Calling or Co-optation?
Revisioning Ministry in The United Church of Canada

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Dedicated To My Parents Mercy and Emanuel Heuer

Dedicated especially to my mother, who never received the attention she deserved while she was alive. In the thirties she was a teacher of a one-room school house, boarding with a farm family in southern Alberta, taking university courses by correspondence while she taught. One wintry night when the only warm room in the house was the kitchen, she was at one end of the kitchen table working on her course of study, while at the other end of the same kitchen table they were butchering a pig! It was this image of her which kept me writing during the difficult times I faced. If she could do that, I could do this.

Abstract

This project/dissertation explores the choice of diaconal ministers in the United Church to become ordained, from the perspective of a feminist ecclesiology. This work can be included in literature pertaining to the nature of ministry and the relationship of vocations in ministry, as well as feminist research methodology. Using a feminist approach to qualitative research methodology, nine diaconal women were interviewed to examine their reasons for choosing ordination. Personal and systemic reasons emerged, including sense of calling, need for education and employment security, career development, influences from context and church policies. Factors, such as sexism and the marginalization of diaconal ministers, were revealed. This dissertation analyses the tensions between calling and pragmatism, authority in ministry and the sharing of power, hierarchical privilege and feminist perspective; and proposes recommendations for the revision of ministry.

Acknowledgements

Through this project/dissertation, I discovered that earning a doctorate is not a matter of individual birthing but rather a collective effort. Three particular "midwives" attended this birth: Glenys Huws, mentor for both the pilot research project and the project/dissertation research; Pauline Bradbrook, advisor for theological writing and copy editing; Teresa Jones, sounding board and encourager at every stage. It was the care and vigilance of these three faithful women which made the birthing possible.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: WHAT LED TO THE QUESTION

"Whenever there are two, one is always seen as better, as superior." The speaker was a layman, a lawyer, who was sitting behind me at a Presbytery meeting. We got into a conversation about diaconal and ordained ministers. He was debating my statements about diaconal ministers as equal to ordained. In his view, equality would never be possible. Hierarchy[1] is inevitable in the church, just as in society. For my part, I was a diaconal minister encountering the familiar experience where church members' attitudes and practices are not in line with United Church of Canada policies.[2]

Diaconal ministry and ordained ministry have a somewhat uneasy relationship in the United Church. The candidacy process of the United Church has insisted that a person entering ordered ministry must choose between two expressions of ministry--diaconal and ordained. Does this very choice set the two expressions of ordered ministry into competition? Is a hierarchy of ministries embedded in the forced choice? Even for those who might wish to claim both expressions of ministry, as they do in episcopal polities[3], for United Church ordered ministers this option has not been offered on an official basis.

In the United Church, there are many more ordained ministry personnel than diaconal ministry personnel. Current statistics place the ratio at approximately 20 to 1. Another factor is that diaconal ministry has been traditionally seen as the ministry which is "women's work". Because of the numbers and the history of sexism within the church, ordained ministers have been seen to be the "norm" for professional ministers. Diaconal ministers face many obstacles because of this norm, not the least of which is having to be their own advocates even as early as the candidacy phase where they encounter many misunderstandings of the nature and scope of diaconal ministry.

Since ordination as the norm for ministry has been so well established, diaconal ministers are regularly asked to compare themselves to ordained ministers and to explain how diaconal ministry is distinct from ordained. For diaconal ministers there is the constant threat of extinction. Questions about the need to continue diaconal ministry are openly raised in such places as discussions within the church courts and media, for example, in Vision TV's Spirit Connection in a program about diaconal ministry preparation at St. Stephen's (March 1, 1993) and in the Observer in an article about the role of diaconal

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[1] See Glossary: hierarchy

[2] 'Church' is a complex concept. In this brief paragraph alone, at least three conceptualizations of the notion of 'church' appear: 1) church as a denomination; 2) church as a widely-based structure or organization; 3) church as a body comprised of its members. From a sociological viewpoint the church is a macro-organization with widely diverse structures. From a theological viewpoint the church is a spiritual community of all who seek the way of Jesus. Chapter Three presents a theological vision of the meaning of 'church'; here 'church' refers to the church universal (not belonging to any one culture or denomination or historical period). In the discussion of the research project, however, 'church' refers most often to the United Church.

[3] Anglicans have a saying, "Once a deacon, always a deacon" and this applies to bishops and archbishops as well as priests.

ministers in today's church (December, 1991). I refer specifically to suggestions that the United Church incorporate diaconal ministry into ordained ministry so that there would be only one form of ordered ministry. Diaconal ministers resist such a suggestion because we are convinced that such an incorporation would result in the total loss of diaconal identity, with its emphasis on ministry as belonging to the whole community both within and beyond the church walls.

More recently, there has been a blurring of the lines between diaconal and ordained ministries. Increasingly it is common for diaconal ministry personnel to be granted a licence for administering sacraments and to be in positions of leadership of worship including preaching (as sole-paid ministers in a pastoral charge or as members of a ministry team). As more and more women with feminist leanings enter ordained ministry and theological education adapts to adult education principles, there is an additional blurring surrounding the preparation for ministry and the approach to ministry. Some wonder whether valid distinctions remain.

As the churches today approaches a time of great upheaval, with lean budgets, reduced memberships, mortgaged buildings, and tremendous uncertainty about the future, diaconal ministry personnel offers the United Church the very kind of leadership that is needed. The gifts that diaconal ministers bring to the church are: development of community, facilitation of group decision-making, future planning, education in the faith, spiritual growth, empowerment of people to use their gifts for ministry, justice-making, and relevancy to the world. These are the gifts and skills required for a time of transition in the church, and indeed for any time. They are the gifts which help the church to be the church in this time.

The United Church of Canada, however, has not fully owned diaconal ministry. While the need for diaconal ministry is increasing, diaconal positions are decreasing or shrinking to part-time positions. Perhaps because education (often associated with children) is seen as "women's work", or perhaps because diaconal ministers are small in number and often misunderstood, diaconal ministry has not been valued in the same way as ordained. Diaconal ministry has not been seen as an "essential" of the church; indeed some have seen it as a threat to the traditional style of ministry---a threat which needs to be stamped out. Within the very church which authorizes diaconal ministry, this ministry is marginalized.

Historically, diaconal ministers have had to fight for their place within the structures of the United Church. Mary Anne MacFarlane has documented the long and persistent lobbying deaconesses had to do in order to gain membership in the official courts of the church.[4] In her thesis she links the struggle of

[4] See "The Struggle for Access to Church Courts" in Gail Campos, History of Diaconal Ministry in the United Church of Canada, Committee on Diaconal Ministry, Toronto: 1991. pp. 87 - 96. The doctoral thesis of Mary Anne MacFarlane provided the basis for this section. See the following footnote.

deaconesses for official recognition with the struggle against sexism. Significantly, the remit to admit deaconesses had been turned down more than once on previous occasions and did not finally pass in 1964 until men, called Certified Churchmen, were admitted into the same order. Only at that point, did the church become convinced that it was appropriate to integrate deaconesses into the courts of the church. Mary Anne MacFarlane's concluding comment has remained true to this present time: "Though membership was finally granted almost forty years after it was first recommended, access to Presbytery did not displace the gendered hierarchical structure of the church or solve the many problems associated with deaconess work in the United Church of Canada."[5]

Diaconal ministers still encounter exclusion and marginalization. In 1987 a research study reported that Diaconal Ministers talk of living with a constant awareness that they are "in but still out" of ministry in the Church. The problem, as they describe it, is one of constant exclusion. Several respondents express discouragement because of the Church's failure to deal with the fundamental issues raised both by their unique expression of ministry and of their second-class treatment by others...A number of respondents speak of being treated as if they were invisible and of not being supported by their colleagues. "Diaconal Ministry can be an incredibly painful ministry. It takes a lot of energy to not only do your job, but also to constantly have to explain yourself, to answer questions about why you are not ordained, and why you work the way you do."6

In an earlier research project of my own, "So Tell Me Again...What is a Diaconal Minister?" (1992), I uncovered the same marginalization continuing. Focus group participants spoke about the many obstacles placed in the road of diaconal ministers. Among these were: paucity in numbers, ignorance about diaconal ministry, not being seen as "real" ministers, devaluation of their educational ministry (especially with children), and lack of appreciation for a non-hierarchical approach to ministry.

With the lack of a full acceptance of diaconal ministry by the United Church, it is not surprising, then, that some diaconal ministers, after a time of being marginalized, choose the more "normal", accepted, and privileged ministry found through ordination. When diaconal ministers become ordained, it is seen by the church as leaving diaconal ministry for ordained ministry. There is a common assumption in the church that a person chooses one or the other ministry, depending upon their calling, their gifts, and their designated functions within ministry. Within the diaconal community, an additional assumption is made, that the person seeking ordination is caught in the need to have the security of employment or that

[5] Mary Anne MacFarlane, A Tale of Handmaidens: History of the Deaconess Order from 1945-68 (OISE thesis) Toronto, 1987. p. 130

[6] See "The Essence of Diaconal Ministry in the United Church of Canada Today," in Diaconal Ministry: All About Diaconal Ministry in The United Church of Canada, Committee on Diaconal Ministry, Toronto, 1987. p. 2.

they seek the power that goes with the privilege[7] of ordination. For diaconal people, the decision of their colleagues to become ordained is experienced as a form of betrayal or abandonment. It is a further sign of devaluation.

Over time I grew curious about the validity of these perceptions of the diaconal community and the reassurance so often given by newly ordained diaconal ministers, that they will continue to minister from a diaconal perspective. My interest deepened when, a few years ago, a highly visible diaconal minister who was a mentor and model to many of us, chose to become ordained. The shock waves went through the community. I went to see her to try to understand, but came away from our talk without any answer that satisfied me. Was I simply unable to hear it? Were the reasons too difficult to articulate? Or were the reasons too difficult to express to someone who felt betrayed?

This research question was actually the first idea I had for a Project/Dissertation. I threw it away when it seemed to be too thorny, too emotional, and too sensitive to research. At that time, I expected the tension would be difficult, and I was not sure ordained ministers would find it possible to talk openly with me because of my passion for diaconal ministry. I ignored the quote from Emerson that was posted by my phone while I was doing contractual work, "Always do what you are afraid to do".[8] Instead of risking, I chose a safer, less emotional topic and, after a time, became thoroughly bored with it.

I returned to this topic, "Why do diaconal ministers become ordained?" following a meeting of the Diakonia of the United Church of Canada (DUCC) in 1994 (Five Oaks). As we considered how widely to extend our membership, concerns were raised about those of our number who had become ordained. Were they still to be included in Diakonia of the United Church? How were we to interpret their choice to be ordained? During the discussion someone mentioned that research was needed on this issue. The comment stuck with me because it converged with my own keen interest in the question.

With this expressed interest of the diaconal community, I embarked on the research with a sense that I was doing it on their behalf, not only out of my own interests. As I prepared for a pilot study to test the question, I discovered that the research question had implications far wider than the diaconal community. It was one of those questions that starts with a specific focus and diverges outwards to more and more, deeper and deeper questions. The fact that diaconal ministers have continued to choose to become ordained raises for the United Church the theological meanings about call, the nature of ministry, and indeed, the very purpose of the church in the world.

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[7] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege

[8] The full quote is: "It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person, 'Always do what you are afraid to do.'" Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Heroism" in Essays, 1841.

RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PROJECT/DISSERTATION TO MINISTRY

The subject of this research is simply one aspect of ministry, the nature of ordered ministry as experienced by those serving the church in this capacity. While there is particular relevance for the relationship of diaconal ministers to the present and future church, there are significant implications for United Church polity concerning both expressions of ordered ministry. The research question raises basic issues about the fundamental nature of designated or vocational ministry. Indeed an interpretation of the research leads into questions and discourse about the theology of ministry.

Some questions arising: Is the call to ordered ministry a call to specific functions? What implications might there be if the United Church decided to affirm both expressions of ministry in the one person? Is diaconal ministry seen as an alternative ministry to the normative ordained ministry? Should all paid designated ministry be diaconal in the emerging church? Should all designated ministry be ordained? What visions of the church do ordained or diaconal ministry affirm? Are these visions distinct, depending upon whether one is ordained or diaconal?

As I began the research design and interviewed participants I was then a diaconal minister engaged in theological education with others preparing for diaconal and lay vocational ministries. I wanted to learn about continuing vocational development. I expected to become more conscious of the challenges people encounter in ministry and hoped that my learning would benefit theological students as they approached positions of leadership in the church.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Call to Ministry

The call of God is made known to all people of faith to live as they believe. Because a person cannot live an essentially communal faith on an individual basis, people of faith, especially Christian[9] people, are called into community as part of their faith. To serve the needs of the community, some people are called into roles of leadership and facilitation of the community's ministry. Such a call may become known in many ways, such as the exploration and development of one's gifts, the affirmation of the

[9] Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to use a lower case "c" for the word 'Christian' except where the word appears in a quotation. Using the lower case is a small, yet deliberate step towards undoing hierarchy within the church and it serves as a reminder of the need to reverse the church's history of arrogant domination over others.

community, the inspiration of the spirit.

A series of questions around the nature of God's call present themselves: If the call to ordered ministry is life-long, can it be changed? Does God change God's mind? When there are practical reasons for responding to this call such as employment concerns, or when there are changes in one's ministry functions, does it represent a call of God? Is the call to ministry different for diaconal ministers than for ordained ministers? Why is it that diaconal ministers are called to ordained ministry, but ordained ministers are rarely, if ever, called to diaconal ministry? Does a call for a diaconal minister to become ordained become an additional calling so that one person carries more than one calling? How does the need for personal power relate to a call to ministry?

Nature of Ministry

A growing emphasis within the faith stance of the United Church of Canada affirms that ministry belongs to all people of faith and I heartily endorse that theology. However, in the practice of ministry a clericalism[10] has emerged which has persisted, placing ordained ministers in a superior position as God's representatives. As part of this priestly role, the clergy have been authorized by the church institution, thus assuming an institutional representation. Here again, a superiority is evident, with the lay people in an inferior position.

Diaconal ministry can be seen as an alternative to the hierarchy of clericalism. The history of diaconal ministry relates it more closely with lay people in several ways. Until 1936 it was the only route through which a woman could enter official ministry. Until 1964 it was a lay order within the church and only gradually became part of the order of ministry, the final step being taken in 1980 when diaconal ministers were included in the pension plan for ordered ministers. Traditionally, diaconal ministers have seen their ministry as a servant ministry, existing to serve those in need and to empower others' ministry. In this support of lay ministry, diaconal ministers have worked against clericalism. The fact that diaconal ministers have not been seen by the majority of United Church members to be "real" ministers is yet another aspect which separates them from the clericalism of ordained ministers.

Ministry is God-in-action through people and, potentially, through all of creation. It is not reserved for the community of the church and especially not reserved for the leaders of that community. All are God-bearers. The church is called to be a responsive community, offering ministry both to the world and to each member of the community. Together they offer God-in-action creating a new order, resisting

[10] See Glossary: Clericalism.

injustice, demonstrating the power of love. This ministry of the community is primary. The ministry of leadership within the community exists solely to enable the community to fulfil its vision.

Ecclesiology

At the root of any theology of ministry is a theology of church, for ministry exists to support the life of the church both within and beyond its walls. As people of faith we are called to act together in the living out of our faith. The life we create together as church community is an expression of God in the world. Our task is to balance the nurture of our own community, including individuals' spirits, minds and bodies, with our mission to be justice-seekers in the world. In the reality of our congregational life, we frequently find our energy consumed by organizational maintenance. In ministry leadership the provision of meaningful worship often takes precedence and skews the balance towards an inward nurturing. Where the church places its priorities of time, energy and money is a fair measure of its operative theology. I am convinced that the United Church is in danger of losing its focus--the need for a mission of justice in the world--and needs re-structuring in order to bring mission back into balance. Mission has become a side-line rather than a central priority. Diaconal ministers offer potential leadership for the church's mission in the world.

I align myself with a liberationist feminist ecclesiology, where the church is called to radical transformation of itself in order to participate in the radical transformation of the world. In both the church and the world, power needs to be made accountable to those who presently have little access to power. Letty Russell has written about the "Church in the Round", where power is shared. She envisions the church as a table where chairs of authority[11] are not reserved, but deliberately shared, and there is no head of the table. The feast is spread, and all are welcome to the table as partners in God's world house.[12] I would like to turn this image around, so that the church faces outwardly towards the world, rather than trying to gather in the world to itself. Then we would have to create the feast in the world where all could share!

In Chapter Three "Revisioning the Church", I describe the characteristics of the church living out a new vision. A revisioned church is a responsive community--responsive to the world, to one another and to God. Its community is characterized by mutual relationships, a hospitality which is inclusive, a welcome diversity of gifts, shared power in leadership roles, and an embodied spirituality.

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[11] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

[12] Letty Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. p. 12

For those making the choice to become ordained, an operational theology of church is implicit in the choice. The research project includes an analysis of this relationship between theology and action as it relates to ecclesiology. Some questions I explore: Do the research participants experience a contradiction between their choice for ordination and their theology of ministry? How does the elevated position of ordained minister fit with their understanding of the church and their place within it? In their vision of the church, would they recommend that all diaconal ministers become ordained?

I believe that the vision of the church is changing for many people. Women, and other oppressed groups[13] have challenged the church to become an agent for justice in the world. Diaconal ministers in the United Church have been part of this challenge, pressing towards a church that has community and justice-making at its heart. Has this challenge resulted in changes in the United Church which make it more possible for women to choose ordination, in the sense that it is more palatable to identify themselves with this more enlightened way of being the church? Has our church already moved closer to the vision diaconal ministry holds, thus making the style of ordained ministry more compatible with the style of ministry embraced by diaconal people?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHOICE FOR ORDINATION

As I approached the research I felt certain that those diaconal ministers who moved into ordained ministry have a unique perspective that needs to be revealed and explored. Their experiences of diaconal ministry and their resulting decision to move into ordination did indeed raise profound implications for how the church sees and responds to diaconal ministry. Moreover, they provide a window into how the church continues to perceive its ministry and the need for leadership to accomplish its ministry. My hope is that this research project will provide a place for them to speak openly about their reasons for choosing ordination, and that, as a result, the church might better understand how to structure and carry out its ministry, both inside the church and in the world.

Through the research I set out to discover: 1) What does this choice for ordination by diaconal ministers say about the nature of the church and the nature of ministry, as seen in the United Church of Canada? 2) How does the United Church contribute to the decision? (i.e. the need for the ordination) 3) Is this a backwards step, a form of co-optation? 4) Are the diaconal community assumptions (employment and power) verified by this research? 5) What are the implications for the continuance of diaconal ministry

[13] The very groups which challenge the church may (or may not) be part of the church in the sense of 'church' as a body comprised of people, those sharing a faith.

in the future?

The main research question came out of hurt, my own, and the hurt of the diaconal community. I felt particularly betrayed when one of our committed diaconal ministers became ordained, and I knew from conversations in the diaconal circles that I was not alone with these feelings. For the diaconal community there is little, if any, celebration of such an ordination.

Through this project/dissertation I have sought to understand the dynamics of a church that has not fully sanctioned diaconal ministry, but regards ordained ministry as essential. I have consciously opened myself to the lived experience of those diaconal people who have chosen ordination. I have tried to listen faithfully to their message and interpret it for the church and for diaconal ministry. This project/dissertation has strengthened my conviction that diaconal/ordained ministers have stories to tell that the church needs to hear.

THE STORY FROM THE INSIDE

There is no doubt that I chose a research topic close to my heart. As I embarked on the pilot project leading to the project/dissertation, I felt an overwhelming concern that I was too passionate about diaconal ministry. Publicly, I was known to be a strong advocate for diaconal ministers. Internally, I questioned whether the people I wanted to interview would be willing to talk with me, and if they did, would they be able to be open and honest with me? I was very conscious of the diaconal bias I carried and its potential for being detrimental to the research. The way in which I proposed to deal with such a strong bias was to declare it and to try to bracket it by attending to the larger issues of ministry, with diaconal ministry as a part of that larger picture. I reassured myself in the design stage by referring to Janice Morse who advises the choice of a research question that is of real personal interest so that it will hold attention over time.[14]

At the same time as I was dealing with a passionate bias, I felt a gnawing concern that I was opening myself to some external force that I did not yet understand. In choosing to explore the reasons diaconal ministers become ordained, what was I preparing myself to do in the future? Did this choice of topic represent something that I was about to consider for myself? I was well aware that such a research project had the potential to change myself as the researcher. In fact, as a feminist researcher I was

[14] Janice Morse, "Designing Funded Qualitative Research", in Handbook of Qualitative Research, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994. p. 220.

committed to explore the changes in myself which would certainly develop. I was not prepared, however for what occurred.

I carefully examined my motives and wrote about them as honestly as I could. I tried to imagine whether I was attempting to use this research as a tactic for advocacy, or for achieving accountability with those who had seemingly abandoned diaconal ministry, or to prove the assumptions diaconal colleagues were making about the need for power or job security. (See Chapter Two.) When I thought about my own job, I realized that I had never faced termination or unemployment as a diaconal minister. Perhaps my passion for diaconal ministry might fade if I were to be confronted by more desperate issues that could be resolved by becoming ordained.

As I was completing the analysis of the pilot study, I became even more conscious of the privilege I have carried. I found many parallels between the women I interviewed and myself. I, too, was engaged in further education towards a graduate degree. Like them, I held a position which had some status within our church. For me, there was a different kind of privilege as a result of working at the Centre for Christian Studies where there was a commitment to providing a feminist environment. I did not encounter the sexism of the church on a daily basis, but only as I engaged in the interface between our theological school and the rest of the church.

In the time interval between the pilot study and the completion of the project/dissertation, my job with the Centre for Christian Studies came to a painful end when the governing council decided to move the school to Winnipeg. As this decision was in progress I was conducting the second set of interviews. I ponder now just how much the upheaval caused by the relocation of the school and my own loss of job, had to do with the way I heard the comments made by the participants. It is significant that I interpreted the pilot interviews as having a strong **pragmatic** slant, while I interpreted the project/dissertation interviews as having a stronger sense of **calling** to ordination. Whatever might be made of that, I do believe that I approached the second set of interviews with greater empathy because of my own inner turmoil. I was experiencing fragmentation within myself and my own relationships as well as fragmentation written large in the diaconal community surrounding the school. As I look back now, I believe that the fragmentation "unseated" me from my assured and strong diaconal bias. It left me personally vulnerable, but with less need to defend diaconal ministry and with more openness to other ways of seeing things.

In the spring of 1998, two major events put a stop to this project/dissertation. The crisis of the Centre for Christian Studies meant that my job was increasingly intolerable and stressful. With the decision to close the school in Toronto and re-open it in Winnipeg, our staff team had to try to cope with doing our work amidst overwhelming transition and immense grief. All of us lost our jobs, except for the

one part-time staff already located near Winnipeg. As a staff team, we had to relinquish our closeness with the student community, all of our dreams and plans for the school, our resource files and library, as well as our cherished staff team itself. Through this crisis I was doggedly attempting to continue my work on the transcription and analysis of the project/dissertation interviews. However when the second major event came, I could not go on. I was writing in my research journal early one Saturday morning, when the phone call came. My father had died. I closed my journal and went to his home. I did not return to the journal for four months.

When I picked up my journal again, I was still recovering from exhaustion. I could not recall where I had left off or how much remained to be done. I was in a state of thorough disillusionment about the church and about diaconal ministry, in particular. I struggled with a loss of belief in diaconal values, such as 'community' and 'justice', which now seemed empty to me after they had been trampled in the process of the move to Winnipeg. At this point I was working on the two theological chapters (Chapters Three and Four). I discovered that my very disillusionment had the effect of deepening my perspective on the nature of church and ministry. No longer did I hold the idealistic theology represented by an earlier assignment I had written about feminist ecclesiology. Instead, I had to totally re-write that assignment[15] in order to incorporate it here in this dissertation. The most striking change had to do with the failure of the existing church to be the church as it is intended to be and the implications of that failure theologically.

As I approached the conclusion of the analysis and interpretation, I was all too aware that the person who began this project/dissertation is not the person who is finishing it. When I began it, I was enthusiastic and passionate about diaconal ministry. I thought diaconal ministry had a distinct and supremely valuable contribution to make to the United Church. I thought of it as the hope of our church! Yet the diaconal community has been unable to embody the vision it articulates. This is not a harsh judgement; diaconal ministry is only the same as the rest of the church, espousing a vision that it cannot possibly claim to model except in moments of grace.

As I conclude, I see diaconal ministry as having been co-opted by the United Church and now in need of reform and renewal. The final chapter contains recommendations that in the past I would have opposed as detrimental to diaconal ministry. Some of these recommendations derive directly from the interviews with the research participants; others come from my own analysis and re-thinking about ministry personnel in the United Church. I have continuously wrestled with the inner issue I call

[15] The descriptors of the "ideal" feminist church have been retained. (See Chapter Three: A Feminist Interpretation of the Church) What has changed is my own awareness of the context of patriarchy, the inclement environment for "being the church", and the tendency of the institution to give priority to its own needs.

"integrity". I have come to the conclusion that when a person changes position, as I have done, integrity is not necessarily left behind. I believe I need to ensure that integrity is accompanying the changes in my bias and theology. Integrity is my way of keeping faith with who I am. My commitments around ministry have changed and expanded during the time of this project/dissertation. I have moved from being a strong advocate of diaconal ministry, as one who was wholly invested in it, to a position of radical re-evaluation as one somewhat removed. Where formerly I was in a central influential position as a theological educator of diaconal ministers, now I have taken up a position on the fringe of the diaconal circle. From the fringe, my central belief remains intact--that diaconal ministry is a vital, essential ministry of the church--yet I see things differently. I believe that the United Church needs to re-instate diaconal ministry, not as it is presently constituted, but closer to what it was originally intended to be--a ministry with the marginalized.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY: THE STORY BEHIND THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to it being dry and dull, I have found the area of research methodology to be fascinating. As a person committed to facilitating personal growth and systemic change, I am naturally intrigued by process as much as content. Methodology is the process of how the research developed, how it was conducted and how the analysis of the data contributed to new insights or questions. As I read methodological books and articles I became excited by the notion of the creation of new knowledge through research.

As I proceeded through designing, conducting and analysing the research, I faced a number of critical issues.

1) As a diaconal minister interviewing others who had chosen ordination, I knew I was on sensitive ground. Would they be able to talk openly with me?
2) As a feminist I was keen to use feminist methods, yet I found that feminist methods were designed for interviewing marginalized people whereas I was interviewing people who were privileged, at least by virtue of their ordination, within church structures.
3) During the time-span when the research took place, I myself experienced profound change leading to a significant change of bias. Apart from the personal pain entailed, such a change of bias is an arresting question from a research point of view.

This chapter will provide a way for me to be accountable around the critical issues arising from the research project. My concern is to be accountable to the participants, to the diaconal community, to the wider United Church, and to the readership.

TWO STAGES TO THE RESEARCH

For this project/dissertation, I first completed a pilot study to test the main research question: What prompts commissioned diaconal ministers in the United Church to become ordained? I interviewed four women in an in-depth style and analysed the resulting data. The learnings which emerged were productive for the second stage of the research where I interviewed five more women. In this project/dissertation all nine of the participants appear. Since the pilot group proved that the main research question was indeed worthwhile, and since the changes in the questionnaire were more a revision than a reconstruction, there was enough continuity to draw on the data from all nine interviews.

The major learning from the pilot study was that the main research question was indeed fruitful. The results yielded a complexity in several areas I wanted to pursue: 1) the relation of vocational calling to pragmatism,[16] 2) the relation of self-esteem to devalued ministry, 3) the relation of one's privileged status and power to one's authority 4) the relation of ministry ideals to co-optation by church structures.

From the pilot group I learned which questions "worked" and which questions needed to be revised. I found areas that proved less useful to explore and areas that were missing. In the pilot group interviews I asked about their views of the future of diaconal ministry, since I was concerned about the depletion of diaconal ministers and the decrease in diaconal positions at a time of huge transition when diaconal ministry would seem to be more needed than ever. The answers to my question were certainly interesting but they were speculative and not particularly informative. I concluded that it would be more relevant to delve deeper into the theology of ministry held by the participants.

One assumption I was testing through the pilot study was that diaconal ministers choose to be ordained out of a need for greater power or authority. The pilot group had much to say about diaconal ministry being regarded as a "lesser" ministry. But it was difficult to pinpoint whether they had motives related to seeking power. My learning, which I was able to apply in the project/dissertation, was to come right to the point. I asked a direct question about their need for power, and found their responses much more enlightening than trying to impute a need for power from less direct questions used in the pilot study.

Another assumption I tested was that diaconal ministers become ordained because of pragmatic reasons. Among diaconal circles it is common to assume that ordination is chosen out of a need for security in employment. The pilot study revealed that pragmatic reasons were indeed important, but they were not the only reasons. For the project/dissertation group, I felt more attuned to the complexities of their reasons for choosing ordination.

I discovered that technology plays a major part in the effectiveness of an interview and was able to improve on the recording equipment required for such a research project. Of course, as I transcribed the interviews I listened critically to my own part in the interview. I developed greater assertiveness as an interviewer.

As part of the pilot research study St. Stephen's College requirements called for a mentor to provide guidance and reflection. Glenys Huws (Ed. D. OISE 1989) agreed to fill this role. I discovered the immense value of the mentor and made a request for her to continue through the project/dissertation,

[16] The term 'pragmatism' or 'pragmatic' is used throughout this dissertation in its general sense, referring to the practicalities of life and the influence of those realities upon decisions; it has no reference to pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought.

along with the D.Min. advisory committee assigned to me. With Glenys, the mentoring went beyond guidance around my research conundrums; I had the opportunity to test my developing ideas and analysis. Glenys was vigilant in her monitoring from the perspective of a "hermeneutic of suspicion".[17] As a result of our conversations, refinements and new possibilities emerged.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION

In our first meeting Glenys asked me to clarify for myself whether I had "something to prove" by engaging this question. She encouraged me to explore my worst possible motives for pursuing this topic. The following questions occurred to me, reported here as I wrote them at that time:

1) Was I trying to prove that the reasons for choosing ordination had to do with job security and economic necessity? This would mean that the participants really wanted to remain diaconal, but were forced by circumstances to become ordained. The element of "being forced" would emphasize the validity of diaconal ministry, the ministry I have so cherished. I believe pragmatism may have a large influence in the decisions, but I needed to allow the participants to describe the reasons for their choice, as they see them.

2) Was I trying to prove that the people who chose ordination were power-hungry, or at least had needs for power? This would mean that they were unable or unwilling to continue in a marginalized ministry, that they had given up the fight and had become co-opted into the normative ministry of the church. A need for power domination might mean that they did not belong in diaconal ministry in the first place, since diaconal ministers consciously vow to use an enabling style of ministry. [18]

3) Was this research topic forcing the women who chose ordination to account for themselves to the diaconal community? This would mean that I was calling them to justify their actions to a community that was experiencing a sense of betrayal by them. It might also call them to reassert their diaconal identity within ministry, or at least to advocate for diaconal ministry.

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[17] The "hermeneutic of suspicion" was coined by Elizabeth Fiorenza in Bread Not Stone, Boston: Beacon Press, 1984. In the Introduction she writes: "Feminist interpretation therefore begins with a hermeneutics of suspicion that applies to both contemporary androcentric interpretations of the Bible and the biblical text themselves." p. xii. Here she encourages a questioning of the patriarchal texts from the standpoint of the emancipation of women, but more than that, she also brings suspicion to the way in which patriarchal texts have been used to maintain patriarchy in current society.

[18] See "Statement of Belief" Diaconal Ministry, Toronto: United Church Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, 1994.

4) Is this research a way of gaining a voice in the church by having new information to share? Is this research providing me with a strategy to advocate for diaconal ministry in the future church?

5) Is this research preparing me in some way? What am I getting ready to do? As my position (I was then a theological educator at the Centre for Christian Studies) becomes less secure, will I be forced to consider ordination?

6) Is this research my own way of coming to terms with the value of ordination? Long ago I chose against ordination and have remained a critic of it, especially in the form of clericalism. Perhaps this research will push me to acknowledge the place of ordination in the church.

As I wrestled to unearth these inner motives, I began to see that likely there was a kernel of truth in each of the questions. The first three motive questions pointed to an area worth exploring in the research itself. For instance, the question about forcing participants to account for themselves (#3) led to a discussion on whether participants view themselves as appropriate members of Diakonia of the United Church even after ordination. (DUCC has been considering whether and how to offer membership to diaconal-ordained people.) As a researcher relating to these participants, my task was to develop a research design that allowed for open exploration within a respectful relationship. By carrying these motivational questions with me into the interviews, I hoped to avoid premature judgements.

A FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

As I understand it, feminist research is not a distinct methodology, but a set of principles brought into a particular methodology, usually qualitative research. Although there is a body of literature on feminist research, there is no identifiable **methodology** that is specifically labelled 'feminist'.[19] Rather, feminist research is an **approach** to research, having to do with giving voice to women, respecting the reality that women have constructed, and working to relieve women's oppression. In Theories of Women's Studies, Barbara Du Bois remarks, "I do not in fact hold that there is or ought to be a distinctively

[19] It is important to acknowledge that there is no single unified understanding of the term 'feminism'. (See Glossary in Appendix A: Feminist Perspectives.) There are many varieties of feminism, such as liberal, liberative, marxist, womanist, lesbian, and others, with sharp disagreements existing between them. For instance, black women with womanist perspectives seriously critique white middle class feminism for claiming to represent the oppression of all women, when black women experience differing oppressions, some at the hands of white feminists. See correspondence between Katie Canon and Carter Heyward in God's Fierce Whimsy (The Mudflower Collective, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985), or see Audre Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," in Sister Outsider (New York: Crossing Press, 1984.) To gain an understanding of a feminist methodology from a two-thirds world perspective, consult Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, En La Lucha: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology, Chapter Three: "Mujerista Theology's Method".

feminist scientific method."[20] Another feminist researcher asks the question, "Is There a Feminist Method?" and argues against the idea of a distinctive feminist method of research.[21] My own conclusion is that feminism, as a way of seeing the world, is not to be too closely identified with just one methodology, but in fact is compatible with a range of research or scientific methods. Feminism is a perspective that is intentionally brought to the design of the research, the interactive exchanges during data collection, and to the final states of analysis and interpretation. It is a way of living out feminist values while doing the research, with the goal of contributing to the larger feminist cause.

As I designed the research I worked out a set of feminist principles to follow. These principles were developed for the pilot study; some were not applicable to the particular dynamics of interviewing privileged women, yet are retained here as principles that are important to me as a feminist researcher. Since I was using a qualitative methodology in the form of intensive interviews, the principles are specifically worded for this method.

Feminist Principles for Research[22]

a. Construction of knowledge is a political process. Feminist research is committed to creation of knowledge out of the experience of those on the underside (women). It asserts that women's experience, ideas, and needs are valid.

b. We are all creators of knowledge. Knowledge exists in many places (common sense, authority, theories, research).

c. Commitment of the research is to the women in telling their stories, as subjects rather than objects. The women become agents of their own history. Opportunity is given for these stories to reach a wider audience. This approach demands a conscious subjectivity.

d. The research focus is on creating knowledge that will describe, explain, and help change the world.

e. Interviews are more of a conversation and dialogue than an interrogation. The goal is to be taught

[20] Barbara Du Bois, "Passionate Scholarship: Notes on Value, Knowing and Method in Feminist Social Science", in Theories of Women's Studies, Gloria Bowles and Rene Duelli Klein, (eds.), Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. p. 109.

[21] Sandra Harding, "Is There a Feminist Method?" in Feminism and Science, Nancy Tuana (ed.), Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.

[22] These principles are a compilation from the following: Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, En la Lucha: In the Struggle:Elaborating a Mujerista Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. pp. 63-78; Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna, Experience Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1989 pp. 15-28,95,96; Renate D. Klein, "How to do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology" pp. 89-101; and Maria Mies "Towards a methodology for feminist research" in pp. 122-127; both articles in Theories of Women's Studies, eds. Gloria Bowles and Rene D. Klein. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.

by those on the underside and to learn both from their experience and their interpretation of it.

f. The setting for research is egalitarian.

g. Questions are planned to allow for people to reflect on their experience.

h. The researcher is included in the process as a person with biases and interests who is open to being changed by the encounter. The task here for the researcher is to listen to her own voice so that her biases do not operate surreptitiously. Partial identification with the subjects is encouraged. The researcher recognizes herself to share the oppression of women, and to compare what she is finding to her own experience.

i. The process of the interview is fluid, adapting the course of the interview to meet the particular needs of the participant.

j. The interview is an instrument for data collection, but is also a sharing of oneself--ideas, experience, philosophy, symbolic expression.

k. Diversity is accounted for rather than diminished by categorization. Specific voices are seen to encompass reality.

l. Elements of the research findings are related to each other rather than to a general classification.

m. Where possible the research is undertaken in groups.

n. A significant goal of feminist research is to contribute to ending the oppression of women, and others as well. The research process is seen as part of the process of conscientization towards this goal.

These principles operated more as guidelines, rather than as a recipe, for conducting feminist interviews. For specific help in refining the research question and writing a questionnaire I relied on past experience of a research project (D. Min. 1992) and the following two books:

1. Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna, Experience Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins, Toronto: Garamond Press, 1989.

2. Janice M. Morse and Peggy Ann Field, Qualitative Research Methods for Health Professionals, London: Sage Publications, 1995.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The actual design of the questionnaire has a long history. It began with conversations at a national

gathering of diaconal ministers in 1994. Here it became evident the exodus of diaconal ministers into ordained ministry needed to be researched. Shortly afterwards, Ann Naylor (a diaconal minister who was then the Acting General Secretary for the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education) and I collaborated to outline the intent of the research and some specific questions that might be asked. At that point we hoped to do the research as a team, but time did not allow for that.

