

## **Abstract**

**Title:** Embracing a vision of gender inspired by the Kingdom of God.

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On 20 September 2013 the first woman bishop was appointed in the Church of Ireland. This brought to completion a policy change which the Church made back in 1990 with overwhelming support from clergy and laity, that women should be admitted to the diaconate, presbyterate and the episcopate. While the appointment of the new bishop has been widely welcomed across the Church, the welcome was not universal and there was expression of theological difficulties by some particularly around male headship issues.

This dissertation examines the creation narratives to determine whether or not gender distinction involved male headship at creation or if it developed as a result of the Fall. It also considers gender distinction in the Kingdom of God and particularly how this is managed in the first century CE by Jesus and Paul. The relevant biblical texts are located in their original cultural settings and account is taken of the purpose for which they were originally written. Consideration is also given to whether or not the scripture under review is intended to give direction for all time or alternatively is prescriptive to a particular time and culture.

In conclusion, the outcome should help determine the ministry path the Church is called to tread in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.