, 'In Defense of the Grandmother's Union', *Mia Mia - The Magazine for Australian Members of the Mothers' Union*, May 1971.

⁶⁷ Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876-2008*, 229.

⁶⁸ Avis Matheson, *A History of the Mothers' Union in Australia* (Australia: Mothers' Union in Australia, 1992), 59.

⁶⁹ Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese*, 298.

⁷⁰ Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese*, 298.

⁷¹ Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese*, 291.

⁷² Jensen, 'Interview', 6.

Northbridge parish after attending a workshop with James Mallison in 1973.⁷³ For ministry wives, the shift meant they had increased involvement in mutual-teaching roles as they became bible study members and leaders. Thus, in 1973, when South started at Emu Plains, ‘my first week there, they [the women] begged me to start a bible study’.⁷⁴ And similarly, from 1985 Jensen encouraged Moore faculty wives to participate in small group bible studies.⁷⁵ The late ’60s and early ’70s saw the rise of playgroups.⁷⁶ Often these were instigated or championed by the minister’s wife.⁷⁷ The shift to lay involvement in women’s ministry was also driven forward by the appointment and work of Narelle Jarrett as Principal of Mary Andrews College from 1985. Livingstone vividly remembers her first ‘Biblical Foundations’ course in 1986, which was aimed at young lay women. It gave women in-depth bible training, and conveyed Jarrett’s vision for mobilizing lay women where they were in the parishes.⁷⁸

Increasingly the question of ordination of women came on the agenda, culminating in the General Synod passing legislation permitting the ordination of women in 1985. In some parishes this led to tension – Roberts recalls having to hold her ground at Mosman in the face of ‘young women [who] were very aggressive in their desire to see women holding the same ministries in the church as men’. In others it involved debate, such as at Normanhurst in the 1980s.⁷⁹ Whilst this movement was very significant more broadly, it was the changes discussed above which more directly impacted the expectations upon ministry wives in the Sydney Diocese from 1960 to 1989.

⁷³ Roberts, ‘Interview’, 5.

⁷⁴ South, ‘Interview’, 10, 20–21.

⁷⁵ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 26.

⁷⁶ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 7.

⁷⁷ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 2.

⁷⁸ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 12–13.

⁷⁹ Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 22.

In summary, what was the effect of these changes on the ministry wife?

Firstly, they meant she potentially faced more conflict. As we've seen, in the 1960s-80s, ministers were seeking to engage with a quickly changing society and ministry methodology. This change at times created conflict where the ministry wife was in the middle. For example, the increase in women's workers on at least a couple of occasions required the minister to establish 'demarcation zones' as to who was responsible for what.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the increased rate of change in this period meant some ministry wives found themselves being used as a 'buffer' by parishioners. Rather than expressing their dissatisfaction at the changes to the minister, they would go through the minister's wife to get to him. For Jensen this presence of conflict formed the main challenge facing ministry wives of the '60s-'80s.⁸¹

Secondly, however, these changes in ministry also gave women more flexibility and less formality in how they served. The bible studies, playgroups and so forth meant more ministry was done by women, for women, in less formal forms. This shifted the expectations on ministry wives. On the one hand, there was more flexibility – they were not expected to lead the Mothers' Union, and were more able to 'play to [their] strengths'.⁸² On the other hand, this flexibility favoured those who were natural leaders, who could take the initiative and adapt to the changing face of ministry. For those who did not have this personality type, this flexibility may have raised more difficulties, as it became less clear what exactly was expected of them. As discussed above, it was more likely to be these women who took up the new opportunities to enter or return to the workforce. This is likely to have produced a broader diversity in what it looked like to be a ministry wife.

⁸⁰ Jensen, 'Interview', 10, 26.

⁸¹ Jensen, 'Interview', 25–26.

⁸² Jensen, 'Interview', 18.

Thirdly, the changes in ministry triggered a shift in emphasis regarding hospitality, from appearance to substance. Jensen vividly recalls being invited to a College student's home for dinner between 1973-76 and being served the (humble) meal of 'Tuna Mornay and Shepherd's pie'. She was struck by the lack of formality but the presence of warm fellowship – 'that was a great lesson really. I remember that very clearly'. And on moving to the UK she began inviting people over for more simple family meals such as spaghetti.⁸³

Finally, the renewed emphasis on lay-ministry combined with the emphasis on female individualism seems to have triggered a slight shift in how some ministry wives viewed their role. While some ministry wives viewed their role as a ministry exercised as an 'ambassador' on behalf of their husband, others saw themselves more as part of the ministry team with their husband.⁸⁴ This team ministry mentality may better explain Porter's observation that Sydney Anglican couples frequently travelled together to conferences (rather than that it was an expression of 'unacknowledged emotional dependence' as Porter suggests).⁸⁵

3. An expanding, diverse Diocese

However changes within the Sydney Diocese, in particular the expansion and diversification of its parishes, also had significant impacts on the expectations upon ministry wives. These impacts are almost entirely overlooked by the literature regarding ministry wives. In 1957, the State Labor Government established a public housing estate near Liverpool called Green

⁸³ Jensen, 'Interview', 18.