When I was ready to proceed, I approached Normand Frenette of OISE as a consultant to the design of the research instrument. He was helpful in forming questions, giving structure to the questionnaire, and in containing the research focus. I was aware that I would be skewing the results by my selection of participants who were known for their strong diaconal identity. My reasons for introducing this bias would need to be declared. One particular concern we resolved together was my anxiety about conducting the interviews with ordained women. I was worried that they would not feel free to reveal their "real" reasons for becoming ordained to me, a person known to be passionate about diaconal ministry. Normand helped me to recognize that my role was to design questions that would invite honest searching and to establish an open rapport. The rest would be up to the participants.

The interview questionnaire was made up of open-ended questions intended to elicit reflective responses or anecdotes. In designing the questions to be used in the research questionnaire, I developed a purpose statement for each question. (See Appendices B and C.) As an educator, I quite naturally formulate a purpose for any activity, and it occurred to me that the research questions would be clarified by a purpose statement. I heartily recommend this step. It maintained a helpful focus so that in the interviews I was able to adjust and interpret questions to suit each participant. I became freer to have a conversation in the area of the question without losing the intent of the question.

As I approached doing the interviews, I arranged for a friend, Barb Lloyd, to role-play a participant so that I could practise asking the questions. The role play gave me an opportunity to test the questions, their order, how to connect the questions in a natural flow, and to experiment with my own comfort level in asking such questions. At the end of the role play practice Barb and I were both glued in our chairs because the issues staring us in the face were so very real in our experience of the church. We had experienced something more than a role play--we had been confronted by the hard-hitting reality of the questions. For me, it confirmed the worthiness of the main research question in raising vital issues for the church and for diaconal ministry.

SELECTING THE PARTICIPANTS

The people I interviewed were all diaconal ministers who had made the choice to become ordained. In the pilot study I made the decision to interview those people who entered into ordained ministry with a solid diaconal identity. I collaborated with diaconal colleagues in key positions (theological schools, national committees) to ensure that I did not rely solely on my own discernment in selecting participants who identified strongly with diaconal ministry.

The pilot study revealed one participant who thought of herself as not having a strong diaconal identity, yet she shared insights and reflections from her experience that were just as valuable as the others. I became less convinced about the value of interviewing only those who articulated a strong diaconal identity. In fact the pilot study showed me that my real interest was in the current situation with the United Church as it affects diaconal ministry. While I remain fascinated by the history and recognize its role in shaping the current situation, I was most curious about why diaconal minsters **continue** to choose ordination now. For this reason, the participants for the project/dissertation research were made up largely of those who became ordained during the last ten years. One participant has not yet been ordained, but has made the decision and is close to completing the courses required. The advantage of a recent decision was that they were much more current with their own decision-making process; in addition, their decision was made in the context of the present policies of the United Church.

THE INTERVIEWS

As a commissioned diaconal minister who had not chosen to become ordained, I needed to take into account how I presented myself, my research question, and how I established rapport with the participants. My approach was to place myself in a learning situation and to declare my openness to each participant. I tried to convey that I sincerely wanted to hear their experience and their interpretation of it.

The location of the interviews was arranged to suit the participants. One concern I had was that three of the participants chose to be interviewed at the Centre for Christian Studies. We used a lounge which conveyed nothing of a theological school atmosphere; however, I persist in wondering if the setting influenced their comfort level or what they chose to say (consistent reference to their training within this same building).[23] The fourth interview took place in the participant's church office. Here again I was left

[23] One participant gave direct feedback regarding the setting at the Centre for Christian Studies, indicating that it had not unduly influenced her interview because with all the changes in the building, the staffing, and the programme, it was no longer the school with which she had been associated as a student.

with a question as to her freedom in that setting to speak openly about her current situation in a team ministry. When I came to the second round of interviews with the project/dissertation group, all of the interviews were held in familiar settings of the participants, either in their churches or in their homes. One was held at another theological school.

Each interview was tape-recorded using a flat microphone, a better technology for multi-directional conversation. I found a tape recorder with a variable speed was extremely helpful when it came to transcribing. I typed the transcripts myself as a way of becoming intimately familiar with the comments and the accompanying audible clues. In this process, I also became aware of my own voice, interactions, and mistakes. For instance, I noted that it was a challenge to develop an interviewing style that allowed me to take part mutually (a key feminist principle). Either I tended to avoid giving my opinion because I did not want to unduly influence the response, or I found that by giving my ideas I diverted the participant from her thoughts. In general, however, as the feedback confirms, I was able to use my educational skills to facilitate the interview process and I was able to be an affirming listener.

ETHICAL ISSUES

In preparation for the interviews, I designed a consent form which set forth the manner in which I intended to deal with the protection of individual rights. A copy is attached as Appendix D. Within the Consent Form I outlined my agreement to honour the participant's option to withdraw from the research project. I also indicated how the raw data would be handled so that access would be restricted. Further, I committed myself to reporting their experiences as anonymously as possible. At the end of each interview I discussed my plan to use a different name for the participant in the written analysis. In all cases they chose a name or noted their wishes in this regard.

Because the decision to be interviewed was entirely optional, I assumed that the participants saw the benefits of telling their stories through this format. The cost was their time, but I received appreciation from all of the participants. Their appreciation was something I did not expect; the participants clearly valued this opportunity to review their ministry experience with another person. One participant wanted to extend the time so that she could hear my story as well; in this case I sensed that there was a need to make it a mutual exchange. As I approached each interview I was conscious that there could be vulnerabilities which the interview questions might bring to light or that simply by the telling of their experiences some pain might be revealed. I planned to make myself available to those persons if further debriefing was needed, or to make referrals should that prove necessary.

One ethical issue concerned the telling of experiences that involved colleagues in ministry. I encountered this as an ethical dilemma in two ways. First, there was the implication of some of the material for my own colleagues at the Centre for Christian Studies. In one case, a graduate reported an unhelpful response given by one of my colleagues. Second, there was the reporting about their own colleagues who figured in their stories, many of whom I knew through the United Church network. I needed to reassure them that confidentiality would be kept, and that their colleagues, too, would be presented anonymously. Each participant chose her own fictitious name to be used here; each also gave explicit permission to include the description of their personal choices described in Chapter Five.

I experienced a research dilemma which emerged from the nature of my relationship with participants. I deliberately tried to establish the kind of open relationship which allows participants to speak freely, and I worked hard to understand their comments within the context of their own lives. As I approached the analysis and interpretation, however, I developed a fear around potential disloyalty because I was bringing a critique to their life stories. Within much feminist research, the goal is to allow the women's voices, usually marginalized voices, to be heard; in this research I was interviewing women who had moved from a place of marginalization to a place of privilege in the church. How was I to treat voices of "the more-privileged" within a feminist framework?

I worked at resolving my dilemma by reporting the experience of the participants as respectfully and accurately as possible. In that sense I tried to be faithful to their perspective and interpretation. (See Chapters Five and Six.) At the same time, I have presented my own perspective and theoretical interpretation. (See Chapter Seven.) Where I found myself in places of contradiction, I have attempted to clearly indicate that I was giving voice to my own ideas. By constructing the chapters so that each chapter speaks with a different voice, I have sought to present their voices and my own as separate.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Throughout the project/dissertation, I relied on the practice of journalling. My journal entries became my companion especially during the analysis and interpretation phase. I divided my journal into three sections: content, process, and inner journal. These divisions, while seemingly artificial at times, were useful in helping me attend to each aspect of the research. I found that dialogue with myself assisted with articulation. At times I wrote an imaginary dialogue with one of the participants. Often I recorded notes after conversations I had held with friends or colleagues which impinged on the topic of this research. In the process section, I wrestled with how to proceed through the research dilemmas I

encountered. Frequently it felt that I was inventing each step as I took it. As well, the Process journal contained a record of my meetings with the D.Min. committee and with my mentor. The inner journal was the place where I wrote ongoing thoughts and musings about the project; I deliberately worked at uncovering those thoughts I might be trying to censor, even from myself. Here I made connections between the research and my own life.

For the analysis of the interviews, I will present the steps I used:

1. I began with journalling. I recalled the way the participant presented herself, the emotional tenor of the interview, the degree of openness, and pertinent non-verbal messages.
2. After carefully reading the transcripts, I made notes under two headings: What was significant to the participant? What was significant for me?
3. I re-read the transcripts in detail and developed categories corresponding to the questions and another set of categories relating to emerging themes, such as "Sexism".[24]
4. When categories were well-established, I photocopied the transcripts so that I could cut them up and group the common bits into envelopes. The responses from each participant were colour-coded.
5. I read the bits in each envelope and created a "comparison chart" so that all the responses would be summarized on one page. The chart included each participant's comments and position, along with a summary of similarities and differences. In a concluding statement, I tried to account for the similarities and differences. Any other observations were also noted, such as the fruitfulness of the question and any potential revisions.
6. Next I examined the charts in relation to one another to discover what might emerge when the themes were set into a dialogue. In some cases, I developed a diagram by placing one theme in the middle of the page and arranging other themes around it, close or distant, depending on the relationship.

Interpretation naturally grew out of the analysis. The charts were the means by which I was able to draw some conclusions. The challenge was not to reach conclusions by ignoring minority voices but to incorporate each participant's experience within the conclusion.

[24] See Glossary: Sexism.

During the analysis and interpretation, my role switched from the "believing game" to the "doubting game" outlined in Belenky et al. Women's Ways of Knowing..[25] In the chapter on constructive knowledge, two ways of knowing are presented: the believing game and the doubting game. The person operating in the believing game learns by taking in what the other is saying, empathizing with it, and finding places where it fits. The person operating in the doubting game pushes against what is being said, tests it to see where it is not true, and learns from arguing another position. For my purposes the believing game related mostly to the process of interviewing and analysing while the doubting game related mostly to interpretation. The two phases are not entirely separate, however, since I obviously carried some interpretation into the actual interviews and made on-the-spot decisions as to what comments to pursue with the participants. Using the believing game, I focused on hearing the participants in what **they** wanted to convey. I tried to listen intently, explore their words in depth, and appreciate their experience. The doubting game provided a movement towards interpreting what the participants experienced within a larger framework. As a "doubter" I began to put questions to the data that had been gathered. For example, I was asking: Have these people been co-opted? Are they conscious of co-optation? These are the harder questions that may not have been possible to ask or answer during the interviews, but which draw on theories of institutionalization, power analysis, and feminist ecclesiology.

VALIDATION

The nature of this research question relied on the abilities of the participants to articulate their experience and their reflections on ministry, along with the researcher's ability to report it accurately. The transcripts were mailed to each participant for review and correction. The pilot group had an opportunity to give critical comment on the pilot study report in its entirety. Two of the participants requested a meeting for the exchange of feedback; one of these sessions I treated like a second interview and taped the conversation. A third provided detailed written feedback. Here again the pilot study proved its worth. Their comments came before I worked on the analysis of the project/dissertation, and they re-directed my thinking, especially around the themes of co-optation and marginalization. The project/dissertation group had opportunity to comment on Chapters Five, Six and Seven (Participants' Choices, Findings, and Interpretation). In this way I sought to establish trustworthiness at each stage of the research project.

[25] For a further explanation of the believing game and the doubting game, see Chapter 6 in Mary Belenky et al., Women's Ways of Knowing: the Development of Self, Voice, and Mind, Basic Books: Harper Collins, 1986. The concept was originally developed by Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers, London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

TESTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

As I began to formulate the recommendations emerging from both the theology and the research, I hungered to test them with people who knew United Church structures as well as diaconal ministry. A group of eight people gathered (four diaconal ministers, two lay people, two ordained ministers). Another ordained minister who could not be present sent a detailed fax. I had an opportunity to hear their reflections on excerpts from Chapters Three, Four, and Seven, focusing especially on the "lenses" for viewing ministry, and the recommendations I presented to them. Their comments substantially affected the specific direction of the recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE: REVISIONING THE CHURCH

HAS THE CHURCH MISSED WHAT JESUS WAS ABOUT?

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom/commonwealth of God,[26] but he not only preached the message about its coming reality, he **lived** this new reality through the way he interacted with people. "What he said and did was so radical and had such an impact that a new and distinctive kind of religious movement began." [27] He taught through his words and actions a new way of being human which implied a radical alteration in social and institutional structures, characterized by lack of hierarchy, and lack of privilege, in fact, replacing hierarchy and privilege with a community of equals. Such a community formed around him. Yet, centuries later, Christians are left with a problem: how can the church of today with its legacy of hierarchical privilege and its history of atrocities, possibly hope to represent the intention of Jesus?

According to Leonardo Boff, Jesus did not go forth to preach the church. He had no intention of founding a new faith community alongside the others of his time. He had a more universalistic goal; he sought to convert all of Israel.[28] Before his death, the community around Jesus had no sense of itself as a new organization; that sense only developed following the resurrection experiences of Jesus. Very gradually the community came to a new understanding of its role in continuing Jesus' ministry and message of a new commonwealth of God, a kin-dom of God where all, including the marginalized, were welcome and treated equally. When one looks at the church existing today, indeed one might wonder how the church has come to deviate so far from the original intentions of Jesus.

An anecdote from a sociology class where I was student is relevant here. S. D. Clarke, professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, used to begin every class by standing with his side to the chalk-

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[26] Recently in theological writing new wordings for "Kingdom of God" have been generated. I prefer the term "commonwealth of God" because it connotes a "realm" similar to kingdom, yet without the patriarchal and monarchical structure. Commonwealth is an ancient English term which suggests the radical notion that wealth is intended to be held in common. The term has the problem of association with the British Commonwealth, but still I prefer it for its insistence on inclusivity. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza consistently uses the Greek term "basileia" which escapes the patriarchal connotation of "king" only because it does not contain the English word; however, in Greek it signifies a male monarch. Some other feminist theologians, notably Ida Maria Isasi-Dias and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott drop the 'g' in kingdom and give us the word kin_dom. There are times when I choose this wording because it contributes the notion of the entire creation being in connection. I associate this term with the spiritual teaching of aboriginal peoples of North America, that every part of creation is "all my relations."

[27] Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Peter Crafts Hodgson, "The Church, Classism, and Ecclesial Community " in Reconstructing Christian Theology, eds. Rebecca Chopp and Mark Taylor. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. p. 307.

[28] Leonard Boff, Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986. p. 51.

board where he would use his arm as a radius to circumscribe a circle. Our class would marvel at his ability to draw perfect circles, but more to the point, the class would then begin to learn about institutionalization. Each class session yet another social movement would begin at the top of the circle and gradually sink into an institutionalized form at the bottom of the circle, only to be replaced by another revolutionizing movement which emerged from the bottom and ascended to the top. The cycle went on, class after class.

The church fits extremely well into Clarke's model of institutionalization. Over time, the community of Jesus found that the eschaton was not immediate and they had to find a way to preserve the faith they had discovered. Passage of time and determination to preserve a heritage are two of the factors that combine to create an institution. To pass on the faith to others, it had to be written down and legitimate forms of the faith had to be approved through authorizing certain leaders or "carriers" of the faith. Initially, the community of Jesus was a definite counter-cultural movement that presented a radically different model or way of being in human relationship within community. The poor, including slaves, were welcome and respected. Widows were cared for. Women had highly significant leadership roles, as witnessed by Paul when he refers to Junia as an apostle before him. (Romans 16:7) In at least one place, property was held in common (Acts 2:44-47). The early church was certainly at odds with its surrounding cultures, both Jewish and Roman. Over time, for the sake of survival, the church began to adapt to its patriarchal surroundings. At first, the accommodation was outward, while inwardly the community remained egalitarian.[29] Eventually this gave way to a patriarchal structuring of the church which mirrored the cultural structuring of relationships into hierarchies.

With the conversion of Constantine, the circumstances of the struggling church communities began to be reversed. The church was drawn from its place on the margins into the very centre of the culture of the empire. As the church accommodated to its new dominant position, the full patriarchal take-over of the church was completed. The church became an institution that parallelled the hierarchy of the empire. "Gradually, the church began to duplicate the political structures of the late Roman Empire and to evolve an ecclesiastical counterpart to the Roman systems of urban and provincial governors, with the presiding bishop of Rome claiming to be the spiritual counterpart of the emperor." [30]

The creation of an organized church was not the expectation of the original faith community, just as

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[29] Thistlethwaite and Hodgson, p.313.

[30] Rosemary Ruether, Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. p. 12. Here Ruether is drawing from the work of George Williams, in H.R. Niebuhr and D.D. Williams, The Ministry in Historical Perspective (New York: Harper, 1956) pp. 27-81.

it was not the expectation of Jesus. The church began as a movement within Judaism to continue to try to convert Judaism. Boff draws upon Erik Peterson's writings to credit the emergence of the church to two contingencies: 1) the coming of Christ was not imminent and 2) Judaism did not accept the new sect's message with the result that the church spread to the Gentiles.[31]

While the church was called to model a new community, an expression of the commonwealth of God, it was drawn into the life of the patriarchal culture around it, eventually becoming a leading proponent of that culture. Thistlethwaite and Hodgson describe this cultural accommodation as invasion from within.[32] This tension between the belief in living as community and the need to move into the future as institution is helpfully documented by Rosemary Ruether in her chapter "Community and Institution".[33] A pattern, much like Clarke's sociological model of institutionalization, occurs repeatedly in church history. It seems that the church is never without its reformers who, in the spirit of Jesus, call the church back to its fundamental purpose to continue seeking God's commonwealth. "New groups of zealous Christians arose and sought out the desert, the woods, or the mountains as places of retreat from 'the world,' renewing the original spirit of community dedicated to rigorous asceticism, intense prayer, and discipline. Often these groups dissolved the class hierarchies that had arisen in monasticism."[34] In the later Middle Ages the Beguine movement was one such expression of religious community where working class women found a ministry in the world as lay women.

The tension and contradiction between community and institution is not a simple matter. The church would not exist today without a history of institutionalization. Some way of preserving the memory and authenticity of Jesus' message inevitably produces an institutionalized embodiment. The contradiction is between two basic concepts of church. One concept of church institutionalizes the message and becomes susceptible to cultural invasion to the point of sacralizing the social order. The other concept of church tends to challenge the church's identification with culture by breaking down the social hierarchies taken on by the institution.[35]

Has the church missed what Jesus was all about? Yes, but not entirely. Clearly the organized church is a disappointing result for those looking for the concrete realization of the commonwealth of God.

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[31] Boff, p. 56.

[32] Thistlethwaite and Hodgson, p. 307.

[33] Ruether, Women-Church, pp. 11 - 23.

[34] Ruether, pp. 14-15.

[35] Ruether, p. 22.

Many times over the church has betrayed God's vision through violent acts of oppression as well as through passive accommodation. Yet, through institutionalization, the church has preserved the memory and the message of Jesus. The vital question is whether it is enough for the church to have held onto the vision despite being incapable of realizing it on a large scale. Holding onto such a large contradiction is no small feat, in my estimation. Furthermore, if the church is in the midst of a paradigm shift towards greater egalitarianism, as I maintain the United Church is, it is moving in one direction Jesus led. Perhaps the institution has the **potential** to be the human embodiment of a spirit-filled vision. The vision, despite the institutional deviations, has not been altogether lost.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH RELATE TO CHRIST?

If Jesus did not intend to form the church, what then is the relationship of the church to the ongoing Christ?[36] Who is Christ for the church?

Jesus was the initiator of a movement which became the church. The church was not the original plan--yet the spirit of Jesus was present with the early followers as they tried to carry on his ministry. The church evolved out of their many struggles to be faithful. As they deliberated about such matters as whether to include gentiles, how to care for widows, how to deal with persecution, what constitutes scripture, what teachings have authority, which leaders have authority, the church gradually took shape. While Jesus made it his mission to inaugurate the commonwealth of God and never intended a new institution, nevertheless the church became the vehicle for carrying on this vital ministry. In this sense the church does originate with Jesus.

The faith of the church is that Jesus did not die a futile death. Certainly he died a cruel death, publicly murdered by the state because he was seen to be a political and religious threat. Yet the resurrection faith proclaims a beginning rather than an end. The resurrection faith proclaims that the spirit of Jesus was palpably present among the early followers and is still available to the Christian community today. Christ is that continuing spirit of Jesus actively present in people, in the faith of the church and in God's mission to the world.

It is the presence of Christ which gives the church its particular essence. Without the spirit of Jesus as its source and guide, the church cannot be the church. Christ may well be present in other

[36] The small letter 'c' conveys that I do not intend for Christ to be a proper name for Jesus. In this section I argue that Jesus is not the only representation of God's anointing and indwelling of human life. Too thorough an identification of Jesus with 'Christ' eventually becomes exclusive.

gatherings of people or well-meaning organizations; however, the ongoing church deliberately seeks to proclaim and to follow the good news Jesus brought, that God is bringing into being a new way of relating through a commonwealth of justice. The deliberate vow to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world is what distinguishes the church from other groups or organizations. A group of people may accomplish as much or more than the church in the healing of the world, yet to be called the church is to consciously attempt to embody Christ, to be the body of Christ.

Embodiment is the way in which spirit is expressed and becomes known to human community. Hodgson goes so far as to say "There can never be spirit without embodiment. This is as true for God as it is for human beings."[37] From a feminist perspective, embodiment is a crucial aspect for theology, and particularly for Christology. For centuries the church has been a body-denying institution, despite its sacramental declaration, "the body of Christ". The church has equated the flesh of the body with sin, with women, and with debasement of faith. For feminists, it has become painfully clear that the church has embodied not only the grace of Christ, but has also embodied the sin of patriarchy, placing spirit over matter, men over women, rule and obedience over liberation. To embody Christ is to be in constant communion with the spirit of Jesus, with the way he showed us, with the vision of the world he intended, so that it becomes evident in our actions and in our very orientation to life.

The embodiment of the spirit of Jesus may take many forms. Christ becomes present not only in kind acts of generosity and in acts of ministry but also in the faces of the poor, those in need of ministry and, indeed those who long for liberation. The poor are reminders of how and where Jesus identified himself and of the importance of the radical transformation he preached.

In a provocative and helpful way feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson has shown how the title of "Christ" moves from being a name for Jesus to becoming a designation for the community of Jesus' followers. After Jesus' death and resurrection "Christ" is no longer attached only to Jesus but to the community's life in Christ:

After his death and resurrection, the focus of the ongoing story of Jesus-Sophia38 shifts from his concrete historical life with its contexts and relationships to the community of sisters and brothers imbued with the Spirit. From the beginning this community is marked by the confession that Jesus-Sophia is the Christ, the anointed, the blessed one. Intrinsic to this confession is the insight that the beloved community

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[37] Peter C. Hodgson, Revisioning the Church: Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.

[38] Elizabeth Johnson consistently refers to Jesus as Jesus-Sophia, the incarnation of the Wisdom of God.

shared in this Christhood, participates in the living and dying and rising of Christ to such an extent that it too has a Christomorphic character. Challenging a naive physicalism that would collapse the totality of the Christ into the human man Jesus, biblical metaphors such as the Pauline body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-27) and the Johannine branches abiding in the vine (Jn. 15:1-11) expand the reality of Christ to include potentially all of redeemed humanity, sisters and brothers, still on the way. Amid the suffering and conflicts of history, members of the community of disciples are enChristo and their own lives assume a Christic pattern. 39

Although writing later, Elizabeth Johnson provides a foundation for the feminist Christology of Rita Nakashima Brock. For Brock, the embodiment of Christ is the community itself, or at least it is found "among the members of the community who live with heart."[40] She has developed a feminist Christology which focuses on the community, rather than on the person of Jesus. In fact she has invented a term 'Christa/community', a term which she explains "deliberately points away from the sole identification of Christ with Jesus. In combining it with community, I want to shift the focus of salvation away from heroic individuals, either male or female."[41] This shift creates a different centre for Christ, located in the community which offers a revelatory and redemptive witness of God's work in history.[42] Rather than a Christology based on a person, she has constructed a Christology based on relationship which fulfils a whole-making and healing purpose. In her exploration of the gospel of Mark, she demonstrates the necessity for community and relationship as the source of Jesus' power to heal. Without the faith of the woman with the haemorrhage breaking through Jesus' own encrustment in patriarchal roles, there could be no healing; her establishment of relationship despite the barriers was essential.

Jesus went about his ministry always in the company of others. It seems fitting that the ongoing group of followers should carry on his ministry after his death in the faith that Jesus was a continuing presence with them. Jesus relates to Crista/community as a co-creator of such community. His participation is central to the community, without placing him at the centre. Indeed, Nakashima Brock maintains that Jesus does not control the community.[43] To control would, in fact, subvert the process of the community commitment to enact God's vision in the world.

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[39] Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse, New York: Crossroad, 1992. p. 161.

[40] Rita Nakashima Brock, Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power, New York: Crossroad, 1992. p 70.

[41] Ibid, p. 113.

[42] Ibid, p. 69.

[43] Ibid, p 52.

For my own Christology, I value the contribution of Elizabeth Johnson's and Nakashima Brock's feminist theology. Particularly I value the removal of a thorough identification of Christ with the person of Jesus alone. While I concur that Jesus was a man full of God, it makes no sense to me to restrict the indwelling of God to one person. If Christ is the human expression of God to us, then Jesus is not the only representative of Christ. Jesus is **a** human who reveals the nature of God, rather than **the** human who reveals God. For instance, Jesus demonstrates a remarkable feminist conviction for his time, yet he cannot represent the incarnation of God in women. Elizabeth Johnson outlines the theological problem that results from confining Christ to Jesus, especially to his maleness. "[I]f maleness is essential for the Christic role, then women are cut out of the loop of salvation, for female sexuality is not taken on by the Word made flesh. If maleness is constitutive for the incarnation and redemption, female humanity is not assumed and therefore not saved."[44] Incarnation, like Godself, is pervasive and, indeed, prodigal. Christology, as the incarnation of God in human form, needs to shed the particularity of Jesus--his gender, age, race, culture. Instead, a Christology of community needs to broaden and to become more inclusive of women, racial colours, stages of life, different cultures. A Christology of inclusive community makes eminent sense from a theological standpoint.

A danger, however, lurks in Nakashima Brock's Christology. The danger is that faith is placed in the community, when in reality the community does not consistently act in a Christ-like manner. I find it fascinating that Nakashima Brock does not deal with this issue when she is so attuned to the evils of child abuse and other forms of patriarchy. The faith community, sadly, embodies these evils along with the embodiment of Christ. Are we left with a Christology which appears only in glimpses when the faith community is able to act as "Christa/community?"

I think the answer is Yes. We are left with only glimpses of Christ in community. Yet there are many communities, many expressions of Christ, many times and places for God's incarnation to shine through. Wherever the faith community, in the spirit of Jesus, is able to fulfil the role that he had there Christ appears. We find Christ in our life together creating community which is welcoming and inclusive, announcing the good news of God's love, teaching God's *basileia* vision, healing the distress of the world, and transforming religious and social structures to mirror God's justice and mercy.

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[44] E. Johnson, She Who Is, p.153.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE CHURCH TO BE THE CHURCH?

Traditional theology has used four notes or marks of the church to convey its essence. These four marks appear in the ancient Nicene Creed: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church." The unity of the church is understood to be God's intention, and more recently it has been seen to be a call for ecumenicity as a prime agenda of the church. D. Hall describes it as a "minimal requirement", certainly not an option.[45] In the past the United Church of Canada has referred to itself as a Uniting Church to indicate that the work of union which culminated in 1925 had only begun. More recently, the United Church has widened the concept of ecumenicity to include dialogue with other faiths.

The second mark, the holiness of the church presents a greater difficulty for feminist theologians if it is seen as a separation of the church from society. If, as Hall suggests, it connotes being "set apart" and if the church claims an undue righteousness about its connection to God, the church is in danger of subverting the universal love of God. If, on the other hand, the holiness of the church is re-interpreted to refer to being called by God and loved by God, a calling and love extended to all who live, this mark becomes more palatable. It is God invested or embodied in the church who makes the church holy. However, I quickly add, God is not wholly embodied in the church; the church is only one place where God's presence is found. God's embodiment in the universe is an equal or better expression of the nature of God.[46]

The third mark of the church is its catholicity. Here "catholic" refers to its universal aspect. Küng writes of the local church being the universal church: "The local Church does not merely belong to the Church, the local Church is the Church."[47] The emphasis here is that each expression of the church participates in the essential elements of the church universal. The structure "above" the local unit is not any more holy. Hall extends this concept of catholicity to speak to our current times. He says, "to confess that universality is one of the characteristics without which the church would not be the church is to deny that the church belongs to any one culture, nation, people, race, gender, class world."[48]

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[45] Douglas Hall, The Future of the Church: Where are We Headed?. Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1989. p 89.

[46] See Sallie McFague, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. Also Models of God; Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

[47] Hans Küng, The Church. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976. p. 121

[48] Hall, 97.

The fourth mark, apostolicity, carries notions of apostolic succession and male hierarchy within the church. However the concern of apostolicity is to ensure a needed continuity so that the teaching of Jesus is faithfully handed on. It can be interpreted to refer to the responsibility of the church to continue to convey the essential truth of Jesus' teachings and actions. The church has been called by God and entrusted with a gospel message of God's loving action towards the world and God's vision for the world, embodied in Jesus.

Hans Küng has stated that the four traditional marks of the church are not only gifts of God's grace; they are at the same time, tasks which the church is called to fulfil.[49] I welcome Kung's perception that the four marks are indeed a challenge to the church to engage in becoming one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Further reflection, however, has led me to the observation that the traditional four marks constitute an ontological view of the church. They describe the church's nature. These four marks point to an ethereal church. Instead of action, there is a strong element of passivity especially for the members who make up the church. The four marks have traditionally been seen as something carried by the institutional church, particularly through the clergy. Especially the mark of apostolicity tends to give the impression that it is the clergy who, through apostolic succession, define the church.

With the Reformation, Calvin proposed two marks to identify the church: "For whenever we find the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God."[50] The word was understood to be pure and the sacraments rightly administered only when these were done by an ordained male cleric.

Calvin's two marks of the church seem to me to be sadly lacking. They centre in the gathered church, not in the church's activity in the world. They over-emphasize one dimension of the church, the celebration of God through worship and preaching, at the expense of all the other dimensions of the church--particularly diakonia and koinonia, the service-actions and lived community of the church. Again, there is a passive element for the laity, who remain the consumers of "right" preaching and "right" sacraments.

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[49] Küng, pp.268-269.

[50] John Calvin, A Compend, IV. i.9, quoted in Letty Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church. Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. p. 137.

Contemporary theologians have also posed new "marks" for the church. In fact according to Schreiter, Roman Catholic theologians have proposed as many as one hundred signs and the traditional four signs or marks became established only in the nineteenth century.[51] Liberation theologian Jon Sobrino was invited to contribute to an issue of Sal Terrae covering the theme "The Other Marks of the Church". His proposal was the principle of mercy. Based on the premise that the true church is a church "like unto Jesus", Sobrino concludes that the element of mercy is most definitive of Jesus' life and ministry.[52] Feminist theologian Letty Russell agrees with the need to incorporate the dimension of justice as an essential sign of the church; however, she prefers to re-interpret the four traditional signs "by lifting up diversity with unity, justice with holiness, connectedness and orthopraxy with catholicity, as well as mission with apostolicity...There is so much injustice both within and outside of the church that a clear reminder of Christ's presence calling the church to be one, holy, catholic, apostolic and just is crucial for its identity."[53]

So far I have reviewed a variety of marks of the church, qualities which have been proposed as descriptive of the nature of the church. What in my own opinion, then, makes the church the church? What is essential, without which the church would not be the church? I begin by asserting, along with Letty Russell, that the church has no nature of its own. Its nature is derived from the presence of Christ.[54] In fact the embodiment of Christ is the essence of the church. To fulfil God's incarnated purpose for human beings and human community is to be God's spirit alive through relationship with one another in the world. To be Christ to one another is to do the mission of Christ in the world. What the church has to offer the world, is the Kin-dom vision, the commonwealth of God where all may eat and none is afraid. This is the vision Jesus brought, proclaimed and lived.

A vision, however, is not easy to maintain; it needs constant nurture. In North American aboriginal culture, a vision is often sought by a young person (a male, in traditional times) through a vision quest. The young person relates the vision s/he received to an elder who then takes on the role of assisting the young person to live in accordance with that vision. The elder becomes the "keeper of the vision". A parallel can be drawn with the church's role in maintaining God's vision. The church has the role of being

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[51] Schreiter, "Marks of the Church" in Russell (ed.), The Church with AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis, Louisville, Ky.:Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. p 124.

[52] Jon Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1994. p 15.

[53] Letty Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church,Louisville, Ky.:Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. p. 136.

[54] Letty Russell, Church in the Round, p.131.

the keeper of the vision for those who seek to follow Jesus' vision.

Jon Sobrino has summed up the vision of Jesus in the principle of mercy. Because the church is called to be like Jesus, mercy must be its essential nature. Mercy is not simply sentiment; it moves beyond sentiment, beyond mere feeling to action, to the very large action of the eradication of suffering. The place of the church is in the world taking on the role of the Good Samaritan--Jesus' portrayal of being human in community--to alleviate and end suffering of "the neighbour". The practice of love and justice as contained in the principle of mercy is the first concern of the church.

The church, then, is called to take on the nature of Christ, God incarnate, and to do God's ministry of love and justice in the world. Being God incarnate is not to "put on Christ" as some foreign nature, but to allow our created nature, our original grace, the indwelling of God, to flourish. The church is called to become God's intention for humanity and to live out God's intention for the world.

A FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF THE CHURCH: CALLED TOGETHER FOR A MISSION

Feminist theology brings a critique to aspects of the traditional formulations of the church, but also brings a new vision, or perhaps, a renewed vision of the church from the perspective of women and other marginalized groups. In this section I set out my own feminist vision of the church--called together for a mission.

The church is called together by the spirit for a mission in the world which continues Jesus' ministry. Two phases of the church's life emerge: a way of being/becoming and a way of acting, a gathering of community and a dispersing of community, an inward movement and an outward movement towards the world. The first phase, "called together", may be seen as an exploration of the nature of the church's life together. The second phase, "for a mission", is the exposition of the church's role in the world. I draw on feminist theology for a particular comment on each of the two overlapping phases.

CALLED TOGETHER:

A Community of Mutuality and Shared Power

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza enlightens us about the root meaning of the greek word for "church". The word "ekklesia" means the democratic decision-making assembly of free citizens.[55] In a church revisioned from a feminist perspective, the pattern of relationships is significantly changed. Feminist principles call for human communities to be built on mutual relationship and shared power. A revisioned church works at undoing hierarchy and privilege by replacing them with mutuality and genuine respect for each member of the community. Each member is an embodiment of God and each one is indispensable to the community. The community itself is also sacred in that it, too, is an embodiment of God.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls the new arrangement a "discipleship of equals" and demonstrates how old this arrangement really is, from the inception of the church of the greek (Christian) scriptures. It is this discipleship of equals that can make present the basileia, the alternative world of justice and well-being intended by the life giving power of God.[56]

Letty Russell uses the image of the Round Table to portray the new paradigm of relationships. For her, the round table emphasizes connection between people. Feminist ecclesiology is deeply concerned with relationship; how things are connected to one another, the context, and to justice for the oppressed.[57]

A third feminist theologian who makes use of the concept of community is Rita Nakashima Brock, as I have already shown in the discussion of the church's relationship to Christ. She places community at the heart of her Christology, naming it Christa/Community. She reminds us that Jesus constantly called others to participate in the basileia, the community of God/dess. In removing Jesus from the centre of her Christology, she gives priority to the community.[58] This is an exciting twist on the metaphor of the body of Christ; here the focus becomes the **body**, the community, rather than the person.

The sharing of power is critical in a community which honours mutuality. Power in the context of a community is an issue of voice, authority, and leadership. The issue is who will have influence? A church

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[55] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals: a Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation, New York: Crossroad, 1993 p. 330.

[56] Ibid p. 12.

[57] Letty Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knows Press, 1993. p. 18.

[58] Rita Nakashima Brock, Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power, New York: Crossroad, 1988. pp.66-68

revisioned from feminist perspective is arranged so that all persons have a voice. Having a voice means having the potential to influence decisions and directions. When all members have a voice, it means that God is able to speak through all members, rather than through a few.

Authority[59] has been sometimes defined as legitimated power. But here, in a community of mutuality, authorization and legitimation remain in the hands of the community who confers power on individuals to accomplish certain tasks. The challenge is to arrange that authority and leadership so that it is accountable to those with "lesser" power. Shared power does not mean that all have equal amounts of power. Rather shared power is an alternate way of using power from the hierarchical usage of dominating power or "power-over". Rita Nakashima Brock has described power as an inherent quality born into us, the power of life. The power of dominance uses power as a commodity to suppress others; this is termed a 'unilateral' power. Such power is grounded in competition for a scarce commodity.[60] An alternate view is that power is not scarce but infinite, like the quality of love or grace. In this sense power can be shared without fear; it can be used to create mutuality within community; it can be held accountable to the vulnerable within the community; it can be an instrument of justice.

