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# Giving Voice to Women of God: Uniting the Methodist Church

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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Giving Voice to Women of God:

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Uniting the Methodist Church

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(TITLE)

BY

Jennifer M. Clark

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

**Master of Arts**

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1997

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Giving Voice to Women of God:  
Uniting the Methodist Church

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B.A., Illinois Wesleyan University, 1995

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Speech Communication  
in the Graduate School of  
Eastern Illinois University. 1997

Charleston, Illinois

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the experience of three female clergy in The United Methodist Church. Historically, women have had a voice in the church, but it has been muted as a result of the traditionally male dominated structure. The purpose of this study is to give voice to these stories and experiences, which is essential to understanding of the past, present, and future of the church. Interviews were recorded with each woman, and the transcripts revealed four common themes among the responses: 1) style of female clergy, 2) calling of female clergy by God, 3) acceptance of female clergy, and 4) role expectations of female clergy. The discussion of these themes explicates what it is like to be a woman performing in the traditionally male profession of ministry in The United Methodist Church.

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Giving Voice to Women of God:  
Uniting the Methodist Church

Leadership effectiveness has been measured in many different ways, with findings indicating that men receive higher group contribution and influence ratings and are more likely to be liked than their female counterparts (Andrews, 1984). This area of study has been researched in many ways; however, there is little to no research in the area of leadership of men and women in a religious context. Many women throughout history have experienced a call to ministry, but have found the opportunity blocked to them because of church policy (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, 1983). Chilcote (1993) reveals that “women who are called to preach continue to struggle with the failure of many to accept their vocation in life” (p.124).

Patriarchy, “the institutionalized system of male dominance,” continues to deprive women of access to power in the church (Winter, Lummis, & Stokes, 1994, p. 49). The traditional male dominance in the number of clergy is a main concern in the struggle for gender equality in religious leadership. Because of the male dominance, there is at times reluctance for people to accept the role of women as clergy leaders in the church, and for the purpose of the current study, reluctance in The United Methodist Church. White and Dobrist (1993) state that women, while voicing major criticism of sexist practices, “see the churches as salvageable and seek to bring about change through established channels of discourse” (p. 239). Fortunately, societal changes have occurred which make it possible for women to consider traditionally all-male professions, such as clergy (Carroll, et. al., 1983).

It is clear in the review of literature that women, including clergywomen, have historically not been given a voice in society. Kramarae’s muted group theory states that women’s words are discounted and their thoughts are devalued. Griffin (1994) explains this as “When women try to overcome this inequity, the masculine control of communication places them at a tremendous disadvantage. Man-made language ‘aids in

defining, depreciating, and excluding women” (p. 441). The result of this process is women becoming a muted group. It is clear that women have been involved in the church for centuries, yet their voices have been muted as the result of their gender. According to Littlejohn (1996), one of the assumptions of the muted group theory developed by Kramerae reveals that “Women must translate their own ways of understanding into the terms of the male worldview in order to participate in public life” (p. 239). This is consistent with the role of female clergy who are struggling to find their own voice in the traditionally male-dominated organization.

Another theory constructed by Gilligan (1982) points out that women have a different voice than men in society. This theory of moral development claims that when women are confronted with moral dilemmas, they tend to think and speak in a different ethical voice than men (Griffin, 1994). The different voice of women concerns the powers of feminine values of intimacy, caring and relationship (Littlejohn, 1996). According to Gilligan (1982), sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view (p. 16). This sensitivity directly relates to the role of female clergy in the church. From this, “Women not only define themselves in a context of human relationships, but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17). From these two theories, it is determined that women in the church, as well as in society, have been a muted group as well as struggling to find their own voice.

Men and women have different types of communication styles. McClelland believes that mature women and men may relate to the world in a different style (Gilligan, 1982). Tannen (1990) discusses these differences and reveals that women cannot change their style to that of a man’s in order to survive in society. She states:

“Women are moving into positions of authority. At first we assumed they could simply talk the way they always had, but this often doesn’t work. Another logical step is that they should change their styles and talk like men. Apart from the repugnance of women’s having to

do all the changing, this doesn't work either, because women who talk like men are judged differently-and harshly" (Tannen, 1990, p. 18).

These style differences are apparent in the preaching styles of female and male ministers.

Women, again, are challenged to find their own style in the midst of the church.

The dissonance surrounding female ministers within the church is present, yet female ministers hold strong beliefs that the sexist practices of the church have and will continue to change. Although significant strides have been taken to advance women and their opportunities to grow within the church in areas of leadership, there are still attitudes present which promote the gender inequality that has been on-going for centuries.

According to Lobody (1993), the institutionally sanctioned spiritual disciplines of Methodism have historically supported the theological empowerment of women (p. 32). This is evident in the Methodist tradition of women's roles in the church. It is therefore important to hear the stories of women and their struggle for equality and acceptance within The United Methodist Church.

Women who enter ordained ministry typically experience a sense of being called by God (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, 1983, p. 6). This "calling" of women has been historically the justification of women serving in the church, yet it has not been validated by the church. According to Lobody (1993), "no matter how compelling the conviction that God called (a woman), no respectable Protestant woman could formally engage in a public ministry at the turn of the nineteenth century without scandalizing society, embarrassing her family, and disconcerting the institutional church" (p. 19). The calling of women to ministry in the church is no different than the calling of men to serve in the same roles in ministry. However, the stories of females are typically different for one reason, gender. Listening to female ministers allows for a kind of understanding of women clergy's life-long struggles for gender equality. These stories are not only a vital and integrated part of the church, but also essential in the understanding of the past, present,

and future of leadership within the United Methodist Church, especially the role of female clergy leadership.

## Review of Literature

### Women and Early Methodism

The licensing and ordination of women as elders in full connection has been recognized as a legitimate part of Methodist policy since 1956; however, the struggle for this attainment dates back to the origins of female leadership within the roots of the church (Will, 1982). In the beginnings of Methodism in the 1730's, women made up the clear majority of the early Methodist followers. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, wrote letters to these women strongly urging activism within their societies. While in Georgia, Wesley appointed lay women to serve as "deaconesses" to assist in visiting the ill, which followed the traditional practice of the Primitive Church and Moravian examples (Rowe, 1994). As early as the 1740's, Wesley began to appoint women to the office of "class leader" (Rowe, 1994). The first woman "licensed" preach by Wesley was Sarah Crosby in 1761. He defended the rights of women to preach at the Methodist conference in 1784, and three years later, in 1787, the conference of churches granted an official authorization writing:

"We give the right hand of fellowship to Sarah Mallett, and have no objection to her being a preacher in our Connection, so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines and attends to our discipline" (Rowe, 1994, p. 1).

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in England experienced a set-back in the progression of female clergy when it ceased the practice of licensing women to preach by a conference action.

In the United States from 1811-1824, Fanny Newell rode a New England "circuit" with her clergy husband, Ebenezer, and shared in his preaching assignments. Rowe (1994)

reports that they both published autobiographies and could be noted as the first Methodist clergy couple.

Early Methodist women had three particular leadership roles in that day: speakers of the Word, internants, and support-group leaders (Brown, 1981). As speakers of the Word, several modes of public speaking were used, ranging from informal conversation with friends to formal preaching and biblical application. Second, the term “internant” had a special meaning in the days of early Methodism; it referred to the preachers assigned to “travel the connection” in the specific circuits to which they had been appointed at the annual conference. No woman was ever formally appointed as a regular internant minister, yet some women did in fact “travel the connection” with the approval of Mr. Wesley (Brown, 1981). Third, early Methodist women of the Word felt the need for contact with and support from other women. Women frequently gathered in these support-groups to reveal fears, share weaknesses, and describe aspirations for their roles as leaders in religion. This network of female friendships provided clear support and encouragement for the female role of leadership within early Methodism.

There is clear evidence of Mr. Wesley’s support, encouragement, and approval of women to travel and preach the Word. He stressed and supported the involvement of women in early Methodism. However, his support of women was not shared by many of the male leaders, and the role of women preachers became nonexistent soon after the death of John Wesley (Chilcote, 1993).

### History of Women in the Methodist Church

It is important to have an understanding of the incremental gains in the history of the church by women, as well as the roles and landmarks of women who struggled for a place for women and their ordination rights within the early parts of the church. Other previous sects of the church, including the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Protestant and the Methodist Episcopal Church dealt with the issue of ordaining women as elders. As early as 1817, Richard Allen, founding bishop of the

African Methodist Episcopal Church, authorized Jarena Lee to hold prayer meetings in her home. In 1819, she preached her first sermon in Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia (Rowe, 1994).

#### The Methodist Protestant Church

As early as 1880, the Methodist Protestant Church began to accept women as ordained clergy. In 1866, the Northern Indiana Conference of the Methodist Church (later known as the Methodist Protestant Church) ordained Helenor M. Davison deacon, but asked the General Conference to clarify the issue. The 1871 General Conference halted the practice and Davisons' status was unclear, but she continued to preach in her clergy husband's appointments (churches) until her death in 1877 (Rowe, 1994). In 1880, the New York Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church ordained Anna Howard Shaw (who in the same year appealed for ordination in the Methodist Episcopal church and failed). However, the 1884 General Conference ruled the ordination out of order (Rowe, 1994).

Without denominational authorization, the Kansas Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church ordained Eugenia St. John, a popular evangelist and lecturer, as clergy in 1889. St. John served as the first woman clergy delegate to a Methodist Protestant Church General Conference, and her election and ordination was upheld by the 1892 and the 1896 General Conferences where she debated the status and role of women in the church (Rowe, 1994). In 1939, the Methodist Protestant Church gave up the practice of full clergy rights for women when it joined with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to form the Methodist Church.

#### The Methodist Episcopal Church

The more conservative Methodist Episcopal Church did not progress as rapidly in establishing gender equality in the ministry. It is reported that Phoebe Palmer, a Methodist Episcopal member, began to hold prayer meetings for women and men in her New York City home as early as 1835 (Rowe, 1994). In 1859, Palmer published Promise

of the Father, which was a massive defense of the right of women to preach based on the promise of Joel 2:20 restated by Peter at Pentecost which reads:

“I will drive the northern army far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land, with its front columns going into the eastern sea and those in the rear into the western sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise. Surely he has done great things” (Barker, 1985, p. 1715).

The first women in the Methodist Episcopal Church to receive a local preacher’s license was given to Maggie Newton van Cott of the New York Conference in 1869 (Rowe, 1994).

The first “test case” of the ordination of women at the General Conference occurred in 1880. Anna Oliver and Anna Howard Shaw lost their appeal, and the General Conference ceased the practice of granting women local preachers’ licenses (Rowe, 1994). The Methodist Episcopal Church established the office of “Deaconess” for women of the church in 1888. The Methodist Episcopal Church granted women the right to a Local Preacher’s license in 1920, but never approved of their ordination as clergy (Will, 1982). In 1924, the church admitted women to a “course of study” which opened them to ordination as local deacons, authorized to preach, conduct divine worship, solemnize matrimony, administer baptism, and assist an elder (full clergy rank) in administering the Lord’s Supper (Carroll, et.al., 1983, p. 38). After two years, women were granted the right to ordination as Local Deacon or Local Elder, but were not granted full membership in the annual conferences and were only authorized to administer communion in the local congregation only (Rowe, 1994). Lobody (1993) reports that at that time, women were “trained in the evangelical arts of public testimony, group leadership, biblical study and moral governance” which allowed women to exercise their gifts in more public ways in response to God’s call to Christian service and discipleship (p. 32).

#### History of Women in the United Brethren Church

In contrast, the women leaders of the church of the United Brethren in Christ made significant gains as ordained ministers and members with full status. During the nineteenth

century, women made their first attempts to become ordained clergy. In 1847, a United Brethren woman, Charity Opheral, received a “commendation” to preach by the White River Annual Conference in Indiana (Rowe, 1994). The Wabash Annual Conference in Indiana granted Lydia Sexton a “license” to preach in 1859. The General Conferences debated frequently over the issue of women preachers, but it was not until September 13, 1889, that the United Brethren General Conference approved the licensing, ordination, and conference membership of women. On this date, the Central Illinois Conference ordained the first female minister, Ella Niswonger, in the United Brethren Church (Will, 1982). Her service of ministry within the church remained strong, and in 1901, Niswonger served as the first woman clergy delegate to a United Brethren General Conference (Rowe, 1994).

Ordained women remained a small but vital section of ministry in the church until November of 1946, when it merged with the Evangelical Church. As a result of their coming together, the United Brethren Church gave up the practice of full clergy rights for women after uniting with the Evangelical Church to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. When ordination was not possible, women expressed their call to ministry in other ways as lay volunteers or other church related occupations which allowed women to participate, such as Christian education (Carroll, et. al., p. 7). Before women were permitted to become ordained clergy in the church, many women became deaconesses who served in combined community service and congregational posts, in community centers, or in home or schools of the local church.

In 1956, Methodist church granted full clergy rights to women, including the right to ordination as Deacon and Elder and full membership in an annual conference with a right to a pastoral appointment (Rowe, 1994). Also in 1956, Maude K. Jensen was the first woman to be granted the rights in the Central Pennsylvania Conference. The Methodist Church appointed its first female District Superintendent, Margaret Henrichsen of the Maine Annual Conference, in 1967.

### Female Clergy in The United Methodist Church

In 1968, the final merger occurred between the United Brethren and the Methodist church to create The United Methodist Church. A new “revolutionary” committee was formed by the church called the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, which is authorized and funded by The United Methodist Church. The first United Methodist Clergywoman’s Consultation occurred in 1975, and others followed every four years thereafter (Rowe, 1994). In 1976, the first women clergy delegates were elected to the General Conference; there were ten females total. The Women’s History Project of the General Commission on Archives and History was established in 1978 to trace the history of women in the church. Most significantly, women clergy reached the “top of the glass ceiling” in 1980, when the first woman bishop, Marjorie Swank Matthews, was elected and consecrated in the West Michigan Conference.

