

Pulpit & Pew

Research on Pastoral Leadership

WOMEN'S PATH INTO MINISTRY: SIX MAJOR STUDIES

By Edward C. Lehman, Jr.



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www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu
Duke Divinity School
Durham, N.C.

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Pulpit and Pew Research Reports, No. 1, Fall 2002
ISBN: 0-9725644-0-3



FOREWORD

Women's Path into Ministry is the first in a series of research reports from Pulpit & Pew, a major research project on pastoral leadership with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc. The project, hosted by Duke Divinity School, has as one of its primary aims to answer the question: What is the state of pastoral leadership at the new century's beginning, and what do current trends portend for the next generation?

Arguably the most important trend in pastoral leadership in the last quarter of the 20th century has been the entry of women into ordained leadership in many Protestant denominations. In some denominations, between one-fourth and one-third of the total number of ordained ministers are women. Thus it seems altogether fitting that this first report focuses on clergywomen.

Since women first began to be ordained in significant numbers in the late 1970s, a number of important research studies of their experiences in ministry have been published. Because of this, we did not believe it necessary to undertake a new study of clergywomen. Instead, we thought that a review essay summarizing and synthesizing the major findings and insights of these studies would make them accessible to a larger audience. Thus we asked one of the leading students of clergywomen, Dr. Edward Lehman, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the State University of New York, Brockport, to undertake this synthesis. He has done an admirable job, providing us with a highly readable and engaging look at women's path into ministry.

In addition, we have invited responses to Lehman's work from four clergy: two are clergywomen currently serving as parish ministers, the Rev. J. Elise Brown, a Lutheran pastor from New York City, and the Rev. Dr. Mary Jane Hitt, a Presbyterian pastor in Scranton, Pa. Two others are denominational leaders, the Rev. Charlene P. Kammerer, Bishop of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Ohio. Each responds to Lehman's work from her or his experience and raises further questions for reflection and response.

Who will find this report helpful? Anyone who cares about the future ministry of the church, the contributions of clergywomen to this ministry, and the roadblocks that still remain will find in it a great deal of food for thought. Women considering ordained ministry, men and women currently serving as pastoral leaders, lay leaders of congregations, and denominational executives responsible for placement should find Lehman's synthesis and the four responses especially provocative. Pulpit & Pew is pleased to make it available.



Jackson W. Carroll, Director
Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a review of six major studies on clergywomen, Edward Lehman argues that women's ordination is one of the most significant recent developments in American religion, fostering change in churchgoers' attitudes toward women in leadership and expanding the concept of ministry beyond the local congregation. Drawing upon research conducted between 1982 and 1998, Lehman sketches the broad outlines of a woman's "career path" into ministry, from seminary and ordination through parish placement, and examines such factors as collegiality, ministry style, and the influence of female pastoral leadership on congregants, denominations, and culture.

Chapter 1, "Studies of Women in Ministry," identifies and briefly summarizes the six studies, which are the primary source of current knowledge about women clergy and their experiences in the American church. In addition, Lehman offers a short overview of the women-in-ministry movement, along with some current statistics on the status of clergywomen.

Chapter 2, "Seminary and Ordination," finds that the available research presents a relatively coherent, and even optimistic, situation: women have successfully navigated seminary education, and, at the same time, have introduced many changes in theological education. Despite female success in seminary, however, some denominations still resist or refuse to accept women as pastoral leaders. The major factor distinguishing various churches' acceptance or rejection of women's ordination appears to be their response to modern secular humanism and its emphasis on the intrinsic value of the individual, whether male or female.

Chapter 3, "The Placement Process," offers a detailed and often bleak assessment of clergywomen's continuing struggle to find positions. Research shows that it takes women longer to find a job and that men still command higher salaries than women. In addition, women are rarely offered "high steeple" churches, serve as assistants longer, receive fewer benefits, and rarely rise to executive levels. Consistently more men than women are placed in jobs that offer more prestige, autonomy, and remuneration.

Chapter 4, "Getting Along on the Job," demonstrates that women experience more role strain than do men and continue to struggle against negative attitudes from laity regarding their call. Surprisingly, clergywomen report general satisfaction with and support from their male peers and denominational executives. Since, however, clergywomen have greater daily contact with resistant church members than with supportive colleagues, they are apt to feel more discouraged and embattled in ministry than are male clergy. Lehman calls upon male clergy and denominational administrators to do a better job of educating lay church members and validating clergywomen's call to ministry.

Chapter 5, "Differences in Ministry Style," assesses research on a controversial question: whether distinctive masculine and feminine styles of ministry exist. Lehman's survey suggests that the data gives "a split verdict" on the issue and no "simplistic answer" can be offered to the question of sex difference in pastoral ministry. In general, some evidence exists to suggest that some men and women conduct ministry differently in terms of power, ethics, and decision making. But no evidence has been found to support the existence of gender differences in terms of authority, status, preaching, interpersonal style, and dealing with social issues.

Chapter 6, “The Impact of Clergy Women,” presents Lehman’s conclusions, a discussion of “setbacks and backlash,” and an overview of “possible futures” for both clergywomen and the denominations they serve. Lehman contends that the position of those who discriminate against women in the church is incompatible with core Judeo-Christian values of justice, freedom, and other-centered love. Ironically, secular institutions such as politics, industry, business, law, education, and sports are doing a better job of applying those values than are churches that subordinate women as a matter of policy. As more church members recognize that discrepancy between Christian values and exclusionary policies, church structures will continue to open up to women, Lehman predicts, though that may take a generation or even a century to occur.

Lehman’s report also includes four responses from clergy.

The Rev. J. Elise Brown, a Lutheran pastor in New York, focuses on (1) the distinction between personal failures and systemic roadblocks and how to help women clergy distinguish between the two; (2) the need to train the laity to respond to women clergy theologically, emotionally and practically; and (3) the need to rethink assumptions that equate a large church with a successful pastorate.

The Rev. Dr. Mary Jane Hitt, a Presbyterian pastor in Pennsylvania, argues the church should not ground the debate over gender equity in terms of the larger secular society. Instead, the church should reexamine and rethink the whole notion of successful ministry by drawing upon the uniquely Christian gospel of “a world turned upside down by Jesus Christ.”

The Rev. Charlene Kammerer, Bishop of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, points out among other things the need for women clergy to stay connected with one another in order to serve effectively in ministry. She notes that once unimaginable changes have occurred, but that important challenges continue, particularly in breaking through the glass ceiling that blocks women’s elevation to senior pastor positions.

The Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, a judicatory executive with the American Baptist Churches of Ohio, praises Lehman’s review for providing a comprehensible framework for understanding the status of clergywomen in America and offers comments, critiques and suggestions in five areas: calling, placement, justice, pastoral care, and the future of clergy women.



CHAPTER ONE: STUDIES OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

One of the most significant recent developments in the life of religious organizations in the United States is the movement of women into the ranks of ordained clergy. While their numbers have grown slowly, by the early 1990s, ordained clergy women constituted an average of ten percent of total clergy in denominations where the ordination of women had been made a matter of official denominational policy. The group with the highest proportion of ordained women was the Unitarian Universalist Association with thirty percent. They were followed by the United Church of Christ with twenty five percent and the Disciples of Christ with eighteen percent. The body with the lowest proportion of women amongst their clergy was the Free Methodists, where women comprised less than one percent of ministers.

The first woman known to be ordained to the pastoral ministry in the United States was Antoinette Brown, whose designation took place in 1853 in the Congregational Church ...

Today the proportion of female clergy in most mainline Protestant organizations averages about fifteen percent. In evangelical/fundamentalist groups the overall figure is about seven percent (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 6,155). So women constitute a small but growing segment of ordained clergy in religious bodies in the United States that endorse the concept of women's ordination.

The first woman known to be ordained to the pastoral ministry in the United States was Antoinette Brown, whose designation took place in 1853 in the Congregational Church in the northeast (Nesbitt, 1997; 16-23). In that region and in some parts of the expanding frontier, there is even earlier evidence of women assuming leadership roles in religious groups and evangelistic actions, especially during the Second Great Awakening, but they remain anonymous. As for Antoinette, she was far ahead of her time, and for that she paid a price. Pressures from conservatives caused her to step down after but a few years of service to the Congregationalists. Nevertheless, she was undaunted, and she joined the Unitarians where she was again ordained in 1863.

The numbers of ordained women grew very slowly until late in the nineteenth century, when they received a push from the first wave of the feminist movement pressing for women's equality especially in the form of suffrage. Up through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, the number of denominations ordaining women increased slowly, resulting in slight gains in the number of women in clergy positions. Then, beginning in about 1970, the ranks of clergy women began to swell almost exponentially. During the 1990s the rate of growth in the proportion of clergy women subsided in a few denominations, but overall the numbers of ordained women still continue to expand today.

Of course, some denominations have never endorsed the concept of women's ordination. The clearest examples of such groups in the liturgical tradition are the Roman Catholic Church, the various Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. At least one denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, has experienced the ordination of women in some of its local churches at one time, but then established a policy proscribing the practice at a later date. Southern Baptist Churches operate with a congregational polity, by which each local congregation has complete autonomy in the structure and process of its religious life, including decisions about ordination. Today the number of ordained Southern Baptist women is well over 100. However, in the late 1990s, the Southern Baptist Convention in its annual meeting passed resolutions condemning women's ordination, citing several verses of Scripture extolling patriarchal family structures, and thus placing those ordained women in its ranks in a kind of vocational limbo.

A third scenario exists in the context of some Holiness and Pentecostal groups, which also tend to have a congregational polity. During the first part of the twentieth century, some women in these groups felt called into ministry and served as preachers, evangelists, and pastors. Some of them were very popular witnesses as they engaged in peripatetic revival meetings. However, as the membership in these churches experienced upward social mobility, apparently wanting to enjoy images of respectability and propriety which they associated with the more mainline groups, they began to back away from such "deviant" prac-

tices as allowing women to occupy major positions of leadership. It is unclear today which direction their policies concerning gender will move.

A number of factors contributed to the rapid expansion of the women-in-ministry movement after 1970 (Carroll, et al, 1982: 7-10; and Chaves, 1997: 44ff). Shortly after World War II, the general level of formal educational attainment in the United States increased markedly, including that of women. Traditional assumptions that “women’s place” was in the home caring for hearth and family gave way to make it possible for women to pursue careers and otherwise join the forces of wage earners outside the home. Declining birthrates removed some of those previous domestic responsibilities, placing many women in a position of boredom and lack of fulfillment sitting at home in an empty nest. With the “first career” of childcare behind them, increasing numbers of women began to pursue second careers in the larger economy. These developments received a boost with passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited economic and political discrimination based on a person’s *sex* in addition to race and ethnicity. The legislation opened doors that previously had been closed to women.

Coterminous with the effects of the Civil Rights Act was the emergence of the second phase of the feminist movement, which some observers date as beginning with the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1963). Friedan’s arguments seemed to articulate and clarify resentment felt by large numbers of women, and the ensuing “women’s liberation movement” coalesced to force the nation to examine its assumptions about women’s roles. The numbers of women entering law, medicine, dentistry, architecture, and a host of other “masculine” fields began to increase sharply. Today the assumption of women’s place being in the home seems to be embraced by only a minority of families. Increasingly the normative pattern for families is that both mom and dad will be working for salaries.