⁸⁴ Livingstone, 'Interview', 4.

⁸⁵ Muriel Porter, *The New Puritans: The Rise of Fundamentalism in the Anglican Church* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2006), 113.

Valley.⁸⁶ In 1966, it established Mt Druitt for public and private housing. By 1976, 45 000 people lived there.⁸⁷ This was a continuation of the post-war suburban vision begun by the establishment of the NSW Housing Commission in 1942. These new housing commission areas, as well as their older counterparts, experienced different social problems, which significantly shaped the nature of church ministry.

Ministers' wives in these areas faced significantly different expectations compared to those in wealthier parishes. In particular, the expectations that a ministry wife would be available for visits and personal assistance appear to have increased. Jensen in 1968 and Livingstone in the 1970s both served at Green Valley. Being a new public housing area there were 'lots of problems'.⁸⁸ Coming at the end of the Vietnam War, for Livingstone, these included high levels of mental illness, alcoholism and family breakdown.⁸⁹ Livingstone relates that at Green Valley 'I cooked a slice every day' because every day there would be a knock on the door, for her or her husband.⁹⁰ On one occasion, when a lady had come to the door having been abused by her husband, Livingstone deeply regretted calling the police because 'she came back a few hours later with a broken nose and I felt I'd caused it by getting the police involved'.⁹¹ It was one of several occasions when she felt unprepared to handle what her role entailed.

In such parishes, hospitality also looked different. Generally, due to their financial position, parishioners relied on the minister's wife to do the hospitality. This could create a contrast in

⁸⁶ George Morgan, 'A City of Two Tales: Distinction, Dispersal and Dissociation in Western Sydney' (Sydney: Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, 2007), 1.

⁸⁷ Morgan, 'A City of Two Tales: Distinction, Dispersal and Dissociation in Western Sydney', 4.

⁸⁸ Jensen, 'Interview', 3–4.

⁸⁹ Livingstone, 'Interview', 9.

⁹⁰ Livingstone, 'Interview', 9.

⁹¹ Livingstone, 'Interview', 10.

styles of hospitality between the minister's wife and the parishioners, which could be 'a bit intimidating for other people'.⁹² Thus hospitality took the form of 'bulk' lunches in the church hall, rather than reciprocated afternoon teas at home.⁹³ Sometimes these differences occurred within the parish itself. South recalled that at one end of the Port Kembla parish there were ladies' 'hat-and-glove luncheons' whilst the other end, where South lived, was very different. Some neighbours were 'jaybirds' (nudists), another was a prostitute who would entertain clients in her backyard. South even had pimps come knocking on her door to get 'their girls' away from bible study.⁹⁴ Some ministers' wives appreciated the lack of 'thin veneers of civilization' to hide behind.⁹⁵ Others found it a demoralizing struggle.⁹⁶ For all, it had its difficulties.

These expectations were exacerbated in one-minister parishes. South recalls one clergy wife who felt quite overwhelmed. She confided in South: 'I never expected this. I would just love to go back to my old job. ...The expectations are unbelievable...they expect me to be perfect'.⁹⁷ Jensen similarly described this as the hardest scenario – when the husband shifts to being rector of a small parish with no resources and everything else becomes the responsibility of the wife.⁹⁸

Thus expectations upon clergy wives were impacted not only by changes in society and in ministry but also by change in the Diocese and moves between parishes.

⁹² Livingstone, 'Interview', 6.

⁹³ Livingstone, 'Interview', 5–6.

⁹⁴ South, 'Interview', 6.

⁹⁵ Livingstone, 'Interview', 19.

⁹⁶ Jensen recalling the experiences of some of her colleagues, Jensen, 'Interview', 3.

⁹⁷ South, 'Interview', 20.

⁹⁸ Jensen, 'Interview', 23.

4. Particular sources of expectations

Expectations on ministry wives also varied according to the nature of their husband, the parishioners and their own expectations of themselves.