Throughout the past forty years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of women getting college education and entering the ministry in response to their call to ministry (Carroll, et. al., p. 8). Although women have been ordained as clergy in The United Methodist tradition for forty years, yet there is no denial that the historical process has been a long and difficult one. According to Parvey (1984), some members of the church are questioning the affects a female clergy’s perspective and values may have on the church, with a particular concern for a woman clergy’s potential influence on ministry, theology, language, worship and biblical interpretations. This opinion of women clergy’s use of language is ironic in a sense, since the traditional language used by men in ministry is usually masculine. According to Carroll, et. al. (1983), female ministers are “offended by the exclusiveness of the male language about God and humankind, common in churches, as well as by hierarchical forms of theology and church polity” (p. 45). To combat this offensiveness, in 1984, inclusive language guidelines called “Words That Hurt, Words That Heal” were commended for a church-wide study by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church (Rowe, 1994).

There is little doubt of the historical and present-day resistance and reasons for females being allowed to serve as ministers. Bock states that ministry “has not only been defined as masculine, but as ‘sacredly’ masculine. The father figure, a prominent feature of Christianity, is also a prominent ingredient in the image of the clergy” (Carroll, et. al, p. 9). In addition, many people argue the biblical, historical, and theological grounds and implications of women being elders, deacons, and ministers of the Word and sacrament (Russell, 1984). Bineham (1993) proclaims that “A woman’s role in the church, then, is limited by the weaknesses associated with her gender” (p. 520).

### Experiences of Early Methodist Women

There are women who have experienced inequality at its fullest in their lives of dedicated service to the church. Catherine Livingston Garrettson (1752-1849) was one of the first generation of women who devoted her life to the Methodist Episcopal Church. She performed some of the most public functions of ministry (teaching, evangelism, pastoral care) in entirely domestic settings and answered her call to Christian service without questioning the restrictions of the church and society which prohibited women from having formal church positions (Lobody, 1993, p. 20). Through her lifelong service, she was able to break boundaries within public and private sections of the church. Garrettson was “energized for Christian service” and honored her call to ministry without social disruption. However, her feminist view and actions impacted the church in significant ways in the early part of the nineteenth century into the present day. There are many other women whose service in the church is deemed extraordinary even by today’s standards. Their roles and contributions have helped to shape and improve the equality status of women and opportunities available within the church.

The education of women in their call to ministry is equally important in the historical context. In 1855, the same year as her death, Eliza Garrett became the founder of the Garrett Biblical Institute. This was the second institution for theological education of the Methodist Church in the United States, and the establishment of this school created

a tradition for women and men to be educated in seminary study. Garrett's school has "benefited from a long line of women who by their generosity and vision have brought opportunities for grown to those who will serve the church" (Fisher, 1993, p. 54). In 1876, the first woman received a Bachelor of Divinity at a Methodist theology seminary. Anna Oliver received this degree from Boston University School of Theology, and Anna Howard Shaw received the same degree in 1878 (Rowe, 1994). By 1932, women began to be appointed to Methodist theological school faculty positions. Examples include the appointment of Mildred Moody Eakin to Drew Theological Seminary and the appointment of Georgia Harkness to Garrett Biblical Institute in 1939 (Rowe, 1994). It is recorded that in 1968, Professor Nelle Morton at Drew Theological Seminary offered one of the first courses in feminist theology in an American seminary. Not until 1983 was the first woman dean of a Methodist theology seminary appointed. In this year, Marjorie Suchocki was appointed the dean of the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.

It is apparent through history that women have struggled for equal rights, status, and opportunity within the church. Research is limited concerning women and religious orientations and beliefs regarding female clergy. Although the severity of this "gender weakness" has perhaps diminished compared to the present, there is no doubt a story to be told. It is hopeful that the beliefs and attitudes regarding female clergy have changed for the positive. There are, however, beliefs about women in the ministry within the United Methodist Church which have been evident for many years, which are reflected within areas such as clergy peers, clergy families, seminaries, and congregational members.

#### Seminary Statistics of Female Clergy

In The United Methodist church, women have had many opportunities to advance their positions within the church, perhaps more so than any other Protestant denomination. More and more women are entering seminaries and seeking positions as second careers (Carroll, et.al., 1983). According to the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church, there were 683 women enrolled in United Methodist Master of

Divinity Seminaries, representing 24.0 percent of the total student population. In 1990, the number rose to 1,099 women representing 42.8 percent of the student body, and in 1996, the total number of women in United Methodist Seminaries earning Master of Divinity is 1,449 or 48.7 percent of the enrollment. The growth of women carrying out their call to ministry is apparent in these statistics, with women representing close to one-half of the enrollment in United Methodist seminaries. It is predicted that this trend will continue and will be interesting to watch the placement of these women, as well as congregational reactions.

### Positions of Clergy

The highest level or position which a clergy can obtain within The United Methodist Church is to be elected and consecrated a Bishop. At the present time, The United Methodist Church has ten female Bishops, nine of whom are active and one is retired. There have been a total of eleven female Bishops in the history of the church; one is deceased. The United Methodist Church is the first church in Christendom to have elected a woman Bishop.

The second-to-highest level a clergy may reach is to be appointed a District Superintendent, or DS. A DS is appointed by the Bishop of the Annual Conferences, and serves the churches within a particular district as an administrator. As of March 1997, The Board of Higher Education and Ministry reports there are 524 district superintendents within The United Methodist Church. Of those 524, 83 are women, resulting in 15.8 percent of the district superintendents being women.

### Divisions of Clergy

Clergy in The United Methodist Church are divided into four general categories: 1) Elders in full connection, 2) Deacons in probationary membership, 3) Associate members either full or part-time, and 4) Local student pastors. Women received full rights to ordination in the Methodist Church in 1956. The United Methodist Church reported a total of approximately 500 clergywomen in 1975. According to Carroll, et. al. (1983),

The United Methodist Church experienced the greatest increase among Protestant denominations in the number of women clergy from 1977 to 1981, reporting a 312 percent increase (p. 50). The total women clergy (including all four categories of clergy in the church) in 1984 was 2,680; in 1993, it was 5,147; and in 1994, it was 5,385 female clergy. The statistics from the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church state that in 1995-1996 there were a total of 5,712 women clergy, with 3,633 classified as elders; 986 as deacons, and 4,619 of the total being ordained clergy. Of the total number of clergy, it is estimated that roughly eleven percent are women.

Although The United Methodist female clergy currently have more opportunities than in the beginnings of the church, they have struggled to attain their standing of equality, or nearer equality, within the traditional male hierarchy within the church. It is therefore important to attain an understanding of the progression of women clergy and their importance and role within The United Methodist Church. For the purpose of the current study, the challenge is to give voice to the stories of women in the church, focusing on differences in views, styles, experience, and challenges these women have faced as a result, or consequence, of their gender. It is understood that the responses of the selected women are not generalizable to the experiences and beliefs of all female clergy in The United Methodist Church. However, the experiences and thoughts of these female clergy will establish an in-depth and real-life understanding which gives a perspective on the historical, present, and future life of the church involving the ministry of women. This leads to the formulation of the following research question:

RQ: What is it like to be a woman performing in the traditionally male profession of ministry in The United Methodist Church?

## Method

### Participants

The participants of the study are three white ordained female clergy in The United Methodist Church. These three women have achieved three different and distinct positions or levels within the hierarchy of the church structure. Each is currently a member of The Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference. The first woman is the Bishop of The Illinois Great Rivers Conference, responsible for the administration of approximately 1200 local churches. She has been in the ministry for 28 years, serving also as the minister of various local churches, also known as “charges”, and as a district superintendent. Probably most impressive and significant, she is the fifth elected and appointed female bishop in the history of The United Methodist Church. Her appointment as bishop is the highest position one can attain within the church structure.

Second, a woman was selected who currently serves the position of district superintendent. She serves on the Bishop’s cabinet, which is responsible for assigning clergy to local churches, and supervises approximately 90 local churches at a middle management level. She also has been in the ministry for several decades, and is currently the first female to serve as the chairperson of the Bishop’s cabinet. In addition to her position as district superintendent, she has also served various local churches as an associate and directing pastor.

The third female clergy interviewed is one who serves in the position as the directing pastor of a local church. Her historical position within the church is very significant. She was the first ordained female clergy in The Central Illinois Conference. (This conference has merged with another and is now called The Illinois Great Rivers Conference.) Her service to the church surpasses the forty year mark.

### Instrument

In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the women. A total of five interview questions formatted on an interview grid were used to facilitate their responses

(See Appendix A). The purpose of the interviews was to obtain insights into each woman's personal experiences while becoming and serving as clergy in The United Methodist Church. Through these interviews, the voice of these woman can be expressed in their stories and experiences.

The female clergy were encouraged to share their stories and experiences as female clergy within the church. Based on the interview transcriptions, which may be found in Appendixes B - D, four central themes emerged and were identified as significant in their stories. The four themes include: 1) Style of female clergy, 2) Calling of female clergy, 3) Acceptance of female clergy, and 4) Role expectations of female clergy. Excerpts from the interview transcriptions have been selected which most adequately identify and depict the women's experiences and feelings concerning the four themes. The identification of these themes allows the descriptive study to highlight the experiences of three female clergy within The United Methodist Church.

## Results

As previously stated, there are four central themes which have been identified in the stories and experiences of the three female clergy in this study. It is acknowledged that these findings are not generalizable to all female clergy within The United Methodist Church, but rather only to those who are participants in the current study.

### Style of Female Clergy

This particular theme is rather general in its wording, so it has been sub-divided into three areas: 1) Relational qualities of female clergy, 2) Women preaching, and 3) Language.

#### Relational Qualities

The females identified differences in the acculturation of females within our society, and the impact this acculturation has on female clergy within the church. One respondent stated:

“(I) do believe we have been acculturated differently from one another. And I do believe that in our culture, in this country anyway, I don’t know if this would bear out in other countries, other cultures, but at least among European-Americans in this country I sense that men have been acculturated toward achievement, accomplishment... Women, I believe, have been acculturated more towards relationships. And as a result I think there is that difference reflected in theological prospectives and the way that people, men and women, go about ministry, too. As I watch women in ministry, I see a lot of commitment given to building the community of faith, which is a relational type of thing, not focused on so much of what we do, but what we be as well as what we do... And it has to do with the acculturation of women to be nurturers, to think of the whole and not just the parts, more relational...” (Appendix B).

This quote makes the observation that women and men clergy may have distinct differences because of their social acculturation. This most definitely reflects the way in which their theological views have an impact on their roles as ministers and spiritual leaders. Many times in the clergy’s interviews, the women commented on both sides of the issue, acknowledging each. This has been a consistent trend in the data which has been collected in this study and may also reflect their ability to see the world from multiple frames and their empathetic nature.

This is consistent with another’s view that women tend to have more relational goals within the church. In this study, female clergy view themselves as more relational, and this view is consistent with their understanding of God as relational and a “community” of believers, rather than the individual. As stated by another clergy:

“Some of the emphases in (women’s) ministry and their understanding of God as a relational being of church as a community of our journey of faith as the journey in community...(women) are more likely to live out the theology of the priesthood of all believers. I think theologically (they) maybe value God as nurturer, and as the church as nurturing and discipling, rather than the priesthood of the ordained who manage and the laity who are in ministry... Women have a different shaping than men do” (Appendix C).

This is not to say, however, that women clergy are the only one with the ability to have relational qualities. One woman states, “I believe that we are both male and female

qualities and that men are being liberated to use their nurturing, softer gifts--their relational gifts.” This statement acknowledges the differences, yet notes that males are certainly just as capable, and even encouraged, to use their relational gifts in the ministry.

It is also noted that the nurturing qualities of female ministers are more evident in certain areas of ministry. As one clergy states:

“The fact that society has seen as nurturing shows up a specific times. It shows up in hospital calling; it shows up definitely when we are talking about the birth of a baby; and it shows up in deaths. Men who might not cry in the arms of a man have been known to cry in the arms of a female clergyperson.” (Appendix D)

### Female Preaching

In the responses of the clergy, it is evident that each had a new experience in leaning and finding their own style of “preaching.” Because the church was traditionally dominated by male ministers, many had to find their own style of preaching as a woman.

One respondent states her experience in preaching as:

“I was the first woman I had ever heard preach. I had never heard a woman preach until I preached, and I thought, ‘Well, that was interesting! I guess that’s how women do it.’ I’m so glad that women don’t have that experience today--that no woman has to be in that place today...” (Appendix B)

The reason women don’t have the same preaching experience today is because they now have role models in the area of female preaching style. One respondent states that learning to preach in seminary was a different experience:

“One of the things that was fun was learning how women preach and the varieties of preaching...I didn’t have to have three points in prayer or an irrelevant joke at the beginning and then three points. We (women) could be creative and use whatever gifts we had, and that the verbal gifts that women sometimes have are well-used in the pulpit to share the Gospel in contemporary ways. That’s certainly not exclusive to women...(Storytelling) is a very precious calling to do that, and it seems to me that women are often naturally storytellers and very grounded in the everyday life where sacred and ordinary are mixed together. So I think I see that more in women’s preaching, although I think there’s a

tendency toward that in preachers of both genders to value that now.” (Appendix C).

### Language

There is a theological issue concerning the masculine language which is predominant in church language. Clergy responses are very clear in their opinions on this issue. One clergy states:

“I am really ready for us to be able to allow God to be ‘Spirit.’ And in my theology, Spirit has no sexuality, and so it’s not even a question. I do understand my sisters that rare frustrated with the patriarchal overtones of the faith...Will it be any more helpful for the church to begin thinking in all female imagery than it’s been for the church to think in all masculine imagery?... (I’d like to) go from the patriarchal to God being Spirit” (Appendix D).

