

In the Beginning Male and Female, Then *She* Came to Seminary: A History of Women at Princeton Theological Seminary

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Abstract

A history of women at Princeton Theological Seminary covers briefly the scope of women's participation in the life of Princeton Theological Seminary from the early years to the present, while concentrating on the expanding presence and influence of women faculty and women students from the 1930s through the early 1980s. The article describes the effects of an influx of women M.A. students with the arrival of the Tennent School of Christian education on the Princeton Seminary campus in 1944. Women students' initiatives in the 1970s for the founding of the Women's Center and a child care center are summarized. Anecdotes about the experiences of early women students, including the first woman B.D. graduate, Muriel Van Orden Jennings, as well as the experiences of early women faculty members Freda Gardner and Katharine Sakenfeld, reveal the changing attitudes of male students, faculty, and presidents toward the presence of women on the Princeton Seminary campus. This article was originally presented as the Seminary's 2011–12 Frederick Neumann Lecture and as part of the Seminary's 2011–12 Bicentennial Celebration.

Keywords

Princeton Theological Seminary, women, history, Muriel Van Orden Jennings, Tennent School

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Freda Gardner

I am Freda Gardner and it has been a privilege for Dr. Sakenfeld (hereafter referred to as Kathie) and for me to have been asked to prepare a presentation on the history of women at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). No amount of fact-finding research, however, can do justice to the experiences of those women in their times and places at this seminary. Their lives, like yours and ours, were shaped by so many factors that what we can say will only hint at the realities they experienced.

Because I am the older, I get to go first.

Undoubtedly there were women here from the beginning, keeping the young gentlemen's quarters in good shape, even before the students lived on a campus and in seminary buildings. Even as dormitories were built, women surely staffed the "eating clubs" in houses on Mercer and Alexander Streets. It is probable that when the Seminary decided to feed the students there were women in the kitchen, and when the professors needed secretarial help there might have been women at the typewriters and maybe even in the Library. So from the earliest days the men of PTS had these small reminders that, oh yes, God created women, too. It isn't for us to speculate about the major reasons why it was "men only" for so long. We can't blame Eve for everything.

Let me start by telling you how I came to be at PTS. I was a Director of Christian Education in Plainfield, New Jersey, when, as was the custom in those days, the senior minister accepted a call to another church and, as was also the custom, the assistant minister found another call as well. After they both left, I was it: the only staff member besides the organist. And thus to the church came two professors from PTS to be the interim preachers, George Hendry and William (Bill) Beeners. I give you these details because one or both of these professors were the catalysts for an invitation in the spring of 1961 from the President of PTS to come for an interview for a position on the faculty. As I have often said, an invitation to enter the Miss America contest would have seemed as likely as this one. I did, however, drive down to Princeton to have a conversation with Dr. McCord. I had met and talked earlier with Harriet Pritchard who was on the CE staff at the seminary, a fine educator. She was leaving. Dr. McCord told me that I was to have lunch with three professors, Campbell Wyckoff, George Hendry, and Bruce Metzger, and that we were going to what was then the Princeton Inn. Well, it was P-Rade Day at the University and the Inn dining room was filled with celebrating (and imbibing) Princetonians. There were no other women in sight. More than once an overly celebrative Princetonian, slightly the worse for wear, slapped one of those worthy gentlemen on the back on his way past our table. If anything instructive or relevant was said by any of us at our table it was purely coincidental. But I was extended an invitation and, thinking I would, like my several predecessors, stay for a few years and then move back to my career as a local church educator, I accepted.

In the late summer, before I moved to Princeton, I received a letter from the President's Office announcing the Fall Faculty Retreat which was to be held

somewhere on the Jersey shore. The letter included a rough agenda and closed with a paragraph inviting faculty members to indicate the faculty member with whom they would like to room. As I was the only woman on the faculty, it appeared that Princeton was clearly a more swinging place than I had realized! Tempting as the prospect seemed, I chose to leave that form blank.