The fact that the 1964 Civil Rights Act did not apply to religious organizations did not deter many women from pursuing a career in the ministry. Beginning with the 1970s, enrollments in mainline Protestant seminaries increased sharply (Lehman, 1985: 10). It took only a few years for women enrolled in seminary curricula leading to ordination to average about one-third of

the student bodies. In some of the most prestigious schools, such as Union Seminary in New York and the Chicago Divinity School, the women outnumbered the men among entering students.

A significant number of mainline Protestant bodies did not endorse women’s ordination until the handwriting was on the wall in the 1960s (Chaves, 1997: 17). While those groups did not have to ordain women for fear of legal sanctions, it seems safe to assert that the moral pressure placed on them by the institutionalization of gender equality in secular society played a part in the shifts in their ordination policies. In terms of their own religious principles of equality and justice, perhaps they had been caught with their platitudes down.

RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Systematic research on the women-in-ministry movement picked up shortly after the big push of the 1970s. Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing to the present, several major studies of the women-in-ministry movement have analyzed various facets of the situation. This review will focus mainly on those major works as described below. Those inquiries were neither the first nor only investigations into this topic. Helen Hacker (1951), for example, is often credited with anticipating the themes of the women’s liberation movement in her argument that women constituted a “minority group” in American society. Being an article in a professional journal in sociology, her piece did not get the attention that Friedan’s later book did, but it did paint a picture similar to Friedan’s. Two other studies focused specifically on women clergy prior to developments of the ’70s. Wilbur Bock (1967) argued that women clergy constituted “marginal professionals,” based on census data dealing with their numbers between 1900 and 1960. Then in 1971 Art Jones and Lee Taylor published an article discussing the status of clergy women as a case study of the inequities involved in recruiting women into professions previously dominated by men. Since the 1970s numerous articles have appeared in professional journals in the social sciences, and there have been a few small-scale in-house studies done by researchers within specific denominations. There is other important work

presently underway. Nevertheless, I shall focus this review on the results of the following six pieces of research that have constituted the major sources of what we think we now know about women clergy and their experiences in the American churches. In order of publication date, those works are as follows:

Carroll, Jackson W., Barbara Hargrove, and Adair T. Lummis. *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982). This book reports the results of a study of the experiences of clergy women in comparison to clergymen. It utilizes data from the clergy and lay church members in nine Mainline Protestant denominations. The work covers the actions of the clergy themselves and the reactions of lay church members to those efforts. It studies patterns of job placement and the personal lives of the clergy on the job.

Lehman, Edward C. Jr. *Women Clergy: Breaking Through Gender Barriers* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985). This work is based on data collected from clergy and lay members of the United Presbyterian Church. It focuses primarily on the attitudes and reactions of lay church members to women in ministry and deals with how those attitudes change when church members experience a woman as their pastor. The study also examines the process of clergy women seeking placement as pastors and in other church-related work.

Lehman, Edward C. Jr. *Gender and Work: The Case of the Clergy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). This study examines possible differences between female and male clergy in how they approach the ministry and do their work. Based on data collected from clergy and laypersons in four mainline Protestant denominations, the analysis tests the arguments of observers who argue for major sex differences in ministry style and tries to identify reasons for the presence or absence of differences.

Nesbitt, Paula D. *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Nesbitt's work examines the influx of women clergy into the

Episcopal and Unitarian Churches over a seventy-year period to assess the kinds of impact women clergy have had on the ministry in those bodies. She also studies the reactions of the denominations to the situation, testing to see if specific arguments about the effects of feminization can be supported empirically.

Chaves, Mark. *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997). Chaves examines the 100 largest Christian denominations in the United States in an effort to understand why some denominations have endorsed the ordination of women while others have not. Using existing statistics, survey data, and historical records, he delineates the complex relationships between denominational policy making, religious cultures, and social movements.

Zikmund, Barbara Brown, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). This work both replicates the earlier study by Carroll, et al, and moves into new questions flowing from several pieces of previous research. The study analyzes data from sixteen Protestant denominations, this time including not only the mainline groups but also the more conservative and what the authors call the "spirit-centered" bodies.

As it is appropriate and useful, I shall also include a few observations from other research publications. The ideas and analysis from all of those sources will be incorporated into a "career path" model of ministry in order to present the picture of women clergy's experiences in a coherent form. That is, the next five chapters are organized in a sequence that broadly mirrors the sequence of events women encounter as they seek to serve as priests and pastors. The text moves from early years in seminary and seeking ordination to the process of finding placement in a parish. We then examine the challenges encountered on the job and the style of ministry women and men bring to the task. The final chapter examines the kinds of impact women may be having on the concept and practice of ministry.



CHAPTER TWO: PATH INTO MINISTRY: SEMINARY AND ORDINATION

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Even in denominations with a congregational polity, most churches today share assumptions about requirements for ministry, and officials at the denominational level typically serve as gate keepers to that status. Certification usually comes with successful completion of a course of study in a theological seminary.

Historically a seminary education was not always required of pastors in the United States (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 99). During the 18th and 19th centuries especially, the realities of frontier life tended to allow fairly lenient educational requirements for pastoral ministry. In a situation of very sparse settlement and poor access to any kind of formal education (let alone seminary), churches tended to select as minister the persons (almost always men) who manifested the clearest religious devotion and the most perceptible sense of “a call” from God. Few people on the frontier enjoyed much “book learning,” as they called it, and they did not see formal education as an absolute requirement for church leadership. In fact they often ridiculed the mannerisms of educated clergy. Consequently, a large proportion of local pastors never went to seminary.

By the late 20th century, that pattern had changed dramatically. The general level of formal education in the United States had risen to the point where most church members were no longer satisfied with untrained church leadership. What used to be called “Spirit-led preaching,” for example, came to be widely regarded as “ignorant ranting.” Pastors had to complete a prescribed regimen of formal education to prepare them for ministry. In most cases that requirement was met in a theological seminary (or analogous Divinity school, Bible college, etc.)

Prior to 1970, the number of women enrolled in seminaries was very small. The few women found in seminary populations at that time tended to be involved in curricula designed to prepare for work in religious education or sacred music – not the pastorate. After 1970 enrollments of women in Master of Divinity programs increased exponentially (Carroll, et al, 1982: 77). By the 1980s women constituted one-third or more of entering classes, and in some instances women outnumbered the men. As this trend developed, some campuses opened

their doors to women fairly quickly. Other schools were much slower to admit women to pastoral tracks because of resistance by conservative faculty and administrators. Another factor helping to open up the seminary was the fact of declining applications from male students for the pastoral tracks (see also Nesbitt, 1997: 100-106). New female students helped keep the institutions afloat.

The women who entered seminary after 1970 did so for a variety of reasons (Carroll, et al, 1982: 81-84; Zikmund, et al, 1998: 102-103). Most women entered seminary from motives other than ordination to pastoral ministry. For some the objective was in line with patterns of the previous two decades involving religious education or sacred music. Others enrolled in seminary primarily for their own personal growth and spiritual enrichment. Nevertheless, *once enrolled* many of them decided to pursue vocations in ministry and completed the curricula required as preparation for ordination. In the last two decades, the percentage of women entering seminary explicitly to become ordained clergy increased noticeably. This shift in goals of entering students appears to be partly an artifact of age. The most recent cohorts have included more “second-career” women, who were older and more experienced in church life. They manifested a higher level of intellectual and spiritual maturity, and their life goals at that point in time were clearer to them.

Once in seminary, women seemed to manifest several characteristics that distinguished them from the male population:

1. The women tended to come from more sterling backgrounds than the men (Carroll, et al, 1982: 80-81). The higher levels of educational and occupational attainment of their parents gave the female students an orientation to higher learning that would work to their advantage in seminary courses.
2. That advantage enabled female seminary students to achieve higher levels of academic performance than men (See also Lehman, 1979).
3. While both men and women described their seminary sojourn as “pleasant” and “comfortable,” the experience was a bit less so for the women. Up through the mid-1970s, some male faculty and administrators were openly antagonistic to female students. By the 1980s seminaries tended to accom-

modate the women more successfully. Still the women often saw themselves as not taken seriously, unless they proved to be exceptional students academically. Male faculty often took a mentoring role in relation to male students but tended to keep women at arm's length, and they had notably more informal contact with the men than the women (Carroll, et al, 1982: 84-87).

4. Both male and female graduates viewed their seminary experiences as valuable, but once again the women found their seminary training lacking in some respects. Clergy women felt that seminary had not prepared them adequately for the sexism and loneliness they would experience in the local parish (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 103).

Clergy women felt that seminary had not prepared them adequately for the sexism and loneliness they would experience...

enties included significant numbers who were personally involved in the women's liberation movement. They organized campus movements and caucuses to press for increases in the number of female faculty and for new courses dealing with feminist perspectives on religious life and scholarship (Carroll, et al, 1982: 77-78). They were successful.

By the end of the 1990s, feminism had a stable place on campus. The seminary culture and the structure and content of seminary courses now introduced entering students to feminist perspectives on religious life and scholarship. Some of that course work involved basic required offerings in Biblical literature and church history, courses taken by both women and men. Since that material resonated more with the experiences of women than of men, it became a part of the women's psyche more readily than the men's. There were also elective courses focusing on women's perspectives and issues which found far more women than men in enrollment. And women's caucuses or interest groups, involving almost exclusively women, still functioned on many seminary campuses. The end

5. Women seminarians became involved in a dialectical process between themselves and the place of religious feminism in the seminaries. The cohorts of women in the early and mid-sev-

result was a built-in set of seminary experiences that often was quite different for female and male students.

The seminary experience often leaves indelible marks on those who work through it. Yet in spite of the observations the Carroll and Zikmund research teams made in the course of their separate inquiries, we do not know as much about involvement in seminary as we might. There is little published data concerning the role of gender in seminary admissions, curriculum choice, relations with faculty and administrators, use of the placement office, informal campus groupings, and more. The fruits of well designed studies of women in seminary would be useful all the way around – to the denominations, the seminaries themselves, and the students.

ORDINATION

For persons seeking to serve the church as clergy, completing theological seminary typically leads to the next step – ordination. The practice or rite of ordination involves an “ordering” or “setting apart” of an individual for service as a minister. It has always assumed some sense of that individual's having experienced a “call” from God – as one person put it, a conviction that “God has laid a hand on my shoulder.” In some traditions candidates for ordination must be able to cite time, place, and circumstances when they experienced that call in order for others to regard it as valid and credible. At the other extreme, the concept of “call” is sometimes defined very loosely, with individuals required only to assert in sometimes nebulous terms that they wish to head down a path of service to God.

Ordination has been the subject of considerable controversy within and between religious groups for most of the history of the church. Discussions continue about “who ought to be ‘ordained’ – young or mature adults, well-educated or especially pious persons, married or celibate persons, males or females, heterosexuals or homosexuals” (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 92), which, of course, brings us to one focus of this essay – the ordination of women.

Carroll, et al, (1982: 44-46) points out that today there are at least three competing orientations to the “ordination” of women. The three perspectives constitute divergent motives held by women for entering ministry.

1. Ordination is a “*calling*,” simply a fulfillment of what God has called women to do. It is a call to bring the love and plan of God to people who need it. It is centrally a matter of theology, and those criteria are the only ones which should be applied in decisions about ordaining particular individuals.
2. Ordination is a matter of *training and certification* for involvement in a profession called the ministry. In contemporary culture and society, the criteria for selecting such leaders are the level and quality of their skills relevant to the job. Equal skills confer equal rights to be ordained.
3. Ordination places women in a position of *authority and power* from which they can work to transform the church(es) into an organization whose objectives, practices, and social structure are more consonant with the will of God. The church should ordain women who can help transform the church and move it toward gender equality.