It is clear in this particular dialogue that there has been traditionally masculine imagery/ language used when referring to God as a specific gender; however, there is an alternate viewpoint expressed on this issue in order to alleviate the concentration on masculinity within the church language. This is the stance that language should be gender neutral, since God is neither male nor female:

“God created diversity, and I think the challenge is to find a way to relate to it all. That’s why I would really like gender neutral...in the English language, part of our problem is we don’t have gender neutral personal pronouns...Theologically, I would say God is both male and female, and yet neither...since God is Spirit, sexuality is not important, but we assume that in the personality of God are the attributes that we tend to break down into male and female” (Appendix D).

Besides language in the theological sense, there is also the issue of language usage in the history of the church. Although ministry among women is becoming increasingly prevalent within The United Methodist Church, one female clergy had to encounter the mainstreamed masculine language used in the appointment of churches, which clearly excluded her from the process. She tells this particular experience as also an issue of language:

“(This was) the year I refused to stand up for appointments...we were doing the appointment process...They used to say, ‘Will all the men and their wives being appointed to such-and-such district stand?’ And for several years I’d gone, ‘Ahh well, well, you know.’ I’d decided I’m not going to stand, because they could say ‘clergy’ or ‘ministers’. So I didn’t stand, but I wasn’t saying a thing. I wasn’t going to make an issue out of it. I just did my heart of hearts, and wasn’t going to stand under those circumstances again” (Appendix D).

### The Calling of Female Clergy

Each of the women has clearly experienced a calling by God to enter the ministry. Their calling has been challenged by various people as being “valid.” This calling has enabled them to have permission to speak within the church, given by God, and it also provides them with the strength to speak and perform as a minister. They each express this calling in different ways as they share their stories:

“I truly believe in a call of clergy, and mine was a very emotional call when I was a freshman in college...I do really believe in a call to ministry, and I don’t think anybody goes for a whole lifetime without it being a call. I don’t think you could survive it” (Appendix D).

“I was called to be an ordained pastor. That was what God wanted me to do...There is nothing that can stop me from what I believe God is calling me to do...What I’m saying is I think I’ve learned to live by the grace of God in a way that is absolutely incredible because of this resistance of who I am and what I’m called to be about. So I’m grateful. I don’t complain, and I hope you hear as I tell my story I’m not complaining. I’m mostly describing because it has been a gift to me. It has gifted me and made me the person that I am today in a very positive way, so I have a strength that has been a great gift as a result of that” (Appendix B).

### Understanding by Women, Men and Family

The calling of women has had effects on not only the women themselves, but also their male counterparts within the ministry. Males can sometimes challenge the “place” women have in the ministry using scriptural texts as support of their ideas. One women

describes the understanding of her call and explaining it to her colleagues in seminary:

“There were men in seminary, classmates, who really didn’t believe women should be there. A part of what happened to me was in sharing with them how surprised I had been to feel called to ministry, and how that had contradicted some of the original understandings I had of scriptures. It helped to solidify my understanding, and also, I think, helped some of them to understand that we (women) weren’t just honing in on male turf without authorization by God, or at least seeking to understand what was the turf” (Appendix C).

Each of the women also had positive reactions by their family members when they responded to their call to ministry. Whether it was parents, spouse, or children involved in their decision, each was supported to answer their call and enter the ministry. One female speaks of her parents’ role in her decision and their response to her calling:

“My family, my parents, always encouraged me to be whatever it was I was called to be. My parents always helped me to understand the sky was the limit, and I needed to be whatever it was I was meant to be or what God intended me to be. And so, they always were helping me explore that sense of vocation without gender biases. I am eternally grateful for their kind of commitment on their part” (Appendix B).

One woman explained the atypical response of her husband when she decided to end her full-time career in the business world and enter the ministry:

“My spouse was and always has been very supportive, and he says, ‘We are in ministry together. Whatever you are supposed to do, I am with you.’ This is not at all typical for many women in ministry” (Appendix C).

### Justification of the Calling

One minister explains the simplicity of her call to become clergy. She doesn’t dispute or challenge God’s choice of her biological sex and her call to be a minister:

“How could hormones alter spirituality? In other words, if I had been male, would I still have been clergy? For people who have given me rough times as I came in...and they were rough times, one of my responses became, ‘Listen, God is God. If God had wanted

me to be male, I assume it would have been no big deal. When I got the call I was in a female body” (Appendix D).

This challenges the idea that calling is experienced differently by males and females. The authority of God is not questioned. God has the authority to create her female or male, as well as call her to become a clergy. It makes no difference if she is in a male or female body.

### Acceptance of Female Clergy

Although women have been allowed to become ordained ministers in The United Methodist Church for over forty years, this is not to say that there has not been past and present resistance in their ministries by both peers and congregations which they serve. The acceptance of these three females is different among their clergy peers and their congregations. Their stories reveal many experiences of acceptance being denied or challenged by these two groups of people.

#### Peer Acceptance

It would be difficult in any situation to work with peers who do not support you in the role of your ministry. For these women, experience has been varied in the amount of support, present and historical, they have received by their male counterparts. One woman tells of her experience when she first became an ordained deacon in the church:

“I was told by (a district superintendent) when they came up to visit, ‘No one will want you.’ They’d ordained me deacon, and now he’s telling me, ‘No one will want you. We won’t have a place to appoint you.’... There was this dream that somehow or other, our being female and just the way the culture allowed us to function and relate would really be a breath of fresh air that would finally free our brothers from a stereotype that the clergy had been forced into” (Appendix D).

A different clergy divulged a similar experience with her district superintendent:

“There was a negative reaction about my thinking about being ordained.

And the District Superintendent came and set a meeting for me to meet with the District Committee of Ordained Ministry. I went to the meeting in Green Bay, and he didn't show up--the whole committee didn't show up. I went home and finally got in touch with him and discovered that he had never called the meeting. I had actually left a note in his mailbox, and he never called or anything. And he showed up at the charge conference where I was going to get my preacher's license. Never did really apologize for that, kind of laughed it off" (Appendix C).

Another experience had to do with a meeting with clergy and a pastoral counselor.

The clergy were put into different groups and asked to discuss their feelings about each other:

"One of the things (the pastoral counselor) did in the group was he wanted us to have an opportunity to say things to one another that maybe we'd never said or should have. It turned out to be quite interesting when one of my male colleagues said, 'You've always frightened me.' And my question is 'How can I be frightening?' He said, 'It was just as you came into the conference, you seemed to know exactly what you were doing and where you were going...I couldn't treat you like I treated all the other clergy.' And I'm going, 'Why couldn't you?' I was surprised that he used the word 'frightened'" (Appendix D).

One of the ministers addresses her acceptance now as a bishop in The United Methodist Church by other bishops within the church. The positive acceptance she has received has been a positive factor in her experience in the church:

"I've found great acceptance on The Council of Bishops, and a great commitment on their part to receive me for what I have to offer and not in a stereotypic way because of gender. That's been a great gift and a great kind of hope for me in the life of the church" (Appendix B).

### Congregational Acceptance

Acceptance has been varied among the congregations that each female has served. Their acceptance has changed over time, historically noting that there is less acceptance in the beginnings of their ministry than at the present time. In their stories, it is

evident that the lack of acceptance by congregations results from their being female. One female tells of her experience with a male congregational member who served on the pastor-parish committee:

“At one pastor-parish meeting he made the statement, ‘If you were a man and married, you’d be perfect.’ That would not have been true. But, I would have fit into his...he could take what I was doing. He could take my theology. He could take my personality, but it needed to be in a male body. And he’d feel better if it was a male body that was married...It’s when things like that happen, on one hand they’re funny and on another hand they’re very sad” (Appendix D).

Another clergy tells the story of an individual within her church who opposed her receiving a preaching license on the grounds of her gender:

“In the course of that charge conference for my preacher’s license, one of the men of the church got up and said, ‘Women are not supposed to speak in church; they are supposed to be silent in church and cover their heads. Therefore, we should not recommend her to have a pastor’s license.’ However, the congregation did affirm it, and I was licensed. But it was that kind of resistance that I’m trying to describe...” (Appendix B).

One of the ministers reveals that it is virtually impossible to expect all people to be accepting and supportive of female clergy, but gives a general perspective of her experience with congregations:

“There was on the one hand great support, and the other hand there has been this undertow because of gender bias throughout my whole experience...I have found that the idea of a woman is much more threatening than the reality of a woman, and people have been really upset about the possibility of a having a woman...I have found through all my ministry great acceptance in all congregations. There have always been some people who do not affirm women in the ministry. That has been a reality. I’ve had to deal with that in every appointment, but by enlarge that’s been very, very small. ...It’s been really interesting as a district superintendent to sit in a pastor-parish relations committee and have them tell me they don’t want a woman as their pastor, and that’s their district superintendent...I have found over the years that congregations have really opened up to women and are accepting women

in the ministry...On the whole folks just been really open to experimenting and trying on the new and to receive me. It has been character building, however” (Appendix B).

### Role Expectations of Female Clergy

There are a variety of role expectations of female clergy in The United Methodist Church. These expectations mostly stem from stereotypical expectations associated with gender. From the interviews, there are three common expectations the female clergy experienced in their ministry. These include role expectations in the areas of: 1) Christian education, 2) Family choices, and 3) Proving themselves as clergy. However, one woman notes:

“The United Methodist Church especially began to see a vision of the church that included women in leadership...It’s assumed that women will serve on a cabinet and be district superintendents...There are now twelve of us who have been elected bishop since 1980. That’s a really short amount of time...I think the role of women has changed significantly in that The United Methodist Church has included us and assumed now we are a normal part of the leadership of the church” (Appendix B).

This is not to say, however, that the past experiences have not occurred in the role expectations of female clergy in The United Methodist Church.

### Christian Education

Historically, it was very common for women to have leadership positions in the church associated with Christian Education. For each of the three female clergy interviewed, either their original intent in their educational studies was to have a career in Christian Education, mainly because that was what was expected by women in that time. or they originally had careers in Christian education and later became clergy. One clergy shares her experiences of changing her vocation in the late sixties:

“I never thought about being ordained, even through college. But I did think about going to seminary in order to get further deepening to be a director of Christian Education...it was just the culture. And when I got to seminary, I never ever thought about being ordained...There were women who weren’t doing that. So I was there as a Christian Education

Director, and that made it safe because that's what women did in seminary...And it felt safe to be a Director of Christian Education because it met all the cultural expectations. I could just safely do that and everyone would be pleased and smile. But to be ordained felt like going into this tunnel with inability to see what it meant, and it felt like joining a men's club...It's like this is so radical, and it was a sense of vocation that was not culturally acceptable. Women just didn't do that" (Appendix B).

### Family Choices

Family and balancing the roles of mother and clergy was definitely an issue in these women's careers. People were often questioning female clergy as to when they would get married, have children, and have the ability to balance each of these in their lives. One female shares her experience with a college professor concerning her decision to enter seminary after graduation:

"My religion professor in college couldn't understand why I wanted to (go to seminary for Christian Education), because I'd be getting married and having children, and I wouldn't use it" (Appendix B).

Historically, many people expected women to get married and have children, rather than begin a career as a single woman. Another clergy shares her experience in her ordination interview, one which typically involves the candidate being questioned about theological views and beliefs:

"I went to the Board of Ordained Ministry meeting, it was the whole Board of Ordained Ministry in the Wisconsin Conference, and there were no women on the board, all men--all white men. And the questions they asked me were, 'What are you going to do when you get married, and when you have children, and when you have to move?' And I kept saying, 'Well, I may never get married. I may not have children. You're assuming that if I do get married and have children that I'm going to follow my husband. He may follow me.'...I didn't get asked any theological questions. These were questions asked by men. Usually, it's a theological contest to see if your theological context in which they see if you're fit for ministry. But I never was asked any of those

questions about fitness for ministry. It all had to do with what would happen if I got married” (Appendix B).

A similar experience was shared by another female when she went to receive her deacon’s orders from the district committee on ministry:

“...the room appeared small to me that day, and dark, and there were eight men sitting around the table in dark suits. I came in, and they sort of humored me, and said that, ‘Well, we assume that women go to seminary to get husbands.’ I said, ‘That’s funny. God didn’t say a single thing about a husband in my call. That wasn’t there” (Appendix D).

#### Proving themselves as clergy

A number of responses the women shared in the interviews dealt with issues that they have had to prove themselves in the role of clergy. In this process, many also noted that they felt this was because of their gender, and that men did not have to prove themselves as clergy. There are similarities in the females’ responses to the interview question regarding the differences in their experience as clergy versus a man’s experience as clergy. These two individual comments deal with the issue of competency as female clergy:

“I think people assume I have to prove myself. There has been along the way an assumption that I am incompetent until proven competent, and my sense is with men they are competent until proven incompetent. So, people expect me to prove myself. I have to say that carefully because I don’t expect myself to have to prove myself. That’s a real bind to put myself in, and I refuse to do that...Folks just have to deal with that assumption, but I also have to deal with it because I know there are those folks who are waiting and watching, and waiting for me to trip up--to prove their assumption that I am incompetent” (Appendix B).

“I feel that I have to work harder. I have to earn my credibility particularly in view of the fact that I was appointed to the (Bishop’s) Cabinet before I’d paid my dues, and particularly in view of the fact that (the Bishop at that time) said, ‘We’re going to take a lot of flak for this.’...I think there are persons who make me prove myself often in hostile ways, but often in just discomfort--genuine discomfort...I think my role is different in that I am aware that I’m watched more,

and I don't think it's paranoia. I think it's partly curiosity. I think it's partly lack of confidence that I can do what I'm appointed to do" (Appendix C).