Before I say more about my own experiences, let me correct one popular legend. It has often been said that I was the first woman faculty member at PTS. That is not technically the case, although I was the first to continue on more than a temporary basis. In the 15 years preceding my arrival, seminary catalogs show that several women were listed to teach courses (always in aspects of Christian education) on a visiting or other shorter-term basis. Since the first woman's name appears in a catalog in 1946 (Jessie Dell Crawford, who taught an elective on Audio Visual Aids in Christian Education) it seems evident that the inclusion of these women was a consequence of the move of the Tennent School of Christian Education to Princeton in 1944 (more on this event later). Following Ms. Crawford over the next decade were another five women, sometimes overlapping (Dr. Bertha Paulssen, Ms. Dorothy B. Fritz, Ms. Jean Boleyn Cassat, Ms. Dorothy Faye Kirkwood, and Ms. Phyllis Stevens) until the arrival of my immediate predecessor, Harriet Pritchard, a 1954 M.R.E. graduate, who taught from 1957–61.

It was from Harriet Pritchard that the story was handed down of a visit by President Mackay to the women students living in Tennent Hall. As Harriet told it, Dr. Mackay came to speak to the women in Tennent and “basically asked us all to become ‘courageous spinsters.’” She acknowledged that some women were incensed, “since it implied that we came to seminary to find a husband, but we forgave him. He was a great man.”

When I arrived in the fall of 1961 I moved into an apartment in Tennent Hall, and here I began to hear for myself stories of Dr. Mackay's relationship with the women students. It was said that he would arrive about ten minutes before 11:00 on Saturday nights, moving toward the big double doors leading into the main lounge of Tennent where women students and their dates were saying good night. There was, or so I was told, always a rush to hide behind those doors which Dr. Mackay would fling open and then openly berate the women for “stealing my men from their calls to ministry.”

There were many “firsts” for me. I recall my first faculty meeting in the old Speer Library Board Room, when Professor Norman Victor Hope was first to arrive and graciously beckoned me (the second one there) to join him on the raised oval platform. Only as the room filled up did I realize that all in the armchairs on the raised platform were occupied by senior faculty, while lesser beings (such as myself) sat in folding chairs on the lower level. One lives and learns, and my missteps were not ever noticeably pointed out. It is not to be overlooked that Christian education was in those days at best a secondary-level program, much like the secondary importance given to the Sunday School in some churches.

It took me a few years before I thought that maybe it would be good for the women students to have a special time together, maybe a retreat. I went to Dean Homrighausen and broached that possibility with him and Homie was quick to support it and offered his home on Mercer Street as a possible location. Then I approached one of my CE colleagues to ask if he could do some presentation that would be edifying and focused on women's place in the seminary. And he agreed and he did and we all listened and learned. The focus of his presentation was on "the tender male ego." I honestly can't remember when I or any of the women students, in the days or weeks following the retreat, began to say "wait a minute." It was, in my memory, an "aha" moment. And the days and weeks went by, and little by little the women began asking questions which were being raised in the culture in which we were living and identified in our own smaller context.

But, enough about me. Let us go back to consider some early women students. The first woman graduate was Muriel Van Orden Jennings. (There is a wonderful DVD recording in which she tells of her time here.) Muriel came to seminary because she wanted to study theology. She had no intention of becoming a pastor. She had been preceded more than a century earlier by Betsey Stockton, a freed slave whose name came from the man who had owned her. The Ashbel Green family and seminary students taught her to read and tutored her to prepare to join a seminary student and his family in 1824 as missionaries in Hawaii, the first single woman to serve as a Presbyterian missionary overseas.

More than 100 years later, Muriel Van Orden petitioned in 1928 for the right to take courses. In the earliest years of the twentieth century there were some seminarians' wives who were allowed to attend courses, but none could work toward a degree because the seminary's charter stipulated that no degree could be given to a woman. Muriel was not deterred, and signed up for a full course load, having gained special permission to sit for course examinations.

