

**S0229 Kenney, The Reverend Marguerite Shirley (1924-)
Papers, 1965-1981
47 Folders**

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The Reverend Marguerite Shirley Kenney donated her papers to the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection in June 1978. She was ordained on February 25, 1978 by Bishop Walker of the Washington Diocese and is one of the first one hundred or so women priests in the Episcopal Church of the United States. Prior to January 1, 1977, the ordination of women to the priesthood was not permitted.

Biographical Note

1924 Born in Cincinnati, Ohio to Harvey J. and Helen Miller Shirley
1940 Baptised, Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, Norwood, Ohio
1941 Graduated from Norwood High School, Ohio
1943 Married William Richardson Kenney
1944 Gave birth to George Churchill Kenney II
1946 Graduated Phi Beta Kappa and with a B.A. cum laude in English from the University of Cincinnati
1947 Gave birth to James Arthur Kenney
1950 Gave birth to Charles Shirley and Anne Richardson Kenney
1956 Gave birth to John Michael Kenney
1957 Gave birth to Thomas Patrick Kenney
1966 Confirmed, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anchorage Alaska
1966-1968 Executive Board Member, Anchorage Planned Parenthood League
1966-1968 Assistant Leader, Chaplain's Marriage Classes, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
1966-1968 Christian Education Director, St. Mary's Churchwomen
1966-1968 Sunday School Teacher, junior/Senior High
1968 Transferred letter to St. John's Church, Broad Creek NM
1969-1970 Steering Committee, St. John's Churchwomen
1969-1973 Homeletics Critic, Virginia Theological Seminary
1970 One of the first two women lay readers in the Washington Diocese
1971 Continuing Education for Women-New Horizons, George Washington University
1974 Entered Virginia Theological Seminary
1977 Graduated, cum laude, Virginia Theological Seminary
1977 Ordained to the Diaconate
1977- Assistant, St. John's Church
1977- Co-Chaplain and teacher, St. Agnes Episcopal School
1978 Ordained to the Priesthood

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Reverend Marguerite Shirley Kenney Papers document her decision and her struggle to become a priest in the Episcopal Church as well as reflect the Episcopal Church's changing attitudes. The bulk of the material dates from 1972-1978. Her poetry dates from 1965-1972. The material is arranged chronologically by type of document (except for poetry, which is

arranged alphabetically by title) and includes correspondence, poetry, notebooks, sermons, speeches, applications, school papers and exams, photographs, miscellany, publications, newspaper clippings and resource material.

The correspondence is divided into family (1976-1978), personal (1973-1978) and professional (1972-1978) and congratulatory letters on her ordination. The professional correspondence documents Kenney's steps towards ordination, including entry into VTS, evaluations, recommendations, and objections and support for her ordination within the religious community.

Her poetry was written largely as a result of her experiences in Confirmation Class in Alaska (1966). The notebooks contain reflections on the difficulties of her position as a woman seeking to become a priest and her own questioning of that desire.

The sermons and memorial services date from 1975-1978. The sermons were preached at Nativity, where Kenney was a seminarian (1975-1977) at St. John's, where Kenney is assistant (1977-1978) and at St. Agnes Episcopal Girls School (1977-1978) where Kenney is co-chaplain and teacher of religion.

There is a copy of her speech before the Convention of the Washington Diocese, January 29, 1978, on the ordination of women.

The school-related material contain papers written in 1972 for two courses in Continuing Education for women at George Washington University, formal applications for admission to VTS and for Candidacy for Holy Orders; essays and papers written while attending VTS; and questions for the General Ordination Exams.

Also in the collection is material (catalogs, handbooks, publications) from VTS, St. John's Church, and St. Agnes'. Included in the material from St. John's are results from a survey of parishoners' attitudes on the ordination of women.

Miscellaneous items include biographical data, an interview, ordination invitations and programs, two lay readers' licenses (the first one reading a "competent male"), and VTS Senior Class Photograph.

Publications which contain articles (both pro and con) on the ordination of women include: The Episcopalian (Aprfl 1976-Nov. 1977); The Evangelical Catholic (Oct.-Nov. 1977); Washington Diocese (Jan. 1977-Summer 1978) and The Witness (Dec. 1977-Feb. 1978). Newsclippings, mainly from Washington papers, are on the ordination of women and date from 1970-1978.

Resources on the ordination of women includes essays, drafts, chronologies and A Resource Guide for Women in the Seminary, as well as notes and handouts from a conference on abortion.

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1. Family Correspondence, 1976-1978.
2. Personnel correspondence, 1976-1978.

3. Professional correspondence, 1972-1976.
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6. Congratulatory cards, Feb-Mar 1978.
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