Issues such as affirmative action are alive and well in the church, and women have experienced the assumption that they are appointed to certain positions and churches not based on their abilities and skills, but simply because they are female. They often see themselves as being used as "tokens" in the church. Several comments were made regarding their placement in the church because they are female:

"There have been those folks who assume that I was, of course, incompetent, and I was put in that position (bishop) because it needed a woman. Another response is that somehow I have taken a position away from a white man--that it belongs to white men. And when a woman or a person of color has that position we are depriving white men of what they deserve...that assumes that white maleness is normative. I have a question about that. I don't agree with that" (Appendix B).

"Sometimes I get invited to things like, well, could you come and preach at United Methodist Women's Sunday? It's kind of like being a token. I think part of my ministry is being a token. I think that's all right as long as I have an opportunity to say, "This is (me) talking. This is not all women talking...There are times when I have to be the interpreter for women. A male will come, whether on the Cabinet or somewhere else and say, 'Is this offensive?' Meaning, is this offensive to all women? A part of the way my role is different is I don't think usually people would come up to a man and say, 'Is this offensive? Would this offend men?' as if that man could speak for all men. So a part of how it's different is either being willing to take that on and teach or not being willing to take that on" (Appendix C).

"I think the bishops are exceptionally sensitive. For the most part, they have really tried. They have tried very, very hard. And in most things now, I don't think it's a token, and I don't think tokens do us any good. If a person can't do their job, they shouldn't be there. So I hope in our whole church, we finally get to that place. It's not the gender that's important. It's the person" (Appendix D).

## Discussion

Historically within The United Methodist Church, women have been a muted group, silenced and not equal as a result of their gender. They have struggled to find a voice in the traditional male hierarchy of The United Methodist Church. Women have been required to “translate their own ways of understanding into the terms of the male worldview in order to participate in public life” (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 239). This is most certainly the case in the history of The United Methodist Church. Kramerae’s muted group theory seeks to “unmask the systematic silencing of a feminine ‘voice’” (Griffin, 1994, p. 442). This study gives voice to female clergy in The United Methodist Church, an organization which has also practiced “systematic silencing.” The muted group theory also involves the recognition that women’s words are discounted, and their thoughts are devalued. In this study, the words and thoughts of women are given voice through the recording of their experiences. This voice is just the beginning of possibilities in revealing the experiences of female clergy in the church.

Although female clergy have historically had muted voices, they have been given voice in this study. Part of the muted group theory states, “Women must learn the male system of communication, but men in contrast have distanced themselves from the female system” (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 240). Female clergy are aware of this “male system,” yet have found their own voice in ministry. This is evident in several areas of ministry, such as language and preaching style. According to Littlejohn (1996), genderization is one of the most thoroughly and uncritically accepted features of language, yet the church has consistently used masculine imagery and language throughout its history. Kramerae argues that the “ever-present public-private distinction in language is a convenient way to exaggerate gender differences” (Griffin, 1994, p. 442). Again, neutral pronouns are suggested to alleviate the alienation of women in ministry through language usage.

In terms of female preaching style, women have also found their own voice. This has been challenging because these pioneer women have developed a unique style, using

techniques such as storytelling, without the use of role models. According to one clergy, “I think women’s style has been changing and will continue to change as we become more comfortable with having more role models.” (Appendix C). Female clergy have found their own individual style as woman, and this will benefit the future clergy because they now have role models in the ministry.

These women have sought to identify themselves, and it is important to focus on the differences in the experiences of women, in order to gain an understanding of their struggle for a voice in the organization. This study gives voice to the stories and experiences of the three female clergy. Griffin (1994) says that a feminist research agenda must take women’s experiences seriously. Clearly, these three women are pioneers in the emergence of female clergy in the church. Using this approach, the stories and experiences of female clergy are voiced and can be used by the church, as well as upcoming females, to understand female clergy. Gilligan (1982) states that voice “requires finding places where women have the power to choose and thus are willing to speak in their own voice” (p.70). These three women have done that in their roles of female clergy within The United Methodist Church, and fortunately, the traditional policies of the church have been changed which allow them to opportunity to have a voice.

The responses regarding changes foreseen in The United Methodist Church regarding female clergy are similar among the respondents. Each has acknowledged that The United Methodist Church has given females opportunities to hold the same leadership positions within the church as men have had since the foundations of the church, thus, the role of the female clergy has gained status within the church over the past forty years. As one respondent comments:

“...I think that the role of women has changed significantly in that The United Methodist Church has included us and assumed that we are a normal part of the leadership of the church. Now, that’s not to say that every part of the church accepts us. There are still congregations that don’t want women as their pastors. There are probably, I mean

there still are areas that don't want women as their bishops...or superintendents. That's just the reality of these particular times, but significant strides have been taken in the last fifteen years. These have opened the doors for women..." (Appendix B).

This is a reflection of many of the responses of the interviewed women. Although not all persons involved in The United Methodist Church are in agreement or supportive of female clergy in leadership positions, there have been many strides and significant changes in the policies of the church which have given women the opportunity have equal status with male clergy. The voice of female clergy is growing in strength and numbers. However, there are those affiliated with The United Methodist Church who disagree with the policy and do not support female clergy.

The intent of this study is analyze the interview data and gain an understanding of the three women's experiences as female clergy in The United Methodist Church. It is clear that women are now, and will continue to be, a significant part in the leadership of the church. Their voice of struggle is an important part of the church's history as well as its future.

Society as a whole has become more focused on gender equality. The United Methodist Church and its formal acceptance of female clergy has helped this equality move forward, if only in one aspect of society as a whole. The number of women in United Methodist seminaries has significantly grown over the past several decades, bringing more women into leadership in clergy positions. Female membership within The United Methodist Church is a vital part of the organization's existence. Women have been and will be an important part of the church, whether serving as clergy or in other leadership lay positions.

The focus of the interviews was to gain knowledge about the experiences of three female clergy who, traditionally, have been a muted group in the church. A conclusion can be drawn that the journey of female clergy to gain acceptance, equality, and support within the church has been a difficult one for these three women. It is also apparent

through the literature reviewed and data analysis that the experience of these three female clergy is different than the experience of male clergy. This is the result of gender. Through the experiences of the women interviewed, this journey can provide a deeper understanding of the past, present, and future experiences and direction of the church and its leadership, one that is and will be significantly impacted by the leadership of female clergy.

### Limitations and Future Study

This study gives voice to the experiences of three female clergy in their lives dedicated to serving in ministry. This is just the beginning of a vast amount of research which could be conducted in this area. Although the findings are not generalizable to the population and the stories don't represent all women in The United Methodist Church, it does not mean these women's experiences are any less real. The findings of this study are a stepping-stone for new research in a variety of different settings.

While women in the pulpit advance their status and voice, over time we may see that the power or standing of the church is diminished. In other words, by accepting a feminine voice the church may lose ground with congregational members. The voice of the church may become muted. One interviewee expressed it this way:

"I don't think that God called us to change to an all female clergy... My greatest fear is that somehow or another the church is going to end up all female. The men die so young, and not only that, so many of our women come to church without their husbands...I women coming into the church as clergy results in men feeling somehow it's no longer for them, that will be very sad...I am haunted that somehow or other, thus church, not this one in specific, but The United Methodist Church and others--what we call "mainline" denominations, whenever we get to have fifty percent women, the men will begin to bail. And it will be a cultural thing, not a religious thing..If we ever get to the place that we have way too many clergy, that will be another interesting thing to watch, as who goes by the wayside--the men or the women? Or will we be judging people on the basis of their gifts and graces?" (Appendix D).

While it is still too soon to investigate this possibility, now as more women achieve leadership positions in the church, it will be an important consideration related to the issue of voice.

Additional questions have emerged from this study. Future study could include interviewing more female clergy. These women could be from different conferences, geographical regions, and/or different countries. Female clergy with different ethnic or racial backgrounds could also provide additional insight. It would also be interesting to compare the stories and experiences of single and married female clergy, as well as those with age differences. The time or year in which women enter the ministry may have an impact on the amount of gender bias and thus the experience of females in ministry. Interviews could also be done with the family or spouses of female clergy to see what their perceptions or experiences are with female clergy. Another twist could be studying female clergy in other denominations or religions other than The United Methodist Church. It would be interesting to see if the voices are different and if the experiences vary.

From this study, it is hoped that another aspect of women's voice in the traditional male-dominated organizational structure is explained and better understood. Future research could lead to a stronger grasp on the role of female clergy and their voice in The United Methodist Church. This study has added to history, not only in the history of The United Methodist Church, but also the history of the voice of women in society. From history, we are better able to learn from the past, identify the present, and anticipate the future, which will continue to be impacted and affected by the voice of women.

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Appendix A

Interview Grid

1. How are women clergy's theological views different than male clergy's?
2. Is there a distinct "style" of ministry which is used by women?
3. What changes do you foresee in the role of female clergy in The United Methodist Church?
4. Describe reactions to you as a woman in your various United Methodist ministerial positions. What about at seminary? Your family?
5. How do you feel your experience with The United Methodist organization is different than a man's?

## Appendix B

## Interview with Bishop

J: My first question is probably...we're just going to get right to the heart of this. This is an area that I am interested in and that I've talked a lot with my father about. How do you feel women clergy's theological views are different than those of men? Or are there any differences?

B: I probably have two answers to that question. I think there is lots of similarity, and I think between men and women's theological perspectives. And I think the diversity may be along other lines other than gender. I mean, I think there is great diversity in theological perspectives, but I'm finding within women some of the diversity that I see among men as well. I mean, for example, if you want to use the old category, I don't think liberal and conservative are categories that carry us now or in the future, but to use that I see among men a broad spectrum of liberal and conservative and I see it in women as well--liberal and conservative if you want to use that kind of bipolar spectrum. So, so I think there is a lot of diversity, and I think there is a lot of similarity between men and women. However, I think there is some difference between men and women, theologically. It's hard for me to name, but do believe we have been acculturated differently from one another. And I do believe that in our culture, in this country anyway, I don't know if this would bear out in other countries, other cultures, but at least among European-Americans in this country I sense that men have been acculturated toward achievement, accomplishment...well, achievement and accomplishment. Women, I believe, have been acculturated more towards relationships. And as a result I think there is that difference reflected in theological perspective and the way that people, men and women, go about ministry, too. As I watch women in ministry I see a lot of commitment given to building the community of faith, which is a relational kind of thing, not focused on so much of what we do, but what we be as well as what we do. I think both of those together. And I think there is a distinctiveness that women are bringing to biblical studies. It's hard for me to put my hand on it, but I think women are living it putting into the scriptural texts in a distinctive kind of way, perhaps because of our acculturation. Maybe it's focusing on the relational aspects of our heritage, scriptural heritage. It's hard for me to name, and I haven't done a lot of study about that personally. I think a lot of folks are beginning to do that kind of thing. But I think there are those gender, there are some gender differences at least in those areas I just named.

J: Is there a distinct "style" of ministry which is used by women?

B: That is related to what I just said perhaps. I don't know. I've seen women be conservative, directional, almost manipulative--which are characteristics that we give to the men. I've seen men be nurturing, and relational, and formational, and sensitive to feeling. So, on the one hand I tend to say no. On the other hand--the question is style of ministry? On the other hand I hear people give feedback to women that seems to signal there is a distinction with them, but what it is hard for me to put my hand on it. Unless is

related around the acculturation that I just named. Let me use a context that I am thinking a lot about these days, and it has to do with the times in which we are living. And I believe that our culture, western civilization is in the midst of a profound shift in self-understanding. And we're moving out of the industrial age, or what we call the modern world or enlightenment that was characterized, or that was described, by Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon and Descartes. That's the kind of thinking that is analytical and...thinking that is characterized by analysis, critique and categorization. Into a whole new world, a whole new epic that social scientists are describing as the post-modern world. It's so new we don't have a name to give to it. We know that it follows the modern epic, but we don't know...some people call it the age of information, some people call it the age of spiritual maturity moving from adolescence to maturity. I talk about in terms of moving from an understanding the world as a machine to understanding the world as an organism. And the difference is, you know how a machine works. You oil all the parts, and then you oil the parts and the whole machine will work correctly. It's mechanical. It's hierarchical. Each part is an entity unto itself. An organism is a body that all works together and the interest is on the whole, not just the parts. And all parts work together for the sake of the whole. It's more of a living, nurturing reality than a machine is. Now...your question. That's probably about a five day conversation that I just shared with you. So, it probably doesn't do justice to the time. It's not careful analysis. But nevertheless, when you talk about a distinctive style, I think the more organic style probably is by nature more feminine. And it has to do with the acculturation of women to be nurturers, to think of the whole and not just the parts, more relational...things that I have already said. But, some social scientists are describing our moving into the post-modern world as a time of moving, claiming our feminine characteristics. The characteristics of the modern world described by...could be described as patriarchy. And where it's not necessarily, I think, that we are moving into matriarchy, but we are discovering a lost side of our society which has been feminine, which has been submerged, which has been invisible, which has not been valued. And maybe we are getting it together...the masculine and the feminine in this new epic we're moving into. Which says that--your question about distinctive leadership style. Was that what it was? Distinctive style. It may have to do with this more organic sense that I'm talking about, rather than a hierarchical or patriarchal style. Does that make sense? I'm not giving you a lot of detail about that. I'm really speaking cryptically. I'm not...you know I haven't spoken in depth in a way that would communicate, in any way that makes sense in less you know what I'm talking about.

J: What changes do you foresee in the role of female clergy in the United Methodist Church?

B: Changes in the role...Well, I think that the church has been over the last 25 years opening its doors to women in leadership and to ordained women. I went to seminary in 1966 to 1969 and that was the time when the second wave of women's movement, the first one being back in the twenties when women were getting to vote, suffrage. It was just emerging and so there were a lot of angry women. Betty Ferdand wrote her book, and but then there was Kate Millen, Jermaine Greer, and other women who were stating

angrily the cause for women. And, the United Methodist church especially began to see a vision of the church that included women in leadership. My own Bishop in 1970...he came to Wisconsin in 1976, and in 1980 appointed me to serve on the cabinet at 36 years of age. That was a pretty radical thing that he did.