Although registered only as a "partial student" (i.e. allowed to take courses but not as part of her class), Muriel finished third in her class of 1931 but still did not receive a degree, because she could not gain unanimous recommendation by the faculty—one member was opposed to granting any degree to a woman. Nonetheless, desiring further education, she continued her studies in the next year, and in the meantime the lone faculty member who had opposed her candidacy for a degree left the seminary for medical reasons. Thus she graduated in 1932 with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in theology and went on to teach for nearly 60 years. The spirit she had is still visible in the video which chronicles her story. It wasn't until 1945 that the next woman, Eileen Bergsten Remington, received a degree.

The first group of between 20 and 30 women students arrived in 1944 when the seminary merged with the Tennent School of Christian Education which had been located in Philadelphia. Those women were housed on the Tennent campus, the only facility for them at the seminary. Lacking access to ordained ministry, for many women the M.R.E. degree program satisfied the calling to ministry in the church. Many women, in light of their hunger for a theological education,

were happy for this chance to study beyond what might have been available in a local church.

The women of that time attest to acceptance in the educational enterprise but were still second-class citizens in the eyes of the school. Many of the men of the student body were happy with the social life initiated by women students: dinners, concerts, and parties. Other men and some of the faculty considered this a male institution and politeness did not erase the sense that women were not fit for theological education or for a ministry in the church. And even some who supported the idea of women receiving an M.R.E. degree had their own concerns, as is made clear in a memo to the Administration from the two senior (male) professors of Christian education during the first year of the Tennent School's presence on campus:

It now seems that marital mortality is a serious problem. This is not undesirable, but it does affect our policy on admissions We must not allow the marriage problem to become a joke Our objectives will be realized even though marriage takes place, if we can make the students aware of their responsibility to the church that educated them and conscious of their vocations even though married We cannot prevent marriage, nor do we desire to do so We need to stress the obligation of those trained in our School to become educational leaders It may be that a personal interview would give us a better clue to the student's motives

Reading this today, Kathie and I suspect that these esteemed colleagues of yesteryear "protest too much"; we suspect that they, or at least the colleagues receiving their memo, might indeed have prevented marriage of women students if they could have done so. President Mackay's view of the women, quoted above, supports this view; indeed until the 1950s men students could not get married without permission of the President.

By the way, you should know that the professors' memo also addressed a more practical matter: "Toilet facilities should be provided for the young ladies in Stuart Hall."

My own experience in the beginning was made easier because those early women students had begun to make a place for women at PTS. It was harder because I stayed and because I knew, even before the feminist movement, that God calls both men and women to ministry, some of it to be lived out in the church. I gained strength from the women students I grew to care about as friends and decided that whenever and however I could I would claim the right of women to be servants in the church. I still recall an "aha" moment when in one of the groups of middlers taking a required course in Christian education, all male, a student referred to the Women's Association in the church as the "stitch and bitch" club. All the students laughed. I remember well that I turned away from the class and, facing the chalkboard, thought "I can cry or I can tell him where to get off." I chose the latter and, although I remember nothing of what I said (I hope I was somewhat polite) it must have been telling because in subsequent years, long after their graduations,

numbers of the men in that group took me out to lunch or had long conversations with me which included apologies for the incident. Another incident which sticks in my memory concerns a meeting with Karl Barth (yes, *the* Karl Barth). I was waiting outside the cafeteria for someone and in the door came President McCord and Dr. Barth. Being the southern gentleman that he was, Dr. McCord brought Karl Barth over to me and said, "Dr. Barth, I'd like you to meet Professor Gardner." I'd like to tell you that Dr. Barth said "Vat a voman!!" but what he really said was "Vat? A voman?" Many years later, having told a minister friend of mine the story and subsequently asked him to give the nominating speech when I stood for Moderator of the PCUSA General Assembly, my friend used the phrase to build up his case for my election.

Then Kathie. Dr. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, a newly minted Ph.D. from Harvard, arrived in 1970. She is formally known as the William Albright Eisenberger Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis and, until very recently, Director of Doctoral Studies. To be truthful, I almost didn't care who or what she was: she was a she.