A Community of Hospitality and Diversity

The Community of the church is called to be a welcoming inclusive community open to all. Parker Palmer has commented that communities are most often formed "by an act of exclusion--'we' are in and 'they' are out".[61] A revisioned church is called to exemplify a different style of community, one that is formed by inclusion. Jesus demonstrated the kind of community envisioned in the commonwealth of God by actually creating such a community wherever he travelled. He associated with "embarrassing" people--women, tax-collectors, prostitutes, thieves, lepers, the 'unclean', the poor, children--the outsiders of the society. He not only associated with such people, but called them into his community. Can a revisioned church do anything less than to follow his model of community? As Letty Russell points out the poor and vulnerable are not in themselves any more righteous than others, yet as a group they are the ones who help us know when justice is done and all are included.[62]

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[59] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

[60] Brock, pp. 25 -35.

[61] Parker Palmer, The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life, New York: Crossroad, 1993. p.130

[62] Russell, p. 197.

The church is a community which exists through the activity of the spirit of God. God calls each one, calls us together, calls us into actions that portray God's loving concern and bring about God's justice. With the activity of the spirit, there is a riotous variety of gifts dispersed among the members. All such gifts are needed for the work of the church, for the encouragement of one another, and for service and witness in the world. Letty Russell notes that such gifts are not an occasion for pride; the gifts are for the common good and all gifts have value. [63]

In the church community, as gifts are truly honoured, there follows an implication that the diversity expressed in the gifts must also be honoured. Diversity in the form of difference has been a challenge to the church. In the hierarchical paradigm of church, difference connotes superiority or inferiority. For example in the earliest stages of the church, the different ministries were seen as equal gifts initially, but by the fourth century as the church became more hierarchical, deacons were clearly seen to be subordinate as evidenced by council admonitions "to keep within their proper bounds".[64] Throughout its history, the hierarchical nature of the church has ordered the gifts so that, for instance, the gift of preaching and sacraments, was honoured far more than any gift of the laity. The difference between clergy and laity remains a pernicious issue today. To overcome this history is a major challenge for the revisioned church.

The contemporary children's hymn illustrates an inclusive ecclesiology of the revisioned church:

> I am the church!
> you are the church!
> we are the church together!
> All who follow Jesus,
> all around the world,
> Yes, we're the church together![65]

The words of the song go on to describe the church not as a building or resting place, but people of many kinds. In fulfilling its call to hospitality and diversity, the revisioned church is actually modelling a justice community.

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[63] Russell, p. 206.

[64] James Barnett, The Diaconate--A Full and Equal Order, New York: Seabury Press, 1981. See chapter four.

[65] Words and music: Richard Avery and Donald Marsh, Hope Publishing Co., 1972.

A Community of Embodied Spirituality

Communities form around an expressed purpose and the way a community functions needs to be congruent with its own purpose. For the church community the purpose is to celebrate God's presence in life and to work together for the realization of God's commonwealth. To be congruent, the church needs to embody God's spirit in all that the church does. The word "embody" has special significance; it brings together the spirit and the tangible bodily expression of it. In a revisioned church, bodies as well as spirits are sacred because we humans are body/spirits created and loved by God. The community, then is also a body/spirit, which intentionally nourishes a spirituality of connection.

One cannot embrace the gospel of Jesus without becoming a member of a spiritual community. The good news cannot be lived alone; it is about living in right relationship in every aspect. In the commonwealth of God both material well-being and spiritual sustenance are the concerns of the community. Rebecca Chopp suggests that the new ecclesia will continue the long-standing tradition of the church: to denounce sin in our midst and to announce grace. [66] A responsive community will take up these two concerns through denouncing injustice in the social order and promoting life for all. In its spiritual embodiment, a revisioned church seeks to make present the commonwealth of God, not only for its members but for all of life. It seeks to embody Jesus' spirit through the embodiment of his vision.

FOR A MISSION: RESPONSIVE TO THE WORLD

Jesus did not call friends together simply to enjoy one another's company, although I assume they did enjoy each other. Nor did Jesus simply call people together to hear his message, although I assume preaching was important to him. Jesus called people into companionship with him for a purpose--to demonstrate in action what the commonwealth of God might look like. Abstract words are not enough; for a full understanding, there has to be experience. We recognize authenticity in Jesus because he had both message and action; he provided both word and experience. Similarly, for the church to have authenticity, there has to be both message and action.

The action to which the church is called is none other than the realization of God's vision of a commonwealth. The vision and the mission are God's. In this sense it is less accurate to speak of the mission of the church; the emphasis is on the mission of God, God's concern for the world. Mission is the

[66] Rebecca Chopp, Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. p. 54.

activity God uses to make Godself known, to create life-giving relationship with all of earth's creatures. Mission is the liberating work of action that opposes every destruction of goodness and life. The church is called to actively participate in this mission, which is the completion of Jesus' ministry through living out his teaching and acting to bring about a global community of right relationship.

Sobrino states that "to have faith is to do God's will, to follow Jesus with the spirit of Jesus in the cause of God's kingdom...Reproducing justice and love in human history is the way we respond to God's love."[67] For him, since the principle of mercy is the key characteristic response of Jesus and therefore of the church, the practice of justice must be the first concern of the church. He makes the challenging point that we should be able to recognize Jesus, or Jesus' way, from the church's ministry in the world.

Clearly for the church to be the **church** means for it to be about God's mission in the world. Letty Russell asserts that

> *"God's mission does not come third, after worship and self-identification with Jesus..Rather, it becomes the way along which worship and identity occur. The life-style of Jesus, diakonia, is not a form of practical application, but is the passport description of what it means to follow, whether in the seminary, in the church or in some other group committed to minding creation."*[68]

In her chapter Russell proposes making a shift from a paradigm of church/congregation to a mission paradigm. For her, mission is the central focus and calling of the church.

According to Dorothee Sölle, the Kingdom/commonwealth of God is the criteria for the church. "Without the shining forth of the Kingdom of God, the church is an association like any other, structured in hierarchy."[69] The implication here is that the church is called not only to create God's vision in the world, but to embody God's commonwealth in its own structure. Sölle's description returns us to the nature of the relationships within the church organization. These, too, are part of the mission.

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[67] Jon Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1994. p. 9. Like many liberation theologians, Jon Sobrino's theology of justice provides a support to liberative feminist theology and assists the feminist interpretation of the church presented here.

[68] Letty Russell, "Which Congregations? A Mission Focus for Theological Education" in Joseph Hough and Barbara Wheeler (eds.) Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. p. 34.

[69] Dorothee Sölle, Thinking about God: An Introduction to Theology, London: SCM Press, 1990. p. 136.

I find it helpful to think of the church in two phases, an outer-directed phase and an inner-directed phase, the church in the world and the church nurturing the faith community.[70] The outer-directed phase is the church's activity in the historic and concrete world, a sharing in the struggle for justice and hope. The church in this phase is called to identify with the marginalized, the oppressed, the lesser ones because it through them that the work of justice, God's vision, needs to be accomplished. This is the obvious place of mission. Yet mission also takes place in the inner-directed phase of nurturing faith. In the inner life of the community of faith, no less than in the world, the vision of God's commonwealth needs to be realized in the way relationships are constructed and in the way the lesser voices have equal power. The previous section of this chapter developed such characteristics for a revisioned church's life together from a feminist perspective--mutuality, shared power, hospitality, diversity, embodied spirituality. These characteristics of a revisioned church are part of a larger purpose: to minister to one another so that members are enabled to participate in the mission to/with the world.

The Outward Phase of Mission : Affirming Life in the World

The contemporary creed of the United Church lists a series of activities to which the church is called:

> "We are called to be the Church,
> to celebrate God's presence,
> to live with respect in Creation,
> to love and serve others,
> to seek justice and resist evil,
> to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
> our judge and our hope."[71]

All the members of the church are called into an active role of shared ministry in the world. For a revisioned church the social emphasis fits well. The community is called not only to believe in the message of Jesus who taught the commonwealth of God, but to become partners with the spirit in its creation. The task is enormous: to create relationships of justice communally, politically, and economically;

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[70] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has developed a two-fold understanding of ministry, related to an outer-directed function of ministry related to the whole world, especially the needy and powerless, and an inner-directed function of ministry related to nurturing, empowering, enabling, and challenging the faith community. I have extended these two ministry functions to a two-phase nature and purpose of the church.

[71] "A New Creed", United Church of Canada, General Council, 1968, alt. quoted from Voices United, Etobicoke,ON:The United Church Publishing House, 1996. p. 918.

to offer caring service to all those in need, including the earth itself; to begin a new way of living that is affirming of all life. The social and global implications of this task are overwhelming in the extreme. It is helpful to remind ourselves that being part of any movement for justice and the affirmation of life, however small and particular, is to be fulfilling God's intention.

In Passion and Compassion, two women theologians made contributions about the nature and role of the church from a third-world perspective. From a Protestant viewpoint, Nelly Ritchie speaks of "a new way of experiencing ourselves as church: people called by God to defend life". [72] Within her context of Argentina she is concerned with the defense of human rights, even at the risk of personal security. From a Catholic viewpoint, Maria Pilar Aquino joins in asserting that the church's role is to further the struggle for liberation. She sees the liberation struggle as an affirmation of life.[73] Both of these women theologians endorse the conviction held by this paper, that the church is a community called to affirm life in the strongest possible sense of that term.

The Inward Phase of Mission : Wellspring of Encouragement

Frequently, the church spends too much of its energy in self-preservation. While this critique stands, the community **is** called to minister to one another in love and in justice through the practice of a basic affirmation of life. Beyond the legitimate concern for one another's well-being, there is a concern to give support and encouragement to one another, to prepare for ministry in the world. The community needs to provide a place for nourishment of spirit, for renewed inspiration, for learning ministry skills, for accountability, for joint action. A wellspring of encouragement is essential to a community which hopes to bring liberative transformation to all social relationships.

The church has consistently devalued the ministry of nurture, so often associated with Christian education and women's work. For instance, "Sunday school" has become a derogatory term in church circles, attendance at study groups is only a tiny proportion of the number present for worship services, and when a congregation decides to "down-size" its multiple staff, the minister of education is considered least essential. This devaluation of nurture corresponds to the United Church's marginalization of diaconal ministry--a ministry which has encouragement as a primary focus of its three ministry functions (education, service and pastoral care). Yet encouragement is absolutely essential for the church to be the church.

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[72] Nelly Ritchie, "Women's Participation: A Protestant Perspective" in Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology, eds. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988. p.156.

[73] Maria Pilar Aquino, "Women's Participation in the Church: A Catholic Perspective", in Passion and Compassion. p. 162.

The word "encouragement" has the root word "courage" or "heart". Literally it means to embolden, to inspirit, to give heart. In the face of the huge and fearful task of resisting evil and promoting justice, encouragement is no small matter. Only through such encouragement will the church be enabled to continue its mission of being responsive to the world.

The Challenge: Why be a Servant People?

Why indeed would a people collectively assume the role of a servant? Jesus' ministry of servanthood is antithetical to the norms of western capitalistic society. For an organization which aims to be successful, a servant role would seem to be utter nonsense. In fact, in his early writings Paul concedes that the gospel of Jesus is "a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks" (I Cor. 1:23). To take seriously the mission of God to/with the world results in persecution, oppression, and hardship of all kinds. Because the mission of God's commonwealth exposes and challenges the roots of injustice, those who carry such a mission become targets. Suffering has to be expected when the church acts prophetically against the mores of the culture. To stand with those who suffer, as liberation theologies call the church to do, is to enter into their suffering. Oscaro Romero and others have been killed because of their mission solidarities. Closer to home, for members of the United Church, the form of retaliation is more likely to be marginalization, yet the act of giving priority to the oppressed may indeed immerse the middle-class church in suffering as part of global transformation.

The only justifiable reason for pursuing a nonsensical ministry of servanthood is because it is inherent in our theology. Christians believe that the spirit of God calls us into community to be responsive to the needs of the world. God has called us together, yet it requires a human responsiveness to become the church. Without human response there is no community; the church is a human community with a divine purpose. The church does not exist for its own sake. Indeed it has been said that the church may be the only community/institution which exists for the sake of others.

In his Letters and Papers from Prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes a "church for others".

> " The church is the church only when it exists for others. To make a start it should give away all its property to those in need. The clergy must live solely on the free-will offerings of their congregations, or possibly engage in some secular calling. The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for

others".[74]

His description is a radical one, emerging from a context of extreme suffering and injustice. In our time of increasing budget squeeze, his concept of a church for others is both highly challenging and ironically prophetic. The church of our time may not be choosing to give away property, yet with lack of funding individual churches are closing or amalgamating and ministry personnel may soon be required to engage in a bi-vocational life-style.

The community of faith exists not only to serve the community members, but to serve the world as well. The community's belief in God and in God's commonwealth is a sign, for itself and for others. I have drawn back from using the concept of the church as sacrament or symbol; I hesitate to claim too much on behalf of the church. The revisioned church community, however, is a model of the eschatological community of God. In its way of life, relationships of mutuality, goal of global justice, the responsive community attempts to duplicate its understanding of God's commonwealth. Thus it is a sign of hope. Sallie McFague reminds us that 'eschatology' can mean many things: the "last" things, the second coming, the hope for a new creation. "It can mean living from a different vision for a different present based upon a new future...We do not have a utopia, an ideal community...where things are the way they ought to be; but we can have an 'atopia', an imagined world both prophetic and alluring from which we can judge what is wrong with the paradigm that has created the present crisis on our planet."[75]

The responsive community not only believes in God, but in God's message of a commonwealth of "right relations", as proclaimed by Jesus. The community's response to God and to the world God loves thus becomes a sign of hope for the transformation of the world.

FAILURE TO BE THE CHURCH: THE CHURCH WHEN IT IS NOT THE CHURCH

Can the church mediate the gospel despite its failings? Is God incarnated in failing communities despite themselves? The church as we encounter it in our local congregations or in our denominational expressions is a church that has a history of many failings. It does not seem to correspond to the church called together in mutuality and inclusivity for a mission of justice and mercy in the world. In failing to be inclusive community fulfilling a justice mission, the church does not appear to be the church. A complete

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[74] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison. The Enlarged Edition, New York: SCM Press and Macmillan, 1971, p. 382.

[75] McFague, The Body of God, p. 198.

ecclesiology must take into account not only the church as it is intended to be, but the church as we experience it, both past and present. An ecclesiology has to deal with evil and suffering found at the hands of the church.

The failure to be the church is not merely a question of whether the church contains sinners along with saints as debated in the early church by the Donatists and Augustine; rather, the church itself is a sinner. All too often the church has been on the wrong side of justice and mercy; its heresy of patriarchy is one long-entrenched injustice and there are many other examples. Margaret Guenther in Rattling Those Dry Bones, recounts the track record of the church as: the Inquisition, forcible conversions, persecution of women as witches, the subjugation of indigenous people.[76] There have been many atrocities. One often-overlooked atrocity is the quiet accommodation of the church to its death-dealing culture. Of course there have always been prophetic voices which have railed against the prevailing culture, but too often these voices have been ignored, even by the church.

The church's sins of omission are also pervasive. The church has not demonstrated an effective involvement in bringing about a world made whole. While God's love is for the world, the church is in grave danger of allowing in-house concerns to consume its energy at the expense of significant action in the world. If its mission is the fulfilment of God's intentions, the church has failed.

A personal story

During a time when I was involved in ecumenical youth ministry, a small group of us began a house church. As a house church we had an endless scope for creativity in worship and every other aspect of being the church. However, we became more of a support group and less of a church. I recall two major failings. We didn't manage to become inclusive and we didn't develop a mission. One of our members seemed unable to share much of himself with us. His presence made others uncomfortable. Eventually we appointed one man to "take him to lunch". He was disinvited. Years later I discovered he was gay, but he had not been able to share his struggles around his sexual orientation with us. Similarly, with regard to a mission, our house church floundered. We had read house church literature which stated that a church without an outreach of service or engagement in the world would eventually die. Though we sometimes discussed how we should relate to the world, we felt too small to accomplish much and we never got started.

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[76] Margaret Guenther, "Have some More, Darlings! There's Plenty" in June Steffensen Hagen (ed.), Rattling Those Dry Bones: Women Changing the Church, San Diego: Luramedia, 1995. p 137.

For all its failings...

To be fair to the church and the overwhelming challenges it faces, Tom Driver reminds us that we live in a time of profound alienation. "We live in a cruel world, organized to protect and maintain social privilege, and no one can live in a community of Christic expectation all the time. I must therefore speak of a community in its relation to the actual social world...but first I must make it clear that the social world in which we are living is hostile to all authentic forms of community."[77] The mission God has assigned to the church to live into and bring into being the commonwealth of God, the basileia vision, is indeed an enormous and seemingly impossible task. It is impossible without the presence and grace of the spirit; it is also impossible without the wiliness of the church to resist an alienating culture as it goes about creating a counter-culture.

Can we honestly expect a beleaguered church to have the capacity to do mission in the world? What, then, can we expect from a church living in a cruel time? I believe we can only hope for scraps of authentic community, but these fragmentary experiences will be enough to sustain us in faith, and they will be enough for the church to persist in becoming the church active in the world.

Perhaps the church might be likened to lovers who know one another's flaws, yet continue to love and receive love, imperfect as it is. Evidently, the church is still a source of grace for many. It is through the church that people may discover who God is, may discover they are loved, may discover that this love leads ultimately to concern for the neighbour. In a world which mitigates against relationships of mutuality and hospitality, the church provides one place where people can gather in community with the express purpose of developing right relationships, personally and globally.

For all its failings I believe the church is still necessary. The community of Christian people need the church as a corporate expression of their faith. The church is needed as the body of Christ, an incarnation of God at work in the world. The church, despite its participation in bringing suffering and oppression instead of mercy and justice, nevertheless carries the good news of Jesus, the welcoming love of God and the message of liberation for all. While the basileia vision, the commonwealth of God has not been realized, the vision itself is not dead. Paradoxically, the church has kept it alive.

The church, like all human communities and institutions, lives in contradiction. The very vision

[77] Tom Driver, Christ in a Changing World: Toward an Ethical Christology, New York: Crossroad, 1981. p. 148-149.

which the church carries, the commonwealth of God, provides a kind of standard for critique of the church. To me, this is the most hopeful sign--that the church has not forgotten its calling. Indeed, it has a self-critique. I would lose hope altogether if the church were to abandon this vision and pretend it has a mission to make the rich more comfortable, for instance. I find it remarkable that through centuries of impossibility, the church has held tenaciously to Jesus' challenging message.

How often, however, do we hear the church deeply lamenting its contradiction or apologizing to those peoples it has oppressed? An authentic church needs to have an acute sense of its own brokenness. We need to openly acknowledge that the treasure we carry is contained in broken earthen vessels. Is there genuine concern within the church that we are not the church God intends? The very recent apology of the United Church (October 1998) for its part in the mistreatment of native peoples through residential schools and the earlier 1986 United Church apology to Native People of Canada are rare in the life of the United Church and other denominations. Native people have been rightfully reserved about forgiving the United Church; instead they acknowledged the 1986 apology and indicated that they would be waiting and watching to see if the United Church was truly moving to a place of solidarity.

The church is called to mission, not only despite its brokenness, but **through** its brokenness. Because the church continually fails in its assignment to do God's work, to be God incarnate in the world, the church is both a mediator and a receiver of God's care. The church is included in the world God loves, and needs to think of itself as included in its own mission. The boundaries between us and the "other" dissolve; the "other" is us, the "neighbour" is ourselves.

The church is not the church; however, the church is always becoming the church. In its faithfulness, the church is saint as well as sinner. It continues to create a spiritual "home" for communities of faithful people, and it continues to hold onto the elusive vision of God's banquet for all. This vision applies both to the church's community life and to the future of the world. Despite all its failings, the church has not dropped this fragile, precious vision.

METAPHOR FOR THE REVISIONED CHURCH: SPIRAL DANCE

The metaphorical image I propose for the revisioned church is a spiral dance. Interestingly, dance is the most primitive form of worship.[78] It is a worship-in-action. The worship of God is intended to affect

[78] Diarmuid O'Murchu, Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1997. pp.

one's whole being and to be continuous with one's living. The spiral dance offers this kind of worship. In dancing with our whole bodies, we give our whole selves to this worship, voices, hands and feet, hearts and commitment. As a form of ancient communication, the image of the spiral dance portrays a message of healing, transformation, encouragement and hope. It seems very fitting that the spiral is a dance that cannot be done alone. Just as we cannot sustain our Christian faith apart from community, so our faith, or our search for faith, calls us into community. The faith that Jesus showed us is nurtured in community and lived out in community. The spiral dance is a dance done only in community, face to face, and all are needed for the dance.

The spiral dance requires that we hold hands, holding onto one another in faith. We are trusting in our bodies and the body of Christic community. We chant with our voices a song of faith, breathing in God's spirit and breathing out God's life, all together. We dance in the joy of life or in the sorrow of loss or in the anger of injury, but always the movement brings us into a dance of hope and commitment.

There are two phases to the dance--an inward phase and an outward phase. The spiralling inward moves the dancers past one another with opportunities to look into each face. This inward phase of the dance signifies the nurture of the church community. It is a place of shared learning and worship (didache and leiturgia) where together we listen for God's word (kerygma) and offer support, encouragement and empowerment to each dancer and to the life of the community.

The second phase, the outward phase of the spiral dance begins when the dancers reach a tight spot in the middle of the community spiral and turn outwards towards the world. When this spiral is complete the dancers actually face the world. The community of faith disperses to live their lives. This outward phase of the dance signifies the vision aspect of the church, where the faithful take on the mission of co-creating a world that is whole. As part of this outward phase the community challenges one another and holds one another accountable to the vision.

The two phases represent two ancient marks of the church: koinonia and diakonia. Koinonia (community) focuses on the building up of the faithful; diakonia (service) focuses on the doing of justice and mercy. Together these two phases make up a church that is a responsive community. It is responsive to its members as individuals and to the well-being of its own community as a place of nurture in Christian faith. Within this nurture there is space for shared learning and worship (didache and leiturgia)

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40 ff. According to O'Murchu, dance is one the earliest modes of human communication. As early as the time our human ancestors first learned to make fires, they danced. Even before they had language, dance was a chief form of communication--with each other, with nature, with the cosmos, and the life force (God).

and space for listening together for God's word (kerygma). In response to God's word the faith community becomes responsive to the needs of the world for healing, justice, and right relationship.

There is always a leader in the dance, someone who draws people further and further into the centre until a tight spot is reached and the leader turns to pull the dancers outward. There is a sense in which every dancer is leading the person beside her/him, in providing the direction. The lead position could be filled by anyone. It is not a difficult dance and therefore not exclusive to a knowledgeable elite. On different occasions, different people could assume the lead position, including children. Here is a dance where leadership may be shared by shifting it from one to another. My imagination has Jesus as the initial leader of the dance, the one who gathers us into a community for learning and worship and who turns us outward to our common task of co-creating a world that is whole.

One way of imaging the spiral dance as church is to see it in a long historic line of the communion of saints. There are those who have gone before us to give us direction in being faithful to God's vision. Their hands are joined to ours, and as the last in the line our hands are reaching out to those who may yet join the church's great spiral dance for well-being of the earth.

The dance may be faltering and imperfect. In fact it is difficult to imagine a spiral dance which is done perfectly. The imperfections add a human diversity to the movement, along with humour and fun. There are painful moments in the dance if the community should exclude a person, or stomp on toes, and even when the second phase concludes with the facing of the outside world and the gasp of letting go of one another to disperse.

The image of the spiral dance offers a critique to the church by holding up the essentials of both community and mission. In the example from our house church used earlier, mission was neglected in our zest for supporting one another. We became more of a support group than a worshipping church. In spiral terms we wound in very tightly, but had nowhere to go because we did not turn outwards to others.

Frequently, present church communities are operating in a survival mode. With budget and leadership anxieties, churches may tend to focus inward on their own community to the exclusion of their outward task. Often it is assumed that the community must care for itself first, before it is ready and equipped to care for others. However, the needs of the community are never-ending. The danger is that communities get caught up in Step One of the dance. Step Two, the care for others and the earth, never

happens.

Questions a spiral dance metaphor raises:

1. Is this a community which nurtures faith?
2. Does this community spend a balanced time on nurture and mission?
3. Does the inward time empower members for outward time?
4. Are the same people always in leadership?
5. Who is offering direction? Who is excluded?
6. How is the community listening to God's vision?

CHAPTER FOUR: A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY IN A REVISIONED CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will outline a broad theology of ministry which flows from the church's commonwealth mission. Both its outward orientation to the world and its inward orientation to nurturing the church members will be explored from the standpoint of what activities of ministry are needed. I include a specific focus on ordered ministry, or the ministry of leadership, because I believe it is essential to gain clarity on issues such as clericalism and the nature of authority. Following the theology of ordering, I review the characteristics of a revisioned church from the standpoint of a ministry of leadership. These sections parallel the descriptive categories of the revisioned church used in Chapter Three (mutuality, shared power, hospitality, diversity, embodied spirituality). At that point in the chapter I narrow the focus to the United Church of Canada, the locus for this project/dissertation, to explore a movement towards the new paradigm within this denomination.

MINISTRY FLOWS FROM MISSION

The mission of Jesus, to co-create a commonwealth of God, has become the mission of the church. This daunting, exciting, mysterious task is to bring into being a world where all may eat and none are afraid and a world where the earth as God's body is honoured. While it is God's activity to bring this commonwealth into being, the people of God are prime agents in the mission. God is not able to complete the task alone; we are the co-creators. The church as Christ, one community where God is incarnate, has the role of continuing to embody God's love and concern for the world.

Jon Sobrino persuasively states, "The reason the church has the mission of proclaiming and inaugurating the Reign of God among all people is that Jesus proclaimed and inaugurated it. The reason the church adopts a new concept of its relationship with the world--a concept practically contrary to its old one--as a relationship of service is that Christ came "to serve and not to be served"."[79] When Jesus proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is among you already," God was recognized as incarnate in Jesus, and in human community even before Jesus' time, actively working to create a commonwealth of peace and justice. The vision was there in the prophets who risked much to call people into a living commonwealth that would honour God. Jesus' role was to preach, teach, heal, and live out such a commonwealth. In his

[79] Jon Sobrino, The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994. p. 109.

relationships of servant ministry we see the commonwealth of God alive and growing.

This mission, the commonwealth of God which Jesus embraced, is the starting point for our interpretation of ministry. Ministry flows from this mission, God's mission, seen graphically in the life of Jesus. In the Christian scriptures we see Jesus' ministry taking many forms: gathering community, healing untouchables, preaching good news, challenging authorities, teaching and allowing himself to be taught. So, too, in the early Christian communities of faith, ministry took varying forms: deacons, apostles, prophets, teachers, administrators, to name a few of the roles mentioned by Paul. The arrangement of ministries developed differently in different locations of faith communities.[80] There was no one "correct" form of ministry that was authorized by Jesus or the earliest church. Instead, the ministry of the new church followed the prime concern for God's mission to the world. Douglas Hall "reminds us that in the early church the form of ministry was determined by the church's mission and our understanding of mission, the church's vocation, still needs to be the priority."[81] Like the old adage, "form follows function", the basic function or purpose of ministry--which I agree is **mission**--is the determinant of the various forms ministry takes. Because forms of ministry are not eternally "set", the church may change these forms, and indeed, it is a serious requirement of the church to arrange ministry to best serve God's mission of an earth-based commonwealth.

While the arrangement of ministries is a pragmatic task, it is also a theological issue. Our structure is an inherent part of our message--a visible portrayal of our theology. How we structure our church life speaks of how we embody God with one another.

DANCING THE SPIRAL DANCE

As Jesus demonstrated, ministry is not done alone. It is done in community. According to our biblical records Jesus did not begin his ministry until he had gathered a community around him. Many of his acts of healing and teaching were only made possible through the actions of others, such as the boy with the five loaves and two fish, or the Syrophoenician woman who persisted after Jesus had dismissed her. Just as a spiral dance needs community, so ministry needs community. And, just as a spiral dance brings people into an experience of community, so ministry creates community.

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[80] See Edward Schillebeeckx, Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ, New York: Crossroad, 1981.

[81] Douglas Hall, quoted in "Towards a New Theology of Call for The United Church of Canada", a report of the Theology and Faith Committee to the General Council Executive, November, 1992.

The spiral dance was the metaphor, used at the conclusion of the previous chapter, to enliven a theology of the church. The essence of the church moves in two directions--inward and outward. Inwardly, we become the church, the body of Christ, to one another. Outwardly, the church becomes the body of Christ, God incarnate, to the world. Ministry also has a two-fold direction.

Ministry is God-in-action through people, and perhaps through other life forms as well. Ministry is an encounter where we experience God healing,sustaining, loving, challenging, providing, transforming. God moves in every person, potentially, to provide these encounters of grace. Ministry, then, belongs to everyone who consciously or unconsciously communicates the nature of God through relationships. Ministry as a spiral dance is done by every member of the community. All participate in the ministry inward, nurturing one another in a commonwealth faith; and all participate in the ministry outward, to realize their commonwealth faith in the world.

Ministry as designated leadership has a role in the spiral dance. For the spiral dance to move, some people are needed for pulling inward to explore who we are as a people of God, to search ourselves, to come to know our scripture and tradition, to reflect upon what is going on socially and globally, to discover our meaning for life, to experience a healing and just community, to find a place of empowerment. The dance cannot move forever inward, however. Some people are needed for pulling outward to the world God loves, to work with others for healing and justice, for empowerment of peoples, for honouring the creation, God's body. Those who pull inward and those who pull outward may be the same leaders, or the leadership may change as the dance moves in and out. Shifting the leadership is a sign of mature community.

The inward and outward pulls of the spiral dance can be seen in the classical activities of ministry: koinonia, diakonia, kerygma, leiturgia, didache. Maria Harris has used the classical activities of ministry as a basic structure for two of her books on ministry: Portrait of Youth Ministry and Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church.[82] The five classical activities connote differing and overlapping expressions of ministry. The two which relate most obviously to the inward and outward movement of the spiral are koinonia and diakonia. Koinonia (community) is the building up of the body of Christ. Diakonia (service) is the active concern for the troubled world. The inward movement of koinonia also includes leiturgia, the communal experience of worship; didache, the act of teaching and learning together for living lives of faith;

[82] Maria Harris, Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church, Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989, and Portrait of Youth Ministry, New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

and kerygma, the message of God's good news. Yet kerygma and didache belong to the outward movement as well. Through action we proclaim and demonstrate the faith we have learned. Similarly, diakonia and koinonia exchange places in the spiral dance. The church has a vital responsibility to serve and care for its own members as part of their nurturing and empowerment. Diakonia is part of koinonia, particularly as we practice pastoral care with one another. And koinonia is part of the outward movement, where the commonwealth mission draws us to create community in the world.

The five classical activities of ministry help us describe the tasks of ministry but they do not exist independently of one another. They belong together, where leiturgia encourages diakonia and didache establishes koinonia. All five are bound together and all are essential aspects of ministry. How we structure ministry in our churches, then, needs to reflect the integration of these ministry activities. Such an integration does not come through establishing a hierarchy of activities or functions, but through equal valuing of them all.

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF ORDERING

Because ministry belongs first of all to God and God's mission, the activities of ministry are carried by all God's people. As stated earlier, ministry in its essence is God-in-action through people and, potentially, through all of creation. It is not reserved for the community of the church and especially not reserved for the leaders of that community. All of us are God-bearers. The church, however, deliberately seeks to offer ministry both to the world and to each member of the community. As a responsive community, the church offers God-in-action abhorring injustice, creating a new and just order, demonstrating the power of love. This ministry of the community is of primary importance. Yet there is a secondary ministry: the ministry of community leadership--the ministry of enabling the community to fulfil its vision.

By naming this enabling ministry secondary, the former clerical hierarchy is turned upside down. Servant-leaders have a ministry only because the church community requires it. Leadership, then, is one of the gifts within the community, a gift that the community calls out of some of its members. As leaders they relate to their calling and to God through their role in assisting the community's ministry. This is a striking reversal of the hierarchical model of church where members related to God through the leader-priest's ministry.

Clearly, for a revisioned church, the responsibility for ministry lies with the community of faith. At this point, however, I turn to the more specific question of ordered ministry within that ministry done by all. What is the place for a designated or ordered ministry within the structure of the church?

The United Church of Canada reports on ministry contain statements interpreting ministry as the calling of the whole people of God. The bulk of the reports and especially the recommendations, however, focus on the ordered ministry. The same phenomenon occurs with the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document[83] where the first seven points relate to ministry of the whole people and the remaining pages explore the nature of ordained ministry. There are two reasons, at least, for the concentration. There seems to be no debate around the calling of the people of God. There is general theological agreement that this calling, beginning with baptism as the entry point into membership, is God's assignment given to every member. Ironically, theological exploration of the meaning of this calling may have suffered because of the lack of a significant debate.

The debate, however, has centred on the issue of ordering. Here there are large differences between denominations and varying opinions even within denominations, such as the United Church of Canada. A calling to ordered ministry is overlaid with an occupational choice, so that ordered ministry personnel have a calling synonymous with their livelihood. Herein lies the second reason for debate. In Douglas Hall's address to alumna/ae at St. Andrew's College, he acknowledged that ordered ministry cannot be discussed in a calm and scholarly way because of the intense emotions surrounding it.[84] Put crassly, ordered ministers are defending their vocation, similar to a professional association. To give the debate more credence, though, the church does need to develop a theology of ordering, if it is to continue ordaining and commissioning its personnel, and more importantly, the church needs to come to terms with clericalism.

Clericalism began as the church took on a patriarchal nature, and it became entrenched when the Constantinian church established orders of ministry parallel to the officers of the empire. The separation of clergy from laity, the hierarchical[85] ordering of clergy, the use of power over lay members, the authoritarian style of leadership, the elitism of knowledge--are all signs of clericalism and how it operated in the church.

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[83] Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Faith and Order Paper No. 111. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

[84] Douglas Hall, "Theology of Ordering", Lectures given to alumnae/i of St. Andrew's College, April, 1992.

[85] See Glossary: hierarchy.

It is part of the patriarchal heresy--a departure from the commonwealth which Jesus described as God's intention. Feminist theologians Letty Russell and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have very clearly demonstrated that clericalism is antithetical to Jesus' preaching and ministry, and to the present calling of the church. Each has demonstrated how the church needs to replace clericalism: Fiorenza uses the historical concept of a discipleship of equals, Russell uses an image of the round table to develop a church in the round.[86] For this chapter, the task now is to describe the nature of ministry leadership in a revisioned church.

Leadership is a vital necessity in any community, organization, or institution. Why have we associated leadership with ministry, to the point where leadership has come to define ministry? The word "ministers" has been used most commonly to refer to paid staff leaders. Letty Russell has proposed a moratorium on the word "minister" for this very reason. As she states, "Leadership is not the idea behind ministry. It is a specific reference to one who is a servant and who renders humble service to others." [87] Wherever possible in this chapter I will experiment with using "leaders" as a replacement word for "minister" so that "ministry" is reserved for the God-embodied activity which belongs to all.

The problem of undoing clericalism is not so simple as changing language. Yet such a change can signal that a transformation is in process. I suggest that our United Church of Canada needs to reconsider terminology surrounding ordering. Letty Russell informs us:

> *"The word 'order' comes from the Latin word 'ordo' and has many meanings related to ranking and placing things in a row or line. In church tradition the word came to refer not only to the ranks of clergy and religious, which were parallel to similar orders in Roman patriarchal society and military organization, but also to law, rules, and procedures. These hierarchical ways of organizing the life of the church were understood as a reflection of God's divine ordering of the universe and of human nature and destiny."* [88]

Changes in language denote changes in concepts. A change in the word "ordered" would begin to change the hierarchical notions contained within the traditional doctrine of ministry. In some United

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[86] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation, new York: Crossroad, 1993. Letty M. Russell, Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

[87] Letty Russell, Church in the Round, p. 54.

[88] Ibid, p.48.

Church documents[89] the word "designated" has been used in place of "ordered" because it includes some personnel outside of ordered personnel. I value the term, partly because it is more inclusive, but even more because it escapes the patriarchal, military, hierarchal connotations. It refers to one who has accepted a specific task or an assignment which benefits the whole. At issue here is whether there can be a "special ministry" without implying a degree of "elevation" or superiority. Traditionally ordination and commissioning services have "set apart" men and women for "special ministries" of leadership within the church. Project Ministry stated that "Ordination is not a device to generate 'clerical privilege'. It is a provision to ensure that all the assignments in the community will be held together...a setting apart of some within the community to ensure the congregation remains focused."[90] The very nature of the "special task" is to "ensure" right preaching and right sacraments. By assigning a certain group with the ongoing specific responsibility for ensuring "rightness" within worship, the United Church generates a superiority, despite the disclaimer that clerical privilege is not intended. Mary Hunt writes: "I wonder whether setting some people aside for religious leadership is in itself part of the patriarchal nature of Christianity, something that we perpetuate at our peril even with women in the roles." [91]

United Church reports, Project Ministry and Report of the Task Force on Ministry,[92] have argued that special ministries are in no way to be viewed as a hierarchical ordering. Yet the act of ordination/commissioning by the church places people in a different relationship to the church and hence to other members of the church. It also confers on them privileges[93] which other members do not have. This is particularly true of ordained members having the automatic privilege of administering sacraments, a privilege reserved for them alone, with the exceptions of licences specially granted to lay and diaconal members. The authority to preside at the sacraments is the visible sign to the community that the ordained member is the "real" minister. Despite the contention of the United Church reports on ministry over several decades that there is no hierarchy in the setting apart of some for special ministries, the privilege ensures

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[89] Two recent reports using the term "designated ministries" are the "Theology of Call", A Report Presented to the Executive of General Council by the Committee on Theology and Faith, March, 1994; and "Discerning the Call" Guidelines for Inquirers, Congregations and Discernment Committees, prepared by the Candidature Committee, Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, October, 1994.