I was the fifth woman district superintendent in the history of The United Methodist Church. There just were not women doing that. But he had a vision that spread throughout the church. So that now, I think every annual conference at least one, probably more, women. And its assumed that women will serve on a cabinet and be district superintendents. And then the wave of women being elected to the episcopacy, so there are now twelve of us who have been elected bishop since 1980. That's really a short amount of time. So, I am identifying a very significant change that has happened for clergy women in a short amount of time when you talk about the some of the first women superintendents around 1980 to 1996. That's a short period of time.

So, I think that the role of women has changed significantly in that the United Methodist Church has included us and assumed now that we are a normal part of the leadership of the church. Now that's not to say that every part of the church accepts us. There are still congregations that don't want women as their pastors. There probably, I mean there still are areas that don't want women as their bishops...or superintendents. That's just the reality of these particular times, but significant strides have been taken over the last eighteen years, twenty years, that have opened the doors for women. I see that continuing when you ask what will be the changing role. I think women will continue to be included in leadership and I think that's bringing a balance to our understanding of the church in a wholeness that hasn't been there.

J: I am interested in finding out the reactions when you chose to become a United Methodist Minister. This could be dealing with specific positions in the church or positions you would take on as a minister such as the local church, district superintendent, Bishop level. As well as reactions by others when you were in seminary, your classmates, your professors, or from your own family. How did they react to your decision? What encounters have helped you to grow stronger?

S: Let me start with family. That's the easiest one. My family, my parents, always encouraged me to be whatever it was I was called to be. My parents always helped me to understand the sky was the limit and I needed to be whatever it was I was meant to be. Or what God intended me to be. And so, they always were helping me explore that sense of vocation without gender bias. I am eternally grateful for their kind of commitment on their part. When I was in high school and began to think about Christian education because that was the typical thing that women did as opposed to music. That was the choice, music or Christian education director. They were very supportive in helping me think through that and consider all the options on both sides without trying to bias me in one direction, at least that's how I felt it. And then when I made my decision was really a series of decisions because the culture didn't invite me to consider ordination. But when I finally reached that point of ordination I, there was nothing but support. And that's

always been the case throughout my whole ministry. So that's been a wonderful gift that I have been given.

In terms of other reactions, it needs to be put in the context of the time. I was in college from 1962 to 1966. The sixties were an incredibly turbulent time. There were all kinds of establishments, dis-establishments, race encounters going on--war, the Vietnam War, all of that was a very volatile time in our society. And so, I never thought about being ordained, even through college. But I did think about going to seminary in order to get further deepening to be a director of Christian Education. And my religion professor in college couldn't understand why I wanted to do that, because I'd be getting married and having children and I wouldn't use it. You know, (laugh) it was that time. This was a person I had done exceedingly well for, in terms of class. So it wasn't like he thought I wasn't able to do it. But, it was just the culture. And when I got to seminary, I never ever thought about being ordained. Here I was in seminary, but never thought about being ordained. Because there were just women...there were women who weren't doing that. So I was there as a Christian Education Director, and that made it safe because that's what women did in seminary. But the assumption was that I was there to look for a husband. That kind of was a cultural...That's not the reason I was there; I was there to get a seminary education. And then, I got out of seminary and decided to work in Christian Education and got a job at a church in Appleton, Wisconsin...and began to struggle with the issue of ordination. And it felt so safe to be a Director of Christian Education because it met all the cultural expectations. I could just safely do that and everyone would be pleased and smile. But to be ordained felt like going into this tunnel with inability to see what it meant and it felt like joining a men's club.

You know, it's like this is so radical and it was a sense of vocation that was not culturally acceptable. Women just didn't do that. So it was a real struggle because I had to struggle with "What am I going to do about marriage?" and "What am I going to do about children?" and all that sort of stuff. And when I decided to be ordained, that was what God was calling me to do, I also decided to be a single person. Because I never thought there would be any man who would be able to live with my own sense of vocation. So there was a sense of, part of the cost of this might be marriage, but that was OK because I was called to be an ordained pastor. That was what God wanted me to do. Well, as it turns out, I got married later. But that was what culturally was going on in terms of reactions and what was happening.

The church that I was a part was of in Appleton, Wisconsin. The church in Appleton, Wisconsin, this is in the late sixties. Appleton, Wisconsin was the home Senator Joe McCarthy who ran the anti-Communist group of the fifties. There was real conservative streak in that community. And so, there was a negative reaction about my thinking about being ordained. And the District Superintendent came and set a meeting for me to meet with the district committee of ordained ministry. And I went to the meeting in Green Bay, and he didn't show up--the whole committee didn't show up. And I went home and finally got in touch with him and discovered that he had never called the meeting. I had actually left a note in his mailbox, and he never called or anything. And he showed up at

the charge conference where I was going to get my preacher's license. And, never did really apologize for that, kind of laughed it off. And in the course of that charge conference for my preacher's license, one of the men of the church go up and said, "Women are not supposed to speak in church; they are supposed to be silent in church and cover their heads. Therefore we should not recommend to have a pastor's license." However, the congregation did affirm it, and I was licensed. But it was that kind of resistance that I'm trying to describe that you're asking about.

So, there was on the one hand great support, and the other hand there has been this undertow because of gender bias throughout my whole experience. That's just the way that it has been. And I can remember, I went to the...I was the first woman I had ever heard preach. I had never heard a woman preach until I preached. And I thought, "Well, that was interesting!" I guess that's how women do it. I'm so glad that women don't have that experience today--that no woman has to be in that place today. I'm just so pleased about that.

But, I went to the Board of Ordained Ministry meeting, it was the whole Board of Ordained Ministry in the Wisconsin Conference, and there were no women on the board, all men--all white men. And the questions they asked me were "What are you going to do when you get married, and when you have children, and when you have to move?" And I kept saying, "Well, I may not ever get married; I may not have children. You're assuming that if I do get married and have children that I'm going to follow my husband--He may follow me." I mean, all the...I didn't get asked any theological questions. These were question asked by men. Usually, it's a theological contest to see if you're theological context in which they see if your fit for ministry. But I never was asked any of those questions about fitness for ministry. But it all had to do with what would happen if I got married. That kind of thing. But...my understanding is a couple of people who knew me kind of laid down their lines and over the barbed wire in that setting, and said she can do it. And they did pass me to be ordained.

In terms of experience in local churches, I have found that the idea of a woman is much more threatening than the reality of a woman, and that people have been really upset about the possibility of having a woman. When they meet the woman then all that gets dissipated because it's Susie, or Sharon or whomever rather than some abstract notion. I have found through all my ministry great acceptance in all congregations. There have always been some people who do not affirm women in the ministry. That has been a reality. And I've had to deal with that in every appointment, but by enlarge that's been very, very small. And that I would also say has been true of district superintendent and bishop. It's been really interesting as a district superintendent to sit in a pastor-parish relations committee and have them tell me they don't want a woman as their pastor--and that's their district superintendent...that kind of thing. But I have found over the years that congregations have really opened up to women and are accepting women in the ministry. Sure, there's been hate mail; there's been all that stuff that goes with gender bias and that sort of thing, but it's minimal.

There have been reactions of surprise. Things like “I’ve never heard a woman preach before.” It’s like, that was OK that I’ve never heard a woman preach. That kind of working through that kind of reaction. I think people have been surprised that I can be decisive in some circumstances, that I can be decisive and that I can set direction and move people in a direction when needed. I think that’s not normally assumed to be possible by women as a cultural belief. There have been those folks who assume that I was, of course, incompetent and I was put in that position (bishop) because it needed a woman. Another response is that somehow I have taken a position away from a white man--that it belongs to white men. And when a woman or a person of color has that position we are depriving white men of what they deserve. That’s a response that I have sometimes got, like “How could you displace a white man?” Well, that assumes that white maleness is normative. I have a question about that. I don’t agree with that. So, there have been those kinds of responses all along the line in terms of my ministry. But on the whole folks have just been really open to experimenting and to trying on the new and to receive me. It has been character building, however.

J: How do you feel your experiences within the United Methodist organization are different than a man’s?

B: I think there is a curiosity about me that many men feel they just don’t have about themselves. I think people assume I have to prove myself. There has been along the way an assumption that I am incompetent until proven competent, and my sense is with men they are competent until proven incompetent. So, people expect me to prove myself. I have to say that carefully because I don’t expect myself to have to prove myself. That’s a real bind to put myself in and I refuse to do that. I know what I can do, and I know what I can’t do. And I am learning to do new things all along. Folks just have to deal with that assumption, but I also have to deal with it because I know that there are those folks who are waiting and watching, and waiting for me to trip up--to prove their assumption that I am incompetent. There are also those folks who try to trip me up, because it’s important for them to know that I am incompetent. So, that’s one of the responses that is different from men, I believe.

There is nothing that can deter me from what I’m about. And I have had all kinds of invitations because of this resistance to get out and to do something else. There is nothing that can stop me from what I believe God is calling me to do. So I feel like with that there is a kind of flexibility. I can just stand in the midst of anything and deal with it, and know that folks are going to shoot arrows at me and try to undo me and all that sort of stuff, but that’s OK. What I am saying is I think I’ve learned to live by the grace of God in a way that a way that is absolutely incredible because of this resistance of who I am and what I’m called to be about. So I’m grateful. I don’t complain, and I hope you hear as I tell my story I’m not complaining; I’m mostly describing because it has been gift to me. It has gifted me and made me the person that I am today in a very positive way. So I have a strength that has been a great gift as a result of that.

I am really pleased with what I am seeing in the life of the church in relationship to the inclusion of women. I am very hopeful about all the little girls in the congregations that we have, or even a little boy who said to the pastor who followed me, who was a man, “I didn’t know men could be ministers.” It was a wonderful little moment. But I do, I carry a lot of hope, and I think the United Methodist Church is in many ways modeling for our whole culture, but it needs to work in gender inclusivity. I’ve found great acceptance on the Council of Bishops, and a great commitment on their part to receive me for what I have to offer and not in a stereotypic way because of gender. That’s been a great gift and a great kind of hope for me in the life of the church.

## Appendix C

## Interview with District Superintendent

J: My first question is how, in your opinion, are women clergy's theological views different than male clergy's?

DS: Given that there's an overlap and it's really a continuum, I'd say women's theological views tend to be more...some of the emphases in their ministry and their understanding of God as a relational being of church as a community of our journey of faith as the journey in community. I think those are emphasized as over against a more hierarchical understanding. I think women are more comfortable with a theology of...they are more likely to live out the theology of the priesthood of all believers. I think theologically maybe value God as nurturer, and the church as nurturing and discipling, rather than the priesthood of the ordained who manage and the laity who are in ministry with but somehow not quite as "liked" in the ministry.

J: Is there a distinct "style" of ministry which is used by women?

DS: I think so. I think that distinct style and theological understanding has changed the church. I think its distinction that it is a horizontal style. It is an empowerment of laity. It is a working with, being in mission with, rather than doing mission to or for. It is a stance of being co-creators with God very unashamedly. Women's primary sin tends to be self-afnigation rather than pride, and this is, I think, is a newer understanding of women, particularly women theologians and women psychologists who have been theological as well as psychological thinkers, have brought an understanding that women come out of a different shaping than men do. Out of that shaping we tend to deny self is natural because of our culturalization, and indeed to deny gifts, to be afraid of "success", to be more hesitant to accept not responsibility to use gifts, but use gifts which are by nature leadership gifts. The tension for women is how to be leaders, servant leaders, and even though we have that language in our new Book of Discipline about being servant leaders, that's not a model that we've had. So some women have tried the leadership model which was the only model we had, which comes from male leadership in the church, and I think there's been an evolution of finding our way of giving ourselves permission to trust our gut. To do ministry in a way that is natural for us, and indeed is natural for many men.

I believe that we are both male and female qualities and that men are being liberated to using their nurturing, softer gifts--their relational gifts. I think one of the differences in women's leadership style is that we seek consensus rather than win-lose. That comes in part out of a greater need not just to be, not just to please, all though that's a part our shaping in the culture. But a need to include everyone so that no one is left out, even if we disagree or even if our views are different. Somehow seeking a way to include people into the kingdom of God, and I think that concern for all shapes how we do ministry. It makes us less comfortable with confrontation, but our leadership style can work in ways that men's can't because we can come into a conflicted situation or a broken situation and

often will not receive the hostility in the same way that a man would. We're less threatening. The flip-side of that is we're often given less authority. That we have to earn our credibility.

J: What changes do you foresee in the role of female clergy in the United Methodist Church?

DS: For us it's a change that we are even here as DSs and bishops, and I anticipate that there will be increased numbers of women in larger membership churches in directing pastor roles. I think the whole church is going to change and has been changing. A question I've been asking for the last ten years is "Are more women coming in to the church; are women being permitted to be clergy and assume leadership roles because the church is losing credibility and authority in the world?" Therefore, like pre-school teachers and other less favored, less desirable jobs gives the role of clergy being lowered in the status in the culture, so that it's less a feat to give women that permission easier. Or is it indeed that women are beginning to be accorded the same authority and status as men? And that's a question that I really haven't answered.

I think women's style has been changing and will continue to change as we become more comfortable with having more role models, for example. I think that's one of the things that many of us had found difficult, and now not only do we have role models, but have a variety of role models. We can look at several bishops, for example, and see a great variety of leadership style and women beginning to put their personal stamp on their ministry. Whereas, before we were perhaps a little more inhibited, at least I know I was, and feeling more comfortable in the role. I think that women are going to challenge the church and indeed the culture to start valuing the marginalized, which includes children, in a way that has never been and was talked about once when Jesus said, "Let the children come." Those marginalized things of very little value in that culture--I think that's going to be a change.