I was honestly delighted in whom I discovered her to be. When she arrived there were already students who were aware of the changes in our nation's society as women began to claim the space and rights of their male counterparts in theological education. What began to transpire as we heard from and shared with women students emboldened us to make some claims and make some changes to what "had always been" at PTS. In 1971 a memo to President McCord presented our conviction that women had to have a formal organization in and through which their concerns might be addressed. What came of that request was the beginning of the Women's Center in 1972. Both Kathie and I were treading on uncharted grounds, but it was apparent that there was no other place or plan for women to be able to work through what was happening in both the seminary and the church and in the culture in which those existed.

Just one more story before I turn the lectern over to Kathie. Women teaching Christian education began in the 1940s, but women's role in Miller Chapel took longer to establish. We believe that Kathie was the first ordained woman to celebrate Communion in the chapel, in 1972.

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld

And since Freda ended with a story about me, let me begin with one more story about her. A few years prior to that 1972 occasion when I first celebrated Communion in Miller Chapel, those in charge of the chapel, with some pressure, decided that women who were elders could be included among those invited to distribute the elements in chapel communion services. On the first such occasion Freda was invited to be a server. She arrived at the chapel, only to be met by the professor responsible for services who said that they wouldn't be needing her that day. When she inquired why, the response was that "the other woman was sick and couldn't serve." She can't honestly remember if she replied out loud or only

thought to herself, but her query was, “What is the problem? Do you think the chapel will tip over if there’s a woman on one side and none on the other?”

In all my years before arriving at PTS I had encountered not one female minister or even a trained female Christian educator: not in home congregations in three states, not in college in Ohio, not while I was in seminary or Ph.D. studies. When I was ordained in 1970 I knew no other ordained woman minister (though there were a few, even in the Presbyterian Church). Furthermore, through all my advanced studies in the 1960s I never had a female teacher nor heard the word “feminism.” My experience preparing for my teaching vocation was thus like that of early women who became pastors, who came from churches in which they were the first women to go to seminary, who were the first to lead worship, the first to preach. Being the first of anything casts a certain aura about you, sometimes an aura of blessing but more often an aura of “odd.”

My experience in coming to Princeton was thus akin to that of many women students, especially in the B.D. program. Women had come from successful college careers and leadership roles to a place that did not hold them in the same esteem. And when one added the notion of a calling there was, on the part of many, serious questioning about whether women were called in the same way that men claimed to be, a response to God’s gifts and their expression in the life of a church. As Gail Anderson Ricciuti (M.Div., 1973) said, “It took 24 to 48 hours after getting here for me to become a feminist. The men took their own presence for granted. They asked women, ‘Why are you here?’” Gail went on to become a parish pastor and in 1978 was the first female minister to be chosen as vice-moderator of a Presbyterian General Assembly. She now teaches preaching at Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School.

Freda and I were aware of the many issues these women would face in the church. The 1970s were times of excitement and of unease in both the church and society. The women’s organization (students, spouses, faculty) asked for a physical space for a Women’s Center. Gathering together in a less than desirable space that was made available—the basement of Stuart Hall—damp, moldy, with so little to make it feel like a place where women could relax and not be “on guard” all the time, they did what women have done throughout history: they made it hospitable and safe. One of the early results was a wall mural which, after research of biblical texts and discussion with a local artist, would depict the theme “Inheriting the Promise,” reflecting the story of Zelophehad’s daughters asking for their inheritance among the men (Num 27). The mural, featuring bright sunshine, a rainbow, and open space, was designed by the artist, and the women students participated in the painting. The safety and hope of that space remains a precious, even sacred memory for me and others of that generation. There I remember in particular Professor Daniel Migliore leading a thoughtful discussion of Mary Daly’s *Church and the Second Sex*. It meant more than we women could express that a male theologian from our faculty would take time to study and review such a controversial book.

