

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
For an
Upcoming Volume in the ILA Women and Leadership
Transformative Women Leaders Book Series
Titled

Inspirational Women Leaders: The Challenges and Rewards of Religion, Spirituality, Purpose, and Calling in Leadership

Edited by Chrys Egan, Stacy Smulowitz, and Mary Tabata

Please see below for a list of requested submissions and timeline as well as a summary of the book. We look forward to receiving your chapter title and 500 word abstract of your proposed chapters by September 15, 2024. Please submit abstract to: cnegan@salisbury.edu, stacy.smulowitz@scranton.edu, and mtabata@eastern.edu.

Requested Submissions and Timeline:

- September 15, 2024: Prospective authors submit a title and abstract up to 500 words describing their proposed chapter.
- November 15, 2024: Editors inform authors whose chapters have been selected for inclusion in the book.
- March 15, 2025: Authors submit chapters of 5000 words, exclusive of references, to editors.
- July 15, 2025: Editors provide feedback to authors.
- September 15, 2025: Authors submit final chapter revisions to editors.
- March 31, 2026: Estimated publication.

Inspirational Women Leaders: The Challenges and Rewards of Religion, Spirituality, Purpose, and Calling in Leadership

Description of the Book:

Extending back to the beginning of humankind, awareness of the “human spirit” and connection to something higher has provided people with a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, as well as an explanation for the many inexplicable phenomena that humans encounter in the universe and in the human cycle of life and death. People may experience spirituality as individual awareness and appreciation of something sacred and awe-inspiring, even in seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life. For some people, religions and their traditions provide a sense of belonging, moral and ethical guidance, cultural identity, comfort and hope. Religions can help to maintain social order and identity, while also being used to divide people with different beliefs. People may turn to their religious leaders for guidance, for spiritual enlightenment, for comfort and for confession, as well as to help make the transitions in life and celebrate life’s traditions and rituals.

Women, leadership, spirituality, and religion have been interwoven throughout history. Many women religious leaders have worked behind the men who were officially titled as leaders. Women such as Mother Theresa, Maate Mahadevi, Evangeline Booth, Mahapajapati Gotami, Aimee Elizabeth Semple McPherson, Karen Kleinbaum, Ann Lee, Sri Mātā Amritānandamayī, Catherine Booth, St Clare of Assisi, Sumayya, Jahanara Begum are just a few of the religious leaders who have left significant legacies in the religions they represent. The article "[Women as Theological Figures](#)" includes hundreds of notable women religious scholars and leaders who have significantly influenced their faiths as well as the faithful. Women whose leadership occurs outside the context of organized religion often find that their faith and beliefs give them a sense of purpose for their lives and their work. Some women are drawn to leadership roles after experiencing a "calling" that compels them to work toward particular issues, with passion and strength beyond what they thought capable.

Women leaders bring unique perspectives and experiences to religious leadership, enrich theological discussions and the interpretation of spiritual texts, making more holistic teachings and practices. They help to ensure that religious institutions and communities are more representative and inclusive and serve as role models who inspire other women and girls to pursue religious roles. Women address women's issues and concerns and advocate for women's rights and status. They often are on the front lines of social justice movements to address poverty, inequality, education, healthcare, and other social issues while enhancing community cohesion. They encourage new approaches to worship, pastoral care, community engagement and break stereotypes. Their spiritual guidance is important for women, men, and communities. Yet, only in the second half of the twentieth century did some religions begin to accept women as ordained spiritual leaders, while some religions still do not recognize women leaders. Debates continue in religions regarding whether women should in fact assume such positions. Those women who do serve in traditionally male religious positions face challenges that they have grappled with and overcome.

Spiritual leadership also involves guiding and influencing others through spiritual principles, values, and practices. It is not confined only to religious settings and can be found in various contexts, including businesses, education, communities, and personal relationships. The majority of studies of spiritual leadership have examined this approach in business contexts. There is a dearth of studies that examine women religious leaders' practice of spiritual leadership in other contexts. In religious practice, "spiritual leadership is a sacred stewardship whereby a person influences, serves, and inspires others to fulfill God's purpose based on the intimate work of God in his/her own life...It involves influence and service and inspiration" (Olson, 2015). How women religious leaders practice spiritual leadership is an area that deserves more extensive study.

The purpose of the book *Inspirational Women Leaders: The Challenges and Rewards of Religion, Spirituality, Purpose, and Calling in Leadership* is to explore the rewards and challenges that women leaders face as shaped by religion and spirituality, the impact of historical and contemporary women religious leaders on religious practice and on society writ large, how women leaders practice spiritual leadership, expanding the boundaries of spirituality or religion

to leadership in daily life and work, finding and exploring a sense of leadership purpose, recognizing and following a calling or vocation, positive and negative impacts of religion and spirituality on leadership and society, religious and spiritual diversity and inclusion, and more.

We seek chapters on a variety of perspectives on transformative women religious leaders and spiritual leadership, including, but not limited to the following:

1. Features about women and/or communities of women leaders who are leading religious or spiritual organizations or places of worship, describing their leadership challenges and rewards. This may include women religious activists, theologians, scholars, spiritual leaders, interfaith leaders, teachers, musicians, volunteers, etc.
2. Models of spiritual leadership, according to religious practices and belief systems, including Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Earth-based, Hinduism, Indigenous, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, , Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, and others.
3. The impact of historical women religious leaders on contemporary women leaders and followers.
4. Auto-ethnographic stories by transformative women leaders that include their religious and spiritual challenges and rewards.
5. The significance of "purpose," "calling," and/or "vocation" to the practice of spiritual leadership.
6. Applications of spiritual leadership concepts such as stewardship, trustworthiness, compassion, and more, in contexts outside of religion, such as work and community.
7. Leading through obstacles such as religious and spiritual beliefs used in international and interpersonal conflicts.
8. Religious and spiritual diversity and inclusion.
9. Other related topics.

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