I think that women's issues are already being taken more seriously. I think some of the ministry that's been done either in the secular ministries or in the church regarding domestic violence, regarding the place of women and the equality for women is a ministry that's going to continue. I think as women begin to struggle successfully with the sexism that we experience that one of the things we have to deal with is the backlash. Helping us all, men and women, confront the sinful nature of our understanding what it means to be human and to accord everyone with respect. Those are issues that women are going to lift-up address in ways that are going to make it uncomfortable. I think that it's going to result in some backlash. People who have been in power do not give up power; it has to be taken. Learning how to do that in Christ-like ways will be, I think, the focus of a lot of women's ministry.

J: Describe any kind of reactions you experienced as a woman in your various ministerial positions, such as counselor, leader in worship, and also reactions from people at

seminary, as far as professors and colleagues, as well as how your family reacted to your decision, which I know yours was a second career.

DS: My family, my daughters were excited and proud, especially the one that is more heavily involved in the church. They've been very much a part of all those rites of passage like graduation from seminary and ordination and so on. My son, the first time he came to worship where I was the pastor, afterwards said, "How did you learn to do all that stuff?" It was like he had a lot of trouble because we'd had sort of little private joke when I was starting to do a Ph.D. in psychology. He'd said, "Your're going to be Bob Newhart, right?" So, he'd had a lot of trouble. It seemed like he was very comfortable when he understood where I was going, but when he saw me up there leading worship he was very uncomfortable. My spouse was and has always been very supportive, and he says, "We are in ministry together. Whatever you are supposed to do, I am with you." This is not at all typical for many women in ministry.

Encounters have been a mixed bag. My first church I was serving before I went to seminary, and basically, it was pretty easy because there had been at least two women pastors there before. They had not been particularly well received, but I was known to some of that congregation. My work was known; my reputation as an educator was known before I came there. So I kind of had a little advantage as I was coming in. That helped a lot. There was one person in the congregation, at that point I lost a lot of weight and was kind of feeling probably a lot better about my body than I do sometimes. At one point I had one husband of someone who was active in the congregation kind of hit on me a little bit, but it was not at all.. it wasn't an assault. It was simply a verbal harassment.

The second church I served was added on when I went on to seminary. They had also had a woman pastor, but they had a lot more difficulty with it. And it was because up until shortly before I arrived, the men and the women still sat on opposite sides of the congregation, and the only reason that a male was teaching the Sunday school, the women's Sunday school class, was all the men except this one guy died that were in the class. There teacher died, so he said, "Well, I guess I could.." So, he actually was the first man who went over there, because they had the class in the sanctuary. Fortunately, there were a couple of...Most of the men in that congregation didn't know any professional women. The only women they knew who worked were like the check-out clerk, and they didn't even go to the grocery, the hardware store or something. Fortunately, there was one woman in the congregation who worked in a bank and was kind of working up to professional status, and I used her some as an alli because she was the daughter of the matriarch and patriarch. That helped to help them understand that women were in leadership positions and that I wasn't unusual at all.

They really had trouble with my husband, and part of that was because he mischievous. We'd come in together, and where they'd have their little board meetings was in the entry way before worship. He'd come in and "how ya doing?" and start talking. He'd talk about the crops or whatever, and one day they'd be comfortable and just think they had him figured out. Then the next week he'd come in and say, "Oh, I found a great bread

recipe this week.” It just kind of blow them away, you know. So they didn’t know what to do with him, and therefore, they didn’t know what to do with me partly.

In seminary I was shocked. I was shocked that there were so many women who did not understand that they were there because of the bodies of other women who’d been laid down before them. Women who did not recognize sexual harassment, did not recognize sexism, and that was a concern. Women who were very passive because of...you know, I was involved in some civil rights stuff, and it just seemed like everybody was so comfortable and so passive. They just were not. Their consciousnesses were not raised, and they didn’t seem politically aware. So, it was just a total shock, because I thought these are women who are active in the church and want to be church leaders. How can they not see what’s there? And how can they minister to women if they’re not aware of the things that happen to women, and men too for that matter? So seminary, I had one very sexist professor, and I more-or-less faced him down. I got involved with the women’s caucus on campus and found them to be very viscous. Perhaps more vicious toward each other than they were toward men.

So I kind of formed my own group that worked with the administration, with professors, and with other women, and we developed the sexual harassment policy for the seminary. I did some things like that were important to me. (I) worked with students who just didn’t understand at all about men, women, and where we were coming from. (I) tried to be a bridge to help people understand that women are individuals. We’re not all radical bitches. You probably want to erase that. We’re not all sweet, little homemakers looking for a man, whatever.

(I) tried to make people understand that there was a variety and tried to deal with some stereotypes and confront those. They certainly were in operation. There were men in seminary, classmates, who really didn’t believe women should be there. A part of what happened to me was in sharing with them how surprised I had been to feel called to ministry, and how that had contradicted some of the original understandings I had of scriptures. It helped to solidify my understanding and also, I think, helped some of them to understand that we weren’t just honing in on male turf without authorization by God, or at least seeking to understand what was the turf. That was sometimes successful; sometimes just, you know, forget it. “Get behind me, Satan” kind of responses.

One of the things that was fun was learning how women preach, and the varieties of preaching. And that I didn’t have to have three points in a prayer or an irrelevant joke at the beginning and then three points. We could be creative and use whatever gifts we had, and that the verbal gifts that women sometimes have are well-used in the pulpit to share the Gospel in contemporary ways. That’s certainly not exclusive to women. One of the things that’s devalued in our culture is story. Women tell the stories in the nursery to the children, and so it’s not very important. But, to be given THE story to tell and to already be a storyteller and to be able to relate that story, THE story in everyday ways is exactly like Jesus did. It’s a very precious calling to do that, and it seems to me that women are often naturally storytellers and very grounded in the everyday life where sacred and

ordinary are mixed together. So I think I see that more in women's preaching, although I think there's a tendency toward that in preachers of both genders and to value that now.

J: How do you feel your experience within the United Methodist organization is different than a man's?

DS: I feel that I have to work harder. I have to earn my credibility particularly in the view of the fact that I was appointed to the Cabinet before I'd paid my dues and particularly in the view of the fact that Bishop White said we're going to take a lot of flak for this. It was unusual then for the learnings, the gifts, the skills, the experience, the training of that first career or careers to be taken into account before one was appointed to the Cabinet. I think that the fact that I was a woman made even more difference. The church for me is not much different from the secular positions I had. I was usually the only woman, and certainly that was true in my first few years on the Cabinet. I think there are persons who make me prove myself often in hostile ways, but often in just discomfort--genuine discomfort. This has never happened before. Basically, I think it's a matter of...maybe it's a little like a person of another race, a minority, having to work with people until they forget they're black or yellow or red or whatever.

There are times when I have to be the interpreter for women. A male will come whether on the Cabinet or somewhere else and say, "Is this offensive?" Meaning, is this offensive to all women. A part of the way my role is different is I don't think usually people would come up to a man and say, "Is this offensive? Would this offend men?" as if that man could speak for all men. So a part of how it's different is either being willing to take that on and teach or not being willing to take that on. Sometimes it kind of depends on the mood I'm in, and how important it seems, and how many times I've done it already, and I'm sick of it. So I think my role is different in that I am aware that I'm watched more, and I don't think that's paranoia. I think it's partly curiosity. I think it's partly lack of confidence that I can do what I'm appointed to do. And partly it's just like--well, this is different. We've never done it this way before.

Sometimes I get invited to do things like, well, could you come and preach at United Methodist Women's Sunday? It's kind of like being a token. I think part of my ministry is being a token. I guess that's all right as long as I have an opportunity to say, "This is (myself) talking. This is not all women talking." You will find that many of my sisters are quite different. On the other hand, I'm invited to speak on Native American Sunday because I am a Native American, and that's okay. But it's still being a token in a sense, and yet I do have something to offer. So I think that's partly my stuff, my problem. You know. Get over it. Go and speak on United Methodist Women's Sunday. Help people to understand that we're in just all in ministry together, and we each have our particular gifts. Even though each of us stands in a particular place and then sees the world and the Gospel in our own particular perspective, that's okay because it enriches our perspective when we gather together and share. So I try to go at it not as an "us and them" thing. It's not me and the world. It's just so exciting to be where I am and to be able to share my gifts whoever is there to share it with.

## Appendix D

## Interview with Directing Pastor

J: My first question is kind of deep, but I wanted to start with this because I thought it would be a good subject to begin with. How do you feel women clergy's theological views are different, if they are different, from male clergy's?

DP: To start off with, you have to recognize that there is as greater variety among women clergy as there is male clergy. And a lot of it has to do with the background's that we come out of, so we are everything from highly conservative to almost frighteningly on the creative edge. I place myself in the center and consider myself an odd mixture of both the liberal and conservative. I am conservative when it comes to traditional doctrine, but I become liberal in the expression of doctrine. So, Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, but I am not into the image of God as goddess. I am really ready for us to be able to allow God to be Spirit. And in my theology, Spirit has no sexuality, and so it's not even a question. But I do understand my sisters that are frustrated with the patriarchal overtones of the faith. Every time I'm even at our clergy team meetings, and I think even your father the other night said a prayer which he called God as Father, and for me that holds no meaning. Because, you call God "parent," I can relate to that, but I see God as neither Father nor Mother--but as mystery far beyond that. I feel that Jesus called God "Father" to help us understand the personal relationship.

So, I hear my sisters on the one side who are out there saying "I can't...I can't worship with a group that has to use male terms." I will always be able to say the Lord's Prayer beginning with "Our Father," that's its historical form, and I would just assume the people that I am worshipping with understood why Jesus used the term. And the re-imagining conference...I haven't gone to any of them, and I almost feel like I should go to the next one. Because there is a group that is so far out on the edge and getting involved in so many additional problems, it's like the focus that we have to help the church keep a solid core, in which the conservative can relate as well as the liberal. It's not going to happen if they keep walking so far out on the edge. And walking out on the edge, many of my sisters then feel obligated to support almost every cause that's on the edge. And I have trouble again.

In The United Methodist Church, the touchy point has to do with the ordination of lesbians or gays. I'm not so sure that we can ever accept that, but it's not because they are lesbian or gay--it's because it's basically a promiscuous lifestyle. And we won't accept a promiscuous lifestyle amongst the heterosexual, so why, you know...Meanwhile the Church says "no" when we get to any commitment between same sex couples, and yet, marriage was actually created, if my biblical sense is right, for creation of children which cannot happen in a same sex commitment, at least not normally. In modern technology we can do it.

So I look at my sisters on the far cutting edge, and I don't think it's going to be helpful. Will it be any more helpful for the church to begin thinking in all feminine imagery than it's been for the church to think in all masculine imagery? I think somehow an understanding and a respect for both imagery...and by the way, it's really interesting a criticism that I got in a preaching class in seminary. I got done with it and one of my colleagues, this was in undergraduate preaching class, said the only problem with that was all the images were feminine. And it just broke the class up. What did he think he had been using? Why wouldn't my images be feminine? But I try to be aware of that, and I feel for the men in the congregation I serve sometimes. Yet, often it's the woman who has the biggest difficulty with it. So, it becomes this crazy mixture, but if we've already got this crazy mixture because of the over-emphasis of the patriarchal, I just don't see my sisters out here going matriarchal being helpful. I'd like to skip that one, and go from the patriarchal to God being Spirit and are finally recognizing that gender is an accident of birth.

Really, it's the kids in the confirmation class when you tell them there is one gene difference in you--those little X and Y chromosomes. And when your Y chromosome kicked in you became male, otherwise you would have been a female with exactly same genetic code. There are sitting there going "HHHH" like it's this real horrible curse. That's really all the difference there is, and we've made such a big deal out of it. I know hormones do make us different. Sometimes I see that as one of God's jokes. I've had colleagues, one in a campus setting. A church I was serving I became part of their rape crisis team in the community, and they had a program one night at the Wesley Foundation. They wanted a rape crisis team, and I got sent along with one of the college students. Afterwards the professor and a couple of grad students stuck around because they had some objections to the presentation. And I will never forget this colleague looking at me and saying--I had said to him, "Why can you only see this (I guess date rape really got them going) from one side. We are talking about human being to human being." Like, can't I be your colleague without first being female? He said, "Absolutely not. Every woman is first female. I don't relate to any female without her first being female." And I'm sitting here going "Wait a minute. This is person to person. The fact that I am in a female body doesn't make any difference right now." And it's like the church. In the past, now not the United Methodist Church, I mean when they finally accepted women, but where we find the Catholic church right now. The body that you are in is more important than the person that you are, and for the church to say that, I find it very scary.

So I don't know. I'm probably a thorn in everybody's side. When it comes to my sisters, because for my really conservative sisters, I'm open on the abortion issue. I've done problem pregnancy counseling which gives abortion as an option. In the individual stories, it's a whole different ballgame than when you just look at it collectively. And I would have never wanted to be in the position to have to decide for myself. But how can I tell someone else what they have to do with their life? So like I said, for the highly conservative sister, they look at me on that issue and go "HUHH?" You know. But then for my highly liberal sister, I just...I'm not into the goddess thing. And a couple of years ago, the imagery used it at one of the worship services...we were talking menstrual blood, womb waters, the whole bit. And so we ended up with these red strings tied around our

wrists to remind us that it is the menstrual cycle that reminds us how closely we are tied to God's creative acts. Well, there were men at this service that were observers. But, you know, a couple of the men felt really excluded, and so anytime we exclude any part of the church then...God created the diversity, and I think the challenge is to find a way that we can relate to it all. That's why I would really like gender neutral, and I did mention to your dad when I got back from the last meeting.