The mural enlivened the basement of Stuart Hall until the renovation of that building in 1986 and its theme “Inheriting the Promise” undergirded a multi-year

series of women's conferences for alumnae and others sponsored by the Department of Continuing Education. After 1986 the Women's Center moved for a while to the basement of Roberts Hall and eventually to the lower level of the Mackay Campus Center, where it is today. The mural is gone, but the spirit of women supporting women is still present in the books and wall hangings. In the later 1970s Freda successfully petitioned the President to establish the Women in Church and Ministry Council (WICAM), providing an official voice for women's concerns with the faculty and administration; some years later she successfully petitioned the administration for the establishment of the annual WICAM lecture-ship, which continues today.

One great but largely forgotten contribution of the Women's Center and early women students was their initiative in establishing the seminary's first child-care center. In a spring 1978 Women's Center gathering, discussion centered on the obstacles faced by student wives with small children in connecting with other women at the school or otherwise participating in campus life. Experiencing through this conversation what they described as God's call to action, women students Nancy Schongalla-Bowman (now PTS Director of Student Counseling) and Lois Ann Wasson took up the challenge of getting President McCord's approval for a volunteer-led child-care program, getting a physical space allocated (the basement of Tennent Hall), raising the money from students to have a bathroom and phone jacks installed in the space, buying paint and recruiting student volunteer painters, and getting donations of toys and furniture. By spring 1979, incredibly, less than 12 months from the original conversation, the first children were enjoying the space with single and married student volunteer caregivers, while their mothers participated in some aspect of campus life. Today the seminary's professionally operated and licensed DuPree Center for Children is recognized as one of the best in Mercer County and serves children of students, faculty, and administrators. Let us not forget its origins in the dream and perseverance of two women seminarians.

Some women students wondered if we were moving too fast, embracing too easily new "feminist" ideas from the culture, while other women wanted even more revolutionary activity to claim their rightful place in the seminary, the church, and the world. Freda and I decided in 1976 that we would try to address this urgency and our own convictions by offering a course that would deal with some of the cultural challenges from a biblical and educational perspective. Believing that racism, sexism, and classism were inextricably intertwined, we naively thought we could deal with all three in a single semester, not to mention exegetical method, hermeneutics, and educational strategies. We tried to do it all, but after the second go-round we decided to use a more manageable focus, centering the course on theological and ministerial issues in women's studies, while still drawing in race and class perspectives. Although we had no clue about whether men as well as women would enroll, we were happily surprised when we had some of each and, for the most part, students who were genuinely concerned about the issues in the culture and how they could be interpreted and evaluated using biblical

and theological resources. I am happy to say that now, many decades later, every department offers more than one course that could be classified as “women’s studies,” and the great majority of seminary courses include at least some readings by women or about gender issues. A very partial sampling of course titles includes *Women’s Ways of Preaching*, *Pastoral Care of Women*, *Women Leaders in the Medieval Church*, *Women in the Teachings of Paul*, *Women in African Christianity*, and *Feminist and Womanist Theology*. Significantly, male faculty members in every department participate today in teaching courses focused on gender issues.

Although ordination of women to ministry of Word and Sacrament had been “on the books” in the (northern) Presbyterian Church since 1957, still in the 1970s and even 1980s many congregants as well as ministerial colleagues were not ready to face the new reality that Christian women were appearing more and more often with a call to live out their baptism in congregational ministry. Thus many women students realized that what they were learning would have to be addressed very carefully in the face of a sexist society and sexist church. These were women who knew their own callings to church leadership and knew that to be accepted they would have to be as knowledgeable as their male counterparts, and also willing to take risks to make the biblical witness and the theology of the Christian tradition understood and appreciated by lay people and clergy alike. The stories told by the women students of the 1970s confirmed what we had observed and intuited in the shaping of our course, which we had titled, “Teaching the Bible as Liberating Word.” We were trying to remove the “if you’re good you’ll have to do it like a man” mentality, of course mounting our challenge in a quiet and lady-like way. And where are we today? I still teach a course that is a lineal descendant of the one Freda and I first began. This past spring (2011) half of the students in the class indicated that in their home congregations biblical interpretation from a specifically women’s (feminist) viewpoint would be regarded with suspicion as subverting the authority of Scripture. To be sure, these students were from many denominations, some of which still do not ordain women, and they selected this course to become better prepared to work for change within their suspicion-laden settings. Issues of women in leadership are by no means settled in the churches in the USA or globally.