For better and worse, the expectations of her husband fundamentally impacted a ministry wife. These expectations could be explicit. South knew of one husband who told his wife: ‘if God’s called me to ministry, he’s called you too, get yourself organized and give up work’.⁹⁹ They could also be implicit – one husband structured his ministry calendar such that the wife could not ‘have a life’ to the extent that she admitted to Marie Robinson (then a bishop’s wife) in the 1970s that ‘ministry gives me the s***s’.¹⁰⁰ Yet for others, their husband was the greatest source of support, wisdom and encouragement in their ministry.¹⁰¹

Expectations also came from parishioners. These varied depending on the nature of the ministry and on the ministry of the previous minister’s wife. Some parishioners – for example, the young university students at St Barnabas’ Broadway – seemed to have lower expectations of their minister’s wife.¹⁰² Others would use the level of involvement of a previous minister’s wife to create expectations for her ‘successor’. This could lead to very high expectations or to a ‘blank sheet’.¹⁰³ Women also noticed a distinct increase in expectations when their husband became rector or even locum.¹⁰⁴ Interviewees also reported

⁹⁹ South, ‘Interview’, 4.

¹⁰⁰ South, ‘Interview’, 19.

¹⁰¹ Each interviewee expressed similar sentiments, e.g. Roberts, ‘Interview’, 9, 22.

¹⁰² Jensen, ‘Interview’, 6.

¹⁰³ South, ‘Interview’, 11.

¹⁰⁴ South, ‘Interview’, 17; South, ‘Interview’, 8.

often feeling that some or all parishioners had no particular expectations of them and just supported whatever they did.¹⁰⁵

However the interviews suggest that often ministry wives were most driven by their own expectations of themselves. It is hard to know whether this finding is a result of the highly driven and competent personalities of these particular interviewees. Each interviewee admitted to having high expectations of themselves in general, which were to some extent fueled by role models who they looked up to.¹⁰⁶ Each expressed a beautiful gratitude to those ministry wives who they had looked up to and modeled their ministries upon.¹⁰⁷ Each interviewee thrived amongst the pressures and expectations and was also happy to admit times when they did not meet their own expectations. It appears that particular personality-traits and convictions helped them cope with the expectations placed upon them. For example, each spoke of their role not in terms of duties or meeting expectations but rather as ‘opportunities’ and often a ‘calling’.¹⁰⁸ The interviewees also appear to be initiators, relationally driven and able to deal with conflict face-to-face, rather than accepting expectations without question.¹⁰⁹ This ability to initiate would have been particularly helpful in an age of so much change, and may have meant they fulfilled general expectations of being hospitable, accessible and supportive even if they did not meet specific expectations all the time. The difficulty is that many women did not have these personalities, were not initiators and so would have still felt ‘ill at-ease’ under the expectations upon them.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ South, ‘Interview’, 8, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Jensen, ‘Interview’, 13; South, ‘Interview’, 12; Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 16.

¹⁰⁷ e.g. Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, ‘Interview’, 9; Livingstone, ‘Interview’, 16; South, ‘Interview’, 3; Jensen, ‘Interview’, 13.

¹⁰⁹ e.g. South, ‘Interview’, 20.

¹¹⁰ Roberts, ‘Interview’, 11.

Thus it would be inaccurate to say that expectations on ministry wives in the Sydney Diocese stayed static between 1960-1989 or to say that the only significant cause of change was the women's liberation movement. Rather, expectations upon ministry wives were impacted by changes in society, in ministry and in the Sydney Diocese. Over this period, hospitality became less about appearance and more about the significance of the fellowship. The shape it took was significantly impacted by the socio-economic character of the parish. The minister's wife became less likely to lead formal ministries such as Mothers' Union and more likely to need to show initiative in adapting to the new shape of ministry with the rise of small groups, playgroups and other women's ministries. However, she continued to be expected to show relational leadership, as people still expected her to be wiser and godlier than the average church member. Further, changes in society encouraged her to have a stronger sense of her own identity and value before God. In some circumstances this meant she felt freer to return to the secular workforce. For others, it gave them a strong sense of their 'vocation' as the minister's wife and a deep understanding of the role, not as a confinement, but as an immense privilege with remarkable opportunities to do significant gospel ministry.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Each of the interviewees expressed such sentiments, e.g. Jensen, 'Interview', 22; Livingstone, 'Interview', 2; South, 'Interview', 21; Roberts, 'Interview', 10.

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