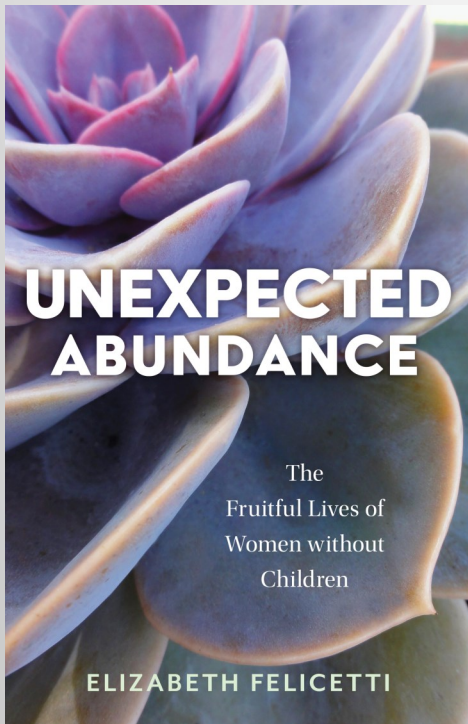




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Unexpected Abundance: The Fruitful Lives of Women without Children

By Elizabeth Felicetti
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Unexpected Abundance

The Fruitful Lives of Women without Children

Meet 25 women who generated life without giving birth.

In many Christian communities today, women are expected to have children—to “be fruitful and multiply.” To be childless is to be less of a woman, less of a Christian, or so it can feel.

Elizabeth Felicetti is deeply familiar with this pressure as an Episcopal priest who never had the children she imagined would be part of her life. But in the landscape of her childhood in Arizona Felicetti found fresh eyes. If she’s “barren,” so is the desert—and if you look closely, the desert teems with unexpected life.

This is also true of women throughout history. Biblical women like Mary Magdalene, medieval mystics like Julian of Norwich, and modern activists like Rosa Parks did not have children, yet their lives bore fruit in their communities and in the church at large.

In reflecting on her own experience alongside those of these remarkable women, Felicetti deepens our understanding of the many ways to be fruitful. Women without children—by choice or chance—who have felt frustrated or voiceless in the church will find solidarity and inspiration in the pages of *Unexpected Abundance*.

“Felicetti’s biblical research and engaging storytelling inspire and inform. This book will keep you turning pages and, as I did, highlighting passages to revisit time and time again.”

—**Teri Ott**, editor and publisher, *The Presbyterian Outlook*

“As a woman without children myself, I treasure the cloud of witnesses Felicetti has gathered together in this bold new book to attest to the abundant possibilities of a life aside from motherhood. *Unexpected Abundance* will be a faithful and fierce companion for women who have chosen or are discerning this path.”

—**Heidi Haverkamp**, Episcopal priest and author of *Everyday Connections: Reflections and Practices for Year B*

Suggested Interview Questions

- Where did you find your inspiration for the book?
- Why did you choose to focus on these specific 25 women?
- Of the 25 women, who do you feel you resonate with the most?
- The words “desert” and “barren” are often stereotyped as a negative descriptor. How have you reframed them in a positive light?
- Your audience is both women who do not have children and those who do. What do you want each of those groups to take away from reading your book?
- Chapter 6 on composers links Dolly Parton to Hildegard of Bingen. Though they lived centuries apart, how were their experiences of sexism similar?
- Why are the benefits of not having children sometimes downplayed?
- Chapter 2 discusses Old Testament matriarchs. How do you define a matriarch?
- How can women who have not borne children be well described as fruitful?



Elizabeth Felicetti is an Episcopal priest and the rector of St. David’s Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia. Felicetti’s writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Christian Century*, and numerous other magazines.

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