African American women who came to PTS suffered with some of the same issues as white women, with racism as a compounding factor. They were fewer in number and most had high personal resolve to respond to what they felt was their calling from God. Hispanic women students remain even fewer in number, and the lack of faculty role models for Hispanic and African American women students has been a continuing concern. The first African American woman to teach here was Dr. Thelma Adair, who taught for the year 1974–75 as a visiting lecturer in Christian education. A pioneering black church leader, she was elected moderator of the (northern) Presbyterian Church in the USA in 1976. When Dr. Clarice Martin joined the faculty in 1985, black women students had a fine role model as they struggled with both racism and sexism. (Prof. Martin now teaches at

Colgate University.) Jacqueline Grant held an appointment as visiting professor. Today Prof. Yolanda Pierce is the first African American woman to hold a tenured position on this faculty. There has yet to be a Hispanic woman on the faculty.

Already in the 1970s some of the men students on campus were concerned about the treatment of women both in the world and at PTS and believed that some action was called for. In 1975 the Men's Auxiliary to the Women's Center was established. Paul Rorem, now a member of the seminary faculty, was the founder of the Auxiliary. Paul and a group of other men students devised a way to make their support more tangible: a fund-raising bake sale was organized and named the Bobby Riggs Memorial Bake Sale. Bobby Riggs, for those too young to remember, was a male tennis player whose career collapsed after he boasted that he could beat any woman in tennis—and then lost on a nationally televised match to woman champion Billy Jean King. Today the bake sale continues and still offers a significant financial contribution to the Women's Center outreach programs.

Surely the experiences of women students at the seminary were shaped in many ways by the additions of women to the faculty. The lone woman in Christian education was gradually bolstered by the arrivals of Virginia Damon as an administrative assistant in Speech and then the first faculty women in other areas of the curriculum during the 1970s. My arrival in 1970–71 also saw Elizabeth Edwards become an instructor in New Testament and Joyce Bailey as visiting lecturer in Christian education. Thelma Adair, as already mentioned, came in 1974–75 for a brief tenure. In 1975 Sandra Brown joined the Pastoral Theology department and in 1976 Doris Donnelly began a several-years term as visiting lecturer in theology. Lois Livezey became an instructor in ethics in 1979, Kathleen McVey in church history in 1981, Clarice Martin in New Testament in 1985. Some of these women were, for a time, the only woman in their department with all that implies about their comfort levels and the way they were heard or not heard in each of their settings.

As the seminary seeks to prepare women and men for church leadership in today's rapidly changing church and culture, the issues seminary courses must address with regard to women are shifting. More women than ever before are not stay-at-home moms and those who do stay at home face, like their employed sisters, new definitions of what makes life good and holy and worthy of their allegiance to the God who still calls and shapes our responses. As the church grows in the global south and Christianity in North America becomes more and more ethnically diverse, attention to the perspectives and circumstances of women in diverse ethnic and cultural contexts becomes increasingly urgent.

Last May PTS graduated 168 women and men. Many, perhaps even a majority, of the women among those graduates had women role models in their churches and on their college campuses. For those graduates whose denominations have by now considerable experience with ordained women ministers and with non-ordained but seminary-trained Christian educators, finding and responding to a call is challenging personally but no longer necessarily path-breaking; their women predecessors have been doing it for quite a while. As our US population ages there are only a few

decades of older members in mainline churches who are still uncomfortable with women in leadership roles, and there are fewer and fewer congregations who think Scripture interpretation is not valid when expressed in the thoughts and words of women. On the other hand, it is certainly safe to say that many more conservative faith communities and congregations still do not welcome women in leadership roles. Sexism, along with racism and classism, remains alive and well and still in need of challenge. We've come a long way since Betsey Stockton and Muriel Van Orden Jennings, but there is still much work to do.