[90] Anne Squire, Project : Ministry Revisited and the Report of Project : Ministry, Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1985. p. 29-30

[91] Mary E. Hunt, "Lead Us Not Into Temptation", in Rattling Those Dry Bones: Women Changing the Church, June Steffensen Hagen (ed.), San Diego: Luramedia, 1995.

[92] Report of the Task Force on Ministry, authorized for study in the Church by the 27th General Council of the United Church of Canada, August, 1977. p. 8.

[93] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

that the hierarchy[94] continues. Letty Russell agrees with Mary Hunt that the setting apart, or the assignment of "special ministries" is inherently fraught with ranking and hierarchy:

> *"Regardless of what we say about ministry as a function, we [ordained members] are still placed in a position of permanent superiority in the life of the church. In this sense ordination becomes an indelible mark of caste rather than the recognition of spiritual gifts for a particular ministry for the church."* [95]

The church needs leaders, not to elevate them, but for them to elevate and serve the overall ministry of the community. Their task is to enable the community to carry out its ministry. This ministry--the community's ministry--is the primary ministry. Unity emerges from a shared vision of the mission of the church, rather than from an allegiance to a leader in authority over the people.

When the church changes its language about ministry leadership, then the language about "call" becomes more fluid. Traditionally, the church speaks of a "call to ministry" when describing ordained leadership. This calling is interpreted to be life-long, and vows are made with a life commitment in mind. Some questions emerge: Can the calling change? What accounts for the change? Does God, or God's purposes change? I will take up these questions again as I analyse and interpret the research. For now, it is important to note that when we speak about leaders rather than ministers, there is a levelling effect. The call to serve as leaders seems less lofty than the "high calling to ministry", and the call to ministry is returned to all of the membership. As well, for those in leadership roles, to shift from one function to another, such as from education to sacraments, also seems less of an issue. Since the overall research question for this particular project/dissertation is to discover why diaconal ministers choose to become ordained, the church's understanding of "call" is pertinent.

The Theology of Call document of the United Church of Canada affirms that God has called the church to be the church in the world. Within the church, there is a call to particular vocations, directed both inwardly to serve the church community needs and outwardly to address the needs of the world. [96] As in other United Church reports on ministry, this document maintains the priesthood of all believers yet also

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[94] See Glossary: Hierarchy

[95] Letty Russell, "Women and Ministry: Problem or Possibility?" in Judith Weidman (ed.) Christian Feminist: Visions of A New Humanity, New York: Harper and Row, 1984. p.89.

[96] "Theology of Call", Report to the Executive of General Council by the Committee on Theology and Faith, March 1994. See pp. 25-26.

speaks of a special calling to ordered ministry. However, there is a fascinating recognition among the writers of this document. They acknowledge that the United Church has "inherited a system that has traditionally honoured the specialized few while inheriting a theology implying that all Christians have a vocation. Do we have a contradiction?" they ask.[97] My response is a definite "Yes", and in my view the contradiction is increasingly untenable as the United Church moves towards an increasing emphasis on the ministry of all members.

Central to this discussion is the question of authority.[98] What is the nature of authority as it relates to ministry/leadership? Lynn Rhodes has explored this question with ordained feminist women, whom she describes as "involved in the daily concerns with people" and as maintaining " a commitment to justice." She found that a common view among these women was to look to themselves and their experience as a trustworthy source of authority. Some participants in her research also pointed to scripture as a source of authority, but her own discussion focuses much more on inner authority.[99] In a patriarchal church it makes sense that ordained women would value the discovery of their inner authority as a source of validation, rather than continuing to rely on external authority as conferred by patriarchy. I find it totally understandable that feminist women would avoid association with a patriarchal authority. Inherent in the nature of patriarchy is the wielding of power over others and there is every reason to distrust such power. Yet institutional authority is at the heart of the acts of ordination and commissioning. Ordination/ commissioning is the church's way of authorizing certain persons who have presented themselves and prepared themselves to serve the church. The church's authorization is a public declaration that these persons have been examined and have been approved to serve the church community and its mission. Such authorization is important because it means that a relationship of trust can be established on a wider level than simply through personal relationship.

The issue a revisioned church faces is how to arrange for ordination/commissioning so that it benefits the church without institutionalizing tiered relationships. Doing away with ordered ministry might be one way. Replacing ordination/commissioning with "designation" by the institutional church might provide some improvement. As I have maintained earlier, language does change concepts. However, I believe far more is needed here.

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[97] Ibid, p. 18.

[98] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

[99] Lynn N. Rhodes, Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987. See Chapter two.

In our discussion so far, I have referred to inner authority and institutional authority. There is one other location of authority which I believe, relates to the first two. That third authority has community as its source. As outlined by Letty Russell,[100] it establishes the community as the holder of authority and leadership as deriving its authority from connection to the community. It is a dynamic authority, in contrast to institutional authority which has a static nature. Like confidence a group has in an elected representative, authority from community is either growing or receding. With authority residing in the community, the delegation to a person in leadership carries the affirmation of the community and the expectation that such authority will be used in service to/with the community. Authority-in-community is a reciprocal relationship. The community invests a person with authority but continues to hold the accountability for it. Inner authority plays a role. A leader who displays inner authority is much more likely to be invested with authority from the community on an ongoing basis. Institutional authority also assists the community's investment since they have some assurance that such a person deserves their trust.

An image of ministry I have used on occasion is that ministry is like water, life-giving and life-sustaining. The ministry of the whole people is like the ocean. This is the vital area of ministry in the world, large and vast, full of innumerable life-giving acts. Ordered ministry exists merely to serve and to enable this larger ministry. A ministry of word and sacrament might be likened to lakes and springs, the source and nourishment of the water. A ministry of education, service and pastoral care might be likened to the rivers, streams and waterfalls that carry water to the ocean. What I like about this image is that each part of ministry has its place, yet the overwhelming emphasis of ministry is the lay ministry of the people of faith. The image helps to do away with a hierarchy of power so often associated with ordained ministry.

MINISTRY OF LEADERSHIP IN A NEW PARADIGM

In the new paradigm of the church as responsive community, leadership continues to be an essential aspect. In any social group certain functions of leadership, such as building community, inspiring a vision, enabling decisions, and co-ordinating activities, are required for the group to flourish. The challenge is to invent a model of leadership that is appropriate to the relationships in the new paradigm of church.

In this section I will attempt to set out a feminist model of leadership which is congruent with a

[100] Letty Russell, Church in the Round, p. 57.

responsive community, using the same categories as in the previous chapter. As much as possible for this section, I continue the experiment of using the word 'leadership' to replace ordered or designated ministry, where it is a more accurate term.

In scripture the commonly used word for ministry is 'diakonia', a specific reference to one who offers lowly service, including table service and footwashing. Gradually the hierarchical church has elevated the functions of ministry into a priestly role and a priestly caste. In the Protestant church, the caste has been maintained historically by the split between educated (learned) clergy and the laity. Currently, with greater access to education, there is frequently less differentiation between clergy and laity on the basis of knowledge, although the clergy may have a speciality in theological knowledge. Moreover, in some sectors, as seen in movie caricatures, clergy are often seen as bumbling and woefully ignorant. The point here, however, is that any divisive split between clergy and laity is false. In the new paradigm of a responsive community, ministry belongs to the community; thus, the use of the word should be returned to the community. Of course designated leaders participate in specific ministries, just as any member of the community does.

Leadership within a Community of Mutuality and Shared Power

A responsive community is deeply concerned with the nature of relationships, both within and external to the community. Since the relationships within the community are to be mutual, as a community of equals, the leadership of the community also needs to relate mutually with members. Mutuality, by its nature, creates relationships through making connections between people; it becomes a source of community. In contrast, hierarchy is anti-relational; it destroys human relating by forcing people to interact through roles and positions.

Ministry is profoundly relational. Any leadership which has the goal of enabling ministry needs to enter into the same kind of mutual relating. This involves recognizing the gifts, skills, experience and knowledge of one another through a sense of deepest respect for God as incarnate in each person. Mutuality does not insist on sameness or exact equality.[101] In mutuality, both value the differing contributions of the other.

[101] While I have referred to a community of equals during this discussion on mutuality, I note that mutuality and equality are not synonymous. Human beings are not equal with God and yet God seems to choose to be in mutual relationship with humanity. Mutuality is possible over differences in equality insofar as the relationship honours the contributions of each.

When leadership within the community is based on mutuality, leadership becomes a communal responsibility. Leadership functions are shared where possible. All members are seen to be a resource for the realization of the community's vision of love and justice. The particular task of the designated leaders is to hold up this common vision and to ensure that members have opportunities to make significant contributions to that vision. A vital part of the leadership role, then, is to assist the members in developing their gifts and skills for ministry and assisting the community to provide for mutual support. The designated leader is a servant-leader for the community; the leadership role exists solely for the purpose of enabling the community members to do their ministry.

Leadership is a particular kind of power-holding,[102] or power-sharing, I would add. To exercise leadership is to exercise power. Rollo May has discussed differing types of power which have relevance for leadership. Power may be competitive, where people exercise power against one another or against another group to gain power over them. A second type of power is "nutritive power", where a leader acts **for** others. A third type of power is "integrative power" where power is shared **with** others. [103] The question arises :Is there a time and place where each type of power is valid and appropriate?

The guideline for the leader in a community of shared power is to do everything possible to invite the community to move in the direction of sharing power. At different times, varieties of leadership styles may be used, keeping in mind the goal of eventual shared power. An illustration from group dynamics may be useful: A group develops through stages where at the beginning the leader takes most of the responsibility, but as the group forms and matures, the leader gradually becomes a member of the group, and responsibility is held collectively. Different forms of leadership styles (uses of power) come into play as the group develops. Similarly, within a community there will be movement towards shared power where the ability to influence the group may shift from the 'strongest' to the 'least' powerful. To enhance a community of shared power the designated leaders will need to use a variety of leadership approaches without losing sight of the vision where all members participate and have a voice.

Liberative feminists have been rightly suspicious of "power-over", the power of dominance, as the source of all oppression. In the responsive community, the challenge is to make the power of the leaders accountable to the community and to the vision of justice. Authority for such leadership is given by the community and resides in the community, not in the person of the leader. The leader-community

[102] James MacGregor Burns, Leadership, New York: Harper & Row, 1978. p. 15

[103] Rollo May, Power and Innocence, New York: W. W. Norton, 1972. pp. 105-112.

relationship, then, becomes a covenant relationship of trust. One of the major contrasts between hierarchical leadership and shared leadership centres on trust; a hierarchical leadership tends to operate with distrust whereas shared leadership affirms a basic trust of the people. It is through a basic trust that the leadership is able to move from person to person, rather than remain rigidly attached to one person as in a hierarchy.

Leadership in a Community of Hospitality and Diversity

Hospitality is the quality of welcoming all including the stranger and the outsider. Inclusion is the overriding concern. Leadership in such a community will give a priority to those who may be normally overlooked, such as children, the disabled, the lower or working class members. This is a similar principle to the theological priority for the poor, espoused by liberation theology.

Leaders in a community of hospitality are called into solidarity with the marginalized. Lynn Rhodes interprets what that means for those in designated leadership:

> *"To be in solidarity means for [leaders] that they must learn again and again to have respect for persons with less access to resources or those who are oppressed by class, race, or sexual identity. They do not act initially to make friends or to be benevolent, but to treat others respectfully. Friendships between the oppressed and oppressors are a real and deeply important possibility, but friendship develops only out of mutual regard. It comes with the building of trust and long-term commitment."*[104]

Of course the designated leaders are not called into solidarity on their own, apart from the community of hospitality. The community members are also called to act out of a similar solidarity. Again the role of the leader is to assist the community in becoming "cross-cultural" in such a committed way that what happens to those on the margins affects the very being of community.

A community of diversity relishes the extravaganza of gifts endowed by the spirit. The task of leadership is to promote the use of these gifts for the building up of community and for the mission of creating a commonwealth of God. Honouring diversity has not been easy for the church, or for our society. A hierarchy tends to see conflict or difference as competition for power. In a revisioned church, leadership skills of education and conflict management will need to accompany the skills of empowerment.

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[104] Lynn Rhodes, Co-Creating: a Feminist Vision of Ministry, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987. p. 92.

Designated leaders in the new paradigm of responsive community will be committed to working with the community to unlearn the fear of difference and to begin to embrace diversity, as the poet Audre Lorde suggests:

> *"Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are not charters...*
>
> *As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than forces for change. Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, not the pathetic pretence that these differences do not exist".*[105]

To truly honour difference is to create equality, to draw all members into a circle of respect. This will not be a homogeneous circle but a circle which acknowledges that every gift of the spirit has infinite value.

Leadership in a Community of Embodied Spirituality

Too often members of the church think of embodied spirituality as delighting in God's creation or including an appreciation of human bodies through watching a liturgical dancer perform. Embodied spirituality calls for much more. A community of embodied spirituality seeks to give life to the spirit through their worship and action. Designated leaders of worship work to create liturgies that are organic, giving prominence to all the people and to the whole of life as experienced by the people. They would ensure that liturgies are participatory, inclusive, intergenerational, and communal in nature. The traditional protestant emphasis on the sermon would be lessened, and at the same time broadened, so that more members would be involved in giving the message.[106] Since liturgy literally means "the work of the people", the sacraments would be returned to the community and those chosen by the community would administer them.

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[105] Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches, New York: Crossing Press, 1984. pp. 111-112.

[106] Kay Heuer and Teresa Jones, "Diaconal Ministry as a Feminist Model of Ministry" in Gathered by the River, ed. Gertrude Lebans, Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1994. p.131

In other words, the present worship would be transformed, with the purpose of modelling the commonwealth of God. Concurrently the worship of the community would become transformative, through encouragement of action in the world. The spirit of God calls the community to go beyond its inward, nurturing circle and practice its ministry of love and justice in the world. Embodied spirituality relates to all of life's physicality -- hunger, homelessness, pollution, and violence, to name a few examples. Action to alleviate such evils is life-giving and therefore is as "spiritual" as any aspect of community worship, in that the action to bring justice is another way of giving life to the spirit.

EVIDENCE OF MOVEMENT TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Many concrete examples, seedlings of the new paradigm, have sprouted in the United Church of Canada in recent years. A few illustrations will suffice:

> At St. Andrew's by the Lake near Kingston, the congregation makes a specific effort to be inclusive by intentionally inviting new members into significant positions that hold power within the congregation. A sign of hospitality.
>
> Augustine United in Winnipeg was the first of a series of congregations to declare themselves an Affirming Congregation. This means that the congregation has written a formal mission statement to specifically welcome gay and lesbian members at all levels of the church's life. A sign of diversity and the honouring of the gifts that emerge from difference.
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> At Preeceville-Sturgis pastoral charge the ordained minister, Miles Russell, became ill for a time. The congregation members pitched in to see that ministry was done. When Miles returned to full time ministry, no one wanted to undo the growth they had achieved and the ministry of the laity continued in an active way. A sign of mutuality and shared power.
>
> When Clifford Elliott retired from his position as senior minister at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto, he suggested that the congregation think seriously about not calling an ordained minister to replace him. Bloor Street members were not ready for this but after an interim time, two ordained ministers were called with the woman assigned to the preaching and pastoral roles and the man assigned to education and community ministries. A way to undercut sexism and therefore undercut patriarchy.

The listing of examples could go on. At this point I turn to the United Church studies of ministry to trace whether the paradigm shift has been expressed in the articulated theology of ministry at the policy level. Since union in 1925, the United Church of Canada has been studying and agonizing about ordained ministry almost continuously. But it was not until 1962 that the denomination gave official attention to "The Ministry of the Laity", included in a report of The Commission on Ordination.[107] It seems highly significant that a commission with its focus on ordination should feel obliged to include a large section dealing with the fact that ministry is not the prerogative of the ordained alone.

In 1972 the Committee on Christian Faith reported to General Council with the declaration that there is one ministry, the ministry of God and within this one ministry there is an order of ministry whose task is to enable the church to fulfil its total ministry.[108] Here the Committee on Christian Faith is taking a further step in the affirmation of the ministry of the people and beginning to reduce the status of ordination. This direction was continued in the 1977 Task Force on Ministry Report where it was stated that both the ministry of the laity and ordained are essential to the full expression of Christ's ministry.[109] However this task force report attempted to straddle two disparate views of ministry. It argues that the call to ordained ministry is really different from the general call to all Christians, that ordination is a means of setting some apart to a representative office. At the same time, it argued that no function of ministry is more important than any other, and that a move between them was lateral, not hierarchical.[110] The two views of ministry, one view stating privilege and another view denying privilege seem to be vying with one another in this report, but the effort to recognize a diversity of ministries as non-hierarchical is still visible.

The next ministry study, called Project: Ministry, was completed in 1980. It tended to reverse the trend towards mutuality in ministry by stressing the centrality of one ministry: the ordained ministry. While they stated a deep desire to affirm the solidarity and collegiality between lay and ordained, the more significant affirmation was clearly for ordained ministry, following the two marks of the church laid out by John Calvin. Project: Ministry declares, "there is a 'special' or 'particular' ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God."[111] Interestingly, the term 'the whole people of God' was used as early as 1977 and

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[107] Howie Mills, Ordination in the United Church of Canada; an Historical Analysis, Toronto: Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, United Church of Canada, 1983. p. 5.

[108] Ibid, p.7.

[109] Report of the Task Force on Ministry, authorized for study in the Church by the 27th General Council of the United Church of Canada, August, 1977.

[110] Ibid, pp. 16, 27.

[111] Anne Squire, Project:Ministry Revisited and the Report of Project:Ministry, Toronto: Division of Ministry Personnel and

has continued increasing usage in the United Church. This term in itself is an expression of shared ministry and suggests a developing mutuality in ministry.

In 1984 a report entitled Educated Ministry in the United Church of Canada: Phase I : Ordained Ministry was completed. It had to be named "Phase I" because this report had given no attention to diaconal ministry. A second report was commissioned to rectify this omission, Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry, completed in 1987. Phase I outlined twelve marks of an educated ministry. One of the twelve was described in these words: "envisions a greater degree of mutual acceptance and colleagueship at all levels of ministry".[112] No doubt the ministry of the laity is to be included in this mutuality. The notion of mutuality is even stronger in Phase 2, Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry. This second report affirms a paradigm shift, like the one set out in this paper. The shift is to an understanding of the church as the 'people of God' who share a vision and commitment to live out the gospel both as a gathered community and as individuals. The leadership roles are fluid, with people moving into and out of such roles. The report states, "The work of the People of God is hindered, not helped, by hierarchical structures and practices which emphasize "power over" and which encourage passivity rather than responsible action...The most radical shift which such a model of the Church brings about is in the understanding of ministry."[113]

The General Council of the United Church has never fully validated any of the study reports on ministry. The pattern has been for the General Council to agree in principle or to affirm the direction of the long series of reports. The consistent action of the General Council was to commend them for study in the church. The papers of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, however, did not have that same kind of exposure because they did not come before General Council for debate. They do, however, represent the thinking of the leadership of the institution at the national committee level.

A membership survey on ordination was conducted in 1987. Here it was found that members have a clear preference for ordained ministers who bring out the best in others rather than drawing attention to themselves. The survey also showed that none of the ordained ministers saw themselves as "the captain

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Education, The United Church of Canada, 1985. p. 3 (Project:Ministry Report).

[112] Educated Ministry in the United Church of Canada: Phase I : Ordained Ministry, MP&E Paper 6, Published by the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, Toronto, 1984.

[113] Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry, MP&E Paper 12, Published by the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1987. p.5.

of the ship"; instead they chose the image of "the cook who feeds the crew". While it may have been too audacious for the ordained to claim themselves as captain, the fact of choosing the image of cook indicates a shift in the thinking about ordained ministry, even if the practice has not "caught up".[114] One might ask whether the ship has a captain, and if so, who it is; and, if not, how a direction is set.

In 1989 the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education assigned a small task group to prepare a concise statement of ministry which would gather up and summarize the recent reports on ministry. The result was a resounding disappointment. Although the group attempted to redress the hierarchy found in the previous reports, the final statement was criticized by the Division members as "presupposing a certain hierarchy of function within the church's ministry that is not in harmony with emerging understandings of ministry in the United Church."[115] This critique confirms that the current understanding of ministry is shifting towards the new paradigm, as suggested by this dissertation.

In 1997, a debate about ordination took place through The Observer after a conference executive secretary, Peter Scott, renounced his ordination on the basis that the church no longer valued it economically. A series of people responded. I offer the following quotes[116] to depict a changing view of ministry. There is clear evidence of a trend towards the new paradigm:

> Diaconal ministers, candidate supplies, minister-in-training and many staff associates not only have strong gifts for ministry, but impressive learning experiences. I value the diversity of ministries within our church and would rue the day all ministry personnel were cut from one cloth. [Harry Oussoren]

> The assumption that ordained ministry is the only valid ministry of the United Church flies in the face of all our church polity and ethos. Our Presbyterian Heritage stressed the priesthood of all believers. To state, "I concluded I would be better off not being a minister" belies the fact that all Christians are called to ministry by virtue of their baptism. [Charlotte Caron]

There is a growing desire for a more egalitarian atmosphere within the church, indeed

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[114] Yvonne Stewart, Images of Ordained Ministers and the Act of Ordination, published by the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, Toronto, 1987.

[115] Minutes of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education Annual Meeting, February 15 - 18, 1990.

[116] The United Church Observer, published by Observer Publications, Toronto, July/August, 1997. pp. 51 - 52.

> within society. While ministers in the pulpit were, as the old saying goes, six feet above contradiction, that is not the climate today. [John Hoffman]

In summary, while the United Church has given prolonged and serious thought to its theology of ministry, particularly to the place of ordained ministry within the church, at no point has there been a full endorsement of any one view or report. The reports have contained a variety of perspectives, sometimes including disparate perspectives on ministry in the same report. While I have traced a movement towards a new paradigm within the reports, there also has been a reaffirmation of the order of ministry as separate and 'special', thus inadvertently maintaining clerical privilege despite the wish to be non-hierarchical. Perhaps because of the ambiguity of the reports, they have not been given a full stamp of approval by General Council; instead, with each report there has been a recommendation to study further the issues surrounding ministry. The disadvantage of this action, or non-action, is that the United Church cannot say with assurance what ministry is. The advantage is that its theology of ministry is still open.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have provided evidence that a new paradigm of being the church is emerging which places authority in the hands of the community as God's agents. What the new paradigm of ministry offers to the church and to the world is a vision for just relationships and for wholeness of life. Within such a revisioned church, designated leaders--a secondary ministry--have the role of supporting the community in its ministry in the world--the primary ministry of the church. This vision of the church and the accompanying theology of ministry provides the backdrop for the research questions and interpretation. Through the research with diaconal women who have become ordained I have attempted to discover whether the decision for ordination was a pragmatic choice in the face of co-optation by clerical privilege or whether, in some way, it can be seen as a move towards a new paradigm of church and ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR CHOICES

Maggie

In my first impression of Maggie as we met for the research interview I sensed some uncertainty and tension. This tension in the air quickly evaporated as she explained her need to shorten the interview, and as she could see that I was working to accommodate her needs. She soon relaxed and entered fully into her story. She portrayed an enjoyment in her own story that spoke to me of self-acceptance and, even more, a valuing of self. Her self-awareness was evident in her reflections. She did not resonate easily with conceptual thinking. More often than not, she answered a question with a story, and when the interview had concluded, she added a few more stories!

As a child Maggie wanted to be a missionary. Looking back, she is aware of having a call to ministry "from the beginning." She loved being part of church groups where she had a lot of fun. It was natural for her to turn to the church after a few years of "being a cog in a wheel" in commercial jobs.

Mentors have been very important in the life of Maggie. She described deaconesses who invited Covenant College students into their congregations, particularly for workshops with church school teachers. Maggie spoke of these deaconesses as sharing their knowledge with her and being available to her whenever she had questions. She said, "We [students] were at their churches more times than enough."

Maggie graduated from Covenant College in the mid-sixties. She was commissioned the same year and worked as a deaconess while her life partner prepared for ordained ministry. After his ordination they served the church together, although Maggie did not receive a salary at that time. They began to dream of more official ministry together as a recognized team. Maggie had already started to do "supply ministry" for her partner when he was away on church business, and was aware that she would like to receive more educational preparation for the role of preacher and worship leader.

A tragic car accident put a cruel stop to those dreams, with the death of her partner. Maggie knew she was in long-term grief, yet her church friends urged her to become ordained if she wanted to continue working in the church. Her advisors were concerned for her security as the sole provider for herself and her child. They saw ordination as the only way to have this needed security. While she pondered her decision she took a position in Christian education with an urban congregation which, in turn, provided Maggie with strong supportive listeners who sat with her as she struggled with the ordination question.

At this point Maggie missed having women role models around her. The diaconal community was not present, nor were there many ordained women. She made her decision to be ordained fully aware that some of the expectations of ordained ministry, such as preaching, were not her first love. To this day she continues to experience a tension between what the congregation expects and how she sees herself, working in a diaconal style. Still, the call was for ministry and at that time, ordination seemed to be the best route to fulfil it. To her, it was a "slide over" from diaconal to ordained ministry. In the interview, however, she revealed that she might not make the same decision today.

Maggie was ordained in the late seventies and settled in an unexpected Conference. They had never settled an ordained woman in that pastoral charge previously, and Maggie felt the pressure of having to perform. She said "I had to prove myself. I knew I was setting a pace for other women to be able to come in. I just about worked myself to death those first three years." It was there she rediscovered support from women through the diaconal ministers association. She has been included (and has included herself--I think it is a bit of both) in the gatherings of the diaconal community. Had I known her in that setting, probably I would have been more prepared, but it came as a surprise when Maggie told me that she thinks of herself as more diaconal than ordained. Her inner identity is diaconal.

As Maggie told her stories her easy acceptance of her own humanity was warming. She laughed about experiencing contradiction as part of being human, although she did not "laugh it off". Many of her anecdotes related to her experiences of being a token ordained woman or the first ordained woman people had encountered. She recalls, "When I would do a funeral, people literally used to come up and touch me. I couldn't figure out what was going on for the longest time...I talked with the women teachers and they said, 'Don't forget you are a novelty out here. You are a woman in ministry, and they have not seen [that] a woman could do this.'"

The "lens" through which Maggie looks at diaconal ministry is clearly a "style of ministry" lens.[117] Maggie outlined her Christian education responsibilities as a deaconess in some detail, but presently she speaks of ministry functions very little. She identifies her ministry now as diaconal because of how she relates, always trying to work collegially with laity, using consensus and consultation to share power.

[117] See Appendix B "Lenses with which to View Diaconal Ministry" for a typology describing various ways in which people view diaconal ministry. Six "lenses" were developed and used as an analytical tool for interpreting the participants' approach to diaconal ministry.

Maggie gives the impression of being uncomfortable with having power. She describes herself as one who "gives power away"--her words for empowerment.

Alice

In the research interview I experienced Alice right away as willing to cooperate. She agreed to the interview despite having significant back pain, and all this the week before Christmas! Through the interview she gave very straight-forward answers, without a lot of embellishment or telling of stories. She was ready to be honest with me and I enjoyed her unapologetic, clean statements about herself. Alice was candid in her appraisal of herself; she showed that she held a balanced appraisal of both her gifts and her limitations. For instance, she demonstrated an ability to critique herself, to question herself, to analyse and reflect upon her own development.

Alice sensed a strong calling to ministry while a teenager attending church camps. There had been presentations about the need for full-time church workers and Alice reported to me in the interview that the call "just kept coming and coming." A call to ministry presented a problem for her as a young woman who had already met the man she wanted to marry. How could she both answer this call to ministry and be married? At that time, it was unheard of to be married and to be ordained. The couple found an answer in Alice being designated a deaconess and her life partner being ordained.

Alice was married only weeks before she was designated a deaconess. She was not aware of it at the time, but for her to serve a congregation as a married deaconess was breaking of new ground. She describes herself as one who does not pioneer or push hard for her own goals, yet she unwittingly became one of the first deaconesses to be designated after being married. She had already found a position to serve as a deaconess, promising to serve the congregation for the three years in which her life partner was studying for ordination.

Her next stage of life was as a mother and home-maker, a role which she wanted to honour by being at home with her children. When she was ready to return to paid diaconal ministry twenty years had gone by and the church decided she should go through the process of being re-instated as a diaconal minister. Before her official re-entry into diaconal ministry she tested her vocation by taking academic courses to update herself and by working in a part-time position to discover whether she still could function in the practical aspect of diaconal ministry.

Alice found that her committee work was a way of becoming more connected to diaconal ministry. She joined committees specifically having to so with diaconal ministry and she discovered that as she shared in common interests with colleagues she was upgrading her skills and understanding.

For several years she enjoyed the role of diaconal minister, specializing in education within the congregation. Gradually, however, she began to feel limited in that role. She had a few opportunities to preach, to conduct funerals, to offer pastoral care, but these opportunities were very few and only when the ordained minister was sick or on holidays. The few chances she did have whetted her appetite for more. She began to sense that she had "outgrown" the restricted diaconal role. At the same time she was now looking for a full-time position, with a full-time salary. There were none to be had in diaconal ministry in her presbytery, nor had she ever heard of a full-time diaconal minister in her area. From a purely practical standpoint, her decision to become ordained was a response to an employment issue.

But the decision was more than a pragmatic one. Alice felt that she was not exercising her gifts for ministry and that to remain diaconal would be holding something back, protecting something, not taking the risks she was being called to take in order to grow. There came a moment Alice describes as, "What are you waiting for?"

She chose to be a generalist in ministry with greater responsibility, and she was happy the move to ordination involved further education to be prepared to serve in worship and pastoral roles. During the candidacy process she was informed that she would no longer be diaconal after ordination. She said in the research interview, "I would love to be both! Why can't you be both?"

The church settlement process placed Alice in a rural setting. For a woman who had spent her childhood on a farm, she feels that she had come full circle. Ministry as an ordained person continues to be satisfying and enriching, particularly the preparation of worship and sermons. She believes that now her gifts for pastoral ministry are being more fully used and her time in these activities are a recognized part of her work, instead of being an additional, peripheral role.

The "lens" Alice uses for discernment of ministry definitely involves the gifts and skills a person brings.[118] Her decision to be ordained was in part to realize her own gifts more fully. As well, Alice clearly

[118] See Appendix B.

operates with a second "lens", a functional view of diaconal ministry. In her experience the diaconal minister has a specialized focus on educational ministry, whereas the ordained minister is the generalist. Alice is fully aware that in some regions of Canada, diaconal ministers may have positions that allow them to be generalists, but in her own area such positions are not open to diaconal ministers. Apparently, there are regional definitions of diaconal ministry which appear to be operating.

Joanna

Joanna was a very welcoming and hospitable interviewee. She was anxious to do well for the research, but she also had her own agenda. The interview presented her with an opportunity to promote a well-developed vision for the order of ministry and how diaconal ministers should relate within this order. She proposed that theological education for both ordained and diaconal ministers should be done together, with the development of a more specific focus in the final year. All would be called simply "ministers", and each would be open for finding a call which most suited their gifts and educational preparation. For Joanna, her vision of ministry was an answer to her dilemma of feeling badly for her diaconal friends when she chose to be ordained, although it was also more than this.

Joanna did not come to Covenant College with thoughts of church ministry. She had been in a program position in an organization outside the church, and her goal was to increase her programming knowledge and skills. During her final year at Covenant College, the opportunity to return to the organization in a program position evaporated. Harriet Christie, principal of Covenant College suggested that Joanna think about "getting approved" for United Church ministry "just in case there is a change in plans." At that time, she was able to rush through candidacy interviews in a matter of months. Because of her experience in the church as a young person, she was well-known and had no problem despite turning to the church as a back-up option. Her commitment to educational ministry was clearly evident.

Joanna's gifts in leadership were recognized early. She presented herself as being aware of her abilities in leadership, yet surprised at how she was "handed" opportunities. She tended to laugh at herself and say, "Me?" when someone would put her forward.

Joanna held a great variety of positions as a diaconal minister, some of which were prominent and visible positions. She was in diaconal ministry for a long time, and she struggled with the decision at the point of becoming ordained. She had told a group of friends that if they ever heard her say that she wanted to become ordained they were immediately to talk to her! They remembered, and they took her for

her word. In their conversations with her, Joanna learned that they were not concerned for her ability to do ordained functions; they were confident that she could "lead a church on her own". Their concerns centred around the priorities of ministry and whether preparations for Sunday morning would overwhelm her diaconal ministry focus. Some of these friends were diaconal ministers who, as the decision was made, were both supportive and disappointed--not in her precisely, but in the depletion of diaconal ministry.

Joanna's interest in becoming ordained began with a growing interest in Sunday worship and a recognition of its importance in the life of the people. She felt strongly that if she was going to focus her ministry in worship, she needed both to do the educational preparation for worship leadership and to take the step of becoming ordained. Joanna believes that it is unfair to the ordained ministers, and perhaps to the church, to function in a word and sacrament position as a diaconal minister, except in unusual circumstances.

In the interview Joanna was very explicit that her identification with diaconal ministry was still strong. She spoke about having two foci; she has simply added the focus of worship leadership. She joked about whether it was possible to have two things as primary and claimed that both diaconal and ordained aspects of ministry were primary for her. As an ordained minister she does not think of herself now as being privileged; instead she tries to be collegial. I sensed that it is not easy to acknowledge the power she has.

The "lens" through which Joanna views diaconal ministry[119] is a functional perspective. If she is doing the functions of ordained ministry, then that is a major reason to become ordained. Yet there are other lenses. Her description of her own approach to ministry is a second "lens", a diaconal style of ministry--"trying to listen to people's hopes for their church and trying to help that come about, perhaps challenging them a bit on their own leadership gifts, and to work more in groups." Her long faithfulness to diaconal ministry speaks of a third "lens", that of life commitment. Through the service she has given to diaconal ministry, Joanna has credibility and she certainly is persuasive.

Hannah

With most of the participants, I already had some acquaintance through diaconal networks. Hannah was the one I knew best. Our personal relationship affected the interview somewhat. We knew

[119] See Appendix B.

one another well enough to have expectations and anticipations of what each would say. All the same, there were surprises. I did not know Hannah's story as well as I had imagined.

I experienced Hannah to be very much herself throughout the interview. She shared her experiences readily and brought a clear, reasoned perspective in her reflections. She expressed strong opinions about the relationship between diaconal and ordained ministries. Her view is that diaconal ministers should be ordained to the functions of education, service and pastoral care, a view she first picked up from an Emmanuel College professor, John Webster Grant, while she was a student of both Emmanuel College and Covenant College. It made eminent sense to her, and she was disappointed when, later, a national consultation of diaconal ministers voted against being ordained to diaconal functions.

Hannah was perturbed by the ambiguous relationship diaconal ministers have with the United Church. She believes the United Church feels ambiguously about diaconal ministry, with the result that diaconal ministers are now being settled or called to ordained positions, and then making requests of presbytery to be licensed for sacraments. She said, "people are trained for one thing and end up doing another thing, and they ask for recognition of a role to which they have not been called." In her view if someone feels called to lead in worship, they should be ordained to word and sacrament. She proposed that all diaconal ministers be ordained to their functions as a step towards clarifying the ambiguity.

At points Hannah's self-reflection was somewhat clouded, perhaps because her choice to become ordained seemed to "happen to her", instead of being a deliberately chosen goal. At other times, Hannah was crystal clear about her self-reflection. She was one of the few participants to candidly acknowledge the importance of authority and power for their role in ministry.

Hannah came to Covenant College in the mid-sixties after she had been offered a congregational position in Christian education. Instead of taking the position, she followed the advice of a mentor and decided to do the education first. She was drawn to Christian education because of her satisfying experiences in church leadership, in contrast to her career of being a school teacher. She noticed that church work was always more fulfilling to her than teaching school.

After graduation from Covenant College and Emmanuel College, Hannah was designated a deaconess and served in a congregation as CE Director, a title she much preferred to "deaconess" which

smacked of "old maiden aunts in black stockings". At the conclusion of her ministry there, as people were saying good-by to her Hannah caught a glimpse of how her ministry had been received as a lesser, much less significant ministry. She vowed that if ever she was to serve in a congregational position again, it would be as an ordained minister.

That thought never left her. In fact, it was re-confirmed much later through an experience Hannah called an "Aha" moment. She had decided to learn about feminist theology by taking some theological courses. Ironically, no feminist courses were available at the time she re-entered theological studies, but she proceeded anyway. She was given an opportunity to lead worship as a student in a congregation. When she stepped into the pulpit, suddenly she knew this was the right place for her to be. She asked herself "Why haven't I been here before?" As a believer in signs, this was a highly significant moment for Hannah.

At the same time, Hannah explained her choice to be ordained by saying "You aren't going to want to hear this," because she seemed to be following a path where one thing led to another. She decided to "get the paper work done" just in case she would be ordained, and that put her in the ordained stream. She never looked back.

At the time of ordination, Hannah made her presentation to the conference using her deaconess pin as her symbol of ministry. She was very clear that she was not "stepping up" to ordained ministry; it was a lateral transfer that did not deny or leave behind her diaconal commitment.

I recalled a conversation with Hannah at the time of her ordination. In my memory she had said that she would always be diaconal as part of her ministry, but she valued being more employable as an ordained minister. I reminded Hannah of this earlier conversation during the interview; Hannah did not remember it, nor did it fit with her main reasons for becoming ordained, although she acknowledged the truth about greater employability for ordained ministers. For me, this "correction" was an eye-opener into the bias I was carrying. My bias led me to believe that people who claimed to be diaconal would only become ordained under some kind of duress!