All three of those arguments have been documented by women-in-ministry research. They appear in studies done at both the individual level of analysis and in examinations of denominations as organizations. Carroll, et al (1982: 93-94) found that about 90 percent of both male and female clergy emphasized that being “called of God” was the primary reason for seeking ordination. Significantly more women than men, however, gave high importance to pragmatic reasons, such as being a “first-class citizen” in the church, no longer subordinated (second-class) to male leadership. The women also emphasized their need for credentials that would give them authority to function as leaders in the church. Especially after the radicalism of the early 1970s died down, only a minority of clergy women placed much importance on the idea of changing the sexism of the church. However, a focus on structural change is still shared by many women (Carroll, et al; 1982: 97).

Zikmund, et al (1998: 97) found similar patterns in their follow-up study of persons in those same denominations. At least 75 percent of both male and female clergy said that a sense of God’s call was central to their pursuit of ordination. And even fewer women clergy stated that to “change the sexist nature of the church” was important to them in pursuing that objective.

A second observation the Zikmund, et al, study (1998: 107) made concerns the clergy’s perceptions of whether women clergy are actually changing the very meaning of ordination. Do more and more people view ordination in terms other than as a recognition of the call of God? Most male and female clergy said, “No.” However, a greater percentage of women than men said, “Yes,” female clergy are changing the meaning of ordination – away from purely a matter of following God’s call and toward seeking authority in the church and endeavoring to obtain a structural location from which to promote gender equality (see also Chaves, 1997; ch. 4).

A third pattern concerning ordination to be noted in data from clergy is the relative difficulty clergy men and women have experienced in seeking their own ordination. Zikmund, et al, (1998: 104-113) found that about one-third of both women and men said it had been difficult for them to be ordained, especially in the more sacramental denominations (e.g., Episcopal). In those groups the procedure has numerous steps, each involving a “yes” or “no” result. And in many instances, the candidate must receive a call from a local congregation before he/she can be an official candidate for ordination. But in the mainline Protestant churches, the long-term trend has been for women increasingly to find an open door before them. In the more sectarian and fundamentalist churches (e.g., the Church of God), the trend has been just the opposite. As they have moved toward the contemporary situation, they appear to be pulling back from providing an easy track to women seeking ordination (Zikmund, 1998: 106).

Zikmund suggests that some of these trends could spell trouble for women ordained in the late-1980s and the 1990s. The women who entered seminary from the late 1960s through the late 1970s knew that they were “pioneers” venturing into unknown territory. They also knew that they would experience resistance from both lay persons in local congregation and from conservative denominational leaders. They knew that church *systems* had to change, and they interpreted setbacks in terms of systemic resistance, not personal failure.

However, the women clergy of the 1990s appear to have forgotten those earlier struggles of others. They seem to expect full acceptance right away and do not appear to be prepared for discrimination which most of them will inevitably experience in one form or

another. They are more likely to see prejudice and discrimination they encounter in terms of personal failure, not as ways in which the deck is stacked against them structurally. Thus they might end up manifesting higher levels of burnout and decide to leave the pastoral ministry, considering themselves to have personally fallen short of what was expected of them.

DENOMINATIONAL POSITIONS ON ORDINATION

These orientations and actions of individual clergy are important in any efforts to understand ordination for ministry. However, there is a much bigger framework within which those events take place – the denomination – at which level most debate about ordaining women has taken place. Denominations promulgate policies dealing with ordination, and local flocks usually understand and implement them. When asked to identify who ordains women and who does not, most individuals reply in terms of denominations. “The Catholics don’t.” “The Methodists do.”

So what is it about denominations that lead some to say “yes” to women’s ordination while others say “no”? The most significant study of variations in denominational policy and action dealing with women’s ordination is by Mark Chaves (1997). Chaves goes beyond the theological rhetoric embodied in official explanations and justifications of denominational policies to identify the cultural and structural factors that do predict which denominations are likely to endorse women’s ordination and which ones are not.

Chaves begins by showing that some common-sense explanations of differences in denominational policy on women’s ordination do *not* work. The first of these is the “supply-and-demand” thesis that women’s ordination will be approved when the women are needed to staff the local churches and disapproved when they are not. However, there is no relationship between shortage or excess of clergy in the churches and denominational policy on the ordination of women. Furthermore, there is also no relationship between whether or not women are organizing and pressing for ordination on the one hand, and denominational policy on the other (Chaves, 1997; 14-32). For example, in the United States today, the Roman Catholic Church

is badly in need of new parish priests, and there are organized groups of women within the Church pressing for women’s ordination to the priesthood. Yet the Church does not endorse the idea. As is so often the case, one must look beyond what seems to be “obvious” to identify factors that do make a difference.

Chaves demonstrates that in order to ascertain factors that explain denominational differences in policy on women’s ordination, one must look first at factors operating outside of the organization. Denominations do not exist in a social or cultural vacuum. Instead they operate cognizant of their relations with other denominations, especially other bodies with which they perceive that they have important things in common. Their leaders are aware that those other organizations are also observing what they say and do, and those interactions constitute a theological and moral climate to which each believes it must conform, a set of unwritten rules of how denominations “in good standing” within the grouping are expected to think, feel, and act. One of the important dimensions of those cross-denominational subcultures in the United States today is a body’s policies concerning the ordination of women.

The two major groupings of Protestant denominations constituting such denominational cultures today roughly coincide with the clusters that coalesce around the National Council of Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals. For the most part, Protestant denominations endorsing women’s ordination participate in the National Council of Churches, while those which oppose it are involved in the National Association of Evangelicals. The shared attitudes about women in ministry within each grouping bind them together and give them a sense of common identity. Those attitudes also become normative, a not-so-subtle litmus test of “right thinking.” A denomination’s rules about women, therefore, are matters of “symbolic social display” to show to others in their subset of denominations that they are members in good standing (Chaves, 1997; 59-60).

The core factor distinguishing denominations endorsing women’s ordination from those opposing it is their general response to modern *cultural humanistic liberalism*. Denominations that resist gender equality in ordination resist more than the simple question of having women in pulpits and at altars. “They resist modernity...a part

of modernity in which the liberal agenda of elevating individual rights is of paramount importance... [and] the notion that individuals have distinct moral standing as individuals and not as members of *natural groups* (for example, families, races, genders, classes)” (Chaves, 1997; 83). This elevation of the worth of the individual over the value of tradition is consonant with the value of gender equality, which of course includes women’s ordination. So the divide between “pro” and “con” denominations goes far deeper than mere acceptance or rejection of women’s leadership in church.

An important external source of pressure on denominations to endorse the principle of gender equality was the feminist movement. Historically the two major surges in denominations officially endorsing the ordination of women coincide with the two dominant phases of the women’s movement in the United States. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the decades of campaigning for women’s suffrage also resulted in some religious bodies deciding that the right to occupy positions of leadership also belongs to women. Then in the second half of the twentieth century, the women’s liberation movement not only erased social and cultural barriers to women entering male-dominated secular occupations and professions, but it also witnessed many denominations endorsing women’s ordination – not just Protestant bodies but also Reform and Conservative Judaism. Not coincidentally, the National Council of Churches officially endorsed the idea in the late 1960s. More denominations began ordaining women in the 1970s than in any other decade going back over one hundred years. Chaves states (1997:47-48), “The point here is simple but important.... From its beginnings, the women’s movement has attempted to influence the major institutions of society and has explicitly targeted churches as an organizational site for movement activity. Because of the pressure of this social movement, virtually every denomination has been forced to grapple with the question of full clergy rights for women, whether or not there were very many women inside the denomination who actually wanted to be clergy.” That challenge became the catalyst that led liberal denominations to institute gender equality in their churches, and it led conservative bodies to crystallize their resistance to the modern ethic and defend their exclusively male leadership structure. Thus we have the two camps that exist today.

Two characteristics of conservative denominational cultures stand out as sources of resistance to women in ordained ministry: sacramentalism and Biblical inerrancy, two orientations that are discordant with modern secular humanism. Sacramentalist bodies hold that selected rituals are more than mere human constructions designed to celebrate various aspects of faith. Instead those rites are held as actually bringing about events in the sacred realm. To the sacramentalist, participating in the rite of baptism actually gives the individual salvation in eternity, the ritual of communion actually renders the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, etc. The best examples of sacramentalist organizations are the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox churches, the Episcopal Church, and Lutheran churches. The key argument offered by sacramentalist groups is that in worship, especially Holy Communion, the agent presenting the Gospel and the elements of communion represents none other than Christ and thus must be a male. Sacraments offered by a female would be invalid. The historical record indicates that non-sacramentalist denominations were more than four times more likely than sacramentalist bodies to begin ordaining women in any given year.

Biblical inerrancy, also referred to as Biblical literalism, takes the Christian Bible as the divinely (and often verbally) inspired Word of God. The Book, therefore, is to be taken word-for-word as given by God, thus making it infallible and authoritative for all of life. To the person approaching the Bible from an “inerrantist” perspective, events described in the Bible happened exactly as they are written, and every dictum found in the Bible is to be applied by everyone in all situations and in all epochs. The key argument of the inerrantists against gender equality in religious leadership derives from their understanding of gender inequality in general. They read the Bible as directing that women must always be submissive to men, especially in the family and in the church. Thus female ordained pastors would function in direct disobedience to the “truths” found in the Word of God. Examples of denominations that embrace this view of Biblical literature include the Southern Baptist Convention, some Pentecostal groups, and others. The 1990s non-denominational political action group known as the Christian Coalition has a following derived largely from inerrantist churches. Denominations that *reject*

the Biblical literalist stance were about two-and-a-half times more likely to begin ordaining women in any given year than the inerrantist bodies.

Chaves also points out, moreover, that the linkages between either sacramentalism or inerrancy and gender inequality *do not necessarily* flow from the arguments each camp uses to justify its position. In reality there is little in sacramentalist notions of worship that actually requires male religious leadership. And the Biblical text is sufficiently ambiguous and malleable to support both gender equality and inequality in the churches. Then why do those linkages exist? They operate, once again, as convenient symbols in opposition to modernity. In Chaves's words, "The tight connection between resistance to women's ordination and

Women had long dominated the religious education field. Even after the field became a track toward ordination, it was staffed by women in a ratio of four-to-one over men.

both inerrancy and sacramentalism should be seen as part of the construction of an antiliberal collective identity for the institutional fields defined by inerrancy and sacramentalism" (1997; 128).

Finally, denominations diverge in their policies about ordaining women due in part to *internal* differences. Those internal factors *do not* include simplistic explanations like variations in the clergy labor market, racial composition or rural/urban differences. Chaves identifies two major factors internal to denominational organizations that are associated with divergent policies on ordaining women – (1) degree of centralization of power and authority and (2) the extent to which their women's mission society is autonomous (1997; ch. 6). With authority centralized, denominational leaders can legitimately forbid adaptive responses to external pressures to liberalize policies governing the ministry, as shown in the case of the Roman Catholic Church. But if the women's mission society does not fall directly under the authority of the central hierarchy, the members of the society are relatively free to innovate and endorse women's ordination, as is the case in several Protestant bodies.