Appendix: Brief Chronology of the Early History of Women at Princeton Seminary

Early Women on the Faculty at PTS

First Women Teaching Courses

- 1946–50 Jessie Dell Crawford. Guest professor of Christian education (CE)
- 1950–51 Bertha Paulsen, Ph.D. Visiting lecturer in psychology
- 1951–52 Dorothy B. Fritz, B.R.E. Visiting lecturer in CE
Jean Boleyn Cassat, M.R.E. Prin. field work in CE
- 1952–53 Cassat with Homrighausen and Butler Survey of CE, field education
- 1953–54 Dorothy Faye Kirkwood, M.R.E. Prin. instructor in CE
- 1954–55 Phyllis Stevens, M.Mus. Tutor in music
- 1958–59 Janice Harsanyi. Visiting lecturer in music

First Women on the Regular Faculty (and Early M.Div. Adjuncts)

- 1957–58 Harriet Pritchard, M.R.E. Prin. instructor of several courses
- 1959–60 Harriet Pritchard listed as asst. prof. Taught basic course in CE with Dr. Wyckoff, Dr. Carmichael, and Arlo Duba
- 1961–62 Freda Gardner. Asst. Prof. in CE
- 1967–68 Virginia Damon. Asst. in Speech (classified as administrator)
- 1970–71 Katharine Doob Sakenfeld. Instructor in Old Testament
- 1970–71 Elizabeth Edwards. Instructor in New Testament
- 1970–71 Joyce Bailey (Jamaican). Visiting lecturer in CE
- 1974–75 Thelma Adair (African American). Visiting lecturer in CE
- 1975–76 Sandra Brown. Instructor in pastoral theology
- 1976–77 Doris Donnelly. Visiting lecturer in theology
- 1978–79 Mary Potter. Instructor in theology
- 1979–80 Lois Livezey. Instructor in social ethics
- 1981–82 Kathleen McVey. Asst. prof. in church history

Early Student Firsts

- 1800s Some women tutored by PTS faculty or students: including Betsey Stockton (ca. 1820), freed slave who became first single woman overseas missionary of Presbyterian Church

- 1915 First woman admitted part time (not as degree candidate): Mary Stewart Harney
- 1932 First woman Th.B. and Th.M. graduate: Muriel Van Orden Jennings
- 1932–47 In these 15 years 23 women officially registered for B.D. classes, most for only one year and not as degree candidates; two received B.D. degree: Eileen Bergsten Remington in 1945 and Ruth Kolthoff Kirkman in 1947
- 1944 Th.B. degree becomes B.D. Tennent School of Christian Education moves to PTS: M.R.E. initiated (three-year program)
- 1946–47 Twenty-six candidates for M.R.E. enrolled
- 1947 Six women graduated with M.R.E. degree (of these, two became Directors of Religious Education in USA; four served in mission field [Japan, Brazil, Korea, Cameroun])
- 1952 First African American woman M.R.E.: Anna Jones Molden
- 1954 Forty-four M.R.E. candidates (including students from nine countries)
- 1945–70 In these 25 years a total of 184 women earned M.R.E.: 51 women earned B.D., 9 Th.M.
- 1971 B.D. becomes M.Div.
- 1972 First women granted Ph.D. degree: Elizabeth Edwards, New Testament; Joyce Bailey (Jamaican), Christian education
- 1972 First woman elected Pres. of M.Div. Sr. Class: Jean Anne Swope
- 1972–73 Women's Center established by women students
- 1973 M.R.E. becomes M.A.
- 1978–79 First child-care center established by initiative of students Nancy Schongalla-Bowman and Lois Ann Wasson

Trustee Firsts

- 1949 First woman elected to Board: Mary Elizabeth White Miller (Mrs. Charles O. Miller), elder First Presbyterian Church Stamford
- 2005 First woman elected Chair of the Board: Mary Lee Fitzgerald

Recent Presidents of Princeton Seminary

- 1936–59 John Mackay
- 1959–83 James McCord
- 1983–2004 Thomas Gillespie
- 2004– Iain Torrance

Author biographies

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