During the interview, Hannah spoke about having a basic diaconal formation or stance, in terms of her hospitable, enabling style of ministry. This is evidence of a "lens" which views diaconal ministry as a

style of ministry.[120] Yet, of the all the "lenses" for diaconal ministry, Hannah fits most strongly with the functional lens. She was clear that both diaconal and ordained ministries were defined by their calling to specific functions, and if diaconal ministers were called to serve in word and sacrament positions, they ought to become ordained. We noted that the reverse suggestion is rare--that ordained ministers should become diaconal if they felt called to an educational ministry. Perhaps this is because ordained ministers are frequently seen as generalists; they would not need permission of presbytery to perform diaconal functions.

Sarah

The interview with Sarah was the last in the sequence. For me, a level of "saturation" was reached in this interview. Saturation is the term research theory gives to the phenomenon of arriving at the place where earlier material is confirmed but no new issues are introduced. Sarah's interview is unique in the sense that she has not yet become ordained; she has made the decision to seek ordination and is well along in her academic preparation. I value this interview because it allowed me to test the questions with a person still in the process of becoming ordained. Her experience is now, rather than a reflection on what happened years ago.

Sarah approached the interview with a quiet composure. She seemed settled and grounded in herself. In recounting her journey Sarah spoke about a personal spirituality. She spoke quite comfortably about the spiritual aspect of herself, although she did not describe details. She impressed me as the type of person who is more at home with images than with concrete details, or perhaps I was simply encountering a natural introversion. Sarah revealed that in her preparation for the interview, she had reassured herself that there were no right and wrong answers, only her answer. She had previously reached a conclusion that she did not expect others to understand her choice--especially other diaconal ministers. She said, "I have mustered within myself that people do not have to understand. It is about my life. It is what I believe I need to do."

Sarah was designated a deaconess in the later seventies, when most conferences were commissioning. She attended the Centre for Christian Studies after hearing about deaconesses from her mother and also from her congregational minister. At the time of her searching, she was preparing to be a public school teacher, yet finding that this teaching would not address the needs of the children she was

[120] See Appendix B.

encountering in her practicum. A ministry focused on her love of children seemed to be the answer.

Sarah practised diaconal ministry, particularly in the area of education, for several years. She found that a specialized ministry was also a restricted ministry. In her previous congregational position, people felt and commented on the limitations placed on Sarah's ministry, for instance, the fact that she was unable to participate in some aspects of ministry with them. This particular position ended with a great deal of pain, when power and manipulation were used against Sarah. She left that congregation very broken, and took time for healing. In the research interview, Sarah commented that this painful experience was significant in her choice to become ordained, although it was certainly not the sole reason. It was one of the many dimensions in her decision.

When she re-entered ministry it was as a sole-paid minister in a smaller setting. Here she discovered how much she enjoyed the "full range of ministry". She began to explore whether she was being called to ordained ministry. The affirmation of her ministry by the people there was another sign that God was indeed calling her to ordained ministry. A factor entering into her decision was the prospect of future employment. Sarah pragmatically realized that she would have more opportunities to pursue ministry in a pastoral charge if she were ordained. She recalled the statement of a conference staff member to her: "You have two strikes against you, right off the bat. You are a woman and you're diaconal." While this comment was made some time ago, Sarah believes it still holds true now. Even so, the main emphasis in her choice to become ordained lies in her sense of calling, rather than in a response to the church's polity and functioning.

The response of her present congregation to her pursuit of further education was that this upgrading was not needed. In other words, they wanted to affirm her ministry just as she was, and certainly there was no pressure from them for Sarah to become ordained. Yet, Sarah has become aware of the value of her academic courses as an enhancement of her present ministry.

Sarah was vehement that she is not abandoning diaconal ministry. She views her ordination as a step along her journey, but not as a "step up". She was troubled by losing her diaconal designation after she is ordained and having only one designation. She would prefer to be called both diaconal and ordained, seeing the two as complementary. Sarah gave no evidence of feeling ambivalent about the prestige she would gain in becoming ordained. To her, it provided her with greater opportunity.

Sarah showed a keen interest in what I was discovering from other participants. In her journey to become ordained, she has felt quite alone, like a pioneer. She was fascinated to learn that others had similar experiences to her own.

The "lens" through which Sarah views ministry is the functional lens.[121] She describes diaconal ministry as a specialized ministry, with the specialities forming certain limits. By contrast, ordained ministry is the whole range of ministry. Sarah used another "lens", the style lens, when she described the nature of diaconal ministry as empowering people to identify their own gifts and inviting them to realize those gifts in ministry. The major emphasis in her interview, however, was the functional lens. I surmise that her painful experience of feeling confined by diaconal functions and then being mistreated when ordained personnel misused their greater power, has meant that her life was profoundly affected by the ways in which church people have interpreted ministry using the functional lens.

Christine

In the interview Christine talked easily, once she was comfortable. She conveyed a confidence in herself, her views, her ministry, her choices. She had no difficulty in claiming a strong diaconal identity. Her responses to questions were very focused, adding lively stories that embellished the point of the question. In her story-telling she was full of emotion--shock, distress, grief, and also humour. The interview was spotted with laughter, especially as Christine poked fun at the patriarchy of the church. Christine offered analysis from her feminist perspective as the interview progressed. She discussed her theology forthrightly, particularly her attraction to a theology of ministry based on the functions of ministry.

Christine graduated in the early 1970's from the Centre for Christian Studies and was commissioned to diaconal ministry the same year. In her formative years she encountered strong, theologically articulate, lay women who offered leadership in the church. These models meant that Christine easily accepted leadership from women during theological education and she had found it natural to identify herself in commissioned ministry, as it was called at that time. "It seemed like the right thing to do." Her ministry took her into shared ministry congregations where United Church and Anglican Church members had joined together to form one congregation as a forerunner of the proposed union between the two churches. Here she experienced discrimination as a woman from both denominations. The United Church prevented her from continuing her first ministry position when she got married, and her Anglican

[121] See Appendix B.

colleagues verbally harassed her about being a woman in ministry. At the time the United Church policy required an annual re-appointment for commissioned ministers in pastoral charge ministry. This made for job insecurity that was especially difficult for Christine's life partner. She decided to seek ordination in the Anglican Church, with the idea of having joint orders in each denomination (an ordained Anglican and a commissioned United Church minister).

With the end of church union talks Christine's dream of joint orders also came to an end. Christine continued to pursue ordination in the United Church. She describes this as a pragmatic decision. There was some controversy during the candidacy phase, since she did not articulate theological reasons for becoming ordained. She attests that this is why she has maintained diaconal identity: she never felt called to word and sacrament any more than to educational ministry. Following her ordination, Christine's nurturing by other diaconal ministers has continued. She is currently part of the diaconal network and has been an intimate part of the diaconal circle of women who have given care to one another quite literally "in sickness and in death". Recently, she has worked to reclaim a more public diaconal identity through changing the United Church yearbook description of herself to DM (Diaconal Minister).

For Christine, the lens with which she looks at diaconal ministry[122] is a mixed lens. The functional view of ministry is quite strong. She identifies her ministry with her job position. She also expands this concept of function by the way she sees herself as an educator in any function of ministry. She quoted a congregational member: "Whatever you do, it always turns out to be an educational event!" This suggests a second "lens" to diaconal ministry, a basic educational **style** that is important in defining diaconal ministry for Christine. In her description of the diaconal circle of women caring for one another as family when the church did not look after them, Christine presents diaconal ministry as a life commitment, a third "lens" to diaconal ministry. Christine was highly conscious of the power differential between diaconal and ordained ministers; she openly discussed the inner ambivalence she feels about the privileges she now has.

Helen

Helen was originally chosen to be a "practice interview", but she is included here because her responses revealed valuable data, particularly from the perspective of a fairly recent graduate and one whose diaconal identity was "not strong" (her own words). Despite the fact that Helen was a student at the

[122] See Appendix B.

Centre for Christian Studies while I was a staff person, we shared only one course together, a fairly large class, and did not have a close relationship. In the interview she exuded a self-composure combined with a direct and honest approach. Helen is not the kind of person to try to make things nice for the sake of harmony in relating; she maintains her own ground. As we talked, she was willing to reveal her thoughts and experience. She spoke reflectively about her dilemmas in ministry and about her philosophical commitments. She became quite animated when she talked about her recent experience in pastoral ministry, working as a team with a staff associate.

Helen graduated in the later 1980's and entered into chaplaincy as a diaconal minister. Her experience of theological education is that she came unprepared for what she found at the Centre for Christian Studies, with its feminist stance and congregational focus. At one point during her candidacy Helen considered switching to Emmanuel College and becoming ordained, but others at CCS dissuaded her. Helen's goals were to pursue chaplaincy, but when she found that jobs were scarce and the chaplaincy job she held was less than satisfying, she decided to take further courses. This gradually led to ordination, with the discovery that an M. Div. was not a necessary qualification for ordination and that the necessary educational requirements were within her reach.

Helen's choice for ordination had a lot to do with people's discriminatory attitudes to diaconal ministry; as a woman seeking to affirm herself, she was not about to endure a "junior" position in ministry. The dissolution of her marriage was another factor in the decision; it meant that her options opened up. Ordained ministry became possible. Even though settlement was not required for her at that time, it was an option Helen chose.

Helen's dilemma around ministry did not have so much to do with diaconal versus ordained; instead she was resolving the issue of whether to stay in chaplaincy or enter congregational ministry. For this reason, some of the interview questions about choosing ordination did not apply directly to Helen's experience. Helen had clearly resolved that if she was choosing congregational ministry, she would embark on that ministry as one ordained. There was no vacillation. She did not see herself in Christian education work. As well, she did not want to spend energy fighting for recognition, as she knew diaconal ministers have to do. Because of her socialization as a woman and "other things going on in my life, my self-esteem felt better to be a Rev. and not have to explain myself all the time." Ordination, particularly preaching, became a challenge for Helen to meet, something she looks on now as an achievement.

The "lens" through which Helen looks at ministry is definitely a functional approach to diaconal ministry.[123] She chose against diaconal ministry because she did not see herself doing the diaconal function of educational ministry in congregations and because she did not wish to be in a team ministry which devalued her ministry role. At the same time Helen spoke about her identification with the philosophy and the principles of diaconal ministry: "being part of the people and empowering the people". Perhaps Helen was operating with a "reality" lens of the way in which the church views diaconal ministry rather than her own "ideal" vision of non-hierarchical ministry. Certainly her decisions were guided by a functional view.

Lois

Lois approached the interview eager to talk. She wanted the opportunity to tell her story to me, as a representative of the diaconal community. It became something of an accountability session and I had to be insistent to return to the focus for each of the interview questions. She did not appear to resent my interventions, however. I sensed that she wanted to repay a favour from a number of years ago when I had spent time giving her support during a difficult experience while in a team ministry. The frustration she experienced at that time appears to be a factor in her decision to become ordained. Lois was very revealing in telling her stories of dismay, hurt, betrayal, and anger. She was equally revealing in expressing her relationship with God through the prayer conversations she reported. Lois seemed surprisingly uncertain about diaconal identity--surprising to me because I knew her to be an advocate for diaconal ministers. As I reflected further, I noted that "deaconess" was the word being used when Lois came to the United Church Training School and without continuing nurture by the diaconal community it is understandable that a person would be hesitant to describe its current essence. In the interview, Lois was candid and open, even transparent; she found it somewhat uncomfortable to be in a situation that was not reciprocal.

As a graduate of the United Church Training School, Lois was unable to be designated a deaconess because she chose to be married. Instead she was commissioned as a missionary along with her missionary husband (ordained). Twenty years later when she was back in Canada and active in educational ministry, she was "recognized" as a diaconal minister when all missionary graduates from UCTS were given diaconal status. This was a justice issue, to ensure employment benefits. Lois became ordained in response to an original calling she felt as a young woman. At that time she had been diverted from ordained ministry by a prominent ordained minister who advised her to go to the United Church

[123] See Appendix B.

Training School and marry a minister. Her sense of calling, however, never totally disappeared and when it resurfaced, she was ready to pursue more education and seek ordination.

A primary reason for becoming ordained was to gain recognition and church approval for her ministry. From her ongoing diaconal ministry, she had become aware of her need for further training and preparation for ministry. As well, sacraments had become increasingly important to her. Apparently Lois was as frank in her candidacy interviews as she was with me. She told a committee that she needed the status of ordained ministry with the result that one man angrily erupted and left the interview. Yet the message about status is freely given out by the church; a Ministry and Personnel Committee told Lois that the team ministry she envisioned would not be possible unless she became a "real" minister. Lois accomplished her education for ordained ministry during a time when she faced great personal obstacles in her life: her mother died, she was raising five teenagers (one child with an ongoing illness), and she was struggling with a marriage where her partner felt threatened by changes she was making, including her decision to seek ordination.

The "lens" with which Lois looks at diaconal ministry is somewhat clouded by the development of diaconal identity over time. She tends to describe diaconal ministry as a style or an approach to ministry.[124] Such an approach would be marked by teamwork and support given to lay people of all ages in their contribution to ministry. While Lois may be somewhat fuzzy in her own description of diaconal ministry, she remains passionate about it. Clearly she sees diaconal ministry as a vital ministry of the church, but she also sees the church as being resistant to diaconal ministry. In this sense Lois shows some awareness of the radical nature of this style of ministry.

Elizabeth

The research interview provided Elizabeth with a welcome opportunity to explain how she came to be ordained. As one who has felt misunderstood in this decision, especially by diaconal ministers, Elizabeth was more than willing to share her perspectives with a diaconal minister willing to listen. She was very open about her experiences of hurt and devastation which surrounded being misunderstood by some who saw her as opting for a more privileged position. The theme of this interview was "I belong!". Elizabeth was very insistent that she is not "formerly diaconal". Her call to ordained ministry was an expanded calling, not a different calling from diaconal ministry. She now has five vows to live out in

[124] See Appendix B.

ministry, rather than three. Much of the interview was laced with stories of current ministry activities which Elizabeth told with great enthusiasm. She seemed to be determined to convince me (and others) that she had not abandoned her educational ministry. The emotional tenor of the interview had a large range, from excitement and warmth to dismay, devastation, and anger. This interview, more than the others, became a mutual discovery and exploration of ideas. As a researcher, I joined her in positing some reflections about her experience.

Elizabeth graduated from the Centre for Christian Studies in the early 80's and was commissioned the same year. Her ordination came in the early 1990's. She was in a prime location to continue to be nurtured in diaconal ministry. She had diaconal friends and she had opportunities to continue her association with the Centre for Christian Studies through committee work and field education with students. Her ministry with congregations extended her possibilities within ministry by offering opportunities to preach, teach, and officiate at funerals.

Elizabeth began to "want it all". She describes herself as a generalist at heart. She reported that as a diaconal minister she felt restricted by the three functions and, later after ordination, she felt restricted as to the ordained functions expected of her. She had long carried the vision of a team ministry that would be truly equal, with both team members doing all the functions of congregational ministry in a shared arrangement. A conference personnel minister told her that such a team would only happen if she became ordained. Her own experience as a woman confirmed that she needed to be ordained to offset the devaluation she experienced in teams. While she could not easily change her gender, she could change her ministry status by becoming ordained. Elizabeth objected to the candidacy process which took no account of her covenant with the church as a diaconal minister. It was as if she had to start all over to prove herself worthy of ordered ministry.

When Elizabeth was commissioned, the name "diaconal" had not yet been chosen or established by General Council. She was one of the gathering of commissioned ministers, certified churchmen and deaconesses who came together to choose the name. Being part of the consensus allowed her to fully "own" the new name.

The "lens" Elizabeth uses for ministry appears to be mainly functional.[125] Diaconal ministry is

[125] See Appendix B.

primarily identified through its educational function. Educational ministry becomes the perspective from which all of ministry is done. In this sense, the educational perspective might be seen as an approach or style of ministry. Yet Elizabeth spoke almost entirely about the functions of ministry to describe both diaconal and ordained ministry.

Researcher: My Own Choices

While not a participant in this research, I include my own account of the life choices I made in entering diaconal ministry. I have not, to this point, seriously considered becoming ordained; yet I am aware there are many parallels in my life with the choices made by the participants. So that the reader may have more acquaintance with the personal experience affecting the bias I bring to this research, I present my personal story here.

Since my father was an ordained minister, I became familiar with many ordained ministers. My first contact with a deaconess was at Knox United in Edmonton where Ruth Simpson was on staff. She was a friend of our family, yet I never thought of her as a model, not even as I look back now.

I recall my best friend, when we were 13 or 14, telling me that she wanted to become an ordained minister. I had never heard of a woman ordained minister then. Beyond wondering if it was possible, I could not imagine why she would want to be ordained. Would it combine with marriage or would she be giving that up? I had not yet caught the feminist spirit; I was clearly bound by sexism.

My interest in diaconal ministry developed as a teen-ager out of an excitement in leading groups at the church. In our church the teen Sunday school was so large that we team-taught our peers, with some coaching from an adult sponsor. This was very heady stuff. I attended weekends for young people designed to introduce us to full-time Christian vocations. As I look back, my vocational choice quite unconsciously combined my mother's teaching career and my father's church profession.

When I entered Covenant College, I was already married to an Anglican who was studying to be a priest. Upon graduation, he chose to become a television producer instead (Man Alive). His abandonment of our goals for team ministry meant that I faced a vocational question for myself. It was a moment of taking responsibility for myself, my financial well-being, and my own future. I, too was ready to graduate, and it seemed obvious to me that I should seek a position in a church where I could practise what I had been learning at theological school. I was clear that I did not want to preach.

Since I had not expected to serve in the United Church, I had not even considered becoming a deaconess. I was content to work as a lay person. When I began a position as CE Director in Hamilton, a deaconess, Lily Uyeda, befriended me and introduced me to church courts and to diaconal networks. In my congregation I discovered that I was not regarded as ministry personnel. No one saw any reason for me to attend Session meetings unless I was making a presentation. At presbytery, I was given the status of corresponding member but no vote. When I went to a continuing education event for team ministers, I talked with some deaconesses in team ministry and began to consider becoming a deaconess mainly so that I would not have to fight for my place in the church systems. I was reconciled to leaving my lay status behind because I was no longer truly lay; I was doing the work of ministry personnel and had the professional preparation which comes from a theological education. I recall no twinges about gaining power or being co-opted into the hierarchy of the ordered ministry; my main dilemma concerned whether this choice was a life-long vocation.

I felt a little bashful about coming " late" to the decision a year after graduation, but I also had the confidence of having "tried it on for size". The only difference for me in being designated a deaconess was that I had entered into accountability with the larger church. I was willing to be under the authority of the Presbytery in order to have their recognition. As I look back, I see my decision as a very pragmatic one. I did not see any point in swimming upstream as a lay person in a diaconal ministry role.

My diaconal identity came later. As a free-lancer, I was asked to produce a slide-tape on diaconal ministry[126] for a national gathering of deaconesses, commissioned ministers and certified church employees. Through this research and writing I found out who I had become by discovering the long and honourable line of diaconal ministry from biblical times to the present United Church. Since that national gathering, where we named ourselves "diaconal", I have continued to live passionately as a diaconal minister.

Currently, as I write this dissertation I am unemployed. My position as a theological educator at the Centre for Christian Studies ended when the school was moved to Winnipeg. That painful ending has left me with a vocational question. I now have to face the practical issues the participants of the research have already faced--issues of employment, security, career development, sexism, power and authority. Discernment about God's calling is again a live issue for me. From this point on my journey I feel many

[126] Kay Heuer, Waiting as Fast as We Can, Slide-tape produced through the co-operation of Berkeley Studio and Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, United Church of Canada, Toronto, 1982.

points of connection with the participants in ways that were never expected when I launched into this research project.

How do I define my own "lens" with which I view diaconal ministry? I can point to the chapter co-written with Teresa Jones, where we interpreted diaconal ministry as a feminist model of ministry. In that chapter, diaconal ministry is described as both a ministry style and an ideological perspective.

> *"The style and emphasis of this ministry embodies feminist ideals such as mutuality, the valuing of each person's experience, collaboration and consultation. Central to this style is a transformative stance that instills passion and hope for ongoing liberation, both personal and societal."*[127]

And,

> *"The consciousness about seeking justice means that there is no choice but to adopt a lifestyle that reflects one's commitment to diaconal ministry. Diaconal ministry is about giving life. The pursuit of justice itself is life-giving. This is not a profession or career but a way of being and interacting that is being chosen. There is no choice then, but to stand with the oppressed to press onwards for societal change out of the recognition that the liberation of all persons is intimately bound up with our own liberation."*[128]

As I set these words against the backdrop of my vocational choices, I am conscious of the idealism of the perspective and the realism of my choices. Perhaps my "operational lens" on diaconal ministry has more to do with church polity than theology. Yet, as one who collaborated in writing the Diakonia Statement of Belief,[129] I resonate most thoroughly with the ideology or worldview lens for diaconal ministry with its focus on justice-making.

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[127] Kay Heuer and Teresa Jones, "Diaconal Ministry as a Feminist Model of Ministry", in Gertrude Lebans (ed.) Gathered by the River: Reflections and Essays of Women Doing Ministry, Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1994. p. 116

[128] Ibid, p.129.

[129] See Appendix C.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS : MANY REASONS TO BE ORDAINED

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will report the themes which emerged from the interviews. Obviously, the participants are not all the same; as the previous chapter shows, there is a wide variation in their life experiences. Their reasons for choosing ordination were particular to each one, and yet there were many points of convergence. The report here will attempt to honour the feminist research principle of searching for similarities without discounting the differences. Diversity is accounted for rather than diminished by categorization and specific voices are given their own reality. As in the interviews, I am committed to the women of this research telling their own stories as subjects rather than objects. What do their combined voices say about the reasons for becoming ordained?

PERSONAL REASONS

Sense of Call

For many of the participants, a strong pronounced sense of calling led them to choose to become ordained. It is no surprise that participants would describe their choice in terms of a calling, since "calling" is the language our United Church uses for ministry of all kinds. Indeed, the theology and practice of the United Church requires that a person in designated ministry be able to articulate a sense of "call", both from a personal standpoint and from a community standpoint. The strength of their calling was somewhat surprising since they were already in a designated ministry. For some participants, it seemed to be a calling that could not be ignored. I discovered that at least two of the participants had an "original calling" as young people to ordained ministry and had been de-railed from ordination because of sexist policies of the United Church. For these two, it was a return in later life to the fulfilment of an earlier sense of ministry. Alice said, "I was already in love, and finally engaged to the person I am still married to, when this call came. [laughs]. So there were some practical problems with being ordained at that time. In fact, it wasn't done.

Married people, married women, were not ordained." Lois talked about a gnawing call to ordained ministry that followed her all through her adult life. She commented, "It was like a 'caughtness' in that I couldn't get out of it." She went on to say that not to be ordained would be a kind of death. For Helen, the calling was to chaplaincy, not so much to diaconal ministry; when she decided to be ordained, her calling

represented a shift towards serving a congregation. These three participants gave the distinct impression that ordination would have been a better choice than diaconal ministry, had the way to ordained ministry been open to them.

For other participants, the calling to ordination was more like an extension of their ministry than a change of ministry. For these participants, the call was a "shift" of interest or a widening of interest to include preaching and worship functions. Elizabeth and Joanna were both very clear about ordination as a way of involving themselves in a broader, more general ministry. Both developed an interest in worship leadership, but they placed emphasis on equal commitment to ordained and diaconal functions, Joanna speaking about having two primary foci, Elizabeth claiming five vows. Sarah, too, responded to a sense of call expanding her ministry; she discovered through her experience of pastoral charge ministry that she enjoyed the "wider range" and that people affirmed her for a more general ministry. For these people, along with Christine and Maggie, the calling to ordained ministry was an extension of their previous ministry. It was an "add-on" calling. Maggie called it a "slide over".

For Hannah, while not abandoning diaconal ministry, the call to ordained ministry was a profound realization that she belonged in worship leadership, and that, for her, worship was what "gave her life" in ministry. For whatever reasons, these participants were clearly drawn to the functions of ordained ministry, either to make them the central focus or to include the additional functions within their ministry.

Gifts: Specialist to Generalist

For some, the calling to ordained ministry was based on a consideration of their gifts for ministry. Joanna and Sarah had served in a pastoral charge as interim ministers, thus experiencing a broad, general ministry first-hand as diaconal ministers before choosing ordination. Christine also served as the only sole-paid minister. Elizabeth, Lois, Maggie, Alice, Hannah were convinced through their experience of multiple staff ministry in a congregation that they would choose ordination. For several participants the particular functions of diaconal ministry meant that they were seen as specialists and therefore confined in their ministry roles. As Alice put it, "I started to feel that I had outgrown that role." But the opportunities to expand into other functions of ministry normally associated with "word and sacrament" were extremely limited. For Alice, these opportunities presented themselves only when the ordained person was sick or on holidays. Others, like Elizabeth and Sarah, would concur with Alice's frustration over having few opportunities to preach, few opportunities to do pastoral care in hospitals and few opportunities to conduct funerals and marriage ceremonies. Through congregational ministry, these women were realizing that they

had gifts for ministry beyond the diaconal functions and they wanted to use these gifts on a more regular basis. They began to feel restricted in the diaconal "specialities". Ordained ministry presented a way for the participants to develop and offer more gifts in ministry.

Processing the Call

Coming to terms with a different or broadened sense of calling was not a straightforward process for most participants. For some there was an inner wrestling. Lois vividly described her spiritual self-doubts as part of a dialogue with God. After thinking about the idea for some time, Alice came to the place where she asked herself, "What are you waiting for?" Elizabeth noted that her call was not a quick AHA, but a long, slow process; gradually she concluded that she would take the step of ordination with the full knowledge that she would be misunderstood by her diaconal colleagues. For others, the testing of a call to ordination directly involved a group of people. Christine consulted her congregation, a shared Anglican-United ministry, to see if they would support her in becoming ordained as an Anglican while remaining a United Church diaconal minister. Joanna had previously warned a group of friends that if ever she were to consider ordination, they were to "speak to her". As she discovered, they both spoke to her about their concerns and gave her their support.

Role of the Candidacy Process in Affirming the Call

In the United Church, gifts for ministry are tested and approved through the candidacy process, a series of interviews at the local, presbytery, and conference levels. Almost all participants found the candidacy process to be an affirming experience. Christine experienced some negative reactions because, for her, the reasons to be ordained were more pragmatic than theological. Lois encountered difficulty during one interview when she openly stated that having "status" was something that she sought in becoming ordained. A member of the committee stomped out of the room, refusing to be part of approving such a reason; others, however, heard Lois' story and gave their affirmation--something that Lois continues to value deeply. Elizabeth had a strong reaction against being made to follow the same process for candidacy approval as she had done earlier when she was commissioned as a diaconal minister. She railed against the insult of having to prove herself once again as "worthy" for ordered ministry when she had already been approved. To her mind, this was an insult to diaconal ministers. On the other hand, Maggie was appreciative of the more receptive interview she had as she prepared for ordination, in contrast with the formidable grilling she had experienced on the way to becoming a deaconess.

Self-fulfilment

In some of the interviews, self-fulfilment was a significant theme. Ordination was a way for these participants to enhance their sense of self through embarking on a form of ministry which was more fulfilling to them. Helen noted that it felt better to have a recognized ministry and to be known as a "Reverend" rather than always having to be explaining herself. For her, ordination became a goal to be achieved. She overcame many hurdles in proving to herself that she was capable of doing this ministry. Developing the self-confidence necessary for preaching was one of the "victories" over her earlier socialization which had "kept her in the background". Lois discovered that her path to ordination was also a path of personal growth. She was hungry "to grow to find out who I am!" The approval of the candidacy committees had a special importance for Lois, since she put herself before them with honesty and openness as a way of testing her calling. With ordination, Lois knew that others confirmed her in ministry in a way that she had never known before. For Elizabeth, however, the approval she needed came earlier with diaconal ministry; ordination was her route towards the fulfilment of a dream of team ministry. Hannah explained to me, "I have never been over-brimming with self-confidence...It takes a long time for a little girl from [a small working class town] to think that they are good enough to do that kind of thing [ordained ministry]." As she has matured Hannah has grown into that sense of capability and has competently handled very responsible roles. Earlier in her life, however, she noted how vital it was for those offering guidance to suggest to her what ministry she might consider.

Not all participants focused on the aspect of self-fulfilment or self-development. For some, it was a non-issue. Maggie told me that she had been raised to believe that she could do anything. Her consideration of ordination had more to do with her life-direction than with her sense of capability. Christine grew up with strong women models. In her considerations of ordained ministry, her capability was not in question, but rather the community's support and the support of the Anglican bishop.

For all the participants, it was important to have confirmation of their chosen ministries through testing, affirmation, and recommendation. From a feminist perspective, the discovery by women that they were capable of holding highly responsible roles was a great step forward, not only personally but socially as well.

Theological View of Ministry

In the area of theological reflection, I found many commonalities between the participants. There was agreement on the theological nature of the call to ministry--that no theological difference exists

between the various callings to ministry, be it lay or ordered. Specifically, then, the participants believed that there is no theological difference between the call to ordained ministry and the call to diaconal ministry; the difference is only in the way in which each call is lived out. As they discussed the theological issues related to the church and ministry, none of the participants gave the impression that their theology had changed radically in the process of becoming ordained. Their theology remained consistent with the theology they articulated as diaconal ministers. Parenthetically, I want to add that there is no suggestion here that the participants had not evolved theologically, only that their decision for ordination itself had not brought about a radical shift.

The theological questions I posed to the participants were different for the two groups of participants. The pilot study participants were asked what theological distinctions they made between ordained and diaconal ministries. The project/dissertation groups was asked a series of questions: Can you think of an image of the church? How is ministry (ordained, diaconal, lay) symbolized? How well does this symbol represent your theology of ministry? Has your theology of ministry changed with ordination?

Common views emerged in the theological statements about ministry: The people are the church, and ministry belongs to the people. Both ordained and diaconal ministers were seen as providing support and challenge in a way that facilitates the people in their ministry. They identified that the church needs ongoing particular leadership (ordered ministry) which is authorized by the church structures. God is actively present in the church's action of ordaining or commissioning.

The project/dissertation participants presented some fascinating images of the church and ministry. To illustrate the church, Alice developed the symbol of a circle, broken in places to reach out to similar faith circles around it. Maggie imagined a church where people were hungry to learn. Sarah drew upon symbols of the body, open hands and heart. Joanna used a biblical image from Ezekiel, where he has a vision of life-giving water flowing out from under the doors of the temple to give sustenance to the world around. Hannah was in tune with the advent season, which was when her interview took place; her image of the church was a stable where there is comfort and warmth before the necessary return to the pastures. The role of ministry is to welcome, nurture, and--yes--to prod.

The project/dissertation participants responded to a question asking them to interpret diaconal ministry. For both groups, their views of diaconal ministry permeated the interviews. Despite the different eras in which the participants entered into ministry and assumed a diaconal identity, there was significant similarity in the interpretation of a diaconal style of ministry. The catch words were used over and over:

empower, resource, consultation, working with people, consensus, small-group education.

It was clear that all of the participants had adopted the term 'diaconal,' proposed to General Council by the diaconal community in 1982. The strength of diaconal identity among the participants was somewhat surprising to me. Since they had chosen ordination, I was not fully prepared for the vehemence with which they asserted their continuing diaconal identity. Only one, Helen, told me that she identified as ordained. Alice mentioned that during her candidacy interviews she was informed that she would no longer be diaconal in the eyes of the church. The rest of the participants insisted that becoming ordained did not mean that they had "abandoned diaconal ministry", as Sarah put it. Christine had already reclaimed her diaconal status in the United Church Yearbook. Elizabeth makes a practice of refuting the phrase "used to be diaconal" by declaring that she is currently diaconal as well as ordained; she feels committed to five vows of ministry. Joanna, as well, talked about having two foci, both equally important. Maggie stated that she identifies with diaconal ministry much more strongly than she does with ordained ministry. Hannah said, "We [those of us who became ordained] still have diaconal blood in our veins". When making her presentation at Conference as an ordained candidate, Hannah used her deaconess pin as the symbol she was carrying into ministry.

The interviews indicated that most participants see themselves as both diaconal and ordained and would prefer not to lose their diaconal designation officially. Along with their verbal assertions of continuing diaconal identity, many participants illustrated how they function in a diaconal style in ministry or how they are involved in educational ministry. I observed that an emphasis on service or justice ministry was mentioned by a few participants, but not the majority. Ministry as service to the world was more often absent than present in the interviews. I note that this lack of emphasis on service as ministry to/with the marginalized is a stark contrast to the Statement of Belief adopted by Diakonia of the United Church in 1992.

Appendix B sets forth a theoretical framework of six "lenses" with which people view ministry. I developed these "lenses" as a way to make sense of the possible approaches to ministry which the participants might take. In Chapter Five, I related each of the individual stories to the "lenses" for ministry. The majority held a functional view of ministry, although the functional view may have been in combination with other views. When asked to describe diaconal ministry, all of the project/dissertation participants used the functions of diaconal ministry as their primary definition.

I contend that a functional view of ministry allows for a more "natural" movement from one form of ministry to the other, even if that means expanding ministry to include others. When diaconal ministry is seen as a set of functions to be performed on behalf of the church, then a change is much like changing one's job description. In this view diaconal ministry and ordained ministry share the same essence of ministry, but apply that essence in different areas. With a "style-of-ministry lens",[130] such as Maggie portrays, there seems to be greater difficulty in changing identity, unless the diaconal style of ministry can be taken into ordained ministry. Some participants have no difficulty with using the diaconal approach, but others experience constraints placed upon them by congregational expectations of a style of leadership. When the "lens" for ministry includes "life commitment" or "worldview", I expected that the shift to ordained ministry would then be a large and difficult shift indeed. Joanna was one who gave evidence of some struggle around whether to become ordained because of her long commitment to diaconal ministry and to diaconal associations. It seemed fitting that her colleagues and friends challenged her to consider priorities as she thought about ordained ministry.

SYSTEMIC REASONS

Context

The participants represented a wide variation of time periods for beginning diaconal ministry. Several graduated from the United Church Training School during the early or mid-sixties. The most recent graduate was 1987 (Centre for Christian Studies). After the pilot study, I made an expressed effort to interview people whose decision to become ordained had been more recent--most of these were during the 1990's. Of the total nine interviews, five were ordained after 1991, and one has not yet been ordained.

The time span certainly affected the language with which participants described diaconal ministry. The references to diaconal ministry strongly represented the time period in which they attended the Centre for Christian Studies or its predecessors. For instance, those who graduated in the sixties spoke about team ministry; those who graduated in the eighties emphasized an educational perspective.

Regional differences within the United Church strongly affected the choice to become ordained. At one point in my research I began to wonder if the trend to become ordained was an Ontario phenomenon, since my gleaning from the Record of Proceedings listed the bulk of those choosing to become ordained

[130] See Appendix B.

as Ontario residents. From 1985 - 1996 fourteen diaconal ministers were ordained. Thirteen of those were ordained in Ontario conferences; one was ordained in Saskatchewan Conference. In some conferences in the United Church, such as Saskatchewan, diaconal ministers are easily placed in pastoral charges as sole-paid ministers whereas for other conferences such as Newfoundland, this is rare. Both Saskatchewan and Bay of Quinte Conferences have granted a universal license for diaconal ministers in pastoral charges to administer sacraments. Alberta and Northwest Conference approves the licence to diaconal ministers upon recommendation from the pastoral charge and presbytery and upon completion of appropriate courses; that licence lasts for the duration of their ministry in that conference. In other conferences, such as Hamilton, the license is never certain. When there is no flexibility to move from multiple staff ministry to sole-paid ministry, more have chosen ordained ministry. Or, like Sarah, they may have chosen it because they wanted to be able to arrange a future change in pastoral relations more easily.

The church context was highly significant in the decision for Christine. Hers was a specific situation where she served a shared Anglican and United Church congregation at the time when union between the two denominations was being explored. For others, the church context was certainly present in the form of limited employment for diaconal ministers and increasing acceptance of ordained women, for instance. Yet most of the participants viewed their decision as primarily a vocational choice, with little emphasis on their context. As a researcher I became aware of the strong influence of the context; however, it remained a relatively unconscious factor in the minds of most participants until I raised it through the interview questions. When I asked, "What was going on in our church at the time you were ordained?", most participants could name some trends, such as the increase in the number of streams of ministry in the United Church; but only a few made direct connections to their choice in becoming ordained.

Connection to the Diaconal Community

The numbers of diaconal ministers varies across the regions and also changes with differing time periods. The significance of the diaconal community might be that strong diaconal support would lessen the need to become ordained. This factor was one of the assumptions that I set out to test. As we will see later, it was not a significant factor in the decision of the participants. Maggie was one who missed diaconal contact when she faced the crisis of losing her husband and, later, when she made the choice to enter ordained ministry. Within her new context, however, she was immediately welcomed into diaconal circles and was able to maintain her diaconal identity through this support. Christine was geographically isolated

from other diaconal ministers as she was making the decision. When she moved to another conference to be settled she, like Maggie, was welcomed by diaconal colleagues.

The degree of connection to the diaconal community does not seem to make a difference to the outcome of the decision. In other words, I did not find that all participants made their decision to become ordained after a period of isolation from diaconal colleagues. Indeed, some of the women in this study were very well connected to the diaconal community. The degree of connection did not affect the outcome but had something to do with the process of the decision-making and with the level of difficulty or ambivalence experienced. For Joanna and Elizabeth, both of whom had easy access to diaconal colleagues, the decision was long and carefully considered. In a conversation with Nancy Sanders, staff person for Diaconal Ministry Advocacy, she revealed that when diaconal ministers phoned her to investigate how to qualify for ordination, one of their chief concerns was the disapproval they might face from their peers. The interviews showed that when the research participants did encounter disapproval, the hurt and devastation was felt deeply.