NEW ORDINATION TRACKS

Up until roughly the middle of the twentieth century, the concept of "ordination" applied primarily to the central leadership position in the churches, such as the priest or pastor. During that period, formal ordination was not considered necessary for incumbents of other positions of church leadership, such as religious education director or music director. From the 1970s and '80s on, various denominations began defining those other roles more clearly as forms of "professional ministry," and they began ordaining candidates explicitly to perform some of those functions. Seminaries created special educational curricula — "tracks" — to prepare students for those roles.

Nesbitt (1997; 115 *et passim*) points out ways in which this proliferation of ordination tracks interfaces with the efforts of women to be ordained in the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Episcopal Church. The general pattern is one in which men came to be concentrated in the superordinate (pastoral) tracks and women in the subordinate (new) programs. In the Unitarian Universalist Association the development of the new ordination tracks (religious education and community ministry) coincided with the period of increasing numbers of ordained women. Women had long dominated the religious education field. Even after the field became a track toward ordination, it was staffed by women in a ratio of four-to-one over men. Most of the few men who were ordained as religious educators were also ordained as parish clergy. But the same pattern was not found among women in religious education. And the religious education job remained subordinate to the male pastorate in prestige, authority, and salary. The outcome suggests that the development of new tracks tends to pressure women into lower level positions and keeps women from "becoming a serious threat intellectually or occupationally to predominantly male parish ministers" (1997; 117).

Similar motifs emerged in the Episcopal Church involving the “permanent diaconate” and the “Canon-9 priesthood.” The permanent diaconate was developed in the 1950s to allow men to become deacons while still working in secular employment. Unlike the regular order of deacons, this arrangement was not a step in the process of becoming ordained as a parish priest. During the last third of the twentieth century, with the abolition of the order of lay deaconess and increasing pressure by women for ordination to the priesthood, the proportion of women to men in the permanent diaconate rose sharply, suggesting that the development of that new role allows the church to channel the declining supply of young males into the pastoral track while encouraging women to serve as permanent deacons, thus bifurcating the potential clergy labor force into career paths of greatly unequal opportunities and rewards.

The Canon 9 priesthood was implemented in the 1970s to provide services of priests in remote locations, such as remote Indian villages in Alaska. In more recent decades, the Canon 9 priesthood has been implemented in urban areas and especially in ethnic enclaves. It was originally intended to be valid only for a specific local congregation, but today it appears to be increasingly transferable from one charge to another. With the over supply of candidates that already exists in the Episcopal stipendiary ministry, these new tracks heighten the competition for traditional pastoral appointments. And they make it harder for those who are vulnerable (women) to pursue their calling. The use of these strategies “redistributes control of the religious organization in a manner that gives far more opportunity for conservative constituencies to resist exposure to controversial ideas, feminist clergy, and the threat of liberal social change, particularly that related to gender and sexuality” (Nesbitt, 1997; 122).

SUMMARY

The increase in female seminary enrollments began in the early 1970s. Those pioneer women adapted to seminary education very well, even in the face of resistance from some seminary staff, and they succeeded in introducing curricular and structural changes in those institutions. From the 1980s on, seminaries adjusted better to the women’s presence, and enrollments of women continued to grow. Both women and men appear to view their path into ministry as a matter of responding to a call of God. Denominations differ in their endorsement of women’s calling. At root the major factor that distinguishes between bodies that accept or reject women’s ordination appears to be their response to modern secular humanism – the superordination of the intrinsic value of the individual, whether male or female – as illustrated in the secular feminist movement. Internal factors that characterize denominations that reject women’s ordination include sacramentalism, Biblical inerrantism, and centralization of control over denominational (and local church) affairs.



CHAPTER THREE: THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

A radio station in the 1970s aired an interview with one of the Episcopalian women who broke the ordination barrier with their “irregular” ordinations. At one point in the conversation, the question arose as to where she could serve as a parish priest. To paraphrase her reply, “It is an honor to be among the first women ordained in our denomination. But the battle is not over. Though I’m ordained now, there are no hoards of people beating on my door to come and be their parish priest.” Placement is an entirely different ball game.

That woman priest was asserting that the process of finding placement in pastoral ministry was different for men and women. In the broadest sense, placement means finding a job. As is the case with many professions, finding a position in which to live out one’s sacred calling does not come automatically. Not everyone who is ordained will find an appointment in a local charge. For most men the process moves forward fairly automatically. But there is no such fast track for most women. There are many points at which women can be derailed from the tracks leading to active parish ministry. People, rules, traditions, stereotypes, and fears can and do get in the way.

First a brief caveat is in order. Not all ordained women actively seek placement in parish ministry. Even after completing a seminary education and having ordination conferred upon them, many women prefer to move in other directions pursuing goals involved in diverse forms of ministry. They enter administrative positions in denominational structures; chaplaincies in schools, hospitals, the military, or prisons; teaching positions; social work; non-profit organizations; or work some observers might consider no form of “ministry” at all such as in secular business. While such decisions do involve some men, movement away from the local parish at this stage is clearly more common among women.

Women who do seek positions in parish ministry have two unique obstacles to deal with, factors that do not influence placement and hiring in most other occupations. The first barrier is the fact that ordained ministry is considered a *sacred* calling. The work is bolstered by centuries of religious tradition outlining qualifications for its practitioners. That tradition, contained in the Bible, written in song, sanctified in shared theology,

and codified into church procedures and laws, is replete with masculine language and images. And those ideas are typically seen as coming from none other than God. On the surface, those traditions reinforce church members’ assumptions that leadership of the church is a man’s job. No such baggage applies to people seeking work as electricians or accountants.

The second obstacle derives from the First Amendment to the United States Constitution – the separation of church and state. National and state laws specifying equal employment opportunities and affirmative action in hiring practices do not apply to religious organizations. If they want to, churches can thumb their noses at those regulations with no fear of negative sanctions. Thus religious denominations establish their own unique criteria for accepting or placing women as parish ministers. Any pressure applied on denominations to open their pulpits to women, or on local congregations to install a woman, must rest on moral or theological grounds, not secular laws.

Placement of women in ministry has been a significant part of several of the major studies of issues surrounding clergy women. Two major thrusts in that work focus on: (1) the *results* of women’s efforts to find placement in ministry, and (2) the *factors that appear to influence* those outcomes. One of the first studies of placement of men and women in ministry, by Lehman (1980), compared the first-placement experiences of 120 men and 94 women in the American Baptist Churches during the early-to-mid 1970s, the period of the first big push in the women-in-ministry movement. The results indicated that a majority of both men and women were successful in their placement efforts. However, the results also clearly revealed patterns in which the men were more successful than the women.

MORE MEN THAN WOMEN WHO SOUGHT PLACEMENT:

	MEN	WOMEN
Found placement at all	94%	75%
Were placed in a church	95%	81%
Were placed as “pastor”	64%	32%
Were placed in less than six months	91%	73%
Had been ordained	86%	73%

However, more women (24%) than men (3%) were placed as minister of religious education. Men's salaries averaged about 25% higher than women's salaries. Men's other cash allowances (car, housing, etc.) averaged twice those of women. As in other occupations at the time, placement outcomes of the men exceeded those of the women (Lehman, 1980: 21).

Carroll, et al, (1982, ch. 5) also found differences in placement outcomes between men and women in their study of several Protestant denominations. All of the clergy in that project's sample had in fact been placed, so their data dealt with various *types* of placements. Their analysis indicates that, overall, men appeared to be more successful than women in their job searches.

PLACEMENT OUTCOME	COHORT	
	MEN	WOMEN
Placed as senior or solo pastor	88%	49%
Placed as associate/assistant pastor	8%	27%
Placed as minister of education	0	5%

When these data were broken down by first, second, or third placement, the sex differences remained clear.

PLACED AS SENIOR OR SOLO PASTOR	COHORT	
	MEN	WOMEN
First job	68%	42%
Second job	85%	49%
Third-plus job	92%	60%

PLACED AS ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE PASTOR	COHORT	
	MEN	WOMEN
First job	32%	58%
Second job	15%	51%
Third-plus job	8%	40%

Like people in other occupations, clergy usually seek to move into more desirable positions when they change jobs. For both men and women, each move tended to be into a larger locale. Yet sex differences appeared to affect their rate of upward mobility. With subsequent placements, the men tended to move into larger parishes much more easily

than did the women. And regardless of first, second, or third placement, the women tended to be placed in more theologically liberal parishes; women also tended to be placed with smaller congregations (pp. 128-130).

Chang (1997: 614-627), in an elaboration of the analysis in the Zikmund, et al, report, shows that some patterns noted in the earliest studies of placement seem to remain; it still takes longer for a woman to find a job in ministry than it takes a man. However, the situation appears to be improving. Using a coefficient developed to indicate clergy's chances of finding placement called a "hazard rate," Chang found the following pattern:

COHORT	MALE ADVANTAGE OVER WOMEN
pre-1970	2.8 to 1
1970 - 1980	1.46 to 1
since 1980	1.21 to 1

So the male-female differences seem to be diminishing. Chang suggests that one of the major factors in that shift is the development of formalized hiring procedures at the denominational level, which (somewhat ironically) were established partly as a result of the push by the women-in-ministry movement to implement unbiased procedures for clergy deployment. These placement structures tend to minimize the effects of "good old boy" networks that have long operated as the principal auction arena in the clergy labor market. As these rational placement mechanisms become more widespread, they will serve the interests of both women and men by replacing personal bias with systematic assessment procedures. The declining advantage male clergy have had over women also suggests that the feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s actually succeeded in creating culture change by replacing sexist assumptions with more egalitarian standards for ordination and ministry.

Male/female differences also appeared in the salary figures associated with jobs in ministry (Carroll, et al; 130-131). Overall, sixteen percent of male clergy earned less than \$10,000 a year, while fully 40 percent of women with comparable experience were in that low income category. And distinctions between full- and part-time appointments did not explain the difference. Of clergy working full-time, only seven per-

cent of the men earned less than \$10,000, while nearly four times as many (27%) of the women earned so little. Finally, breaking down the salary figures by first-and-subsequent placements did not erase these salary differentials, except to say that number of years experience was the single most important factor affecting men's salaries. Time in service made much less difference for women. The most significant salary predictor for women was being in a part-time position. In third-plus placements – the category with the highest experience – 37 percent of women still earned less than \$10,000, while only six percent of men were in that situation. And only three percent of the women but twenty-seven percent of the men fit in the income category of \$21,000 and over.

(T)he feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s actually succeeded in creating culture change by replacing sexist assumptions with more egalitarian standards for ordination and ministry.

One might expect that the clergy women would be up in arms about this situation, but at the time of the survey they were not. In fact a higher percentage of women than men expressed basic satisfaction with their salary during the preceding year. To explain such a counter-

intuitive pattern, Carroll, et al, speculated as follows (pp. 134-135):

“It may be that the women are not using clergymen as their reference group or standard of comparison. Rather, they are viewing their situation in terms of the experiences of *pioneer* women parish clergy or of the stories they heard in seminary about how *grim* things are for women in parish ministry. With earlier women clergy as their reference group, the women in our study did not expect their rewards to be great, and therefore they express relative satisfaction with what they have found.”

The authors end their discussion of these inequities between men and women with an enjoinder to denominational officials: “[T]he positive advocacy of judicatory officials, seminary faculty, administrators, and others able to influence congregational decision makers will be critical” if women and men are to find equal opportunities and rewards at the local parish level (Carroll, et al; 138).

