

The so-called 'natural' place for a woman to participate in the life of the church is in the Women's Auxiliary/Fellowship/Association. Presumably this does still fill a need in some women's lives, but by no stretch of the imagination could the normal women's church meeting be called thought-provoking, politically awakening or intellectually stimulating. This is mainly because women themselves have been educated and brought up to believe that they are inferior in so many ways to men, that they themselves often believe it, and so are unable to free themselves of their oppressions.

We must break away from believing that our greatest talents necessarily lie in the directions of housework, cookery and mothercraft. Given the opportunities and education normally reserved for men, we too can make the most of our intellect, personality and ambitions, and take our rightful, active place in the community.

The Church's complete disregard for women's feelings is seen most clearly in those churches (e.g. Methodist) which cling to the system of the itinerant ministry. It is true that the man often does not have much choice in where he will work, but it is totally unheard of for the wife to be consulted in the matter. It is just accepted that she will follow her husband blindly around - remaining, of course, sweet-tempered, agreeable and compliant - fulfilling all that is expected of her in her role of minister's wife.

The fact that she may have developed close and meaningful friendships, which have to be broken each time she moves (resulting in feelings of insecurity

and deep unhappiness), or (understandably less often) a job which she finds fulfilling, is simply not taken into account.

All this is secondary to the great 'God-ordained' job which her husband is doing. It is just presumed that the wife will uncomplainingly give this all up to go where her husband is sent. All this in a church which claims to believe with Paul that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, SLAVE nor free..."

I know many women believe that they have been "called" to be ministers' wives, but this means being an understudy to your husband for the rest of HIS ministry. Very little of yourself is left after playing out this role for a number of years and having become more and more submerged in his personality and his "thing". Few wives are able to break away from this role definition and become persons in their own right and creative in their own spheres - because of the years of prejudice, and society's and the church's expectations.

But the time is NOW, no-one else can do it for you. It is an exciting experience to discover **YOURSELF**.

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This article is not just meant as an abstract negativism against all males, but rather a genuine argument for opportunity, equality and recognition of ourselves as persons, in all spheres and no longer women in stereotyped roles.

Charter for Women

The rights enumerated in this Charter might appear to be so fundamental as not to need stating at all. All women should have them, but in South Africa the majority of women do not. In fact, African women do not enjoy any of them, because the whole policy of apartheid, which entrenches discrimination on the basis of colour, has caused the denial of these rights to be written into the laws of the land.

- Every woman has the right to choose her marriage partner.
- Every woman has the right to live with her husband throughout her married life.
- Every woman has the right to live with her children, to protect them and to care for them.
- Every woman has the right to free education for her children.
- Every woman has the right to own or to rent property in her own name.
- Every woman has the right to freedom of movement and residence.
- Every woman has the right to work, to free choice of employment and to just and favourable conditions of work.
- Every woman has the right to live out her declining years with those who wish to care for her.
- Every woman has the right to these fundamental rights and freedoms which shall not be violated by any law or administrative action.

See Mrs. J. Sinclair's letter on page 14