When I asked, during the interviews, if there were people they avoided talking to as they were making their decision, most named their diaconal colleagues. There were varying reasons: distance, isolation, little ongoing contact. One prominent reason was that they expected disapproval. Only two participants mentioned receiving support from diaconal colleagues. Elizabeth was one who was certain that her decision would be misunderstood by her diaconal friends. Sarah came to the interview with me, convincing herself as she drove, that her experience was her own and it only had to make sense to her, not to anybody else. In my notes after the interviews, more than once I recorded that these women seemed eager to talk to a diaconal person who was interested in hearing the stories which led them to ordination.

Influential Persons

The interviews included a question about persons the participants turned to for support in making their decision. Most had a close relationship which influenced the decision towards or away from ordained ministry. One participant discovered that with the end of her marriage she was now free to enter ordained ministry and accept settlement. Another participant spoke about an opposition from her partner, but most "partnered" participants found that their partners were their most valued support-persons. Four of the participants had partners who were already ordained. While no statistical conclusions can be drawn from such a small sample, I believe the high percentage indicates that the partnership with an ordained person

very likely influenced the choice, or at the least, presented ordination as a realistic possibility.

Those who were not "partnered" with an ordained person tended to find other ordained people who supported them. For all participants, encouragement from key people in church structures was definitely important. Some participants mentioned conference or national staff who directed them towards ordination. As outlined earlier, church candidacy committees were generally supportive.

Church Policies

The question I posed to both the pilot group and to the project/dissertation group was the same: Is there something the church might have done that would have meant you did not need to become ordained? For some participants, this question made absolutely no sense at all. They **wanted** ordination in a way that I did not anticipate, from my own diaconal perspective. It was not a matter of being constrained or forced into ordination, but a matter of freely choosing it.

Nevertheless, the policies of the United Church of Canada significantly affected the vocational choices for the participants. The policies set the parameters within which decisions might be made. Certain individuals were caught in archaic and sexist policies, such as Lois who was not allowed to be designated a deaconess because of her marriage, or Christine who was removed from her congregational position by presbytery because she got married. In her next job Christine was curtailed by the regulation that she had to be appointed annually to work in a pastoral charge as a diaconal minister. Others were affected by policies which operated more informally. An instance is Alice's presbytery where it was not possible to work as a diaconal minister in a pastoral charge as a sole-paid minister. All these policies made it difficult to continue in congregational leadership as a diaconal minister. For the majority, the church policies favoured ordained ministry. Helen, on the other hand, was one participant who was originally discouraged by the candidature policies surrounding internship. This was the only case I found where church policy worked in favour of diaconal ministry.

So much depended on the church policies that were current. With a different time period, quite possibly different decisions may have been made. Participants observed, as I did, that policies have changed over the years. Generally there has been a move toward greater justice and equal treatment for diaconal ministers.

Regarding sacramental privilege for diaconal ministers, there were opposing views among the

participants. While the pilot group supported the need for diaconal ministers to have access to a licence for sacraments, some in the project/dissertation group were strongly of the opinion that diaconal ministers should become ordained if they want to celebrate the sacraments. Since the public and most church members equate sacramental privilege with ministerial authority, the church policy restricting this privilege to ordained ministers becomes problematic for many diaconal ministers who envisage equality in ministry.

Diaconal Ministry as a "Lesser" Ministry

The participants were in full agreement that diaconal ministers are seen to be in a "lesser" position within the order of ministry in the United Church. The lack of the United Church's understanding and support for its own diaconal ministry is indeed a problem. Hannah pointedly stated that the United Church is ambivalent concerning diaconal ministry. Lois put it even more strongly when she said, " The church has tremendous resistance to diaconal ministry."

Among diaconal circles there is a constant attempt to address this problem through education of church committees, presbyteries, and congregations. Stories continue to be rampant about not being seen as valid ministers. The United Church report, Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry refers to the common frustration of diaconal ministers who are asked when they are going to "go on and be ordained" or why they are not "real ministers."[131]

During the time when they were diaconal ministers, the participants found that they were a minority, sometimes isolated, often devalued and occasionally painfully terminated from their positions. The limitations they experienced in their diaconal roles was a limitation of their ministry potential. Because in so many places, diaconal ministers are expected to work in a multiple staff setting, they are not seen as having the responsibility associated with leadership in a pastoral charge where they would be the sole-paid minister. The participants reported that people in authority, such as conference staff, openly advised them to become ordained in order to gain an equality in ministry with team colleagues.

Although ordination is generally seen to be a "step up" in the eyes of church people, the participants do not report a sense of any greater distance from the people they are serving. Nor do they sense a change in how they relate to people as a result of becoming ordained ministers. Ordination has not changed their personality or their relational skills.

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[131] Educated Ministry: Diaconal Ministry, M P & E Paper 12. Toronto: Published by the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1987. p.3.

None of the participants supported the inequality between the various ministries of the church. Some very clearly stated their interest in undoing the hierarchy. At the same time, they carried no illusions about which ministers congregations are choosing to hire. As ordained ministers the participants have the advantage of being the "norm" in ministry. As both ordained and diaconal, they have found a way to be diaconal without the penalty of being "lesser".

Experiences of Sexism in the Church

Almost every participant had stories of sexist treatment at the hands of the church. Sexism may be defined as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance."[132] The pilot group was very clear in their analysis of sexism. After the pilot study, I was convinced that sexism was a major factor in the decision to become ordained. Becoming ordained was one way to counter the sexism they had encountered in the church. However, the project/dissertation group did not reinforce this conclusion to the same degree.

From the pilot study report I wrote: Elizabeth stated that as a woman she would not easily be seen as the equal member of a ministry team with a man. Christine was determined to find a way to prevent her Anglican male colleagues from further verbal attack on her as a woman aspiring to a priestly ministry. She found protection in being their equal in the hierarchy. Helen commented that she was overcoming her past socialization. As a woman, she had been trained to be in the background, giving support to others. For Helen becoming ordained was a personal challenge to develop her speaking abilities and to assume responsibilities for public leadership. In her journey towards ordination Helen was addressing an inner built-in sexism as well as sexism in the church. With the pervasiveness of sexism in the church, despite the effort of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade for Solidarity with Women 1988-98, the pilot group found another way to raise their status--through ordination.

The project/dissertation group was more mixed in their experiences of sexism with the result that as a group they were less clear. In some, there seemed to be a hesitancy to declare sexism in relation to their own lives. It made me ponder if there is something demeaning for them about admitting that they were victims of sexism.[133] One participant stated that she did not experience sexism acting against her in her diaconal role. Another found that she had no experiences of sexual harassment or "belittling" as a

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[132] Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider, New York: Crossing Press, 1984, p. 115.

[133] Liberative feminists claim their victimization as the first step of awareness. Rather than seeing it as demeaning, their recognition of themselves as victims leads them into outrage and active opposition on behalf of others.

woman, yet she acknowledged that it was particularly the men in the congregation who did not give credibility to diaconal ministry. As a woman, she was definite that she did not want to be in a secondary position to a male colleague. Of this group, Maggie was the one who very strongly related her ministry experiences to sexism. With Maggie, however, sexism was no reason to become ordained; her experiences with sexism intensified after ordination when she became a "pioneer woman" in ministry within her region. She recalls "working herself to death" because of the need to prove herself as a woman minister. She told many humourous stories related to the pervasiveness of sexism, including people disbelieving that a woman was allowed to perform wedding ceremonies.

Pragmatism and the Opportunities for Employment

While most of the participants would declare that practical considerations were "not the whole reason" for becoming ordained, all would acknowledge the importance of job opportunities, job security, adequate income. I suspect that pragmatic reasons were likely even stronger than people stated simply because of the United Church emphasis to have an articulate calling. To say in a candidacy interview, as Christine did, that her main reasons were pragmatic was to open herself to controversy and challenge.

The comparison of the interviews showed that the participants had very different pragmatic considerations in mind when they chose ordination, yet employment is a common underlying factor. Christine sought job security and equality with her Anglican male colleagues. Similarly, Elizabeth had a goal of equality, but her focus was equal team ministry, which she could only achieve through ordination. Lois reflected on her need to have her own identity in ministry; ordination, then, was a confirmation of her ministry as a sole-paid minister. Maggie was concerned to be able to provide for herself and her daughter; ordained ministry was the only secure ministry. She stated that "the call was there to be in ministry, and just because of circumstances it was a "slide over" [from diaconal to ordained ministry]." If diaconal ministers had equal opportunity to ordained ministers, she surmised that she might have remained diaconal even with further education.

Alice mentioned that she wished to work full-time and, in her area, that meant being ordained. Helen found that there were reduced jobs available in her specialized ministry (chaplaincy); ordination was a route to employment in ministry. Hannah and Sarah referred to their increased employability in the church as ordained ministers. Employment, then, or future employability was a significant and major factor for almost all of the participants.

REASONS THAT ARE BOTH PERSONAL AND SYSTEMIC

Theological Education

To become ordained after being a diaconal minister requires further theological education. As I entered into the research, the requirement of further education was a surprise element. Instead of being a block or obstacle to ordination, education was a catalyst for ordination. All were willing to go back to school and had particular interests in the courses. All but one participant reported a felt need for further education, either to update themselves after a long gap, or to fill in areas that were not covered in their diaconal education. Of course all were willing and able to go back to school. This research project has no way of assessing those diaconal ministers for whom education might have indeed been a block, and therefore may not have become ordained. I do not want to minimize the efforts of the participants, however. For some, like Sarah, there were anxious times about finding the next course or fitting it into the already full schedule.

It was through further theological education that two of the participants discovered their interest in becoming ordained. Hannah and Helen began theological courses simply out of an interest. Helen discovered that she could be ordained by gaining the necessary credits; she did not have to obtain an M. Div. Hannah, on the other hand, began courses when the national Women in Ministry Committee encouraged the study of feminist theology. Ironically, there were no feminist courses the year she began. All the same she started courses and subsequently followed the suggestion to "do the paperwork" for ordination just in case she should want that.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the women in this research, all of whom had been steeped in the philosophy of life-long learning as diaconal ministers, would be hungry for further education. In fact, as diaconal ministers they had already sought out opportunities for learning. They were ready to embrace new chances to expand their knowledge and practice of ministry.

The question which remains is whether further educational opportunities leading to more credentials in diaconal ministry would offset the interest in becoming ordained. I posed this question to a few, where it fit within the context of the interview. Only Maggie indicated that she might have remained diaconal after further education. In 1994 the Centre for Christian Studies and St. Stephen's College entered into a formal agreement to provide an MTS in Diaconal Ministry which is available to graduates as well. Since the participants in this study were almost all ordained by 1994, it is too early to assess the

effect of continuing education for diaconal ministry on the trend to become ordained.

Power and Privilege[134]

Among members of the diaconal community, people often state that the reason for becoming ordained is primarily to gain power in the church. Being diaconal is just too marginalized. In the research I attempted to test this hypothesis. It was a very tricky area to explore. In the pilot study, I asked participants about the way their leadership had been received as a diaconal minister compared with being ordained. Was there a change in the way in which their leadership had been affirmed by others? This approach was far too indirect to produce the kind of data I wanted to examine. I was able, however, to search the transcripts for clues as to how each one handled the power issue. For the project/dissertation group, I became much more direct. I asked: "Now that you have experienced some of the results or privileges of being ordained, what is your reflection on your own need for status or power as a minister?"

Undoubtedly there is a power difference between being diaconal and being ordained. All of the participants recognized the difference of power especially in how ordained ministry is viewed by church members. For some, the inherited power caused an inner disturbance; others simply accepted that privilege came with ordination. Among the participants there was a concurrence that power in ministry is to be used to empower others. Christine articulated her reasons for endorsing certain aspects of the Report of The Task Group on Ministry because its proposals would have erased the ranking and privilege of ordained ministers.

From my observations, the participants had differing responses to a discussion of their power in ministry. Two people engaged the question at length, one person denied that she had power, one disclaimed the power ordained ministers actually have, while yet another found a way to avoid the discussion. As a researcher I have to ask myself about my own comfort level with the discussion of power and whether my own approach inadvertently led to some discomfort with the topic. Perhaps it would have been more helpful if I had acknowledged my own power in ministry as an introduction to the discussion, as a way of making it acceptable to acknowledge the power they had. I did not think of using that approach at the time of the interviews. Instead, I discovered that if I introduced my question about power by reminding the participant of an experience of power or powerlessness she had already revealed, this approach worked reasonably to open up a discussion on power.

[134] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

The participants used various ways to "resolve" the contradiction they felt around having power. Joanna , Maggie, and Helen spoke about placing an emphasis on being collegial. Sarah suggested that becoming ordained would be an opportunity to discover a new way for ministry, one that was not exclusive of ordained or diaconal ministry. Both Joanna and Hannah offered proposals that would equalize the power positions of diaconal and ordained ministers. Christine was clear that increased power means increased responsibility; she has made a practice of advocating for diaconal ministry from a power position. In a refreshing way, Hannah and Helen spoke frankly about the need for power and authority in order to carry out their ministries. (Chapter Seven will explore the need for authority and recognition in greater detail.)

Ambivalence about the Hierarchy of Ordination

Originally I developed the pilot study out of the sense of betrayal that I shared with other diaconal colleagues when one of our members becomes ordained. In the pilot interviews, I looked for a corresponding sense of disloyalty among the participants. What I found was that most of the participants felt strongly that they were still diaconal. They seemed to want to convince me of their diaconal commitment. Apart from this kind of justification, the disloyalty or betrayal issue was something they anticipated from diaconal colleagues, but it did not appear to be an internal issue. Elizabeth particularly was expecting to be misunderstood, and indeed she was devastated by experiences of rejection.

Instead--something I did not anticipate--the findings showed that most participants carried some ambivalence towards being privileged within the hierarchy of ministries. The manner in which ambivalence was experienced by the pilot group was unique to the person, yet it was common to three of the four participants.

For the project/dissertation group, I was more conscious of the ambivalence or contradiction as I proceeded. Here the research benefitted from previous experience with the pilot group, and in fact, the categories shifted. Ambivalence is an entirely different category from disloyalty. Disloyalty has an external reference (the diaconal community) while ambivalence has an internal reference (one's own values).

The project/dissertation group displayed different degrees of awareness of a contradiction around privilege and power. One participant felt no contradiction at all in the seeking of ordination. Some were aware if someone else drew it to their attention. Some were consciously aware of their privilege and showed how they were trying to mitigate against it. For instance, Joanna said: "I've always tried to be

collegial and a colleague, and I guess I don't think of being privileged, but I do know that there are differences. People see you somewhat differently, even through you try desperately not to be different!"

Often the contradiction was experienced around others' expectations of an ordained minister which placed them in a position of power that was not always welcome. Helen mentioned the value of having a "reverend" title because she was easily identifiable, but then chafed at always being expected to offer prayers at a gathering. For other participants the contradiction was focused on being perceived as only ordained, when they saw themselves as both diaconal and ordained.

RESULTS OF BEING ORDAINED

Both groups of participants were asked the question: Did becoming ordained accomplish what you hoped for? The majority had no hesitation in responding: Yes, ordination was fulfilling their goals in ministry. Largely, they enjoyed the ordained roles they had assumed, such as preaching. Only a few were unsure of the results of their decision. Helen stated that ordained ministry was a rewarding experience yet it had also been a difficult experience. Maggie, as stated earlier, continues to identify more with diaconal ministry. Christine discovered that her diaconal colleagues provided her with a greater sense of community than she found with ordained women colleagues. Yet she also acknowledged that she would not have been hired into her present position without being ordained.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTERPRETATION: MEANINGS FOR THE CHURCH

Career Development

For ministry personnel, career development is not often openly discussed. The concept of career development carries a tinge of ambition that does not fit with a theology of service. Yet it is a significant factor affecting the choices ministry personnel make for their futures, and rightly so. I had not anticipated the participants' need for career development as I embarked on this research, but it emerged in a number of ways. The interest in moving from a specialist ministry to a generalist ministry has already been described in the previous chapter.

All of the participants experienced diaconal ministry as either limited or unrecognized. After years of working within a ministry that felt confining, it seems natural that people would want to make a shift towards a more fulfilling position. Ordained ministry beckoned as a position that allowed for the "full range" of ministry. One might ask why it is that ordained ministry has the "full range" of ministry while diaconal ministry is confined to its three functions. Indeed, why is it that ordained ministry is not confined to its two functions of word/sacrament and pastoral care? I believe that ordained ministry has been constructed by the church to protect the word/sacrament function and to limit this privilege to those who have been authorized by the church. Diaconal functions, on the other hand, do not require this "protection"; in fact, the functions of education, service and pastoral care are intended to be shared by all, both laity and ordered. The result is that diaconal ministers are **restrained** from entering ordained functions while ordained ministers are **encouraged** to enter into diaconal functions.

Some participants within the study, notably Helen, did not display an interest in moving into the full range of ministry, since she herself did not identify with educational ministry and had never chosen to work in Christian education. Most others, however, were seeking a way to carry forward their commitments to educational, service, and pastoral care ministries within a larger scope of ministry. The larger scope of ministry suggests that there is a greater responsibility. Thus ordained ministry is seen as something of a promotion by others, despite the efforts of the participants to portray it as a lateral move. Certainly, the position of sole-paid minister of a pastoral charge carries more recognition than the position of diaconal minister in a team ministry. Diaconal ministers who have experienced both positions have informed me that they find a notable difference in the authority they are given through the sole-paid position.

Ordained ministry as a career for women has been made possible by other trends in society. One such trend is the numbers of women now entering ordained ministry in mainstream Protestant and

Episcopal denominations. In the United Church, theological schools have reported equal numbers of women and men students for the past several years, and the 1997 statistics report that approximately one-third of ordered ministry personnel are women. Several of the participants in this study reported that they were influenced by the numbers of women in ordained ministry. Their very presence in ordained ministry, and perhaps their modelling of ministry, suggested to Alice, Helen, and Hannah that they too could consider ordination.

The age and stage of the participants also affected their career path. These women gained in confidence as they grew older and became more experienced. Helen, Hannah and Lois spoke about the part that self-confidence played in offering themselves for ordination. It was a step of overcoming prior gender- socialization which held them back from assuming more prominent, responsible roles.

Similar to the growth in confidence is the need for challenge. Joanna and Alice both described themselves as persons who enjoy a new challenge. It makes sense that the participants of this study, who have all been immersed in life-long learning, would seek to develop their ministries in challenging directions. For some, then, ordained ministry presented such a career challenge within the ministry of the church.

In contrast to their expanding interests, the participants experienced a lessening of employment opportunities as diaconal ministers. The United Church Report "Ministry Needs in the New Millennium" documents the decline in ministry positions. Using a statistical prediction, the short-term view shows an alarming drop; a longer-term view shows a steady drop in ministry positions available. The report refers to the increasing "conversion of full-time positions to part-time and new positions being developed as part-time and often temporary, although this increase is not as dramatic as might be expected. [135] The decrease in full time positions and the trend to part-time positions has affected diaconal ministry directly, since these positions are usually the first ones to be cut in a multiple staff context. Alice reported that there were no full-time diaconal positions within her presbytery, and this is not uncommon. Seven out of the nine participants commented that limited employment as diaconal ministers was a concern. Based on the stories of the participants, I suggest that there is a "glass ceiling" for diaconal ministers in the United Church similar to the limitations placed on women in the business/professional world. Diaconal ministers within the congregation are limited to specific roles; outside the congregation they might move to

[135] Ted Reeve, "The United Church of Canada Ministry Needs in the New Millennium", Report to the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education Annual Meeting, 1997. pp.5 ff.

community development, social justice work, or pastoral care specialities, such as chaplaincy. Another potential place of ministry are the educational/administrative positions within church structures. These jobs beyond the congregation are certainly not numerous.

Ordained ministers, on the other hand, are freer to move into any ministry positions, outside congregations or within. For instance, some ordained ministry personnel have moved into diaconal positions without having to become diaconal ministers. I am not aware of ordained ministers who feel a sense of limitation in their ministry functions.

The "glass ceiling" for diaconal ministers relates, I believe, to the marginalization of the educational function within congregations. Congregations have been organized around the priority of word/sacrament. The association of education with children and women has relegated this function of ministry to a lesser priority. Mary Elizabeth Moore, a diaconal minister in the United Methodist Church USA, writes:

> *"The avoidance of religious education studies is common among women in Protestant seminaries today, and most Protestant denominations face problems in finding people to fill the educational ministry positions in local churches. Women often resist these placements for fear they will become stereotyped and stuck in what has been seen as a woman's role in the church. Men often resist these placements for fear that they will have less status and benefits in these specialized, associate positions".*[136]

For feminist women the marginalization of education presents a conundrum. Such women do not want to remain constrained by sexist marginalization. At the same time, to refuse to do the "women's work" of educational ministry is to further abandon this priority in ministry.

Diaconal Ministry as a Marginalized Ministry

As the findings have shown, both groups of research participants experienced diaconal ministry to be a structurally marginalized ministry. They found that their ministries were limited and they were not seen to be "real" ministers by church people. In an earlier research study, I wrote:

> *"By choosing to be diaconal, marginalization becomes a "given" reality. As people prepare for diaconal ministry, they encounter questions and attitudes from church members and committees which alert them to this reality of marginalization. They may also hear stories*

[136] Mary Elizabeth Moore, "The Unity of the Sacred and the Public Possibilities from Feminist Theology," Religious Education, Vol. 84 No. 3, Summer 1989. p.386.

from experienced diaconal ministers giving further verification of it. The experience of most focus group participants , especially the more recent graduates, was that by the time of commissioning they knew they were entering a form of ministry "on the edge" of the church."[137]

Diaconal ministers do not intend that marginalization be their fate, or anyone else's. And yet, there is a sense in which diaconal ministers deliberately choose a marginalized position. In the style of ministry identified as diaconal, those in leadership work to empower others' ministries. Diaconal ministers frequently operate invisibly "behind the scenes", as opposed to the "upfront leadership" role. This very commitment to enabling others' ministries has the reverse effect of demoting rather than promoting diaconal ministry. It means that diaconal ministers continue in the marginalized role.

To its credit, the United Church has worked to improve the position of diaconal ministers within the polity of the church. Diaconal ministers, once a lay order, are now included in the order of ministry with salary and benefits equal to ordained ministers. Now it is possible for diaconal ministers to be called to a pastoral charge without yearly appointment by presbytery. At least two conferences have approved the general licensing of diaconal ministers for administering the sacraments. The Division of Ministry Personnel and Education includes a national Committee on Diaconal Ministry with responsibility for advocacy and education. Many attempts have been made to raise the profile of diaconal ministry in the United Church through publications and materials for educational workshops. The result has been disappointing. As Hannah remarked "So the education [of the church about diaconal ministry] has never happened, and quite frankly I don't think it ever will."

The numbers of diaconal ministers remains very small in comparison to ordained ministers. The 1998 statistics report that 259 diaconal ministers are recorded in the yearbook while there are 3,888 ordained ministers. The sheer fact of numbers means that few United Church members have met or worked with diaconal ministers. Diaconal ministers are seen to be an "oddity" rather than a central ministry of the United Church.

The church has clearly given priority to ordained ministry, particularly to the ordained functions of preaching and sacraments. Church policies continue to favour ordained ministry. Diaconal ministers,

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[137] Kay Heuer, So Tell Me Again, What is a Diaconal Minister?, Major Project for St. Stephen's D. Min. Program, an unpublished paper, 1992.

even today, may be denied the licence for the sacraments; ordained ministers, however, never have to apply for permission to enter an educational ministry.

The United Church has not succeeded in affirming the functions of diaconal ministry, particularly the function of service, at the point of commissioning. A diaconal candidate may sense a strong call to social justice ministry, but very few of these positions are authorized by presbyteries as places of "settlement" for commissioning. Most often the candidate is placed in a congregational ministry first, but later it proves difficult to find social ministry positions open to them.

Being structurally marginalized in the United Church serves to strengthen the solidarity diaconal ministers affirm with various marginalized people. Out of their history of exclusion[138] and their experiences of marginalization, diaconal ministers feel a greater identification with the voiceless and dispossessed. The Statement of Belief adopted by Diakonia of the United Church in 1992 reflects that history and places an emphasis on diaconal ministry as contributing to the creation of a just and loving world. Ministry to and with the marginalized is of central concern: "We offer an intentional commitment to stand and be with others on the periphery."[139]

Marginalization is a complex concept. Clearly diaconal ministers are structurally marginalized within the United Church. Yet diaconal ministers are highly privileged people in other respects. All are educated. Most are white caucasian by race. The vast majority does not belong to a visible minority. Most are middle class. Many are able-bodied. Many are hetero-sexual, with legitimized marriage partnerships. As Canadians, diaconal ministers have access to a highly prized passport and citizenship. From many vantage points, then, diaconal ministers can hardly claim to identify themselves as marginalized. I offer these comments not to disclaim their marginalized ministry but to set it within a larger perspective. Their marginalization within the church is only one aspect of who they are, yet their experience of marginalization has had a profound influence upon the perspective diaconal ministers bring to ministry. Both in their activities and in their ideology, diaconal ministers commit themselves to stand with others who are marginalized.[140] They are able to do so more effectively because of their own direct experience of marginalization.

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[138] See Chapter 1: Introduction pp. 4-5.

[139] Statement of Belief, Diakonia of the United Church of Canada, adopted in 1992. See Appendix C.

[140] See Appendices B and C.

Need for Authority[141]

In the previous chapter "Findings", I offered comments from the participants on the aspect of power and privilege. A power difference between diaconal and ordained ministries is obvious. Further reflection has led me to ask the deeper question about authority in ministry. One way to define authority is to see it as legitimized power. In my view, the participants were seeking ordination as a way of authorizing the shift in their calling, but the end result of ordination was to become more widely recognized in their authority. Authority in ministry leadership is an essential aspect of the relationship with a congregation/organization. To be ordained meant that the participants were no longer questioned about the validity of their ministries, their right to administer sacraments, or their suitability to continue in their congregational ministries--questions and uncertainties that they faced as diaconal ministers.

Authority may reside in many places--a group, a leader, an outside body. In the theology of a revisioned church, authority resides in the community, as well as in the institution and in the individual. To be able to act effectively as "minister" a person needs to enter into a relationship of trust where ministry can be given and received. In such a relationship authority is given in trust. Authority in this view is an aspect of the relationship, part of the informal contract between leader and congregation, a dynamic that may increase or diminish, depending on how the ministry is experienced.

The **particular** authority which the participants gained by becoming ordained was the authority emanating from the institution. This "blessing" from the church institution was needed to establish the **relational** authority in the congregational context. While it is true that diaconal ministers receive an authorization from the church institution as well, it is a somewhat "mixed blessing", not seen as a full authority, largely because it is not seen to be the "norm" in ministry by the membership of the church. An obvious sign of the church's authorization comes in the use of the word "reverend", commonly used by ordained personnel but not a term applied to diaconal personnel.

Diaconal ministers often report being without the authority they need to be in effective ministry, and frequently it becomes an experience of pain. In her interview Hannah mentioned that as she left her first congregational position, she vowed that if she ever went back to the pastorate, it would be as an ordained person. "While I was there I did leadership training, set up a library, did all kinds of things for a lay school of theology for presbytery, participated in contemporary worship, did the music, did chancel drama, and at

[141] See Glossary: Power, authority, privilege.

the end of two years I was still described as the woman who looks after the children in the nursery!" Clearly she was not seen as having the authority of ministry for the whole congregation.

Sarah described the way her leadership/ministry ended in a congregation where she was a diaconal minister with restricted scope. As she became more involved with the congregation, there was more affirmation from the members who encouraged her to be their minister in other areas as well. Both she and members of the congregation were feeling limited by the areas where she was allowed to function. The ordained colleague began to experience her ministry with the congregation as a threat to his ministry. Sarah continues:

"It was very painful because of the whole way the situation was handled and the manipulation of power by the ordained minister. I withdrew from ministry for a year, and I really questioned whether I would continue to be in ministry. I questioned whether I wanted to be part of the church where there is so little support available for someone in such an unjust situation. So it took a year of questioning and praying and healing before I could get to the next point."

Unfortunately, Sarah's experience is not a rare, isolated case. When diaconal personnel gather, many similar stories are told.

Authority has been experienced differently by diaconal ministers depending on their context. Those in multiple staff situations often find that they have a limited authority with the congregation while those in sole-paid ministry in a pastoral charge experience an authority equal to an ordained minister. This may reflect a difference in the rural and urban contexts for diaconal ministry since many of the sole-paid diaconal ministers work in small towns or rural areas in a pastoral charge with two or more points. After moving from a rural sole-paid position to urban congregation, one diaconal minister commented that the rural folk had seen her as their minister whereas in her new position she is called "assistant to the ordained person" or "associate minister." She noted that there is a definite difference of authority between the two contexts.

Congruency

As part of the analysis of the research data, I looked for the element of congruency. Congruency is one place where the tensions between actions and beliefs become manifest. Did participants give evidence of conflicting viewpoints? I examined their reasons for being commissioned in comparison with reasons for being ordained, and investigated their stated theology in the light of their choices.

A careful comparison between the participants' reasons for becoming commissioned and becoming ordained has demonstrated a large degree of congruency, especially in the nature of the call to ministry. For both commissioning and ordination, the participants described their interests in ministry. What they felt "drawn towards" was central in their choices for ministry. In both commissioning and ordination, the participants were following the path set out by the church for recognition of their interests and gifts in ministry. Among the participants there was a large degree of similarity in the interests they were combining with ministry, described as: teaching, group work, leadership and programming, community development. For Helen, Lois and Alice, there were practical considerations, such as marriage. Diaconal ministry was a calling that fit their marriage circumstances better than ordained ministry for a variety of reasons.

The reasons for ordination concentrated around three areas--a sense of further calling, the need for credibility, and the practicalities of employment. In comparison with their reasons for commissioning, the reasons for ordination showed a greater emphasis on the pragmatic reasons, although a sense of calling accompanied both decisions. All of these people, of course, approached ordination with years of experience as diaconal ministers behind them. They had come to terms with the need for greater credibility in the church and many felt concern about employability and security. Age may have been a factor. Certainly Helen and Hannah talked openly about not wanting to play a secondary role in a multiple staff, given their age, knowledge and experience. Changes in the church's needs for ministry personnel may also have played a significant role. During the sixties and seventies, diaconal positions were not overly plentiful but positions could be found. In the later eighties and nineties, diaconal positions have become more scarce and projections, as cited earlier in this chapter, indicate that they will be even more scarce in the future.

Individually, the participants demonstrated a consistency in their movement towards ordination. For Alice and Lois, it was a reactivation of an early calling to ordained ministry. Diaconal ministry was not exactly a diversion from that original calling, but it was only a partial step. For others, ordination was an expansion of their ministry, not a departure from their commissioning vows. Whether or not others see them as continuing to be diaconal ministers depends, I believe, on the degree to which each one openly articulates herself to be diaconal.

In a comparison of stated theology with reasons for ordination, the participants were remarkably similar. None made any theological distinction between the calling to ordained ministry and the calling to

diaconal ministry. The distinction came in the way the call was lived out in specific areas of the church's life. In this sense, all carried a functional theology of ministry. The theological reason for the existence of the order of ministry is for serving the church's needs. It is a facilitative role so that the church is able to carry on its ministry. Becoming ordained or commissioned was not seen as a change in one's being, but rather a change in one's relationship to the church. The same theological rationale applies to the distinction between laity and ordered; there is no theological difference but only a difference in the way the calling is exercised.

In the previous chapter, I proposed that a functional theology of ministry allowed for an easier shift to ordained ministry, much like a change in job description within the same organization. I contend that a functional theology also corresponds to the inclusion of pragmatic reasons for ordination. If ordained ministry is a function within the church, then issues of employment and security have a bearing on the person's ability to perform that function.

What this research reveals is that the commitment is to **ministry**, not so much to the particularity of diaconal ministry. If the commitment was to diaconal ministry, I believe the interviews would have portrayed more turmoil as the decision was made. The worldview, then, which each participant carried, was a perspective which accompanied them from diaconal into ordained ministry. A viewpoint commonly held by diaconal ministers, however, sees it differently. Their view is that those who become ordained leave the lesser marginalized ministry to join the more normative privileged ministry. Those ordained may see themselves as diaconal and function in a diaconal style and even advocate for diaconal ministry. Yet all the verbalization on behalf of diaconal ministry does not detract from the privilege the ordained person enjoys.

Christine was one who spoke about such an inner dilemma, not so much at the time of ordination but a dilemma that continues. To her, it does not seem right to live with the privileges of ordination while claiming to be diaconal--a ministry without the same privileges. She continues to live with this ambivalence, and in fact, believes that it is "right" to be in a dilemma about it. "I think that people who have privilege should live with some level of ambivalence about it." For her, ambivalence is the appropriate inner response to having privilege. The appropriate outer response is to offer advocacy from the place of privilege; she mentioned her public statements or explanations as examples of her advocacy. Interestingly, Christine was one who expressed a diaconal worldview, a view she holds together with her feminist perspective.

Tension between Feminist Perspective and Hierarchical Privilege[142]

In the interviews, not all of the women deliberately defined themselves as feminist. Yet a feminist consciousness was evident through feminist values they embraced. Among the participants there would be a variation of interpretation of feminism. The pilot study revealed a group which was ready to articulate their sexist experience from feminist perspective. Some from this group stated that becoming ordained was part of their process of feminist consciousness. Christine mentioned that her ordeal with her male colleagues was the pivotal event that catapulted her into a feminist way of seeing the world. Elizabeth reiterated a comment one of her peers had made, that as a woman she was already seen as "second class" and she was not about to be "second class" as a woman in ministry. Helen held a very similar position.

The project/dissertation group, as noted in the previous chapter, did not report sexist experiences with the same forthrightness. Yet they spoke about the importance of women models, already in ordained ministry. Obviously the feminist movement has had some impact upon the church, and the increasing number of women in ordained ministry is one sign of this feminist influence.[143] In a certain way, the move to be ordained can be seen as a feminist step. Through ordination these women were refusing to remain in a lesser position; instead, they were claiming equality both personally and as a wider statement. If a major goal of feminism is to undo sexism, as I believe it is, then a claim for equality with males promotes a feminist vision of justice.

A common tenet of feminism is the opposition to hierarchy. In their theological perspective, many of the participants took a stand in opposition to hierarchy. Their action of becoming ordained, however, would seem to suggest a contradiction. How can a move by which some women overcome sexism to gain greater privilege in the hierarchy of ministries be seen as contributing to feminist goal of non-hierarchy? The question for exploration here is the tension between feminist perspective and the hierarchical position of ordained ministry within the United Church.

While sexism remains an evil to be stopped, liberation feminism has expanded the agenda to include a much larger scope. It is not enough for women to be made equal to men in an unjust social system. It does not enhance the lives of women for some to become as privileged as men, and continue to

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[142] See Glossary terms: Feminist perspective, Hierarchy, Privilege (power).

[143] Interestingly, feminism has not had a similar effect for diaconal ministry. Here there has been no gender shift. Diaconal ministry remains primarily a ministry chosen by women. Approximately ten percent are men.

oppress others. The system which promotes oppression of all kinds (race, class, sexual orientation) must itself be radically changed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza offers this perspective:

> *"Feminism is not just concerned with gender inequities and marginalization. Rather, feminism is a movement of those women and men who seek to transform patriarchal structures of subordination. Patriarchy perpetrates not only dehumanizing sexism and gender stereotypes but also other forms of women's oppression, such as racism, poverty, religious exclusion, and colonialism."*[144]

In this sense of feminism, the choice of the participants to become ordained is not a step towards feminism. Dualism within the system has not been challenged by this step.

A feminist theory outlining the feminist movement in its early days and now, in its current expression, describes two waves of feminism.[145] In the first wave, women broke down the doors of male exclusion and claimed equal place throughout society. Gaining the right to vote, the right to education, the right to own property, the right to any job, equal salary and benefits--these were the goals. Now it is commonplace to find women in public office, women physicians, women electricians, women ministers; even so, a full equality still eludes women. The second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960's, has yet to take a noticeable effect. The goal, for many varieties of feminism now,[146] is nothing short of undoing patriarchy. Patriarchy is held in place by hierarchy and privilege. Ordination, historically, has been one way in which the church has contributed to patriarchy. When this analysis is applied to the question of ordination as a "step towards feminism", it can be argued that the choice for ordination as equality is a feature of the first wave of feminism. To remove the church from patriarchy or patriarchy from the church, will need a much different kind of action. In their interviews, some of the participants began to imagine a church without hierarchy. Action towards this goal would be a second wave action.

Within the United Church, diaconal ministry aligns itself with the second wave action, or subsequent waves of feminism. Through the empowerment of lay people diaconal ministry seeks to

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[144] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Bible, the Global context, and the Discipleship of Equals", Reconstructing Christian Theology, eds.Rebecca Chopp and Mark Taylor, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

[145] Nancy Adamson et al. Feminist Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988. See Chapter 2, "Our History/Histories".

[146] Many expressions of feminism exists today--liberal, liberative, marxist, womanist, lesbian--to name a few. The undoing of patriarchy is a shared goal for the transformative feminisms.

promote a church which models shared power, rather than continuing an hierarchical, "power-over" structure. Liberative feminist convictions are integral to diaconal ministry: "there is a commitment to value the experience of women, to critique structures of power, and to live in global solidarity with all those who are marginalized in church and society." [147] The diaconal community presents those diaconal ministers who choose to become ordained with this challenge: **to work at undoing the very privilege which they have chosen and now enjoy**. Though the challenge may sound like an impossible and contradictory task, it is none other than the familiar challenge to find ways to be in solidarity with those less advantaged. People with privilege have a responsibility to make a common cause with those from whom privilege is withheld and deliberately begin to give up those privileges which dominate and oppress.