Zikmund, et al, (1998: ch. 4) also examined sex-related patterns in clergy placement and salary. Their data came from fifteen denominations, which is a greater number than the two studies discussed above. The figures they used include not just “salary” but also other benefits (e.g., retirement, auto expense, health insurance). In fact they found the highest salary among clergy men and women to be about \$50,000 and the lowest to be \$20,000 – figures considerably higher than those found roughly fifteen years earlier. Some of that difference, of course, is due to the definition of “salary” reported as noted above. Some of the change is probably due to inflation in general. Hopefully some of the difference reflects actual improvement in the way congregations compensate their pastors.

Zikmund, et al, found that in gross figures, and *in every denomination, the average salary of the men exceeded that of the women.* The magnitude of differences ranged from about 10 percent to over 30 percent. Since those figures involve different positions (senior pastor vs. assistant pastor), variations in size of congregation, and denominational sub-culture, the authors calculated the effects of each such factor to produce an adjusted salary difference. In the end the data indicated that women clergy earn about 91 percent of men's salaries “...for working the same hours in the same types of jobs, within the same denomination, in the same size church, after adjusting for differences in age, experience, and education” (p. 73). Thus a full generation after the women-in-ministry movement took off, women's compensation still falls short of that afforded to men in churches.

In a report on additional analysis of the Zikmund, et al, study, Chang (1998: 151-170) identifies factors that help explain salary differences. Clergy women (and men) tend to make higher salaries than their colleagues if:

1. They attended a high-prestige divinity school associated with a major university,
2. They are between 45 and 55 years of age,
3. They have had several years of experience in ministry, and
4. They occupy the position of senior minister in a large church.

Zikmund, et al, also found that sex had the same impact on job placement as observed in the other studies noted above. *In first, second, and third-plus job placements, clergy men held more of the “desirable” positions than women.* The differences appear right away in the first jobs clergy take after graduating from seminary. To roughly parallel the breakdowns covered above, the first placements appeared as follows:

	MEN	WOMEN
Senior or solo pastor		
First job	44%	18%
Second job	49%	19%
Associate/assistant pastor		
First job	32%	35%
Second job	13%	19%
Other parish (e.g., education)		
First job	6%	16%
Second job	10%	21%
Non-parish and secular		
First job	17%	30%
Second job	26%	37%

By the time clergy have made two additional moves, changes take place in all categories of those differences. For the third placements, more men than women have gained the “managerial” positions, and proportionately more men than women have left the subordinate positions. Movement into other types of parish positions increased for both sexes, and the number of both men and women in non-parish and secular positions increased noticeably. The authors summarize these patterns as follows (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 88):

“Our study shows that the career paths of female clergy are dramatically different from the career paths of male clergy. Male clergy are more than twice as likely to hold positions of managerial authority.... Furthermore, the career paths of clergy women are considerably more diverse than those of clergy men. Men seem to follow fewer options.”

Paula Nesbitt (1997) also examined the placement process of male and female clergy in her study of the Unitarian and Episcopal denominations. Nesbitt systematized the various hierarchical positions clergy

might occupy within the denomination (secular work excluded) in order to get a more precise measure of hierarchical gradations. The criteria utilized in establishing such ordering were:

1. amount of authority a position commands,
2. extent of autonomy a position affords for exercising leadership, and
3. whether a position is held prior to or subsequent to other positions.

These calculations produced a nine-point scale, with low numbers indicating little authority and autonomy and high numbers signifying the more powerful positions. Combining some of the categories for analytical purposes, the working scheme Nesbitt used is as follows (p. 43):

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
1 to 3	entry-level positions usually supervised at the work site
4 to 6	mid-level positions – vicars, interims, rectors in charge at the work site
7 to 9	senior/executive positions – over large parishes, bishops, denominational executives

Nesbitt then compared the placement levels of men and women clergy in ordination cohorts from 1920 to 1990. A simple comparison of placement level with gender indicates consistent differences between men and women in their first placement. From 1970 to 1980, there was a trend toward gender parity. But around 1980 the percentage of women reached 30 percent or more per cohort. From that point onward, the trend reversed, with men increasingly landing the higher-level placements. Among the Episcopalians, in the 1990 cohort the mean ranking score for men was 3.1 and for women 2.8. The figures for the Unitarians at the same time were 5.0 for men and 4.8 for women. In secular occupations, the point of 30 percent women typically is the point where gender-related job segregation begins to appear. This pattern suggests a causal relationship in which women reaching a critical number triggers organizational responses that segregate women into lower level placements early in their careers. More men than women in both denominations tended to hold entry placements in jobs historically linked to upward mobility on an occupational

job ladder. Women, on the other hand, were clustered more in jobs devoid of those linkages to mobility opportunities (Nesbitt, 1997: 44-46).

For the Episcopalians, these differences in placement level by gender remained clear even after considering the effects of other factors. Candidates received higher-level first placements if they were ordained in early cohorts, in the priest ordination track, married, highly educated, and had prior work experience. Of those factors, ordination track and year of ordination had the greatest effects on placement level. Nevertheless, the more elaborate analysis still supported the proposition that “men are placed in higher level entry positions than women, despite whatever resources women may have. The advantage of male gender cannot be explained away by year of ordination, age, education, prior secular work, marital status or ordination status” (Nesbitt, 1997: 55).

These placement disparities in first jobs have influence on subsequent patterns of placement for men and women. The differences between men and women in level of job placement follow the same general pattern in second placements as in entry-level jobs. While both men and women improved in the level of their second job, the men clearly advanced more than the women.

When all of the possible factors in job placement were compared analytically, the picture changed dramatically from the way those factors had influenced first placements. For the Episcopalians, the strongest effect on placement level of second jobs was by gender; being male made the biggest difference. Being ordained in the 1950 cohort or earlier also boosted second placement level. And the third factor was their *entry job level*. Those in higher entry level jobs tended to get even higher level placements for the second job. Those whose entry-level placements were relatively low tended not to experience as much advancement in the second job. Thus the gap between men and women was widened. Nesbitt summarizes the results of the analysis: “[F]rom the second placement onward, male and female clergy careers unfold in very different ways. Gender is a powerful corollary and predictor of career differences. Where gender isn’t explicitly independent of the influences of other variables, it was apparent that gender became imbedded in them” (1997: 71).

Nesbitt expands her discussion of first and later placements by exploring the concept of the “career trajectories” of male and female clergy. The term “career trajectory” refers to patterns of placement in various level positions from the initial job to the end of one’s working life. For most clergy the modal trajectory begins with first jobs in subordinate positions on the staff of fairly large parishes or solo pastorates of small congregations in remote communities. The typical pattern then ends with a solo pastorate in a middle-sized church. Those whose careers go beyond those norms end up as senior ministers with large congregations or as denominational executives. Clergy with career trajectories below the norm remain in subordinate positions or end their career remaining in small, remote parishes.

Nesbitt’s analysis (1997: e.g. ch. 5) produced patterns consistent with the following generalizations:

1. Modal patterns of career trajectory have changed over time. The most recent cohorts of both men and women have not experienced as much vertical mobility as the earlier ones.
2. The first five years of clergy careers are critically important for mobility. The more mobility there is in the first five years, the higher the level of placement clergy will experience by the end of their careers.
3. The nature of clergy’s first placement has clear influence on future placements and hence on vertical mobility. The types of first placements men tend to receive are more associated with vertical mobility than the first placements typical of women.
4. Men experience more modal career trajectories than women.
5. Any declines in the career trajectories of male priests in recent decades are attributable to other changes in denominational structures and processes, *not* to the entry of women into the field.

Characteristics of the types of parish in which women are placed in Lehman’s (1985) study of Presbyterians also support some of the findings reported in the works reviewed above. When comparing the attributes of congregations where women were placed with

those of congregations in the denomination as a whole, several noteworthy patterns emerged:

ATTRIBUTE	DENOM.	WOMEN PLACED
more than 300 members	56%	5%
declining membership	29%	87%
multiple staff	41%	10%
percent aged 56 or older	39%	48%
percent college graduates	51%	30%
income 25K plus	50%	17%
percent high status occupation	66%	47%

Although Lehman's Presbyterian data did not distinguish between first and later placements, the patterns are consistent with those reported in the other studies. Far more than the men, the women clergy find themselves in remote communities with small congregations containing proportionately large numbers of older members possessing fewer financial and cultural resources for their church programs. Such placements are not the stuff of pastors' dreams. Most men placed in such marginal situations discover that it is but a temporary step enroute to more desirable charges. Not so the women, who report that they feel "locked in." For more of those women than for men, the next move is either resigning to obtain more education for other forms of ministry or deciding to leave the ministry altogether (Lehman, 1985: 238-241).

This study of Presbyterian clergy women also included the following question: "What, if anything, do you think has been the major obstacle to achieving your present position?" (Lehman, 1985: 245). A content analysis of their replies revealed four major themes:

1. Their own shortcomings 17%
2. Lack of resources 12%
3. Family impediments 18%
4. Sexism in the system 53%

When asked what kinds of coping strategies they used to overcome the obstacles they identified, their replies tended to fall into three categories. They tried to deal with the obstacles by:

1. Specific action focused on a goal (e.g., make contacts) 67%
2. Adjusting (e.g., get psychotherapy, counseling) 13%
3. Ritualism (e.g., be patient, keep trying, pray) 21%

It is especially interesting to note that identifying barriers as self, resources, or family was *unrelated to placement outcomes*. Having to cope with such problems was not associated with the number of contacts, interviews, or calls they received or whether they obtained a "man's" position. However, if they identified a "sexist system" as an obstacle, they tended to get *more contacts, interviews, and calls*, and they were more likely to be placed in a "man's job." Note also that how they dealt with barriers they perceived was *unrelated to differences in all but one of those outcomes*. Lehman (1985: 247) summarizes this segment of the analysis as follows:

"The major implication of these patterns is that, from the standpoint of identifying what can be done to enhance one's chances of getting a job, identifying barriers and finding ways to cope with them are probably not the most important things to focus on. Barriers exist – true. One cannot ignore them – also true. But equally true is the observation that *identifying and coping with barriers is not what predicts success or failure at breaking into the supply of jobs.*"

Then what does predict success? *The best predictor of success in placement is a realistic placement strategy that takes advantage of structures that link candidates with churches.* The Presbyterian data suggest that the women who perceive sexism in the system, but decide to *find ways to manipulate it* to their advantage, tend to find the most success in the placement process. The process is less a matter of identifying barriers and then coping with them, and more a matter of developing a placement strategy that seeks to manipulate effective linking structures.

The analysis simultaneously examined the effects of a large number of factors in placement strategy that could possibly influence outcomes. The objective was to determine which ones were effective in leading to placement, an analysis similar to the procedures fol-

lowed in the Nesbitt study reported above. The variables entered into that analysis included the following:

1. Individual characteristics including their seminary degree track, marital status, and age upon completing seminary;
2. Using the denomination's formal placement system by registering, contacting local ministerial relations committees, completing placement forms, attending dossier-writing workshops, and using a denominational career counseling center;
3. Using informal contacts with friends, seminary acquaintances, and other clergy women; and
4. The number of unique needs they had in their personal and family situation.

