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Year Commissioned

2003, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, Thunder Bay

Program of Formation

CCS Special Certificate in Diaconal Studies

What called you to Diaconal Ministry?

In 1980 I was ordained to a ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care. As an overly confident staff associate, as a culture-shocked ordinand, as an energetic Conference staff minister, as an intentional interim with rusty skills, as an overwhelmed minister in a new church development congregation, as an awestruck facilitator of theological education; I have been blessed and blessed again. The church has at times, exasperated me, but it has accepted me, developed my gifts and affirmed me as a valued and worthwhile human being; and given me opportunity and space to share my gifts. I have not regretted my life in ordained ministry. But as the old century came to a close and after over twenty years in paid accountable ministry, I began the process to have my order of ministry designation switched from ordained to diaconal.

I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of function. With two years as a congregational staff associate responsible for outreach and education, eleven years as a Conference staff person in the areas of education and justice, and eleven years as a theological educator; my ministry has focused on diaconal functions. I endeavor to integrate pastoral care, education and social justice throughout ministry. In my conversations about my desire to switch my ministry designation from ordained to diaconal, I have often begun my explanation with reference to function. This has been a helpful place to start in the attempt to explain this unprecedented move. In many ways I see the value in this functional approach. But I would not want to reduce diaconal ministry to a job description. I do not want to unduly place value on performance and productivity in ministry over presence and reflection. A breadth of relationships, theology, spirituality, history and commitments make up the vocation of diaconal ministry.

I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of style. Enabling and empowering nurture, growth-oriented and prophetic questioning, non-hierarchical inclusivity, consultative collegiality, mutuality in accompaniment are articulated faith values of the diaconal community. These attributes are not, of course, unique to the diaconal community. But the diaconal community offers accountability to these values and I long to officially be a part of this kind of ongoing, intentional feedback and responsible discerning.

I, partially, understand diaconal ministry in terms of perspective. The diaconal identity is shaped by a long and rich history. The diaconal community tends to operate from a strong calling to what has traditionally been understood as servanthood and has been prophetically understood as justice orientation. In many ways it is a marginalized, non-normative ministry. This experience affects the diaconal viewpoint and understanding. I ache at the injustice and unfairness of the way those in the diaconate are discounted and discredited. But I delight in the stories of courage and defiance and the dedication to integration. I am moved by the stories shared about faithful mentors and outrageous characters. I feel a sense of belonging to the diaconal community and lives of faithful commitment, responsibility and hope.

Describe some of your experiences of ministry

I joined the Centre for Christian Studies program staff in July of 1998 and carry particular responsibilities in the areas of educational ministry and pastoral care. Prior to joining the staff of CCS, I served a new church development congregation in Winnipeg. For eleven years, I was Worship, Education and Justice staff for the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario of the United Church of Canada. I have also worked in interim ministry with an amalgamating congregation, in a rural four-point charge, and in urban Toronto as a staff associate. A frequent contributor to United Church publications, I co-edited Roll Away the Stone: Lenten Reflections at the Close of the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women, contributed to Spiritual Guides, and chaired the national task group preparing the service book, Celebrate God's Presence. My thesis for my Master of Sacred Theology degree focussed on diaconal ministry in the United Church. In 2004, I successfully completed a certificate in Conflict Mediation. I have finished my Doctor of Ministry degree with work on transformative theological education. I am currently enrolled in the Prairie Jubilee Program in Spiritual Formation.

3 February 2009