Few of the participants gave much evidence of wrestling with the tension between privilege and feminist perspective. As outlined above, Christine was one who articulately named the dilemma she experiences from being privileged while holding a feminist perspective. It is possible that several participants accepted the privilege that comes with ordained ministry as a "by-product" of their new or expanded calling. None of the participants named privilege as something they sought. Yet Lois came close to naming it. As portrayed in Chapter Five, Lois was frank in her statement to the candidacy committee that she needed status. Others, too, while not having privilege as the primary reason, valued the benefits of ordination which gave them greater authority and recognition. For some, these benefits were secondary reasons for ordination.

To be a feminist in a hierarchical institution is to be in a place of conflict. As Maggie quipped, "To be in contradiction is part of being human, isn't it?" There are times when it is possible to act on a feminist agenda and times when other agenda may take precedence. Some feminist women find that they need comfortable places from which to operate. Ordination might be one such choice. From this place of comfortable privilege, then, it is possible for these feminist women to enter into arenas that are uncomfortable, to offer challenge and to take risks. This approach is similar to working at transformation from "within" rather than from "without".

Of course the task of removing privilege belongs not only to those who seek ordination, but to the whole church. The church has a role in perpetuating privilege and hierarchy. Those responding to a calling of word and sacrament, have little choice but to accept ordination with all its privileges and

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[147] Kay Heuer and Teresa Jones, "Diaconal Ministry as a Feminist Model of Ministry", Gathered by the River, ed. Gertrude Lebans, Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1994, p.112.

responsibilities. In Chapter Four a new paradigm of ministry was presented as the direction in which the United Church is now moving. In that understanding of ministry, leadership is shared and designated leaders have the role of empowering the ministry of the church membership. The new paradigm of the church shares with feminism a commitment to collegiality in place of hierarchy.

Tension between Calling and Pragmatism

In the United Church pragmatic reasons are not a legitimate basis for seeking ordination. Candidates need to give evidence of an inner calling from God along with the church community's support for such a calling. There is a tension here. The tension exists because there is an "overlay" of calling with occupation and the accompanying need for remuneration. It would seem, from the stories in this project/dissertation, that God calls people to greater security, more opportunities for employment, and more recognized authority. In fact, a general trend in the United Church is for ordained personnel to begin serving small rural pastoral charges, then gradually make moves to larger and more well-paying urban congregations, often because of family needs. Pragmatic goals would seem to be fulfilled through situations where God calls. Do we have a pragmatic God? One who calls people to "the possible", as opposed to the impossible? Is the United Church merely blessing the employment practices of the dominant culture? The Theology of Call Document suggests that the United Church needs to grapple with the extent to which "unavoidable or not, the United church mirrors society in this aspect of employment."[148]

The same document also raises concern for avoiding "the danger of developing a theology that is little more than a soothing rationalization for present polity and practice that actually may be unfaithful."[149] A central question is what constitutes a calling in the United Church? The Committee of Faith referred to calling as God's naming of persons to particular service to the Church and to the world. "In the United Church, we have used the term 'call' in two specific situations: in relation to the candidacy process, where the testing of an individual's 'call' to ordered ministry is a mandated part of the process, and as a designation for the invitation a pastoral charge extends to a member of the order of ministry of its choosing to enter into a pastoral relationship with it." [150] Their report goes on to broaden meaning of call as applied to the ministry of the whole people of God. They refer to the two types of calling seen in scripture: the calling to the people into community to serve God's purposes, and the calling of specific persons to fulfil

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[148] Theology of Call, Report presented to the Executive of General Council by the Committee on Theology and Faith, March, 1994. p.6

[149] Ibid, p.1

[150] Ibid, p. 5

public roles of leadership.

In the section "Theological Dimensions of Call", their document lists three aspects of calling. There is a general calling into the body of Christ; this is a calling extended to all Christian people to be the church. A second aspect of the calling is to the vision of shalom, conveyed by God through the prophets and through Jesus; again this is a calling of all members to a ministry of transformation in the world--a world in desperate need of the peace with justice shalom would bring. A third aspect of God's calling is to particular people to exercise their gifts. In one sense this calling is intended for every person, since every person has unique gifts to be used to further God's care for the world and the church. This third aspect is further specified when it is applied to those with gifts for designated leadership within the church community.[151] In latter instance, the person's calling is tested and then authorized by the church polity. Here there is a definite connection between calling and the authority of leadership. This project/dissertation has shown the importance of receiving the church's authority through ordination. Significantly, the Theology of Call document asserts that there is no ontological difference between the lay and ordered callings; for example, ordination does not make a person into a different kind of being. As well, the document asserts that they seek to avoid any "distinction of rank". My own observation is that the theology and policies of the United Church may have made this attempt towards levelling; however, in practice, the hierarchy remains entrenched and clericalism runs very deep.

In scripture there are many examples of God calling individuals to fulfil roles in the community. What is striking is that these calls are so often highly demanding and excessively costly. The resistance on the part of the biblical prophets and leaders is certainly understandable. Moses has the overwhelming task of confronting the Pharaoh. Even after God gives him miraculous powers so that he will be able to convince the Pharaoh, Moses pleads with God to send someone else. After trying to refuse, he is granted the assistance of his articulate brother Aaron. (Exodus 3) Jonah takes a voyage in the opposite direction to escape God's call to Ninevah. Through the fearsome experiences of the raging storm, being thrown into the sea and swallowed by a "large fish", Jonah is ready to listen again to God. (Jonah 1-2) Mary of Nazareth experienced fear, perhaps even terror, at the approach of the angel Gabriel. Her first reaction was to question, yet in the end she accepted her costly calling which led ultimately to watching her son die an excruciating death on the cross. (Luke 1:29: John 19:25) Scripture does not tell us Phoebe's reaction to her calling, but she did undertake to carry Paul's letter to Rome, a dangerous journey for anyone, and even

[151] Ibid, p. 25

more so for a member of a persecuted sect. (Romans 16:1) These are not exceptional illustrations. In biblical narrative, the call of God is an awesome and fearful experience. The call usually demands that the person move from a place of relative comfort to a place of extreme discomfort. God seems to be calling them to do the impossible.

I am not suggesting that God desires the people of the earth to live in discomfort and misery. In fact, God's calling includes a vision for universal justice and peace, the commonwealth of God. Through the prophet Isaiah God proclaims comfort for distressed people (Isaiah 40). Other biblical images point towards a land of milk and honey or the wiping of every tear away. Clearly, God seeks comfort for all God's people through the ending of poverty, fear, and sadness. This is the vision to which the church is called, a vision which designated ministry personnel are called to facilitate. God is not opposed to comfort, but rather to the comfort of only the few. To attain the comfort of all proves to be a highly uncomfortable path to follow.

In contrast, as noted in the above section, designated ministry personnel in the United Church often seem to be called from places of discomfort into places of greater comfort, or at least greater security. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that while there may be comfort in having a recognized position, there are sometimes places of great discomfort within the designated ministry role. For instance, Hannah reported discomfort around trying to answer unanswerable questions, offering care after a suicide, supporting those with unsupportable burdens. I am not suggesting that preaching or pastoral care is a comfortable role, yet, overall, for the participants in this research ordination led to a more comfortable lifestyle. It was a way to provide for themselves and their families. None of the participants spoke about the foolishness or the impossibility of the calling to ordination. Some were urged to take the step of ordination **because** it made sense.

The tension between calling and pragmatism occurs not because pragmatic reasons are wrong reasons but because they are not seen to be legitimate as qualifying reasons. The United Church requires evidence of a genuine calling before giving approval for ordination. Yet the very real practical goals of security and employment, which accompany ministry as an occupation, challenge the Church to relate its theology to its practice. The Theology of Call document included some questions as standards for a theological evaluation. Among them was: "Do our culturally conditioned forms and structures of ministry serve the liberating good news of God?" Indeed, the tension between calling and pragmatism points out a disjuncture between the vision of shalom and the present institutional realities of our United Church.

THE UNITED CHURCH'S ROLE IN CO-OPTATION[152]

In the previous chapter the participants shared their experience of diaconal ministry as a lesser ministry within the United Church. In several ways the United Church perpetuates the notion of ordained ministry as the important ministry. There is an attempt on the part of the United Church to provide each pastoral charge with an ordained minister. Where this is not possible, lay pastoral ministers assume the same functions of preaching and sacraments as ordained ministers. The distinction between lay pastoral ministers and ordained ministers is primarily in their educational preparation. The norm for the church is clearly word and sacrament ministry. A quick glance at the United Church Observer ads for ministry positions confirms the importance placed on ordained ministers as the first choice of pastoral charges for ministry personnel. For instance, a pastoral charge is unlikely to dispense with ordained ministers, but diaconal ministers or staff associates are seen to be optional. Most diaconal ministers recognize that it is essential to be included in worship leadership where they are in visible ministry because the membership sees this aspect of ministry as having special worth. John Calvin, as noted in Chapter Three , emphasized preaching and sacraments as the two central acts which constituted the church. The elevation of ordained ministers is to the detriment of both diaconal ministries and lay ministries in the world; in fact, the elevation of ordained ministry is to the detriment of the church as a community because it creates an elitism.

As shown above, the United Church has not altogether "owned" diaconal ministry. It remains structurally marginalized. The participants of this research validated the diaconal experience of being misunderstood and not fully supported by the church. As reported earlier, Hannah stated that the United Church remains "ambivalent" about diaconal ministry. While there is an official recognition of diaconal ministry, unofficially it is not encouraged as a vocation, neither for enquirers entering a designated ministry nor for the hiring of ministry personnel. Advocacy for diaconal ministry over the years has not significantly changed our church's ambivalent attitude towards diaconal ministers.

Along with their calling to a new or expanded ministry, one reason participants decided to opt for ordained ministry was to gain recognition in the church. This reason was particularly in evidence for the pilot study group, but it was a strand woven into the comments of other participants as well. In one sense, joining the ranks of the ordained represents a co-optation by the church. Certainly the participants did not

[152] See Glossary: Co-optation.

speak of being co-opted, yet they conformed to the priorities and requirements of the church. Perhaps our church gave them little choice. To "have the whole range of ministry", or to be seen as equal, or to be employed they had to become ordained. The point here is not individual capitulation, but rather to see our church as a systemic phenomenon which maintains ordination, privilege, and hierarchy at the expense of mutual community, diversity, and shared power.

Generally the participants did not question the system of ordination; rather, they supported it. Joanna and Hannah were clear that if they were to be doing the functions of ordained ministers, it was important to be ordained. In Joanna's words,

"I didn't feel it was fair to those who are ordained that a person who did not have their 'qualifications', academic qualifications, should take on that responsibility, unless it was a situation where you were a diaconal minister and the ordained minister left and you filled in for awhile. I really felt that it [ordination] was important for me to do that work."

After I had written about co-optation in the pilot study, Elizabeth provided some feedback. She conveyed to me her discomfort with the notion that she had been co-opted. She gave it long and considered thought. In the end, she conceded that perhaps she had been co-opted quite unintentionally. Of course, that is how co-option works, that a person is drawn into a system; by making one choice there are implications of that choice which might not be consciously chosen and might not be welcome. Elizabeth pondered what alternatives might be available to her. One such alternative is to advocate for the marginalized from the position of privilege, as Christine outlined earlier. Here the ongoing challenge of what it means to be in solidarity presents itself: To what extent are they --or any of us--able to serve the margins from a place of greater privilege?

From a diaconal perspective of feeling abandoned and weakened, it is easy to name co-optation as operative when diaconal colleagues become ordained. I am convinced, however, that the issue of co-optation by the United Church is much larger. In fact, I contend that the diaconal ministry in its entirety has been co-opted. In its root meaning of service, diaconal ministry calls the whole church to a ministry in the world, the outward phase of the church's life. Within the United Church in recent decades, diaconal ministry has been drawn into the inward phase of the faith community to provide nurture, in the form of education and pastoral care. During the fifties and sixties, there was a boom in the United Church for educational ministry positions. Graduates of the United Church Training School and Covenant College knew that there were positions waiting for them in congregational settings. Service ministry, particularly

social justice ministry, became both less available to and less practised by diaconal ministers. As already noted earlier in this chapter, the settlement process[153] at the point of commissioning tends to move diaconal ministers into congregational placements rather than social justice positions. To be settled into a social justice ministry is the exception. The primary reason for not accepting social justice positions is the lack of structural connection to presbytery. Accountability is a key concern for the newly commissioned or ordained personnel, and generally, congregational placements are held in a closer relationship of accountability. The participation in the United Church Pension Plan, minimum salary, and other just labour practices are also requirements for a settlement placement. The result, whether it was intentional or not, has been to co-opt diaconal ministry into serving the inward life of the church, rather than affirming the importance of drawing the church to an outward ministry.

In the United Church there has been some concern about the "blurring" of diaconal and ordained ministries. As our church increasingly gives responsibilities to diaconal ministers which are normally assigned to ordained ministers, such as administration of sacraments, the question arises as to whether there is a real distinction. Diaconal ministers have regarded the distinction as important to maintain in order to have visibility as a minority group. The history of diaconal ministry, the international connections of Diakonia, and the orientation to service are vital facets of this ministry. They see the distinction as partly functional, but more often will state that the real distinction lies in the style of ministry. (See Appendix B: Lenses of Ministry). Yet there is a growing similarity between diaconal and ordained personnel not only in the functions of ministry but also in their approaches to doing ministry. Many ordained ministers also speak of their roles in ministry as facilitative and empowering. Hannah remarked: "I went to Emmanuel in the sixties (M.R.E.) and I went back in the eighties (M.Div.). The difference is quite striking. In the sixties the diaconal people talked about empowerment and enabling and all those good words, and now everybody is talking in those terms. Those are not just diaconal terms." The overlap of diaconal ministry with ordained ministry is one aspect of the church's co-optation of the whole of diaconal ministry.

An interesting observation is the number of diaconal ministers currently staffing in social justice movements. The United Church is a strong supporter of ecumenical coalitions for justice work. One might expect to find diaconal ministers making up a fairly large percentage of the staff, given their calling and commitment to social justice transformation. That is not the case. Diaconal ministers do not presently hold

[153] In 1982 General Council of the United Church voted to include diaconal ministers in the transfer and settlement process as a requirement of commissioning. Before that time, diaconal ministers were free to find their own position but it was still a requirement of commissioning to have been offered a position.

any positions. In the outreach ministries of the United Church itself there are only a few diaconal ministers on staff relating directly to ministries with the poor and marginalized. By far the largest percentage of diaconal ministers is in congregational ministry, some as sole-paid personnel with responsibilities for word and sacraments, many in multiple staff congregations with responsibilities for education, service/outreach and pastoral care. Primarily their focus is inward--the nurture of the faith community for its ministry.

In the new paradigm of a revisioned church, the model of leadership follows the patterns established by diaconal ministry--mutuality, shared power, hospitality and inclusion. The United Church gives many signs of moving towards such a new paradigm, as demonstrated in Chapter Four. Diaconal ministry is actually flourishing in our church communities, but it is not called diaconal ministry. I find it curious that there is no credit given to diaconal ministry for this movement towards the new paradigm of ministry. Of course the new paradigm is part of a much wider movement, beyond the church and beyond Canada. The new paradigm represents a **cultural** shift in the direction of diaconal ministry but it does not exist **because of** diaconal ministry. Adult education, liberation education, community development, as well as feminist liberation and third-world theologies, all have had an influence in this wider movement. Diaconal ministry is a mere speck in the overall move towards the new paradigm, although it may have played a role in "infecting" the church by making it more receptive to an empowering style of ministry.

These two movements within the United Church--the paradigm shift in ministry leadership and the co-optation of diaconal ministry--have been operating simultaneously and, I suggest, interdependently. Diaconal ministry may have had some small part in setting the scene for the new paradigm of leadership, for instance in pioneering field-based theological education models. Yet the very acceptance of diaconal approaches to ministry has increased its invisibility through a blurring of roles and the resulting loss of a diaconal distinctiveness. In this sense the paradigm shift, which diaconal ministry has supported, has led to its own "disappearance" through absorbtion and incorporation. An illustration is the national position of advocacy for diaconal ministry within the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education. In the mid-1980's the Division created a half-time position to educate and advocate for diaconal ministry within the United Church. Over the next decade the position was cut successively to less and less time. Now, in 1999, a new position is being advertised for advocacy for ministry personnel which does not even mention diaconal ministry in the details of the position description, although I assume it is included. The need for specific advocacy for diaconal ministry has disappeared from the Division agenda through being incorporated into a larger agenda. Is this acceptance of diaconal ministry? I call it co-optation.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined several areas of tension for the United Church between belief and practice surrounding the paid leadership/ministry positions: career development and other pragmatic realities within an occupational calling, concern to fully "own" diaconal ministry and provide diaconal ministers with authority, the undoing of hierarchical ranking of ministry positions, the Church's own role in co-optation of diaconal ministry. The following chapter will explore further specific implications for the United Church and emerging recommendations for action, including a recommendation to re-vitalize diaconal ministry in a renewed form.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this concluding chapter I deal with the implications of the project/dissertation in the form of recommendations. Following each recommendation there is an explanation or rationale and accompanying implications of the recommendation for The United Church of Canada, its specific committees, and for theological education.

As a writer formulating these recommendations, I experience a tearing between heart and head. My heart wants to make radical recommendations based on my theology of ministry and church as set out in Chapters Three and Four. My head wants to make practical recommendations that the United Church will be able to use immediately. I propose to resolve this conflict of loyalties by making recommendations for immediate action and creating another set of recommendations that are understood to be long-term. The more radical recommendations can be included as part of the long-term vision for the church.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1

To eradicate clericalism from The United Church of Canada by:

a. **Establishing a task group, responsible to the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, whose purpose is to identify forms of clericalism and make proposals for diminishing and ultimately removing clericalism.**
b. **Authorizing a Conference within the United Church to experiment with ways of eradicating clericalism, and to report back to General Council in three to five years.**

Chapters Three and Four set out a feminist vision of the church as it might be without clericalism. Clericalism is antithetical to the direction of current United Church ecclesiology. Since the 1960's the United Church has consistently re-affirmed the theology of ministry as the continuation of God's ministry by the community of believers, rather than by the elite body of ordained ministers. While the reports and statements about the nature of ordered ministry or designated ministries have contained considerable variances, the ministry of the whole people has been proclaimed again and again throughout recent decades.

The practice of ministry, however, has not been consistent with the theology. Few congregations see themselves as the "real" ministers, despite the increasing number of signboards which read something like: "Ministers: all who worship here". It is time for United Church people, ordered/designated ministers, and church courts to take concrete action to reverse the attitudes of elitism, in the form of clericalism, which continue to prevail.

Eradicating clericalism is not a new idea for the United Church. In 1968 the Commission on Ministry in the 21st Century recorded in their report that some on the commission wanted to get rid of ordination. In 1971 Saskatchewan Conference presented a formal memorial to the 24th General Council of the United Church proposing that the United Church do away with all ordination, designation, and certification; confirmation would then be the commissioning to ministry for all Christians.[154] For this reason, Saskatchewan Conference might be the appropriate conference to conduct an experiment proposed in Recommendation #1 b).

Implications for Recommendation #1:

The most significant implication is that the United Church develop a commitment to eradicating clericalism as a pressing issue of this denomination. Terms of reference and a budget will need to be established for a national task group to meet. Similarly, terms of reference and a budget will need to be set for the Conference which agrees to experiment with a new model for ministry. Care will need to be taken for those ministry personnel who might be changing pastoral relations and moving either into or out of the Conference engaged in the experiment. Beyond the United Church, it will be important to give consideration to how ecumenical relations would be affected by any emerging proposals.

Theological education for all designated ministry personnel will need to promote non-clerical attitudes, particularly around worship roles, and also provide for the development of leadership skills required to animate non-clerical attitudes within the people of the United Church.

Recommendation #2

To re-develop and re-vitalize diaconal ministry within the United Church as a ministry oriented towards ministry in the world through:

a. a thorough study of: i) the Uniting Church of Australia ordered ministry, expressed in the

[154] Cora Krommenhoek, "Ministry Research Project", Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, February, 1996. p.3.

two forms of Deacon and Ministers of the Word, and ii) the movement for the Renewal of the Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada.

b. Re-consideration of the foci for designated diaconal ministers with a view to creating appropriate foci for the animation of ministry in the world by the whole people, while at the same time, continuing the tradition of diakonia/service to the needy.

This recommendation is grounded in the conviction that the United Church is out of balance in its present concentration on ministry within the gathered people. Chapters Three and Four set forth the essential aspects of the church's ministry as inward nurture of faith and outward transformation of the world towards a realization of God's commonwealth. A theological dilemma arises from too neat a division between ministry oriented inwards and ministry oriented outwards. To be whole, ministry has to address both the inward needs for encouragement in the faith and the outward expression of God's care for the world. Indeed, as Chapter Three outlined, there is an overlapping of the phases. Mission takes place both within and outside the congregation, for instance. Marginalized people exist as part of congregations and ministry needs to address their empowerment.

While the United Church is known for its progressive social stances, nevertheless its ministry in the world has been minimal. It is the neglect of ministry in the world which this recommendation addresses. The current budget squeeze which the United Church is experiencing has resulted in the cutting back of social and outreach ministries. Diaconal ministers are finding that fewer and fewer positions are available to them in the areas of social transformation and service. Recently, there has been a serious absence of diaconal presence in the world beyond the walls of the church. Instead diaconal ministers have been constrained by where the church has offered employment, namely primarily in congregations.

Chapter Seven outlined the United Church's role in co-opting diaconal ministry into serving the needs of congregational ministry. As a result, there has been an increasing overlap between diaconal and ordained ministries. Instead of asking whether the United Church still needs diaconal ministers, I am proposing that diaconal ministry is an absolutely essential ministry of the church--essential to the very nature of the church. Without the ministry of diakonia, the church cannot claim to be a continuation of Jesus' ministry! A strong case can be made that diaconal ministers, by their very presence and leadership, enhance the people's ministry in the world. The existence of diaconal ministers gives visibility and focus to this essential ministry of the whole people.

Diaconal ministry in the future may need to take a different form in order to carry the role of animating people's ministries in the world. Future ministries of leadership in general, whether inside the congregation or not, may be unpaid. Those in ministry leadership in the future may be bi-vocational or operate in the model of worker-priests[155]. These developments will certainly apply to diaconal ministers. The key issue here is that diaconal ministers will need to be appointed in accountable ministries beyond the current institutional church.

If the United Church is serious about its ministry in the world, it will need to actively address social needs and develop alternate ways of funding for these needs. Rather than responding to locations who can financially afford to offer a social ministry, the United Church may want to consider a "socialized scheme" whereby social ministries receive the personnel and support they require from a national budget, similar to the funding of overseas missions. In other words, the United Church might consider the overall needs for ministry in Canada, such as communities experiencing poverty and unemployment in Newfoundland, and appoint diaconal ministers into social ministries in those places.

In the meantime, this recommendation suggests that the United Church begin that re-vitalization of diaconal ministry through studying at least two other denominations.

The Uniting Church of Australia began ordaining deacons in 1992 after a decision to proceed to renew the diaconate. At that time, two forms of ministry were officially adopted: Deacons and Ministers of the Word. Both are authorized to administer the sacraments. The two ministries have distinct foci. Deacons focus on ministry to/with the marginalized, generally those outside the usual bounds of congregational ministry. Ministers of the Word focus on the gathered people in the form of congregations. Because of the difference in their purposes and starting points, a distinct nature has been established for each ministry.

The Anglican Church of Canada made a formal proposal for the renewal of the diaconate in 1989.[156] It has not received official endorsement across the Anglican Church, but has begun to be

[155] Worker-priests are priests in "secular" employment, often in blue-collar manual jobs, who operate in the interface between the church and the workplace. Priests assigned to represent the church to the poor by working in such positions are more common in the United Kingdom or in Europe than in North America. John Rowe presents his reflections as a British worker-priest for many years in his chapter "Communication Across Class Barriers" in Terry Brown and Christopher Lind (eds.), Justice As Mission:An Agenda for the Church, Burlington, Ontario: Trinity Press, 1985. pp. 35-40.

[156] "A Plan to Restore the Diaconate in the Anglican Church of Canada", Committee on Ministry, Anglican Church of Canada, 1989.

enacted in some dioceses. The movement is quite controversial, and for this reason, is worthy of serious study. One controversial issue is the use of permanent deacons by bishops as unpaid ministry personnel.

Implications for Recommendation #2:

One concern to be addressed in the re-vitalization of diaconal ministry is the matter of hierarchy. In re-establishing a distinct form of diaconal ministry apart from congregational ministry, are we reinventing a two-tiered system? The discrepancy would be a serious concern particularly if, as is likely, diaconal ministers would not receive equivalent salaries while doing justice ministry in the world. On the other hand, such a discrepancy may disappear altogether if the future trend of the United Church is to move towards having no paid ministry personnel.

Theological education for diaconal ministry would need to be revised to fit with a stronger emphasis in social ministry. Currently much of the diaconal theological education is focused on congregational ministry needs. Social ministry is also included in the present curriculum, but for a re-vitalized diaconal ministry, this area of education would receive even greater attention. Social ministry would become primary in the preparation of future diaconal ministers.

With a re-vitalized diaconal ministry to serve the ministry in the world, there are obvious implications for the present diaconal ministers within the United Church. Recommendation #4 deals with immediate options for those who are presently serving congregations as diaconal ministers. The expectation is that current diaconal ministry would continue and gradually become transformed into a future form that would more deliberately call the whole church into ministry in the world.

Who will undertake the re-vitalization? The national Committee on Diaconal Ministry mandate might be adjusted so that the re-vitalization of diaconal ministry would become its priority, perhaps replacing the mandate on advocacy for present diaconal ministry. Diakonia of the United Church of Canada (DUCC) would continue as an association of diaconal ministers giving support to one another. As the re-vitalization of diaconal ministry progresses, DUCC's task would be to expand to actively include this revised form of diaconal ministry.

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #3

To find and publish ways of recognizing ministry in the world by:

a. **Mandating the national committee on worship to develop, collect and communicate a variety of ways to recognize members' ministries, such as covenanting services.**
b. **Establishing ongoing discernment committees to recognize and seek out ministries currently being done by members in the world.**

This recommendation emerges from the increasing emphasis in the United Church on the ministry of the whole people. It is all too easily stated, however, and all too easily left at that, without exploration and development. As part of congregational life there is often a recognition of ministries, such as church school teachers, by means of a covenanting. Here I am challenging faith communities of the United Church to name publicly the lay ministries outside the church doors. The giving of the church's blessing to lay ministries is one way to lift up and support members in their ministries in the world. It would honour individual ministries and make them visible, while also encouraging others to think of their lives as ministry.

As I imagine it, members of a faith community would present their ministries to a discernment committee or ad hoc group for the purpose of receiving the church's recognition. The discernment committee/group would also have the responsibility to search out lay ministries to identify and bless publicly. In a service of worship there might be regular recognitions of ministry with the support of prayers by the community. This liturgical action is only one way to give greater visibility to the importance of ministry in the world. The recommendation provides for a means to develop a profusion of ways to give recognition. Perhaps an approach similar to "Loaves and Fishes" curriculum or "Gathering" could be used. The national committee on worship would be mandated to develop, collect and communicate a variety of ways to recognize ministries in the world.

Implications for Recommendation #3:

Individual congregations or faith communities need to take responsibility for the identification and recognition of ministries in their midst. I am conscious that this recommendation places more responsibility on already-burdened local pastoral charges; yet, the recognition of ministries among their own people would most certainly be a source of new energy and a cause for celebration.

Possibly a local faith community might encounter difficulties in the implementation of this recommendation. Should petty jealousies develop, how might they be dealt with? Might there be problems with recognizing a ministry (eg. police officer) that might prove to be abusive in some way? The development of "guidelines for recognition of ministries" by the national United Church would assist with the task of discerning local ministries.

There are budget implications for the national worship committee to be able to provide resources in the area of recognition of ministries, unless these can be included as part of ongoing publications, such as "Gathering".

Theological education for designated ministries needs to prepare leaders to be a resource to the process of naming and recognizing ministries in the world. Essential to the recognition of ministries is the education towards attitudes which support ministry as the right and responsibility of the people.

Recommendation #4

To revise the current ordering of ministry[157] by:

a. **Ordaining all candidates for ordered ministry to either diaconal ministry or pastoral ministry.**
b. **Naming the functions of ministry as part of the covenanting act for each ministry.**
c. **Granting sacramental privilege to all ordered ministers, to be activated as part of the act of covenanting.**

This recommendation presents a choice to candidates approaching ordination. They have the option of choosing to identify with diaconal ministry or with pastoral ministry. Diaconal ministry is the empowering ministry of working with the marginalized, striving for social transformation, and supporting congregations and their members in their own ministries in the world. Pastoral ministry is the nurturing ministry of providing spiritual care for individuals and congregations, and encouragement of the faith community to become a model of God's commonwealth. These two identities of ministry are not entirely distinct, nor is it possible to keep them neatly separated. There is a generous overlap of ministry. The emphasis and starting point is framed differently for each: diaconal ministry begins with the world's needs; pastoral ministry begins with the needs of the faith community. Each has their place both in the

[157] See Glossary: Order of Ministry.

congregation and in ministries situated outside congregations.

Part a) Ordaining all candidates for ordered ministry to either diaconal ministry or pastoral ministry.

Part a) of this recommendation emerges from the research directly. Participants in the research were those diaconal ministers who chose ordination; most saw their choice in terms of adding on to their ministry rather than abandoning diaconal ministry. More than one participant suggested ordaining to diaconal ministry so that the two expressions of ministry would be seen as equivalent. None of the participants wanted to see the United Church discontinue diaconal ministry.

The recommendation continues diaconal ministry as a form of ordered ministry, with the act of ordination as the liturgical initiation and authorization for diaconal ministry. In that sense, diaconal ministers would become ordained ministers. The recommendation proposes a different name, "pastoral ministers" for those who have been traditionally called "ordained ministers". The rationale for using a different name is to emphasize that no one form has any more claim to "ordained minister" than the other. Other potential names for "pastoral minister" might have been "presbyteral minister" or "priest". The usage of "pastoral minister" is more in keeping with United Church ethos. Already there are Lay Pastoral Ministers.[158] This recommendation proposes ordained pastoral ministers. Pastoral ministry is a widely-accepted term among order of ministry and lay members; it is descriptive of the general focus of the functions now associated with ordained ministers. Similar to the name "diaconal", the name "pastoral" points to the focus of ministry rather than the act of the church (ordination) in initiating that ministry. The use of the title "Reverend" becomes optional for both forms of ordered ministry.

In 1982 a national consultation of commissioned ministers, deaconesses, and certified churchmen was called to deliberate on a number of issues, one of which was to find a new name for this form of ministry. The consultation chose the name diaconal ministers as a way of retaining the connection with our own United church's deaconess heritage and the international diakonia, a world-wide movement of diaconal ministers. The same consultation considered a motion to request that diaconal ministers be ordained into diaconal ministry. That motion did not achieve consensus in the group, largely because

[158] With the recommended new nomenclature for ordered ministry, diaconal and pastoral, it follows that there is a parallel with designated lay ministries: lay pastoral ministers (as they are now called) and lay diaconal ministers (a suggested term for staff associates). Of course current staff associates would need to be consulted and agree to the change of their name.

many of the people there had chosen their ministry as distinct from ordained ministry and valued the differences. Many of the older deaconesses were very clear that they did not want to participate in elitism. The question, "Would we be called Reverend?" was a pivotal point in the discussion. The consultation veered away from any association with "Reverend" or clericalism.

Since that time, however, national diaconal gatherings sponsored by Diakonia of the United Church of Canada have entered into further discussion about the appropriate use of the term "Reverend". Some diaconal ministers use the title, particularly for circumstances when they are convinced it will be helpful to establish their ministerial authority, such as with funeral directors. Currently only a small minority make a practice of using the title; this recommendation would open the option to diaconal ministers.

The above recommendation follows the argument of Chapter Seven that diaconal ministers have been co-opted by the United Church's policies around settlement. While Long-term Recommendation #2 has proposed one way of responding to this co-optation through re-vitalizing diaconal ministry as a ministry in the world, Part a) of Recommendation #4 provides for different, more intermediate response to the co-optation, by accepting the church's need for diaconal ministers to be placed in congregational ministry for the immediate future.

Part b) Naming the functions of ministry as part of the covenanting act for each ministry. The functions named will be one or more of the following six possible functions: Education, Sacraments, Service, Word, Pastoral Care, Administration.

Part b) of Recommendation #4 proposes that the functions of ministry be named at the point of covenanting rather than at the point of ordination. This allows for greater flexibility of movement between the functions, and hence, for greater options within ministry that would meet the needs of career development, discovered in the research (see Chapter Seven). It is assumed that each covenanting situation would assess the qualifications and education of the ministry personnel in determining their suitability.

The six functions of ministry correspond to the present functions for ordered ministers, with the addition of "administration". Since administration is a considerable part of any ministry position and may be the major focus for some positions, such as national, conference, or institutional positions, it seems fitting that this function be named as part of the covenanting.

In the research, some participants regarded themselves as "generalists" who felt drawn towards all functions of ordered ministry. It would be possible for such a person to name all six functions at the covenanting service, provided all six were specified by the pastoral charge/ministry and provided that the person was competent in all functions as demonstrated through education and experience.

Part c) Granting sacramental privilege to all ordered ministers, to be activated as part of the act of covenanting.

Part c) of Recommendation #4 is a further interpretation of Part b) concerning sacramental privilege. The recommendation proposes that sacramental licence be granted at ordination to each member of ordered ministry, both diaconal and pastoral. The license is to be regarded as inactive until it becomes part of the covenanted contract with a pastoral charge or other ministry. It would be activated simply by signatures from the pastoral charge/ministry and the presbytery representatives. While seemingly restricting sacramental rights, this recommendation is extending them to diaconal ministers in positions where sacraments are a natural part of their ministry. At the same time, the recommendation limits those in primarily administrative ministries or retired ordered ministry personnel from having automatic licences for the sacraments. The recommendation is in keeping with the theology of the people of God holding the power of sacraments and having the right to confer it on the appropriate persons. As well, it is in keeping with the polity of the United Church. According to the Basis of Union, oversight of the administration of the sacraments is the duty of the Session (or equivalent body).[159] Some conferences have been considering granting the licence for sacraments to lay people who have received specific education about the sacraments. Alberta and North West Conference has such a policy in place for the licensing of lay or diaconal people in "paid accountable ministry" who have completed a prescribed course and who have been recommended by their pastoral charges and by presbytery. Once licenced, these people do not have to re-apply while they are in paid accountable ministry positions with that conference.

A notation from the research indicates that Part c) of Recommendation #4 may be controversial. Comments from the research show that the participants were divided on the issue of granting sacramental privilege to diaconal ministers. Most indicated that it would benefit diaconal ministers to have automatic licence, or at least greater access, to administer sacraments. Two strong voices opposed the increasing trend to extend sacramental privilege to diaconal ministers. Their view was that diaconal ministers should

[159] The Basis of Union, Polity, 5.10.1. See The Manual of the United Church of Canada, Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1995. p.21.

be ordained to receive this privilege; ordination would assure that these people had been called to sacramental ministry and had received the required education. Their views might shift, however, if diaconal ministers were to receive theological education together with pastoral ministers (see Recommendation #5), and if ordination was the means of entry into diaconal ministry.

Implications for Recommendation #4 Part a):

For current diaconal ministers, Recommendation #4 could be controversial. It presumes that a way can be found to make an acceptable transition from commissioned ministry into ordained ministry. Foremost is the issue of readiness and willingness to take such a step. Diaconal ministers will need to be consulted and agree to the wisdom of seeking ordination as a group. A question remains as to how best to honour the choice some diaconal ministers might make to remain commissioned and not to become ordained.

Whatever liturgy might be devised, it would need to encompass present ordained ministers, formalizing their new designation as ordained pastoral ministers, as well as diaconal ministers formalizing their new designation as ordained diaconal ministers. The liturgy would need to be constructed so that there is no suggestion of discounting or repudiating any previous ministry.

Implications for Recommendation #4 Part b):

A major implication of Recommendation #4 is that discernment of one's calling has to do with the ministry of designated leadership as distinct from the people's ministry in the world. The functions of ministry are no longer the categories for one's calling. The United Church's theology of calling is affected here. God's calling is to **ministry** rather than to **functions**. In other words, the calling to ministry does not distinguish between "educator" or "preacher". Interests, gifts, and education determine how the ministry of leadership is exercised in a specific context, but do not determine the overall calling to leadership.

Another implication relates to the United Church's practice of hiring ministry personnel. Recommendation #4 Part b) proposes that ministry functions be negotiated as part of the ministry requirements. This places greater responsibility on search committees or joint pastoral relations committees to assess applicants' qualifications for ministry functions. With the usage of needs assessments for pastoral relations, United Church people are already becoming familiar and competent in this area related to the needs for ministry. This recommendation simply extends their responsibilities to ascertain that the ministry personnel possesses the required education and skills.

Theological education needs to include a basic course in all six functions of ministry. Further courses to develop a special interest also need to be made available. (See Recommendation #5.)