When the effects of all of these factors on placement outcomes were examined simultaneously, the following patterns emerged from the analysis (Lehman, 1985: 262):

1. Some factors had little or no influence on placement outcomes. These include the women's marital status, holding a graduate degree, age at graduation, contacting friends about openings, or completing personnel forms.
2. The strongest predictor of placement was using the *denomination's formal placement system*. The effects of involvement in the denomination's central system appeared primarily early in the placement process, in, for example, the number of contacts with possible jobs, the number of interviews, and the number of times a church listened to them preach. The number of actual calls they received was linked to using the local ministerial relations committee.
3. Informal inquiries with seminary friends or other women clergy tended to result in getting contacts and interviews but were *unrelated* to actually being called to a church.
4. The more unique needs the women had in their personal and family situation, the *less* likely they were to get to the interview stage, to actually receive a call to a church, and to be offered an adequate salary.
5. The only factor to influence whether or not a woman landed a job traditionally held by a man (usually the pastorate) was whether she held the Master of Divinity degree.

Some important conclusions follow from those patterns. First, they indicate that *the denominational system is not necessarily the enemy*. No doubt denominational leaders are products of their culture just as local lay church members are. It is equally certain that they differ amongst themselves in their sympathy for the women-in-ministry movement. But most denominational leaders are much more in tune with modern ethical humanism than are the laity. They know that egalitarian norms are the order of the day. However, the role of denominational leader involves clear role conflict, with the broader egalitarian culture pulling them in one direction and concerns about possibly alienating conservative local constituencies pulling them in the opposite direction. Most of them *do try to meet the needs of clergy women*, but they do so within clear constraints imposed by the grass roots. And the executives differ widely in the extent to which they are willing to take risks in relation to local church constituencies by seeking ways to implement norms of gender equality in the congregations for which they are responsible.

Second, given the fact that women are non-traditional candidates for ministerial positions, to succeed they need *effective advocacy* in their placement search. That advocacy is most likely to come from the denominational personnel working directly in the placement process. The placement functionaries, especially the regional and area executive ministers, usually have direct contact with the local search committees, and often their characterization and recommendation of individuals is received at the local level as having the authority of the denomination as a whole. They command considerable respect, and they have significant influence. So while they may symbolize the conservatism of the religious system as a whole, *they are also potentially the best friend clergy women may have in the placement process*.

Third, depending on informal contacts with friends and acquaintances is at best limited and at worst counterproductive in producing desirable placement outcomes. Using only these informal placement strategies is limited in that they can produce contacts but not actual calls. It is limited, also, in that the informal contacts impart very limited information to the targeted church, data on a candidate that does not contain the full scope of information available in the

denominational placement system. Using only the informal system of contacts to the exclusion of the formal system is also counterproductive, because the strategy places women candidates in a bad light to denominational authorities. Not only have they forfeited the assistance executive ministers can give, but they also forfeit the good will to come from the executives' offices. In that situation, women not only suffer the cultural stigma of being non-traditional candidates, but also the behavioral stigma of not playing the game by the rules.

SOME GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT PLACEMENT

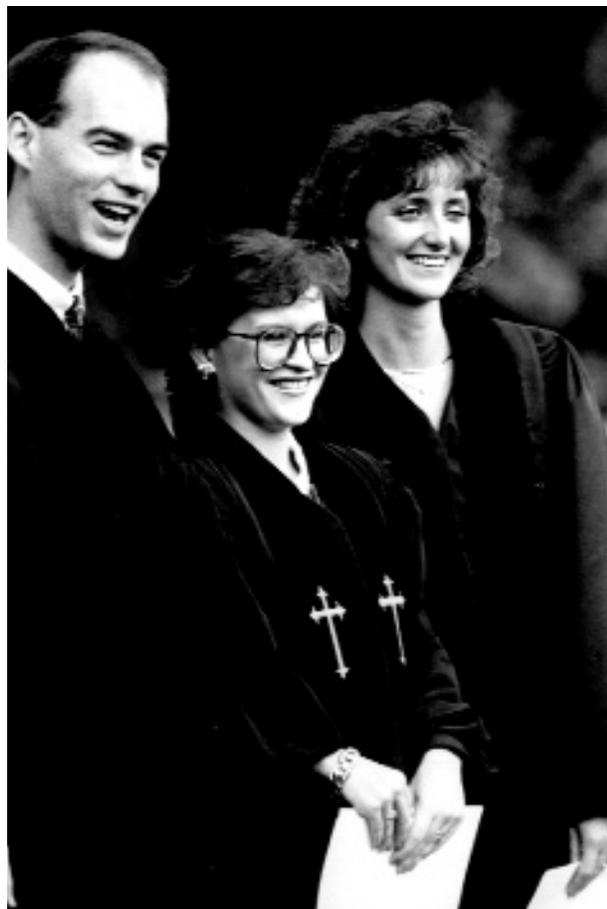
The results of the five studies that dealt with job placement have yielded a great deal of consensus about differences in the experiences of male and female clergy. As these data have accumulated over the last quarter of the twentieth century, one study after another has replicated patterns noted in previous work and then gone on to pursue several of the next questions. The evidence is quite strong in support of several generalizations:

From start to finish, the career paths of clergy men and women differ significantly. Consistently more men than women are placed in jobs defined as more desirable in terms of prestige, autonomy, and remuneration. More men than women find ministry positions in the primary clergy labor market. More women than men are placed in positions in a secondary clergy labor market. Overall, men tend to enjoy higher salaries and other allowances than women. If these criteria help define level playing fields for women and men, then the clergy playing field is filled with peaks and valleys.

These patterns tend to be cumulative. Differences between men and women in job status and financial support that appear in first placements expand into second and third jobs. First placements in less desirable positions are but temporary beginnings for the men. In contrast, such low level jobs assigned to women early in their careers tend to become appropriate for subsequent placements. What's more, the longer women remain in their first placement positions, the less likely they are to move very far into more desirable placements.

The presence of factors other than gender do not erase the discriminatory patterns working against women. Regardless of family problems, age, freedom for mobility, etc., gender still explains differences in the career trajectories and salaries of clergy. In fact the farther one goes into the progression of a clergy career, the more gender becomes a defining variable in job characteristics.

The need for denominational advocacy on behalf of the interests of women clergy is virtually universal. As non-traditional candidates for placement in ministry in local parishes, women confront widespread suspicion, prejudice, and potential discrimination at the hands of search committees and other parishioners. This pattern applies both to simply obtaining a position and to financial remuneration once hired. Denominational efforts to prevent such discrimination against women have not been entirely successful.





CHAPTER FOUR: GETTING ALONG ON THE JOB

Moving into ministry is not unlike taking steps to enter other fields of work. Typically the process involves a series of points at which ones feels, “If I can just make it through this stage, then the rest will be easy!” The outcome, of course, usually involves movement into a new set of problems to solve and difficult tasks to perform, sometimes more vexing than what went before. So it is with entering the ministry.

ROLE STRAIN AMONG CLERGY

A significant difficulty encountered by pastors is what sociologists call “role strain.” The clergy person, as an individual, interacts with many others as “role partners” in doing the work of the ministry. The clergy person him/herself also simulta-

neously occupies other roles – wife, husband, parent, sibling, citizen, club member, etc., and each of these roles also involves unique sets of other role partners. It doesn’t take much imagination to anticipate the range of difficulties that can emerge as clergy try to function

Loneliness occurs among both men and women, but it is a problem for more women than men.

As “tokens” in the ministry, clergy women find themselves observed and scrutinized more closely than men.

and conform to the expectations of others with whom they are involved. Terms used to describe some of those frustrations include role overload, role saturation, role ambiguity, role conflict, and lack of role consensus.

Zikmund, et al, (1998, ch. 2) point out that clergy are more apt to suffer from such difficulties because their role is defined not merely as a “job” but as a “sacred calling.” This perception leads both clergy and laity to have “unrealistic expectations that clergy should devote all of their waking time to ministry...” and that “ministers are expected (and expect themselves) not to have a life that is distinct from their church work” (Zikmund, et al; 1998: 23). The ministry is defined as a “way of life” and not merely as an occupation.

The role of clergy thus imposes expectations that are assumed to take priority over the requirements of

other roles, a sort of “role hegemony.” That fact alone can impose demands on individual clergy that are literally impossible to satisfy. Carroll, et al, (1982: 189) offer the following illustration:

“It is a pastor’s day off. She or he has planned a game of golf with a friend. The phone rings. A parishioner has entered the hospital for emergency surgery. And to cap it off, the school calls to say that the pastor’s child is ill and needs to come home. The spouse has already left for the day. How does the pastor cope?”

It is not uncommon at all in this kind of situation for a family to threaten to call for the pastor’s resignation because s/he did not show up at the hospital quickly enough.

The ministry seems to impose greater difficulty in separating the demands of work from the rest of life than most other occupations. Carroll, et al, (1982: 189-197) present some of the earliest evidence of this problem for clergy women. More than 50 percent of the women in their study reported difficulty handling the multiplicity of role demands they encountered. For many it was simply a matter of finding ways to say “no” to work requests that intruded on their personal lives. Lay church members appeared to expect the woman pastor to subordinate all other obligations and commitments to their requests for the woman’s time and energy.

The Carroll study found that, while women in all types of family situations reported role strain in roughly equal degrees, the *specific* source of strain differed from one marital situation to another. For *single* women, the problem was having no set of family demands to refer to when seeking to maintain a private life — no easy out; they were assumed to be available to members at all times, since they are presumed to have no pressing distractions at home. Moreover, having a healthy private life is difficult for single clergy women because their identity greatly narrows the range of persons with whom they might establish close relationships in leisure activities. A “normal love life” is hard to pull off.

Married clergy women also experienced role strain, but it derived from sources different from those experienced by the single women. Most of the married clergy women were young (under age 35), and many of them had children under age 10. More than the married men, those female clergy typically had spous-

es who were also employed full time, and many of those husbands were also clergy serving churches. Generally the issue of whose priorities and demands were to prevail emerged as a source of role strain and frustration. Fully two-thirds of married clergy women reported problems of that type, considerably more than reported by men.

Divorce also created problems for both clergy men and women. In many congregations, going through a divorce remains the unforgivable sin. Divorced clergy take on a stigma that affects their relations with their parishioners, and they usually experience difficulty finding placement in a new congregation.

The 1982 study also dealt briefly with clergy problems of loneliness and dissatisfaction with one's present placement. Loneliness occurs among both men and women, but it is a problem for more women than men. As "tokens" in the ministry, clergy women find themselves observed and scrutinized more closely than men. Living in that exaggerated fish bowl situation makes it difficult for women to relax, develop some role distance from their work, and develop close friendships. They often feel isolated and lonely. This problem is especially severe if the woman is young, unmarried, and placed in a rural parish where there are few options for private life. A higher percentage of women than men in such situations consider giving up and leaving the ministry altogether.

Lehman's study (1985) of Presbyterian clergy women indicated that many of them had special needs to consider when seeking a position, especially the occupational needs of their husbands, husband's and women's own educational needs, the needs of their children, and the opportunity to share a job with their husbands (p. 244). These are the same factors affecting married women noted in Carroll's data.

Zikmund, et al (1998) explicitly sought to replicate some of the patterns in the Carroll study of fifteen years earlier. As before, they found that more clergy men than women were married, more of the married clergy women than men had working spouses, and a greater proportion of the clergy women than men were married to other clergy. That pattern had not changed appreciably. The effect of marital status on one's ability to maintain boundaries was also negligible as noted by Carroll, et al, although clergy women appeared to experience slightly more difficulty than

men in separating private life from work (pp. 25-27). The study also indicated that married clergy women more often reported that their career was given less consideration than that given their husband's work when it came to making career decisions (p. 28).

