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A Magnificent Tapestry of Women:

‘Women and Ministry Conferences’ and the developing Woman-Church Movement in Aotearoa 1980 – 1994.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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The title “A magnificent tapestry of women” is a quote by Marcellin in *Women and church shaping the future. 4th National feminist theology conference. Conference musings.*

ABSTRACT

For many Pakeha Christian women the past 20 years have been a time of evaluating the Christian church and their personal beliefs in light of developing feminist dogma and theology. Such evaluation has inevitably brought about the desire for change. Some women have stayed within the church to encourage change from within the structure. Others have worked on the fringes in a search for a faith affirming of women, while still others have left the church convinced of its inherent patriarchy. Loose networks of women have established themselves throughout the country to discuss, challenge, and draw strength from one another as they have struggled for change. Their emphasis has been placed on developing an inclusive, holistic faith, affirming of women and free from patriarchy. This I have labelled *woman-church*. This thesis focuses on the emerging theology and emergent trends in the spiritual practice of *woman-church*. Four conferences were held throughout the country from 1981–1994. The significance of these conferences is also discussed. The texts from the conferences, along with material from the interviews of twenty-one women are used to draw out emergent themes. This thesis is not intended to be a complete history of *woman-church*. Rather I aim to create a flavour for what has been happening in this area of pakeha women's spirituality, particularly over the time span of the conferences.

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