The one with the red string was probably six years ago; it was in St. Charles, Illinois. The one that was out in Atlanta two years ago had an interesting possibility on language use. And I haven't done any follow up on it, and I haven't written to the woman who really wanted to get it together. She happened to be there in a group when we had workshops, and she did the one on "Ti-Che." This was mentioned by the keynote speaker there who is a Catholic sister, but wondering if we can't put them together, so that what you get is the pronouns for God "Sh-he," "Sh-him," "Sh-his." Because in the English language, part of our problem is we don't have gender neutral personal pronouns. This is the most creative combining of the male and the female.

Theologically, I would say God is both male and female and yet neither. And so, I tried this here. When I got back, I said to them that I'd found something that was really rather interesting in approaching inclusive language for God. And since God is spirit, sexuality is not important, but we would assume that in the personality of God are the attributes that we tend to break down into male and female. And really they are none of them either male or female; it's a continuum. And again, I think there's as much difference within a sex as between the sexes. And I try to...we almost lost one couple in the church. I haven't used it for quite a while, and I had asked about doing it and about putting it in the liturgy. Pastor Perry said it was OK and so did everybody else. We didn't think it would cause any kind of response, and I was really surprised because it's a couple in their late forties. She had always struck me as highly creative. She has a charisma of her own; she's got energy and a good sense of humor. And I about did her in with that. I just about did her in. And I told her, well I still think it's an interesting possibility. I never purposely do anything to alienate anyone, and if this is something that would keep her out of the sanctuary, I will just go back to not using any pronouns for God. That gets awfully hard though. Our language makes it very difficult. I always said that someone's got to check with a good Hebrew scholar and make sure that if you transliterate those back into Hebrew that you don't have a dirty word. I really don't know what...My Hebrew is "bluh." So, I haven't, but I kept telling myself the biblical person that I had on my doctoral project was an Old Testament scholar. I should run him down and ask him to look into that for me. But I know that I couldn't run him down and ask him without us first having to have this theological discussion of why I'm interested in the first place. I really don't know where he would come out. His wife does the most beautiful liturgical art, but would consider herself a ( ). But it's a crazy world. Does that answer what you want or do you want to read the question and I can try again?

J: No, that's fine. The next question...Is there a distinct "style" of ministry which is used by women in comparison to male clergy?

DP: The fact that society has seen us as nurturing shows up at specific times. It shows up in hospital calling, it shows up definitely when we are talking about the birth of a baby, and it shows up in deaths. Men who might not cry in the arms of a man have been known to cry in the arms of a female clergy person. In the birth process, it's so funny out here with the a... There's a volunteer chaplain at Court Illini Hospital, and Sally Hammond, who is a United Methodist Clergy also, she and I are the only two women right now. Although from time to time there have been Catholic sisters also. But the men just really do not make calls on maternity. They go in and ask at the desk do you have any problems, hoping that the word will be "No" and they turn around and leave. And of course, Sally and I walk into every room. The way it's set-up there, you do your basic labor from the rooms. They just go into the delivery room at the last minute. Sally and I are often walking in on a woman in labor in the middle of a push. The nurses have commented out there it's just different when we walk in the ward. It's like you don't have to explain anything. And again, if we got used to relating to each other just simply as people, men would be more relaxed in that. But that's one of the places.

Hospital calling in general... I was a nurse's aid one summer, and it was probably some of the best training I ever had for being clergy. Then I did a clinical pastoral education at Cook County in Chicago. When I got there I was glad that I had been a nurse's aid for a summer, because we assigned to teams where there was a resident, an intern, two med students and a chaplain intern. And if they got called back at night, I got called back at night. And often they would be doing a procedure or something, and I was there... and they expected me to help them. So again, I think they would have expected a man to do that. But funerals may be the place you most see in pastoral ministry, although children also but there are some women who are really ( ). But women are expected to be and men sometimes are.

But funerals... I've heard several of my sisters do funerals, and all of them have been very personable. They couldn't have been a service for anybody but that particular person. I've also heard some of my male colleagues, and they tend more toward the generic or liturgical. Again, I don't know. I doubt if that's hormone based, and it's probably out of our culture. Also, I have done services where I cried, and it may be that men do too. I don't know. I've never talked to my male clergy counterparts about this. But, if I cry during a service I just let the tears fall. I don't try to wipe them away; I keep going. I just cry throughout the service.

I think maybe we women have a freedom, but I don't know if the men have yet been given. And, it's what we women talked about when I first came out of seminary. In my graduating class in seminary, there were three women, one of whom was never going to be ordained. It was really a prerequisite for a Ph.D. that she wanted in religious philosophy. Another one has been a DS in Colorado. She was Rocky Mountain Conference's first female District Superintendent. I'm not sure if she's still in the local church or not. But as we came out and began to join together, there was this dream that somehow or other, our being female and just the way the culture allowed us to function

and relate would really be a breath of fresh air that would finally free our brothers from a stereotype that the clergy had been forced into. We wanted to even change the way things were done administratively. Instead of having to stick to robert rule of order, work more on a consensus attitude. Get rid of the hierarchy was the idea. Equal responsibility, because we are supposed to be equally capable. By the time we get...and the hurdles are getting more and more in the United Methodist Church. It almost crazy. And I don't know what will happen with that. But I am not so sure society has yet, in general, changed what it expects of men and expects of women.

My home church is Paxton. They have never been served by a woman. And my mother keeps telling me...the first time they're told they may have to have a woman, she said there will be fireworks. I said, but they produced two clergy women. They've also produced a clergy man, but he switched to a different denomination. But she still feels that in their mindset, they are not prepared yet for it to be the woman. So I don't know. The funny thing I found out in one church was though...and I really felt badly about this. I think it's going to remain true probably for another fifteen, maybe twenty years. The older women in the congregation who are fine a female clergy person, it's devastating in some ways, because they have been told there are very few men they can trust in life--their fathers, their brothers, their husbands, and their clergy person, and maybe their doctor. That's it. The husbands die, the brothers marry, their fathers are long gone, medicine has changed. So who is the one left that can come into their home and they can open their hearts? It's the clergy person. And in one church I served, I found myself in the weirdest relationship with some of the older women. One day at one of them's house having tea, she said, "You may be nice, but you're just never going to be a man." And, that was true. She had a need in her life to still have a man she could open up to. And it wasn't going to happen while I was there. Because I could be as supportive as possible, and it wasn't going to change the fact that I could not meet her need.

The other side of the coin is the younger women. My first appointment was in Pekin, and I was surprised I had several women in their forties that dropped by my office. I was an associate in a church where there were three clergy, two men and myself. And I had several forty year-olds drop in because they were angry at their husband and just needed to tell someone. It sort of took me back. It's like...wait a minute. How did we get here? They were women that married under the old understanding that somehow or another, they were to let their husbands make the decisions. And they'd been letting their husbands to it for over twenty years, and they thought somewhere in there, their husbands would figure they were important enough that they could at least get asked. And they didn't get asked. They kept shoving the anger in the closet. When they walked into my office it was because the closet had filled up. They were very much in love with their husbands, but very, very angry. And so again, I don't know if they would have ever walked into a man's office to dump on their husbands. But they figured, she's female. She might as well know what it's going to be like type of thing.

So there are times...I think what's ideal, if we can do it down the road...We have five churches that work together here. And so that puts Janet Eggleston and Charlie Swart

and myself together, which means if I run into a counseling situation where I know that it's not going to do. Now, Charlie's still a student means his time is limited, but to always have a male colleague that when I know just by my being female...It's got nothing to do with my personality and it's nothing personal. It's really crazy but it happens. There are some people that I cannot be there for them as someone else in a male body could automatically be there, and to be able to accept that's just where our society is. That's okay.

This idea that there has to be contention is sad. It's really funny how etiquette gets wrapped up in this, and I think that's a real riot. I can remember Annual Conference sessions having clergy who are walking in with me saying, "You want to open your own door or can I open it for you?" And I say if my arms are full, I'd love your help. If I'm here first and my arms are free, I'd be glad to open it for you. It's like we make big deals out of some very simple things. This Annual Conference, I think, has come a long way. The women are still basically in the smaller churches. And, I don't know if there's even a way to do a comparative study at this point now that we're the larger conference would be even more interesting. I think Jean Kramer-Heurman was a good choice if they were sending a woman to a campus church. I think it's ideal. Her response is, she's had some rough times. But, then again, all of us have to ask the question, "Am I having the rough time because I'm male or female, or am I having the rough time because I'm Sandra?" And being able to figure out which is which is real important. But I think we've come a long, long way.

I think the Bishops are exceptionally sensitive. For the most part, they have really tried. They have tried very, very hard. And in most things now, I don't think it's a token, and I don't think tokens do us any good. If a person can't do the job, they shouldn't be there. So, I hope in our whole church we finally get to that place. It's not gender that's important, it's the person. It's like my colleague what my colleague said--I always recognize what body you are in first, and I can't do anything until I say, oh yes, female or male. You know I could put him on my prayer list, but I doubt if it helps. It just takes up a space.

J: This kind of leads into my next question...what you just talked about. What changes do you foresee in the role of female clergy in the United Methodist Church?

DP: I see a danger. I see a frightening danger. In the local church it plays out too. Because I see it there, I'm worried about the clergy becoming female. In this church, if the women do something the men's attitude is fine if you do it all. Most of them it's not a working with, but the ushers have stayed male. And I don't think, unless a woman would come and demand the right to be an usher, I don't think I want to see that happen here. Because I think the first Sunday a woman does it and it isn't for something special or it isn't the "you", it's going to carry over there, and the men are going to say, "Fine. You can usher, you do it." I don't know where this comes from, but this not working together...

We so desperately need to work together. And my concern in the clergy has been over time, we probably will become fifty/fifty. When we get to the fifty/fifty mark ( ), whatever reason. Theologically the question the sisters ask when their together is why has called so many women to ministry at this time? There must be a reason. And part of it may be for an opening of the door, seeing a new way, a church that needs to be more inclusive. But I don't think that God called us to change to an all female clergy. And my sisters that are out there with the goddess... All I've got to say is I do not see how men, brought up in our culture at this time, can really respond to the goddess language without feeling like a pagan. And there's always been a different view of God and goddess. And part of that comes from the fact, I think, that even in Jesus' day so many of the religions had goddesses in their fertility cults. You worship by having intercourse? It's the overtones here.

So, my concern is if the women should live until they takeover, the women do very well in any United Methodist Church. The group that is working the best, no matter where I go, is the United Methodist Women. They are more or less autonomous, although their president sits on the board and things have to be approved in the sense of calendar conflicts. But they do a beautiful job. Case in point here was the brotherhood came to a standstill. It's not an actual Methodist Men's unit. They don't want that. Women are naturally beginning to do that.

It's really interesting though the response right now to our current Bishop, which is of course our first experience with a female. And the fact that she's here at a time when we are also experiencing something new, which is this Illinois Great Rivers Conference. So we would have been changing size and format anyway. But there's been, there's a lot of shifting going on, and it's really interesting as things go down the pipe how they are going to be different. The question is "Is this the Bishop?" Or once in a while, "Is this a "woman thing"?" Or is this just creativity in light of the new structure and everything that's coming along? So, it's going to be a very interesting Annual Conference. I don't think we'll truly know how we're handling a woman bishop, and, of course, she's got her own personality. And again, the question may not be is this a female thing, or is this just a personality thing? But it's going to really be interesting because the way we've done things will shift, and shift greatly.

So it's going to be interesting to see what the comments are. I haven't run into anybody who's automatically negative. As a matter of fact, the women, the last couple of times we've had a bishop, have been hoping for a woman. That does not mean that we will automatically as a group support everything she may like. You know, I just wish people could be people. That's what I really wish for. But my greatest fear is that somehow or another the church is going to end up all female. The men die so young, and not only that, so many of our women come to church without their husbands. Catholicism did do an interesting thing in lifting up Mary as they did, because it gave a feminine image if we want to talk about love. It gave a feminine image for the man who might have difficulty in love as something shared between males, and we've really had a void there. But again,

going the goddess route, I don't think it's all the same. I'm still going around "Let God be Spirit."

If I was going to have a banner in a theological parade, my banner would be "Let God be Spirit." I just don't know what the men would do. I don't think the men are less spiritual than women. I don't think that's possible. Again, because it's person. I don't see how hormones could alter--how could hormones alter spirituality? In other words, if I had been male, would I still have been clergy? For people who have given me rough times as I came in, I mean...and they were rough times. But one of my responses became--Listen, God is God. If God had wanted me to be male, I assume it would have been no big deal. When I got the call I was in a female body.

We had a man on one pastor-parish committee that I served who enjoyed bedeviling all clergy, but he especially enjoyed bedeviling me. And at one pastor-parish meeting he made the statement, "If you were man and married, you'd be perfect." And that would not have been true. But, I would have fit into his...he could take what I was doing. He could take my theology. He could take my personality, but it needed to be in a male body. And he'd feel better if it was a male body that was married. The chairperson of pastor-parish said she just wasn't quick enough on her feet, or she should have said in the meeting, "Well I'll check up on conference health insurance and see what they do for sex change operations." It's when things like that happen, on one hand they're funny, and on another hand they're very sad.

So, like I said, as I look at the church, and I look at how many women there are as opposed to how many men. Ours is an all female choir, and I guess it's been that way for ages. The last pastor before me sang, but the men say when they get home from work they just don't want to give up an evening. Again, it's a mind set. And I will admit that a lot of the men do different kinds of work than we women do. Some of them do really hard labor, and some of their shifts are in the seasons. They get to be ten and twelve hours, but this idea that a man comes home from work to be taken care of. And I don't know any sisters in the choir that go after work to be taken care of. They still have all the cares to take care of. They've still got families to feed. They've still got a house to take care of. They've still got clothes to do. We've talked about this. Why is it? Our men say they can't sing, and we know that's not true because we've heard some of them sing and they do quite well. But the idea of scheduling a rehearsal into their lives. They even, this was before my time when Jack Tomage was here, they even moved to a Sunday rehearsal. They came early and did their rehearsal before church, so they wouldn't have to make a special trip in. That didn't do it. So it's like they haven't got the slightest idea. Our administrative board is basically female. It's so bad that this year that the trustees will all be members of the administrative board, and we may only get two or three of them at any administrative board, but we need them. We need the balance. We need the mix. It gets frightening.