Zikmund, et al, (1998) observed problems facing single clergy women that closely resemble the picture painted by Carroll's work. Single clergy found it hard to maintain boundaries between work and private life because (1) congregations don't see why they need time away from church concerns, and (2) single clergy are less motivated to make the separation than married persons. More clergy women than men stated that being single generally worked against their social life. The difference was even greater when the issue was intimate relationships. The major explanation given by the single clergy women was that men tend to be "threatened by the thought of dating an ordained woman" (p. 35). Especially in small, rural communities, if single clergy women are interested in developing a romantic relationship with a man, there are precious few available.

Zikmund, et al, also looked at divorce among clergy men and women. They found rates of "ever-divorced clergy" that resembled those observed for the nation as a whole. About 24 percent of the women had been divorced at some time, and the figure for the men was 18 percent. But the time of the divorce differed for women and men. Divorce for the women tended to occur prior to their ministry career, while men who divorced usually did so during their ministry. They also noted that the divorce rate for female clergy had increased somewhat since the 1970s. Divorce patterns differed by denomination as well. It was more common among "liberal" denominations than in "conservative" bodies. And the perceived consequences of divorce varied in the same way. Liberal groups tended to accept it as a regrettable part of human life but to allow the parties to go on with life and work. Conservative denominations tended to view divorce more negatively, often seeing it as an indication of moral failure by the persons involved. That stigma has negative consequences for clergy careers.

The study by Zikmund, et al (1998: 38-40), also touched upon the issue of sexual identity. That research found that (1) very few congregations are willing to call a gay or lesbian minister, (2) homosexual clergy tend to leave the ministry at higher rates than

do “straight” clergy, and (3) homosexual clergy who choose not to leave tend to hide their sexual identity and to experience high levels of anxiety over the possibility of being discovered. *There is a need for a lot more systematic research into the ways in which churches deal with the issue of sexuality.*

GETTING ALONG WITH THE LAITY

While the hegemony of the clergy role creates problems for women in pastoral ministry, it pales in comparison to the effects of the negative attitudes some lay church members have toward women’s ordination. Derogatory preconceptions and antagonism constitute barriers to women’s ministry at every step in their career – all the way from being refused ordination, to being denied a call to a parish, and to the members’ hostility toward the woman as pastor once installed. How lay church members respond to their work ranks as the single most important determinant of clergy women’s feelings of satisfaction, of a sense of self worth, and of motivation to remain in the pastoral ministry. Negative feedback, often deriving from negative attitudes toward women’s ordination in general, can be the clergy woman’s most taunting “downer.”

The primary source of these problems is simply the conflict between the traditional subordinate role of women and the modern secular ethic of gender equality. As Chaves (1997) has pointed out, this set of divergent assumptions is at the heart of the debate over women’s ordination, and it influences the discussions of women’s ministry all the way from the board rooms of the denominations to coffee hours after local worship services. It is becoming a ubiquitous component of the deliberations of search committees as the presence of ordained women expands. Since those assumptions about appropriate gender roles have been so basic to the fabric of our society, the attitudes that derive from them tend to be deep-seated and tenacious.

The most detailed studies of lay attitudes toward women in ministry were done by Lehman (1981; 1985) and involved lay members of American Baptist and Presbyterian churches respectively. The studies focused on patterns of receptivity and resistance to women in ordained pastoral ministry by ordinary rank-and-file

members of local congregations. Conceptually the projects examined the images lay members had of female pastors, largely in terms of possible stereotypes commonly found concerning professional women. The studies also investigated members’ preferences for men or women to perform common functions endemic to congregational life such as preaching, counseling, and creating a budget. Members’ “attitudes” toward women in ministry were examined in terms of those stereotypes and role preferences.

As women have moved into occupations typically dominated by men, a set of stereotypes tends to emerge in the rhetoric of those who oppose them. This phenomenon has been observed in several secular fields such as law, medicine, and architecture (Epstein, 1970). These stereotypes have typically involved traits assumed to be relatively “feminine,” including women’s temperament, inexperience at organizational leadership, family roles and commitments, degree of dependability as an employee, and modes of handling pressure. In all instances, the stereotyped assumption has been that men show up better than women – that men have the more appropriate temperament, leadership experience, are free from family distractions, and are dependable and tough under pressure.

Significant proportions of lay church members in these two studies held such stereotypes of women in pastoral ministry (Lehman, 1981: 325; Lehman, 1985: 31):

THE STEREOTYPE	BAPTISTS	PRESB.
Women clergy have higher absenteeism	37%	27%
Women clergy have a higher rate of job turnover	42%	18%
Family roles give women clergy emotional problems	57%	53%
Clergy women’s children will be maladjusted	45%	30%
Women are weak leaders in the church	49%	37%
Women’s temperament is not suited to the pastorate	29%	18%

The average percentage of members holding these stereotypes was about 43 percent among the American Baptists and 31 percent among the Presbyterians.

Conversely this pattern means that over one-half of the Baptists and two-thirds of Presbyterian laity did *not* stereotype women clergy in these ways.

Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. In many instances, the conservative minority of lay church members tend to be the more vocal faction in these discussions. Members who view women clergy in negative terms also tend to hold traditional conceptions of gender roles in general, rejecting the modern ethic of gender equality (Chaves, 1997; Lehman, 1981: 325). These lay persons who so adamantly oppose women’s ministry can make a clergy women’s work a constant struggle. Carroll, et al (1982: 142-144), also finding negative stereotypes of women clergy among the *lay leaders* they surveyed in several other denominations, commented that “[I]f these lay leaders are correct about what most church members think, then indeed it seems that women ministers may have difficulty in their parish ministry...” (Carroll, et al: 142).

Stereotypes deal with what people *think* – their ideas about reality in others. Attitudes also deal with what people *feel* – their emotions, what they *want*. The two Lehman studies asked the lay members whether they preferred a man, preferred a woman, or thought it made no difference concerning formal positions on church staff and who performed certain routine functions in the life of the church. Those roles and the percentage of Baptist and Presbyterian lay members who indicated that they preferred a man in that situation in each study were as follows:

POSITION / FUNCTION	BAPTISTS	PRESB.
Senior Pastor	45%	60%
Associate/Assistant Pastor	34%	21%
Minister of Religious Education	11%	7%
Minister for Youth	16%	21%
Preaching a sermon	38%	33%
Conducting a funeral	43%	33%
Leading a worship service	26%	13%

It should be noted that in response to these and most other such questions, typically only one or two percent of members stated that they preferred a *woman* for the role.

Once again the major pattern indicates that most lay church members said that *it made no difference to them* whether the person in these routine church roles was a man or a woman (see also Carroll, et al (1982:144-147). Again, this pattern is fairly good news for clergy women. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the conservative minority tends to be quite vocal and to express their preferences very strenuously.

The next question concerns identifying factors that might predispose lay church members to hold stereotypes of women clergy and to prefer men in clergy roles. Usually if we can identify factors that appear to be associated with positive or negative attitudes in people, we can begin to understand why they feel as they do. The analysis of the data from the surveys of American Baptists and Presbyterians identified several possible reasons why some church members are receptive to clergy women while others resist them. These points include their position in life, their general theological orientation, their reference groups, and their religious commitment. Among both the Baptists and the Presbyterians, holding stereotypes of clergy women and preferring men in clergy roles were found primarily among members who (1) were older, (2) had less formal education, and (3) were not married. Age and education are likely to be simply associated with traditional ways of looking at the world, including traditional assumptions about sex roles. Being unmarried could be a matter of not having experienced life with the other sex and thus not testing out those traditional assumptions about male and female traits. Among the Presbyterian members, the men were clearly more opposed to women in pastoral ministry than were the women.

The survey of Baptist church members also revealed that exposure to the dominant attitude made a major difference. That is, if the individual member perceived that most people in the congregation objected to clergy women, then s/he tended to hold more stereotypes and to prefer men in more clergy roles. Similarly, if the individual thought that his/her pastor – an important opinion leader for the congregation – was opposed to clergy women, then s/he manifested more stereotypes and preferred men in more clergy roles. These patterns support the general idea that often one’s attitudes derive not from experience with the object of the attitude as much as from experience with the dominant

(and thus normative) attitude of one's in-group. We often learn "appropriate" attitudes long before we ever experience the object of that attitude for ourselves.

Negative attitudes shared by a significant proportion of the laity can be a significant obstacle to a pastor's working with them. Perhaps more than is the case with most other occupations, the clergy's success or failure as pastor depends on establishing good working relations with members of the congregation, especially the lay leaders. Providing spiritual comfort and guidance is difficult, if not impossible, in the presence of antipathies and interpersonal conflict between minister and members. In fact, disaffection with members of the congregation is such a barrier to effective ministry that it is a major factor in some clergy's decisions to leave the ministry altogether.

The kinds of lay members most often involved in disputes with the minister – clergyman or clergy woman – tend to be businessmen, business executives, and middle-aged men and women.

Fortunately, most clergy men and women report good working relationships with most members of their congregations (Carroll, et al, 1982: 161-169).

About 90 percent said relations were very good. Only 10 percent reported that such relations were "usually" a problem.

Once in the churches for a while, clergy women tend to be well accepted by their parishioners. That overall pattern of acceptance is in dramatic contradiction to the typical predictions of those opposed to women in ministry that with women at the helm, churches will (1) lose members to other congregations, (2) find their financial contributions fall off, and (3) find themselves with only women in attendance. The critical question, of course, is, "Do those things actually happen when a woman is installed as a congregation's minister?" If the question is posed as to whether such things *EVER* happen, then, of course, one must reply in the affirmative. However, if the question is whether such responses are the *TYPICAL PATTERN*, then the reply is clearly negative. So the bottom line is that the horror stories rarely, if ever, materialize. After the woman assumes the pastorate, the church simply goes on being the church (see also Lehman, 1985: ch. 7; and Royle, 1982).

Carroll's study asked clergy whether they had actually experienced conflict with one or more lay leaders during the past year. Slightly over one-half of the women clergy reported that they indeed had had such a problem (only slightly more than the men). The identity of the lay person(s) involved in those disagreements is instructive, for it indicates that some types of members tend to be at odds with the pastor more than others. The kinds of lay members most often involved in disputes with the minister – clergyman or clergy woman – tend to be *businessmen, business executives, and middle-aged men and women*. Those people are usually in positions of authority and power in their work organizations, and as a result they are accustomed to having their way in organizational decisions. Their expectations of such deference tend to carry over into the church setting as well. Thus when their preferences or suggestions are questioned, they are not getting the response to which they are habituated, and they sometimes react in a way that creates conflict with the pastor.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CLERGY

Most clergy women also report that they get along well with other clergy, especially those in their own denomination. While there is some slight sense of being in competition with each other, both male and female clergy tend to be supportive of one another in the interest of facilitating the success of the church as a whole. Finding such support is often very important to ministry novices. Unfortunately, neophyte clergy are often placed in small, remote rural parishes where there is little such encouragement to be had. Women especially find themselves in that kind of situation, and they have to find other ways of acquiring social and professional support (Carroll, et al, 1982: 179-83).

