

I agree that Luke acts in his gospel to give positive features to women and it likely reflects strong traditions of female involvement in the early Jesus movement and also that Luke's target audience took the role of women in the diaconate as the normal state of affairs, probably still presiding over their house churches.

Mary's prominence is carried on into the traditions that pitch her against Peter for primacy in the Gospel of Mary (10:3-6). (Miller R J (ed), *The Complete Gospels*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994, 365)

Luke makes a point of including women as disciples and according them an honoured role. He is careful to individualise and flesh out the women he mentions.

The synoptic parallels of 8:1-3 are arguably Mark 6:6 and Matt 9:35 where women aren't mentioned at all. In Luke this addition of women to the picture follows the story of the sinful woman and the ointment that in John (12:3) and subsequent Church tradition is ascribed to Mary. In Mark and Matthew this is an early anointing of the soon to be dead Jesus. Luke moves it far back as an example of service and chides Simon the Pharisee (no longer a leper cf Mark and Matthew) for not serving him as the woman did. Jesus in Luke gives the highest praise to the service given by a woman who is acknowledged to be a sinner.

Byrne (p76) is concerned that Luke is ascribing mental illness as a feature of women. I can't see it: Luke is merely detailing what he knows of Mary Magdalene from Mark 16:9. What seems more likely is that Luke is simply stating the fact that women in the early church had the ministry of service (ie the diaconate) and highly praising that fact. This inclusion of women into his circle was revolutionary enough in itself. I can't see that we can be critical that the tradition of males forming the twelve and the pillars persisted considering its Jewish origins and the societies into which Christianity was projecting.