Implications for Recommendation #4 Part c):

The recommendation concerning sacramental licencing changes the current polity of the United Church of Canada somewhat. At this time, the Conference has the power to grant a licence to administer sacraments, upon the application of the Presbytery and the Pastoral Charge.[160] The Conference would retain this power in conferring ordination with the accompanying privilege of sacraments. However, this recommendation gives a larger role in the licencing to the Pastoral Charges and the Presbytery. The Pastoral Charge/ministry determines in their ministry needs assessment whether sacraments are to be included in the ministry. The signatures of both the Presbytery and the Pastoral Charge give authorization to administer the sacraments.

The theology of the United Church around sacramental privilege requires further examination in the light of a revisioned church. For instance, the United Church would need to concur that there is a need for sacraments as part of a ministry in the world expressed by diaconal ministers. Similar to chaplains offering sacraments in a secular setting, diaconal ministers would offer sacraments in appropriate gatherings. If we believe that God is already present in the world, then sacraments are a valid expression of worship in that context.

Recommendation #5

To design and implement a co-operative plan for the joint theological education of all ordered ministry candidates.

The Response Group, a one-time gathering of people to collaborate in the writing of these recommendations, were generally in favour of Recommendation #5. They anticipated joint education of diaconal and pastoral candidates to be the coming reality. Yet some indicated ongoing concerns for the development of diaconal identity in diaconal candidates studying at theological schools where they would likely be a tiny minority. As a former theological educator of diaconal ministers, I have articulated those same concerns and continue to believe that the nurturing of diaconal identity is crucial.[161] However, in the

[160] Ibid, Section 427 b), p. 178.

[161] Without spelling out a detailed curriculum plan, I believe it is vital to diaconal ministry to make provision for diaconal candidates to have separate classes or "clusters" for the specific development of diaconal identity. This focus on diaconal

past, I have asserted the need for an entire independent education of diaconal ministers on the basis of diaconal identity; now I no longer support that position.

At this point I am convinced that diaconal education cannot be separated from the whole scope of theological education any more than the outward movement of the spiral dance can be separated from the inward movement. Theologically, the outward orientation of diaconal ministry belongs together with the inward nurturing of pastoral ministry as shown in Chapters Three and Four. There is no theological justification for independent education of diaconal and pastoral ministers; in fact, there is a strong theological argument that, for the church to be whole, reaching in and reaching out, these ministries must be done in relation to one another. Thus, theologically, the educational preparation of ministry candidates needs to be done jointly.

Recommendation #5 arises directly from the research. Several participants initiated the suggestion that it was now time for theological education for diaconal ministers[162] to be included in the education for all ordered ministry personnel. This was not a direct response to the financial distress of theological education in the United Church; rather, it was a reflection upon the changes which have taken place in theological education. The participants were in a position to compare studies from a student perspective, and they noted increasing similarity between diaconal education and preparation for ordination. Some also noted the need for pastoral ministers to have a better grounding in educational ministry and social ministry. A few research participants, and others as well, have observed that taking courses at the same theological school provided the benefit of greater understanding and respect between the two expressions of ordered ministry. One participant proposed a specific plan which forms the basis of Recommendation #5.

Suggested plan: That all candidates for ordered ministry take a basic complement of courses together. In the final year of theological education they would specialize through selected courses leading more specifically to diaconal ministry or pastoral ministry.

The above plan was suggested with reference to the current diaconal practice of serving primarily

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identity could be included as one part of a larger plan for joint education.

[162] The research participants, of course, were speaking of diaconal ministers as presently understood in the United Church, not of the renewed diaconal ministry as recommended in this chapter. Their arguments for joint education especially hold validity for those present diaconal personnel who are now serving in what we here refer to as "pastoral" ministry.

in congregational settings. It makes sense to offer joint educational preparation for all those engaged in "pastoral" ministries. For those who want to enter diaconal ministry, in the renewed sense of serving the world, theological education needs to emphasize social ministry. This recommendation for joint education is intended explicitly to include them as well. The inward and outward aspects of church and ministry belong together theologically and cannot be separated without weakening the church.

Implications for Recommendation #5:

To implement Recommendation #5 theological schools interested in participating in co-operative joint education would need to undergo major transformation both at the institutional level and at the educational level. The Co-ordinating Committee of the United Church Education for Church Leadership, in co-operation with the Committee on Diaconal Ministry, would need to authorize specific theological schools which qualified for this joint education. The theological schools would need to co-operate in developing curricula and re-educating or hiring teaching staff to be able to offer diaconal education specialities. Of particular importance is the mode of diaconal education; the preparation at theological schools needs to model the principles of empowerment which form the basis of diaconal ministry.

The United Church Manual (Section 724-726 and 732)[163] sets out the prescribed courses of study. A comparison reveals that there is already considerable overlap in the educational requirements for both ordered ministries. While courses are stipulated for the same areas of learning, the difference is one of concentration[164] leading to different specialties and functions in ministry.

Recommendation #5 would re-arrange the course requirements into a basic joint program and specialty offerings. Certain "speciality" courses would become mandatory requirements to fulfil a certification in the ministry specialty. The specialty courses would lead towards diaconal ministry or pastoral ministry or both ministries, depending on the number of requirements fulfilled.

Recommendation #6

To develop a plan for further education in diaconal ministry subject areas.

a. To offer continuing education opportunities in the area of diaconal ministry, especially

[163] Ibid pp. 246, 248.

[164] The difference of concentration is the visible difference from the way the Manual section lays out the courses. There is also a hidden difference in the manner in which courses are taught. Diaconal education has practised a thorough commitment to both learner-centred and community-centred education.

credit courses.

b. To create a doctoral degree in diaconal ministry (social ministry, religious education) or to provide for greater access for diaconal ministers in D.Min. programs.

Part a): In the findings of the research, education was a significant factor leading towards ordination. As noted in Chapter Six a few participants discovered their interest in becoming ordained through the courses they were already taking. Courses connected to pastoral ministry are readily available; however, courses connected to diaconal ministry are only offered sporadically and often with no credit attached. The availability of courses has a direct bearing upon the ministries which they support. Without continuing education opportunities for diaconal ministers, the church and theological education is not giving adequate support to diaconal ministry.

Part b): One of the reasons for the neglect of diaconal ministry is that United Church theological schools have not given consideration to diaconal educational requirements in planning for graduate degrees. The exception is the Masters of Theological Studies offered by St. Stephen's College. However, like the Masters of Religious Studies, this is considered to be a "dead-end degree"; in other words, it does not provide access to a doctoral program apart from the D.Min. program at St. Stephen's College. For entry into most D.Min. programs the requirement is a Masters of Divinity, generally acquired by ordained pastoral ministers, but seldom acquired by current diaconal ministers. Diaconal ministers who might possess a M.R.E. degree have been required to upgrade to a M.Div. degree in order to pursue doctoral level studies. Yet, as the research shows, being immersed in theological education leading towards ordination gives an additional push for some diaconal ministers to become ordained. If the United Church wants to maintain diaconal ministers as a visible leadership for the whole church's diaconal ministry in the world, then graduate theological education is one place to give active support. There are few diaconal ministers possessing doctoral degrees. The question arises as to the relation of diaconal ministry and the authority which comes with doctoral education. Not having more widely recognized degrees for diaconal ministers contributes to the marginalization of diaconal ministry.

Implications for Recommendation #6:

Theological schools, in co-operation with the Co-ordinating Committee for Education for Church Leadership and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry, need to plan for the creation of diaconal education opportunities.

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CONCLUSION

The recommendations I am advocating here have addressed the long-term vision of a church unencumbered by clericalism, reclaiming its diaconal ministry in the world. More immediate recommendations propose a recognition of people's ministry as "real" ministry, a revision of ordered ministry and accompanying changes theological education. The recommendations flow out of my theology of a revisioned church, out of my convictions about the place of ministry and leadership in the mission for justice, and out of the research insights with diaconal people who have become ordained. Through these recommendations I want to challenge The United Church of Canada to become a revisioned church, a church determined to diminish clericalism, a church ready to radically transform the ministry of its people, a church prepared to make mission in the world a primary focus, a church with the commonwealth of God at its heart.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Call to Ministry is a call from God, made known to all people of faith to live as they believe. Because a person cannot live an essentially communal faith on an individual basis, people of faith, especially Christian people, are called into community as part of their faith. To serve the needs of the community, some people are called into roles of leadership and facilitation of the community's ministry. Such a call may become known in many ways, such as the exploration and development of one's gifts, the affirmation of the community, the inspiration of the spirit.

Candidacy process is a series of prescribed steps taken by a person seeking to become ordained or commissioned by the United Church. Through these steps the person first becomes a candidate for ministry for the period of at least one year before commissioning or ordination. Initial steps involve the local congregation in a discernment process; later steps involve the recommendation of the Presbytery and Conference Committees on Education and Students.

Clericalism is the practice of placing ordained ministers in a superior position as God's representatives. It has emerged from the hierarchical ranking of ordered ministry and the inherent theological and political influence attributed to ordered ministry personnel by the church by virtue of their office.

Commissioning is an act of Conference to recognize and initiate persons as diaconal ministers.

Commonwealth of God (See footnote #1 in Chapter Three.)

Co-optation is the process of incorporation of a movement having a distinct agenda, such as diaconal ministry, into a larger corporate structure in such a way that it becomes absorbed, loses its own identity and serves the agenda of the larger corporate structure. The result of this incorporation is to render the movement ineffectual, though that may not be immediately apparent.

Diaconal ministers are those who have been commissioned by a conference of the United Church to the designated ministry of education, service and pastoral care. These functions describe much of what diaconal ministers do, yet the essence of diaconal ministry is its goal of mutual empowerment. Thus the collaborative style in which diaconal ministers approach their ministry tasks defines the nature of diaconal ministry even more than its three functions. In a few conferences, diaconal ministers have the privilege of sacraments, but in most conferences they must apply for this privilege. It is a decision of the conference,

but is recommended by the Manual of the United Church for diaconal ministers in team ministry and those serving a pastoral charge or chaplaincy in a sole paid position. The educational preparation for diaconal ministers is a five-year regional or community based program of study at The Centre for Christian Studies or at a native theological school.

Diaconal ministry is a ministry which belongs to the whole membership of the church. It is not just that designated [ministry done by diaconal ministers. Indeed it is the purpose of diaconal ministers to provide leadership that will enhance the diaconal ministry of the whole church to become the agents of God's spirit in the world so that needs are met and justice is realized. Herein lies a contrast with ordained ministry, which guards its sacramental privileges for those authorized by the church.

Diaconal identity refers to the embodiment of a diaconal approach to ministry. It is the living out of the collaborative style of ministry which seeks to empower people of faith through nurture and care, and to mutually engage in justice-making.

Feminist ecclesiology is an understanding of the theology of the church from a feminist perspective. Ecclesiology is a theological description of the essence of the church, both its present incarnation of the spirit and what it is called to be. Feminist ecclesiology seeks to name the church as an inclusive community of equals[165] which opposes the expression of patriarchy in the church and in the world. In this ecclesiology, the church is a justice-making community which attempts to embody the spirit of love and justice.

Feminist perspective begins with women's experience as an oppressed group within society. Since there are many diverging forms of feminism there is no one feminist perspective. Yet feminists are united in their common opposition to patriarchy, particularly in its systematic treatment of women as inherently inferior to men. Feminist perspective, then, analyses events, organizations, and social phenomena from the vantage point of women's critique. Certain feminist perspectives, such as liberative feminist perspective, promote a transformation of society to eradicate the oppression of women and other marginalized groups.

Hierarchy refers to an ordering of social system by class, status, or authority. Within the system each rank has a successive order, with the lower rank subject to the rank above it and dependent upon the upper

[165] See Letty Russell, Church in the Round:Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation, New York: Crossroad, 1993.

rank(s). 'Hierarchy' has a specific meaning for the church, especially those religious organizations which recognize a priestly class. In this present work, the word 'hierarchy' is used in its more general social meaning of tiered ordering, describing a 'top-down' relationship.

Lay Pastoral Ministers are appointed by a presbytery to a designated lay ministry of word and pastoral care. Commonly they receive the license to administer sacraments after fulfilling the necessary requirements. Some hold a commitment to a form of designated lay ministry within a pastoral charge; others choose lay pastoral ministry because they are unable, for a variety of reasons, to complete the required preparation for ordination. Lay pastoral ministers are seen by the church to perform the same functions as ordained ministers. Their education consists of three years of supervised pastoral ministry, academic theological courses, and three residential events (two weeks each year for three years).

Order of Ministry comes from the Latin word "ordo" which means to rank or place. In the history of the Christian church, it came to be understood as a reflection of God's divine ordering of human relationship and the universe itself. (See Letty Russell, quoted in Chapter Four.) Often the liturgical words for ordering are "set apart" for a specific ministry, indicating that the official body of the church has authorized that ministry and the person entering that ministry. In the United Church there is **one** order of ministry with **two** expressions: **diaconal** and **ordained** ministers. The order of ministry is one of the designated ministries of leadership within the United Church; other designated forms of ministry (not part of the order of ministry) are Staff Associates and Lay Pastoral Ministers

Ordained Ministers are ordained by a conference of the United Church to a designated ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care. Most serve a pastoral charge as the sole paid minister providing leadership in worship, pastoral care to individuals and groups, and nurture for the life and work of the faith community. Some ordained ministry personnel function in teams in congregations or larger institutions/organizations sponsored by the United Church. Their program of study consists of three to four years at a theological school, following a Bachelor's degree; for native ministry the program is five years of community based education at a native theological school.

Ordained ministry is a designated ministry of leadership within the United Church, regarded as essential to the well-being of the faith community. It refers to the ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care performed by ordained ministers. Here there is a distinction from diaconal ministry which is a ministry, initiated at baptism, to be done by every member.

Paradigm has its roots in the greek word for "example" (deigm) "set along side"(para). A paradigm is a model by which we comprehend a larger amorphous pattern in our culture in theology. There is a confluence of factors or elements making up the pattern that gives a shape to the culture or theology. Paradigm shift, then, represents a major change in the cultural or theological pattern. Peter Hodgson distinguishes three great paradigms in Christian theology: classical, modern, and postmodern. A new paradigm for the church and its ministry suggests a basic change of emphasis, exemplifying a new pattern of relating.[166]

Patriarchy, from its two root words, literally means "father-rule". In its use today, especially in feminist literature, the word goes far beyond the rule of fathers. According to Maria Mies, in Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale , p. 37, "It includes the rule of husbands, of male bosses, of ruling men in most societal institutions, in politics and economics [and religion], in short what has been called 'the men's league' or 'men's house' ['old boys' club]." She explains further that the term 'patriarchy' has been re-discovered by the new feminist movement as a "struggle concept" because the movement "needed a term by which the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect women, could be expressed as well as their systemic character. Moreover, the term 'patriarchy' denotes the historical and societal dimension, and is thus less open to biologistic interpretations, in contrast, for example, to the concept of 'male dominance'." The term 'patriarchy' refers to a systemic arrangement which has existed historically in most known cultures that places social, political, economic, and religious control in the hands of men. The social norms have given men the paternal 'right' to dominate both women and children.

Power, Authority, Privilege: These words are closely related; they are grouped together here for the purpose of comparison and distinction.

- Power is the ability to choose, to act, to influence, to effect, to control. The term indicates capability, but also the assumed or assigned right to exercise control or influence. In this dissertation 'power' is used as a neutral term in the sense that power can be either beneficial or destructive; however, power is seldom, if ever, experienced as neutral. 'Power-over' refers to the use of power to control others, and is commonly experienced as oppressive. 'Shared power' is the concept of power as a limitless commodity where many or all people influence action, participate in decisions, take part in varieties of leadership. See "A Community of Mutuality and Shared Power"

[166] Peter C. Hodgson, Revisioning The Church: Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. p. 12.

in Chapter 3.

- Authority is a form of legitimized power or delegated power. Rooted in the word 'author', it connotes an assigned power. There are many types of authority, as described in the section, "Towards a Theology of Ordering" in Chapter 4 and the section, "Need for Authority" in Chapter 7. Institutional authority refers to authorization through official approval and endorsement. Inner authority is the concept of having oneself as a source of authority, or claiming power for oneself, as in trusting one's own experience and speaking one's truth.
- Privilege is the enjoyment of special rights or power conferred by virtue of position, role, gender, age, status, income, ethnicity, family origin, knowledge, association. The root word signifies 'peculiar' or special; it connotes an exception. Hence, 'privilege' refers to the granting of an exclusive right or power. Where there is privilege, certain persons have the benefit of an advantage which has been denied to others.

Sexism is the socially conditioned dominance of the male gender over the female gender because of a societal belief that males have an inherent right to the superior position. Political, economic and religious systems have been constructed to reinforce the dominance of males over females.

Staff Associates are appointed by a presbytery to a designated lay ministry, usually in a congregation. They are seen by the church to perform the same functions as diaconal ministers. Their functions include one or all of: education, service and pastoral care. Commonly they work in a team ministry. There is no specified program of preparation for Staff Associates; previous experience and education may be recognized as preparation, or courses/degrees may be taken from theological schools to enrich their particular ministries.

APPENDIX B: 'LENSES' WITH WHICH TO VIEW DIACONAL MINISTRY

Diaconal ministers in the United Church of Canada often make a differentiation between identifying diaconal ministry according to its ministry **functions** or according to its **style** of ministry. The functions for diaconal ministry have been assigned by the United Church of Canada as: educational ministry, service and pastoral care. It is to these functions of ministry that diaconal ministers are formally commissioned. Yet frequently diaconal ministers interpret their ministry by claiming a diaconal approach or style of ministry. Barb Elliott was one who outlined this distinction in a brief unpublished paper:

> *"Much of the distinctiveness of diaconal/commissioned ministry appears to me to be in its style and stance. These are what are different as much as what we do. I can't decide whether this is due to the training, or whether we seek that kind of training because we already have a particular orientation to ministry! At any rate, this ministry emphasized more of a learning to work with people than proclamation, a consultative leadership style more than up-front leadership which tends to be seen as authoritative."* [167]

The description of diaconal ministry according to "style/stance" or according to "functions" might be seen as the lens a person brings to viewing diaconal ministry. One lens becomes the primary way in which diaconal ministry is seen and interpreted. For the purposes of analysis, I found it helpful to further break down the two categories (functions and style) and to add some more categories. A set of six lenses emerged. These lenses are not totally distinct, yet they provide insight into the standpoints of the participants in this research.

Some participants demonstrate a combination of lenses; indeed it is possible for a person to evolve from one lens to another although the lenses are not arranged in any sequence or hierarchical pattern. A certain theology can be connected to each of the lenses on diaconal ministry. For each lens, then, I have included some theological connections which may provide a basis for understanding the theological approaches of the participants in the research.

Lens: Skills and Gifts

A person using this lens describes diaconal ministry as the place where certain skills and gifts for ministry can best be exercised. Group leadership, counselling, community development, social analysis

[167] Barb Elliott, Thoughts re the Validity and Distinctiveness of Diaconal/Commissioned Ministry, unpublished paper, 1981

are a few of the skills which come to mind as indicators of a potential diaconal ministry. Gifts are endowments persons receive from God, which like skills, may also be cultivated. For instance, a gift of music or storytelling may be inborn yet develops and matures through acquiring and practising the skills related to music or storytelling. Naturally, both skills and gifts help to determine the most suitable areas for a person to serve in ministry, such as education or preaching; thus, skills and gifts correspond closely with the functions of ministry.

The lens of skills and gifts relates most strongly to a theology of gifts as emanating from the creator. Gifts can be interpreted as the grace of God and when these gifts are embodied in ministry they become additional "means of grace" for the faith community. Some examples of such gifts used as a means of grace are: the liturgist who uses a gift of poetry in congregational worship, the pastoral care giver who relates easily with people of all ages, the minister of outreach whose passion for justice draws others into action, the educational minister who brings an ability to facilitate learning and spiritual development.

Lens: Functions of Diaconal Ministry

A person using the functional lens describes diaconal ministry as having three areas of focus: educational ministry, service and pastoral care. This approach to interpreting diaconal ministry follows the Manual of the United Church and conveys the more official definition through the particular ministries assigned by the church at commissioning.

Educational ministry includes Christian education for all ages, along with using education as a way of doing many aspects of ministry, such as leading worship, resourcing committees, counselling. Service (diakonia)is the key word from which diaconal ministry springs. Service is seen as an outreach ministry with an emphasis on the creation of justice within our world. This aspect of ministry adapts to serving whatever needs are current. Pastoral care is the expression of God's loving concern for those both within and beyond the church.

An institutional organization, such as the United Church of Canada, requires categories of demarcation to give order to its various ministries. Thus the use of a functional lens fits well with the institutional need to categorize. "The primary task of diaconal ministry is ...through educational, service and pastoral care.[168]

[168] from the Statement of Belief adopted in 1992 by Diakonia of the United Church of Canada. See Appendix C.

The functional lens relates to a functional theology of ordination/commissioning which places emphasis on the office, or functions, rather than on the ontological status of the ordained or commissioned minister. In this theology, ordination/commissioning does not inherently change the being of the person; rather ordination/commissioning sets the person within a new covenant and authorizes that person to perform certain functions of ministry. Conceivably, this introduces a fluid theology of ministry. If the United Church were to operate more thoroughly with a functional theology of ministry, ordained or commissioned diaconal ministers would enter into ministry roles as these were negotiated for each appointment, and the functions would be covenanted at the beginning of a new pastoral relationship or ministry position.

Lens: Style of Ministry

While gifts and skills can be used in many ways, and functions of ministry can be performed through different methods, a certain approach or **style** of ministry has been adopted by diaconal ministers. It is this style of ministry which some diaconal ministers use as their interpretative lens. The style most frequently refers to a style of leadership involving consultation, consensus, empowerment, shared power, mutuality, collegiality and non-hierarchy. Depending upon the era the diaconal minister attended theological school the words might vary from "teaming" to "enabling" to "liberating", yet the basic denominator of this style of ministry is to work with people, to lift up their gifts, and to take on ministry together. Diaconal Ministers who claim this style of ministry do so not because they alone possess this approach, but because they have been educated to minister in this style and because they bring a deep commitment to it. "The primary task of diaconal ministry is mutual empowerment..."[169]

The ministry style lens points to a style of leadership and a way of relating to people. Whatever style is embraced, it will be reflected in a theology of power. For instance the lens held by a person embracing an empowering style relates to a theology of inclusivity and shared power. The key aspects of this theology are the affirmation of the gifts of every person, and the empowerment of those seen as "lesser". A theology of inclusivity welcomes difference, shown particularly in differing gifts. A theology of shared power focuses particularly on those with lesser power, to empower them so that they are able to take their place in leadership, offering their gifts. Because of the sharing of power, this theology has the potential to be a radical theology which connects to a theology of liberation of the oppressed.

[169] Ibid.

Lens: Life Commitment

Diaconal ministers who use this lens to interpret their ministry have made a thorough identification of themselves with their ministry vocation. They live their vocation, or perhaps, their vocation has become their life. They cannot imagine doing or being anything else. It defines their personhood and their way of interacting in the world.

For diaconal ministers, especially in past generations, an element of community living infuses this approach to diaconal ministry, even if the person lives alone. There is a sense in which the church or the diaconal community has become the extended family. Such a life commitment is visible especially in the circles of deaconesses who gave support to one another during times when the church did not provide adequately for them, such as during illness or retirement. They also shared good times with one another, often providing companionship for holidays.

The lens of life commitment relates to a theology of calling and to a theology of community. The call to ministry is a life-long vocation. The call is to a designated ministry within the faith community or on behalf of the faith community, and it is a calling that exists for the life of the community. Through such designated ministries, the faith community grows spiritually and is equipped for its mission in the world. Those designated ministers who have "life commitment" as their lens, see their vocation as a definite lifestyle. One aspect of that lifestyle for diaconal ministers involves a relationship, a kinship if you will, with others who have adopted the same vocation. This kinship is the basis for a vocational community, which may be lived in a dispersed manner, yet retains the essential qualities of community life.

Lens: Servant Ministry

Servant ministry provides the origins of diaconal ministry. Diakonia originally referred to a menial service to others, caring for the physical needs of people. This lens of servant ministry is rooted in the biblical tradition of diaconal ministry. Jesus' servant ministry is visible in the gospels many times, for instance in the washing of the feet of his friends. In Acts 6 the early church established deacons for the purpose of caring for the physical and financial needs of widows.

As a continuation of diaconal ministry, the concern of this lens is to meet the immediate needs of others. In varying contexts these needs may differ quite widely, yet the concern to respond to those in need remains constant. "Diaconal ministry remains flexible and responsive to the needs of the Church and

the world, wherever that may lead."[170]

From a feminist perspective, caution needs to be taken in recommending, especially to women, a servant ministry. Servanthood needs to be distinguished from servitude, the forced subservience that has been the lot of women and other oppressed peoples for so long. When diaconal ministry has been a primary way-- historically the only way--for women to enter a ministry vocation, this caution against servitude becomes all the more important. Jesus presents us with a model of chosen servanthood, a willing and intentional identification with the lesser ones.

The theology of servanthood, of course, is the theology which expresses the lens of servant ministry. In this theology God becomes incarnate in a servant role. Actively choosing to follow Jesus' model of service, diaconal ministers offer service to others through which they express the care and concern of God for all, most especially for the downtrodden. "To be a servant following in the steps of the Servant Christ is to have the kind of love that finds the suffering of other insufferable."[171]

Lens: Ideology or Worldview

In this lens, I have taken the notion of "stance" in Barb Elliott's writing and developed it further. The stance she implied was to a particular style/approach. Undergirding that style/approach, however, is a particular worldview. It is a perspective which questions everything from the standpoint of justice and transformation. Similar to God's preferential option for the poor within liberation theology, this worldview stands with the suffering, the lesser ones, and works with them for change that will bring healing to humanity and to the earth. Diaconal ministers using this ideological lens define their ministry as work with the marginalized. Those on the margins of society (and the church) are central in the concern of these diaconal ministers. The marginalized are the starting point of ministry and justice is the end-goal. A phrase from the Statement of Belief that expresses this ideological lens is: "We offer an intentional commitment to stand and be with others on the periphery."[172]

Here I have portrayed the particular worldview that Diakonia of the United Church of Canada

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[170] Ibid.

[171] Louise Williams, from a presentation made at to the National Consultation of Commissioned/Diaconal ministry (United Church of Canada) at Cedar Glen, February 16-19, 1982. p. 10. Deaconess Louise Williams is a staff member the Lutheran Deaconess Association, USA.

[172] Ibid.

espouses. The worldview lens adopted by Diakonia is a specific ideology which connects best with a theology of liberation. Its perspective or stance is to focus on the marginalized. There is an accountability first to those on the periphery. While there are many theologies of liberation, there is among them a common base of commitment to justice through standing with the lesser ones, following God's preferential option for the poor. Given this understanding, the diaconal worldview lens, with its goal of global justice through a commitment to the marginalized, is located solidly within a liberation theology.

APPENDIX C: STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Revised and adopted in 1992 by Diakonia of The United Church of Canada; Diaconal Ministry in The United Church of Canada

We are called with all God's people to
be responsible agents of creative transformation
support and caring
liberation and reconciliation
justice and mercy
inviting all into a pilgrimage of
dignity and well-being,
and a ministry of accompaniment.
And we are called with all God's people
into a life of discernment and risk.
Our roots are within the church's earliest traditions,
and we exist today within a world-wide
expression of diaconal ministry.
Diaconal ministry exists within the ministry
of the whole community and is the
responsibility of that community.
The primary task of diaconal ministry
is mutual empowerment
through education, service and pastoral care.
This includes working together
to maintain relationships that are life-giving
and sustaining of community
to meet immediate needs
and to work to create a just and loving world.
we offer an intentional commitment
to stand and be with others on the periphery.
Seeking to be faithful to the gospel,
diaconal ministry remains flexible and
responsive to the needs of the Church and the world,
wherever that may lead.

APPENDIX D: PILOT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please note: the questions in bold were verbally asked. The possibilities in ordinary print were notes to myself of potential areas to probe.)

1. **To get us started, when were you designated/commissioned? Was that right after graduation from CCS/Covenant College? When were you ordained?**

   (Purpose: data)

2. **Who or what helped you to gain a diaconal identity?**
   Some possible sources:
   - a particular mentor
   - mentoring group (eg. Diakonia)
   - student peers
   - courses/CCS programs
   - books, audiovisuals, educational materials
   - transformative event or experience

2a. Was this diaconal identity nurtured for you in any ongoing way?

2b. How strongly did you identify yourself with diaconal ministry?
(Purpose: ascertain degree of diaconal identity, how identity was formed)

3. **What were your reasons for wanting to be commissioned as a diaconal minister? What do you recall telling people in your candidacy interviews?**
   (Purpose: establish a base for comparing rationale)

4. **What were your reasons for wanting to be ordained? What do you recall telling people in your candidacy interviews? telling other people? (ordained colleagues, diaconal colleagues, church members) What did the Candidacy committee ask you? Were there areas where they pressed you or challenged you?**

4a. What were the specific factors entering into your decision?

Some possible factors:

- experience of team ministry
- gaining more credibility
- worn down by the powerless position of diaconal ministry
- a change/development in your gifts for ministry or in a sense of your own spirituality
- practical considerations (employment, sacramental privilege)
- issues of gender
- concern for acceptability

4b. Out of all the factors we've talked about, which was influencing you the most in the decision?

(Purpose: the core question of the research)

5. Was there a particular incident/story that especially prompted you to make the change from diaconal to ordained ministry? (For instance, a hurtful experience or a specific discovery?)

(Purpose: a "story" way to identify reasons to be ordained)

6. How difficult a decision was it to make? (How does it compare with the most difficult decision of your life?)

6a. Was there a particular person who was your main personal support during your decision to become ordained? Was there a significant personal relationship that was not there when you were commissioned?

(Purpose: explore the cost/meaning of the decision)

7. What was going on in the church at the time you were ordained?

- -major trends, church struggles
- -any awareness of the context affecting the decision?

(Purpose: recognize the potential effect of the historical context on the decision)

7a. Is there something the church might have done that would have meant you didn't need to become ordained?

(Purpose: recognize the potential effect of the historical and social context on the decision)

8. Did becoming an ordained minister accomplish what you hoped for? What has changed since you became ordained?

- the way you see yourself in ministry?
- the way you are seen to be in ministry ...by church members?...by ordained ministers...by diaconal ministers?

8a Do you feel your leadership has been affirmed over the years? Any change since becoming ordained?

8b Did you experience any losses in becoming ordained?
(Purpose: self-reflection and analysis re the decision)

9. In your view, is it possible to be both diaconal and ordained or do you think we choose between these two ministries like a "fork in the road"? (Has ordained ministry been added onto your ministry, or do you experience ordained ministry as different from diaconal ministry in a way that replaces it?)

(Purpose: discover their view of the need to distinguish)

10. Do you still consider yourself to be diaconal in some way?

- If "NO", give reasons...
- If "YES"...
- -In what ways are you diaconal?
- -How is diaconal ministry expressed in your actions,
- in advocacy, in networking?
- -Do you wish to be part of DUCC? (Diakonia of the United Church)
- -How is diaconal identity being nurtured in you on an ongoing basis?
- (Purpose: test continuing diaconal identity/commitment)

11. What theological distinction do you make between ordained and diaconal ministries? (How is the call of God present in diaconal ministry? in ordained ministry? What can each expression of ministry affirm about the other? How is each ministry threatened by the other?

(Purpose: theological reflection from one who has been both)

12. **In thinking about the changing future of the church, how do you see the future role of ministry personnel, and how do diaconal ministers fit with this future church? Does an image come to mind to describe how diaconal ministers might relate to the future church?**
(Purpose: test my perception re need for diaconal ministers)

13. **Think for a moment about how you relate to the church** (not your particular congregation/pastoral charge but the church in general) . . .**How would you describe your relationship with the church? Has this changed since your ordination?**
(Purpose: elicit self-definition as a "lens" to view this person) from the perspective of power)

14. **Is there anything else you would like to include your comments?**
(Purpose: empowerment -interviewee may contribute whatever they deem important)

15. **How have you experienced this interview? Do you have suggestions for changing the questions or the style?**

(Purpose: learning/revision for future interviews)

APPENDIX E: PROJECT/DISSERTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please note: the questions in bold were posed verbally. The possibilities in ordinary print are notes to myself of potential areas to probe.)

1. **To get us started, when were you designated/commissioned? Was that right after graduation? When were you ordained?**
   (Purpose: data)

2. **Before you became ordained, what did you call yourself as a minister?** (e.g. deaconess, commissioned, diaconal, minister of Christian education) **What helped you gain a sense of identity in this ministry? What ongoing support of this ministry did you find, or not find?**
   Some possible sources: - a particular mentor
   - mentoring group (eg. Diakonia)
   - student peers
   - courses/CCS or other programs
   - books, audiovisuals, educational materials
   - transformative event or experience

2a. **How do you describe diaconal ministry? How strongly do you identity yourself with diaconal ministry?**
   (Purpose: to ascertain how identity in ministry was formed and the degree of diaconal identity)

3. **What were your reasons for wanting to be commissioned (or designated) as a diaconal minister (deaconess)? What do you recall telling people in your candidacy interviews?**
   (Purpose: establish a base for comparing rationale)

4. **What were your reasons for wanting to be ordained? What do you recall telling people in your candidacy interviews? ...telling other people? (ordained colleagues, diaconal colleagues, church members) What did the Candidacy committee ask you? Were there areas where they pressed you or challenged you?**

4a. What were some of the specific factors entering into your decision?

Some possible factors: experience of team ministry

- gaining more credibility
- worn down by the powerless position of diaconal ministry
- a change/development in your gifts for ministry or in a sense of your own spirituality
- practical considerations (employment, sacramental privilege)
- issues of gender
- concern for acceptability

How did your experience as a woman affect your decision?

4b. Out of all the factors we've talked about, which was influencing you the most in the decision?

(Purpose: the core question of the research)

5. Was there a particular incident/story that especially prompted you to make the change from diaconal to ordained ministry? (For instance, a hurtful experience or a specific discovery?)

(Purpose: a "story" way to identify reasons to be ordained)

6. When you were making this decision, who(m) did you talk it over with? Who(m) did you go to for help in making this decision? Who(m) did you avoid, or fear talking with?

6a. Was there an intimate relationship, either a friend or partner, involved at this time? How were they affected? How did they affect your choice?

6b. Can you give me some idea about how difficult a decision this was to make? (How does it compare with the most difficult decision of your life?)

(Purpose: explore who was influential in this decision and the potential cost of the decision.)

7. What was going on in the church at the time you were ordained?

- major trends, church struggles
- any awareness of the context affecting the decision?

(Purpose: recognize the potential effect of the historical and social context on the decision)

7a. Is there something the church might have done that would have meant you didn't need to become ordained?

8. Did becoming an ordained minister accomplish what you hoped for? What has changed since you became ordained?

- the way you see yourself in ministry?
- the way you are seen to be in ministry ...by church members?...by ordained ministers...by diaconal ministers?

8a. Now that you have experienced some of the results or privileges of being ordained, what is your reflection on your own need for status or power as a minister?

8b. Did you experience any losses in becoming ordained?
(Purpose: self-reflection and analysis re the decision)

9. In your view, is it possible to be both diaconal and ordained or do you think we choose between these two ministries like a "fork in the road"? (Has ordained ministry been added onto your ministry, or do you experience ordained ministry as different from diaconal ministry in a way that replaces it?)

9a. What do you think of the idea of all diaconal ministers becoming ordained?
(Purpose: discover their view of the need to distinguish)

10. Do you still consider yourself to be diaconal in some way?

- If "NO", give reasons...
- If "YES"...
- In what ways are you diaconal?
- How is diaconal ministry expressed in your actions,
- in advocacy, in networking?
- -o you wish to be part of DUCC? (Diakonia of the United Church)
- -How is diaconal identity being nurtured in you on an ongoing basis?

(Purpose: test continuing diaconal identity/commitment)

11. Can you think of an image of the church that appeals to you? Within that image, how is ordained ministry symbolized? How is diaconal ministry symbolized? How is the ministry of the people symbolized?

11a. Has your own theology of ministry changed with ordination? What theology of ministry do you encounter most often in the church? Is your own theology of ministry compatible with prevailing theologies or do you sense contractions? Are there contradictions within yourself? (If so, what do you do to minimize the contradictions or prevent co-optation?)
(Purpose: theological reflection on the church and ministry)

l2. Think for a moment about how you relate to the church (not your particular congregation/ pastoral charge but the church in general)...**How would you describe your relationship with the church? Has this changed since your ordination?**
(Purpose: elicit self-definition as a "lens" to view this person from the perspective of power)

13. Is there anything else you would like to include your comments?
(Purpose: empowerment -interviewee may contribute whatever they deem important)

14. How have you experienced this interview? Do you have suggestions for changing the questions or the style?
(Purpose: learning/revision for future interviews)

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

I hereby give permission to Kay Heuer to transcribe this interview and to include my comments in a written report or dissertation. The permission extends to the hiring of a clerical person for transcription purposes who will be expected to keep professional confidentiality. I understand that I may withdraw at any point and that my wish to withdraw will be respected.

Further, I understand that in any written report/dissertation my name will not be used and my experiences will be kept anonymous in so far as that is possible. In addition, names of my colleagues will not be used and anonymity will extend to them as well. Access to the raw data will be restricted to these persons (clerical staff and Kay Heuer), with storage arranged in Kay's home office and home computer. The interview will be used for research purposes only.

Should further debriefing or counselling be needed at the conclusion of this interview, Kay Heuer agrees to make a suitable referral to a ministry colleague, a spiritual director/friend, or a counsellor; or to engage in further conversation where that is indicated.

_____ _____

(date) (place)

_____ _____

(researcher) (signature)