I don't know what the solution is, and this is not the only church I've seen the problem in. And so, if women coming into the church as clergy results in men feeling somehow it's no

longer for them, that will be very sad. But you also have to ask why would a man respond that way? It's like in the military the question that we're having should women be in combat? Do the men need to feel that they're doing things that only a man can do? It's true--only a woman can give birth. Is there a possibility that in our culture there's a need for a balance? That there are those things, in the end, that is a man's to do? And traditionally, the woman gave birth, and the man protected the family. And so, that's why I'm worried about the bailing out. I really am. And it's not going to change that the woman's the one that gives birth. I seldom watch it, but Sliders. you're familiar with the program? Fox. I did catch it the night that they slid into a world where the man gives birth. What had happened was the civilization, the creation had been hit with a virus that made it so that a woman could only carry a baby so far, and then she had to relinquish the baby. They transplanted them in the husbands, and who of course gave birth by cesarean. But it was the only way that the culture could go on. That's sort of a nifty idea. Everybody does their fair share. As I look at it, the real concern is maybe there needs to be something that the men feel especially theirs, and for a long time the role of clergy was. In the Catholic Church it still is.

I think I will live to see women priests, but I will never live to see women in the Missouri Senate Lutheran Church. Because the way they work with women, their whole theology goes down the tubes. If they ordain women, the Catholic church is not quite that bad because of their tradition of the Pope being able to correct or to change because society has changed the way they look at something. When the Pope announces it the Catholics go, "Oh, no hats," "Oh, no Latin," "Oh, the men can marry," "Oh, we're going to have women priests," and I think they can do it by their tradition. In the Missouri Senate Lutheran, I think it would absolutely destroy it. Yet, I've met Missouri Senate Lutheran ministers...When I was in Pekin and there was a clergy banquet, who ever set up the tables either had a tremendous sense of humor or was viscous. They put me next to a Missouri Senate Lutheran pastor who the only thing he said to me the whole meal--turned and looked at me and says, "You know you're going to hell and taking everybody you work with you." He turned back to his meal and said not one more word. And I really think their attitude, that attitude still prevails, although I've met a couple of Missouri Senate Lutheran pastors who were very cooperative in small town ministry.

But I am haunted that somehow or other, thus church, not this one in specific, but The United Methodist Church and others--what we call "mainline" denominations, whenever we get to have fifty percent women, the men will begin to bail. And it will be a cultural thing, not a religious thing. Some people have said though that part of it, if it happens, will be salary based. People will not be willing to work for the salaries that the church pays when they can make more money elsewhere. We'll have to see what happens when it comes.

J: Could you give me any specific reactions, whether it be your family when you decided to enter the ministry, or specific reactions at seminary, specific instances that happened in your ministerial positions?

DP: First of all, I didn't decide to enter the ministry. I truly believe in a call of clergy, and mine was a very emotional call when I was a freshman in college. I was going to be a speech and drama teacher. I also have English and library science minors, and I finished and still have my certificate registered. Although I don't ever expect to use it, I do keep it registered. But I do really believe in a call to ministry, and I don't think anybody goes for a whole lifetime without it being a call. I don't think you could survive it. My parents response...My mother says she can't remember saying this, but it was at a state MSM retreat at East Bay Camp over New Year's holidays. I told them when I got in the car, and my mother's response was, "I'll believe it when I see it." She says she can't remember saying that, and boy, I remember it so clearly. I think initially everybody sort of humored me. I was in college...we'll see, we'll see, we'll see, and then I applied to seminary...we'll see, we'll see, we'll see. When I went before the district committee on ministry in the process of getting deacons orders, it was held in the basement in the Wesley United Methodist Church in Urbana in those cinder block rooms to begin with. It had this table in there, and it was one of the smaller rooms because later when I worked there I found out the rooms weren't all that small. But boy, the room appeared small to me that day and dark, and there were eight men sitting around the table in dark suits. I came in, and they sort of humored me too. And said that, "Well, we assume that women go to seminary to get husbands." I said, "That's funny. God didn't say a single thing about a husband in my call. That wasn't in there." But that was sort of the attitude, and it was sort of a "we'll play along with you."

Now, you do need to remember that the one they had before me was a time I came. My deacon's orders were '66, and I think her's would have been '62. She had already dropped out and gone with her husband to Alaska. So they did have in this conference an experience where they can say that was what happened. But, it was sort of a humoring me. I got out of seminary. The spring interviews, my last year in seminary, I was told by Harry Crady, as a DS when they came up to visit, "No one will want you." They'd ordained me deacon, and now he's telling me, "No one will want you. We won't have a place to appoint you."

This was also where I got asked the famous question, again by a DS. He was there with some persons from the Board of Ordained Ministry. His big question was, "How do you feel about pregnant women in the pulpit?" The attitude was all the way through the interview was, "Like you've got to be kidding?!" "You know, you're not going to really do this," "You're not really going to," "No, no, no, no, no." And the answer was always, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes I am." By the time I left that interview, I was in tears when I got back to the dorm, and like I said, there weren't too many women that were going for the basic seminary degree at that time. They were basically working on Masters of Art in religion or music or missionary or whatever. Never did have the opportunity to ask it because I never got asked the question again, but one of my sisters said next time somebody asks you that, look them in the eye and say, "Married or unmarried?" But I've never had the opportunity to use it. Nobody asked it again.

It was a pastor that served my hometown church, Paxton, he was pastor there when I was in high school my senior year. So he was now in Pekin, they literally--he literally, made a place on his staff. There was no way they would allow me to go to a church myself. It was made very clear I was going to be an associate. They were still trying to figure out "Exactly what does she think she's doing?" So, I had two years in Pekin with Glenn Sims, and they made him a DS and he had brain surgery in the first year. It was good that he died when he did because it turned out to be basically inoperable when they got in there. It was a brain tumor. He made a place for me, but he was there just one year, and the pastor who came after I only had one year with him there although I was in Pekin twice--two years. The man who came after him...It was rough. It was really rough. For instance, he would do things. The one that sticks out in my mind is his attitudes toward women and men were different. And he had done a wedding and worn a red stole. I hadn't been at the wedding, and I didn't know about the red stole. But I got stopped in downtown Pekin on the street by a person who said, "You know, I was at the church you serve for a wedding the other day. You use red for a wedding?" I said, "White is the liturgical color." She said, "Well, I was at a wedding where your senior pastor wore red." I said, "Well that's very interesting. Maybe he just forgot to change his stole." She said, "No. The paraments were red." Well, our next staff meeting I asked him, and he said, "Well, I always ask the women if they are virgins. If they're not, I wear red. I only wear white for a virgin." And I said, "Do you ask the men?" He said, "Of course not!" So in situations like this, I mean, uhhhhhhmmmm!! Frustration, I guess, is the best way to put it. How can a clergyperson publicly announce by the color of a stole at a wedding that he has set in judgment upon the bride? It just blew my mind. So I left there after a year, and that was when I went to Wesley in Urbana, again as a Christian educator. I enjoyed Wesley, and I still have all the tendencies of a Christian educator.

It was after three years there, though, I decided if I didn't get out of being an associate soon, they'd probably have me pegged for life. You can get pigeon-holed. Back then you could more so than now. There's a fluidity that's a little bit different. And also, that was the year that Barbara Swetz was the second one in the Annual Conference. She now has multiple sclerosis. (She) was coming back and wanted an appointment in a local church, and finally, well I'd been there five years so maybe we women were going to stick around. So, I finally went as the pastor to a two-point charge, and so did Barbara.

I don't know. It's like it's a fear. I do feel really sorry for white male colleagues, not my ethnic ones that are male because everyone's being very careful not to trounce on them. Everyone is trouncing on the white male, and it's like his ideas don't count because of the sins of the males over the centuries. But we women bought into it. We agreed to it. They keep saying, and I believe this, in several books I've read that women have the power to change the world in one generation. They way to do it is by how the children are raised. Women have always had the power, but not used it. We're all in this mess together. Most of what I find is a sense of humor. I got shocked at a meeting when I was first up here in '93. The area pastoral counselor came, (it was a new one, Don Houts had retired) and he was going to all the different groups just giving people a chance to get to know him and his services. But one of the things he did in the group was he wanted us to

have an opportunity to say things to one another that maybe we'd never said and should have. It turned out to be quite interesting when one of my male colleagues said, "You've always frightened me." And my question is "How can I be frightening?" He said, "It was just as you came into the conference, you seemed to know exactly what you were doing and where you were going." And he said, "I couldn't treat you like I treated all the other clergy." And I'm going, "Why couldn't you?" But, I was surprised that he used the word "frightened." That just blew my mind. Angry with me, frustrated by me, but frightened? One of the things that's happening is I age. I've been around over thirty years now. My deacons orders are '66. I came, and I stayed, and I plan to go the full forty. Really, that's what my call was. It was never for beyond the local church. I did not think of myself in terms of a "pioneer." There was nothing about that in the call either.

I've been the brunt of jokes. You probably know the famous one on the floor of the Annual Conference, the year I refused to stand up for appointments. Oh, I get moody sometimes, you know, and we were doing the appointment process. This was Lance Web was bishop then; John Andrews Smith was my DS. They used to say, "Will all the men and their wives being appointed to such-and-such a district stand?" And I for several years I'd gone, "Ahh, well, well, you know." I'd decided I'm not going to stand, because they could say "clergy" or "ministers". So I didn't stand, but I wasn't saying a thing and I wasn't trying to make an issue out of it. I just did my heart of hearts, wasn't going to stand under that circumstance again. The DS noticed it, and so when they got to the very end where the bishop was to certify that all had been appointed, my DS stands up and says, "Oh, we can't do it Bishop. I have one in my district that hasn't been appointed yet." And so John Andrew Smith says, "I don't believe that Saundra Newman stood up, but we really ought to change her name. It's sexist. We need to make her Saundra Newperson." This was on the floor of the annual conference.

I made the biggest splash at the annual conference in Decatur, and for a long time, I think it was the image that many that were there carried of who I was. I don't think I've ever been who the annual conferences thought I was. But, we had a guest speaker. We did conference sessions. This was under Bishop Webb again, so he would have a visiting bishop or visiting seminary president or somebody come in to do sessions with us. This one did a series on servanthood, on what it means to truly be a servant in the world, and his last speech, he ended it by saying, "And now you men in the ministry..." And the problem was he had just been talking about accepting the language that the blacks wanted us to use as a part of servanthood. Being sensitive that the words the we say tell people what we think about them. I'm sitting there. He knows this is not an all male annual conference, and he says, "And now you men in the ministry..." Well there was a talk-back immediately afterwards, so I stood up and said, "How can you after having talked all of these sessions about our developing a sensitivity to others, so that what we do always be inclusive and caring. How did you just choose to exclude me?" And I don't know what remark he made. My mind is gone. I don't know what it was, but all I remember is the instant burst of laughter. He said something that pushed it off. Then he said something, and the whole conference was laughing over it. And I got angry. I seldom speak on the floor of the annual conference. I think there's only twice. That and when the bishop had

made a mistake, and I was editing the journal. He called me out-of-order, but he had made a mistake because I was being very careful since I was editor to listen to what was happening. But I asked, "How could you do what you just did? You just chose to laugh at my pain."

Afterwards, the first thing that happened was Dortha Russell, who would later become a local pastor, and two other women shang-haied me, took me to a corner, sat me down on a chair, and prayed over me so that I wouldn't be disrupted. I'm sitting here going, "Ladies, I don't believe this." They weren't praying that my pain would be healed or anything like that. It was that I was just totally out-of-line. I embarrassed them as women to talk back to a man and speaker like that. Later, Dortha would become clergy, and I got an apology from her. She said how she was treated as a lay woman...she was district president. I don't know if she was ever conference president, but she was a lay woman that was out there and into everything. She said the attitude with which the men responded to her, she was praised; she was hugged; she was celebrated. The minute she switched to clergy, she told me one of the most horrifying things was all the sudden she wasn't a person anymore, and she apologized. She says, "I look back, and I'm trying to figure out how did I ever pray over you after that man made that statement?"

What the man did was he caught me the next morning. He was getting ready to leave for a plane and apologized. And I should have told him he needs to stay and do this by the book. Just me. But his apology was, "I promise you. I will never ever be so incentive." But I really should have said, "You need to at least have the bishop to apologize for you before the annual conference." For many people, I became the angry woman who stood up. I was automatically considered to be a "bra burner." Heck, I wouldn't burn my bra. They are for comfort, people. I don't regret any of it. I don't think there is any lasting anger over it. There is a...if I let myself really think about it, there's a feeling of exhaustion, because it isn't over. That's one of the saddest things.

When I was working on my doctorate, and it was at Garrett, I remember Dorothy French was working on her Ph.D. when I was in undergrad. She was a professor at Garrett when I was up there. We'd just have a sit together at a meal, and she said she was frightened. Frightened for the women now at seminary. She said, "They're going through this acting as though there's no battle that awaits them out there. Acting as though everything is over and done with. They haven't got the slightest idea that the ground hasn't even been covered, and those churches have not had women. I really feel for them. They're going out there totally naive and innocent assuming that because a few people, a few women who have done it, that all the doors are opened. They're not gonna be. They (the women) won't hear you. They can't hear that."

I don't know what will happen. Right now, we're a denomination that needs clergy. If we ever get to the place that we have way too many clergy, that will be another interesting thing to watch, as who goes by the way-side--the men or the women? Or will we be judging people on the basis of their gifts and graces? And I think I'll be in my rocking chair, one day.