Clergy serving in positions of associate or assistant pastor are in a unique situation of working under the direction of a senior minister. Once again, most of these clergy reported having good working relations with their superiors. The occurrence of problems with the senior minister was only slightly higher for women than for men. The difficulties reported by the women serving as associates and assistants typically involved senior ministers being overly critical, unduly protective, threatened by a clergy woman's presence on staff, or possessed of a ministry style that conflicts with that of the female assistant. In these multiple-staff sit-

uations, older women tended to fare better than younger women. Carroll (1982: 179) speculated that such was the case because older women had the potential of casting a “mother figure” about themselves which would call for greater deference and cooperation from the senior minister than young women could expect.

The ways in which other (especially male) pastors and denominational administrators relate to the women-in-ministry movement are very important. Those male pastors are opinion leaders for their congregations, and they sometimes compete with women for a particular appointment. Clergy serving as denominational administrators are also gate keepers who are in positions to have profound effects on clergy women’s careers. At all of those levels, what male clergy say and do can have significant positive or negative impacts on ministry opportunities for women. The data from Lehman’s study of Presbyterians (1985: 56-70) indicate that women cannot expect to find universal support among their male colleagues. Many clergy tended to question women’s ability to handle the role conflicts between home and work. They also often preferred a man as senior or solo pastor and in roles of coordinating church staff as senior minister, working with a contractor to renovate the church, and preaching sermons – the same areas where greater numbers of lay members also showed preferences for men.

There is an interesting pattern in the differences between various church members’ attitudes toward women as pastors. Listed in order from persons least receptive to those most accepting, the categories are as follows:



Why does it come out this way? On the one hand, the pattern reflects differences in the extent to which the persons involved have a view of the total picture of the church and its place in society. Clergy and denominational administrators would clearly look at such things differently from most lay members. It is also likely that the pattern reflects predictable differences in the extent to which persons in each category *have a personal investment in the organizational strength and health of a particular congregation calling a woman*. Given the negative predictions opponents of clergy women make about organizational consequences of female leadership, it is the lay members directly involved in the life of the congregation who have the greatest stake in their local congregation. To the extent that they fear any kind of schism in their church, they are likely to question women’s ordination (see Lehman, 1985: ch. 5).



SUMMARY

Most clergy live their lives working with and for lay church members. How the laity respond to their efforts usually constitutes the feedback that either makes or breaks their day. Images and assumptions of the ministry held by lay members tend to be built on centuries of tradition that defines the clergy role as for men and not women. Those assumptions result in negative stereotypes of clergy women, preferences for men in clergy roles, and fear of unknown consequences of having a women as pastor. Male clergy and denominational administrators need to do a much better job of educating lay church members and validating clergy women’s call to ministry if those women are to have a decent chance of fulfilling their calling.



CHAPTER FIVE: DIFFERENCES IN MINISTRY STYLE

The preceding section pointed out that some lay church members and clergy prefer a man in various ministerial roles, especially as the incumbent of a senior or solo pastorate. One would normally infer from those patterns that members with such inclinations *assume that the way men fill those roles will be different from the way women perform them*. That premise reflects assumptions about what is “naturally” male or female that are shared broadly in Western society. The idea that men and women by nature act differently in similar situations is one of our “of course” assumptions. “Of course” the sun rises in the east. “Of course” women are more compassionate than men. “Of course” a man’s ministry style will be different from a woman’s approach. Everybody “knows” those things.

However, ideas like that have been the subject of considerable discussion recently. From those conversations it is clear that not everyone is willing to presume that sex differences in attitudes and actions are either natural, inevitable, or even desirable (see Lehman, 1993: 6-11). Some people have argued, for example, that women have problems dealing with the harsh realities of work and politics, and they need to become more assertive – more like men. Others said that women’s “soft” traits are far better for our conflict-ridden world, and that men need to learn to be more caring — act more like women. Yet a third stance argued that everyone really should be “androgynous,” i.e. find both their masculine and feminine sides and act out from both of those inner resources, be neither dominantly masculine nor feminine. These various prescriptions have been offered to solve problems ranging all the way from raising children in the family to the conduct of international relations.

The arguments about male-female differences have also been applied to the ministry. In those discussions, the two major positions have been: (1) the traditional stance – that men and women by nature think, feel, and act differently from each other when confronted with the same situations, and (2) a revisionist viewpoint that takes the position that there are few (if any) differences in thought, affect, and action endemic to men and women. The first view has been labeled “maximalist,” indicating many sex differences in ministry style. The second perspective is called “minimalist,” signifying few such differences.

The maximalist argument states that clergy men and women are fundamentally different in their approaches to ministry. Since men have dominated religious

leadership in Christian churches for centuries, their stamp is indelibly placed on the culture of ministry. Furthermore, their “masculine” form of ministry, say the maximalists, is basically pathological. It involves “excessive rationality, scientism, legalism, authoritarianism, status seeking, rigidity, exclusivity, and power over people” (Lehman, 1993: 21). They argue that this masculine approach to ministry must be replaced by a feminine orientation, which is characterized by “intuitiveness, holistic thought, responsible ethics, egalitarianism, intrinsic rewards from work, flexibility, inclusiveness, and the empowerment of people” (Lehman, 1993: 21). A significant number of people in the women-in-ministry movement are deeply committed to this position. Their goal is to replace the dominant masculine culture of ministry with feminine forms.

By contrast, the “minimalist” argument asserts that there are few inevitable differences between male and female clergy. The problem, to them, is not an evil masculine culture of *ministry* but a discriminatory *social structure* ordering the church’s leadership. The minimalist position is that any gender differences people perceive in the thoughts and actions of clergy men and women are “spurious.” They only *appear* to be basic masculine and feminine styles of ministry, and thus they are not the real sources of the church’s problems. Any such apparent differences between male and female clergy are but artifacts of the minister’s position in a stratified social arrangement, especially involving women’s experiences of subordination and exclusion from complete access to the life of the church. That stratified structure of religious leadership needs to be eradicated.

So we are faced with fairly simple questions: (1) can we document the existence of divergent masculine and feminine styles of ministry, and if we can, then (2) do we find the masculine style mainly among men and the feminine style mainly among women?

Lehman’s study (1993) of ministry style in four mainline Protestant denominations is the most complete examination of those questions to date. Based on the arguments of the maximalists, the study identified nine ways in which male and female clergy supposedly differed in their approach to ministry:

1. Using power over the congregation
2. Seeking to empower lay church members
3. Desiring positions of formal authority
4. Using formal/rational decision making

5. Making ethical decisions legalistically
6. Interacting with an open interpersonal style
7. Preaching with a focus on human needs
8. Seeking status among other clergy
9. Being involved in social issues

The study collected data from roughly equal numbers of male and female clergy, who were asked multiple questions related to each of those nine aspects of ministry style. When the responses of the clergymen were compared with those of the clergy women, being male or female accounted for differences in the measures of only four of those areas:

1. More men than women manifested tendencies to use power over the lay members of the congregation.
2. More women than men were trying to empower their lay members to master their own spiritual lives and congregational affairs.
3. Men were more legalistic than women in dealing with ethical issues.
4. More men than women preferred making decisions using formal and rational criteria.

These patterns lend some support to the argument that women and men approach the ministry differently. However, it must also be noted that while the male/female differences in each of those aspects of ministry style were statistically significant, they were not very strong.

On the other hand, there were *no significant differences in the way clergy men and women approached the other five facets of pastoral ministry*. Men and women tended to be very similar in the level of formal authority they wanted, their modes of interacting with lay church members, their approach to preaching, their concepts of what gives them status, and the extent to which they were personally dealing with social issues. Those patterns tend to support the arguments of the minimalists: no difference exists in ministry style between men and women.

So the data gave a split verdict. Neither those convinced of gender differences in ministry style nor those who perceive basic similarities in modes of doing ministry would be fully pleased with the results. With regard to *power, ethics, and decision making*,

there is some evidence to support the idea that some men and women do ministry differently. But with regard to *authority, status, preaching, interpersonal style, or dealing with social issues*, there is no independent evidence that differences in ministry style are inevitably defined by gender.

Whether there was evidence of sex differences in approach to ministry also depended on a few other factors as well, the most dramatic of which was race and ethnicity. The sex differences described above apply almost exclusively to *white-majority clergy*. Among minority-group clergy, most of whom were either African-American or Hispanic persons, the vast majority – male or female – tended to manifest a *masculine* ministry style. In those communities the ordained ministry appears to be imbued with such authority and prestige that it becomes a targeted occupation for capable people barred by discrimination from achieving their potential through other channels. In this instance, more minority men than women had bought into the masculine ministry status system, and the minority women did not depend on formal rational thought forms in making decisions as much as the men.

Another factor influencing sex differences in ministry style was type of ministry position. Co-pastors, first of all, indicated fewer sex differences than clergy in more traditional appointments. Only on two facets of ministry style did co-pastors manifest sex differences, and in those instances it was the *men* who manifested the more feminine approach to ministry. More *men* than women rejected the traditional masculine emphasis on preaching, and more *men* than women opposed the traditional masculine clergy status system. Among clergy in solo pastor positions, the patterns were the same as those observed for the whole.

A few “lucky” clergy are called to large parishes where they occupy the position of “senior” minister. They are “in charge” of a staff of clergy serving that congregation. While the clergy sub-culture officially defines everyone on those staffs as “equal,” normally there is no ambiguity about which of them is “first” among equals. Clergy in senior pastor positions are viewed as having achieved “success” in their ministry career. A senior pastorate is a “desirable” position. Even among clergy women known to criticize such invidious distinctions in the ministry, such appointments for women are defined as desirable and as signs of “progress” for the women-in-ministry movement.

It turns out that *sex of clergy is more predictive of ministry style among senior pastors than among solo ministers*. Men who are senior ministers tend to be more masculine in approach to ministry than female senior ministers. And those differences are clearer and more consistent than among solo pastors. Among senior ministers, the men were more masculine and the women more feminine on six of the nine dimensions studied. The only areas where no significant sex differences appeared were approach to preaching, orientation to clergy status, and involvement in social issues. These patterns suggest that being first among equals gives clergy the luxury of specializing and shaping their ministry style in ways that are partly defined by gender. The results also indicate that solo pastors have far fewer such liberties. Solo ministers,

More men than women rejected the traditional masculine emphasis on preaching, and more men than women opposed the traditional masculine clergy status system.

as the only trained professionals on the scene, are expected to be the ones acting out all dimensions of clergy roles, and there appears to be less flexibility allowed in those small congregations than in the large, multiple-staff situations.

Finally, seminary cohort played a role in sex differences in ministry style. Clergy women and men who completed theological seminary prior to 1970 manifested virtually no sex differences in approach to ministry. Those persons completed their theological education before the seminary faculties adjusted to having female students in significant numbers, before those institutions really began recruiting female faculty, and before they began modifying the curriculum to address the interests of female students. So in those circumstances, the seminary experience tended to be basically the same for men and women. In an effort to succeed, this cohort of women in seminary apparently bought into traditional definitions of ordained pastoral ministry, and the ministry patterns they subsequently developed tended to be quite similar to those of their male colleagues.

Clergy who completed seminary between 1970 and 1980, on the other hand, reflected the basic set of differences in ministry style noted in the early phase of this analysis. The men sought to wield power, act highly rationally, and employ legalistic ethics, while the women

tended to do the opposite. These individuals, in a sense, went through a *different seminary experience* from the previous cohort. In their time on campus, feminism became more institutionalized as an integral part of theological education. Female seminary faculty were teaching both basic courses and electives. The curriculum included offerings that presented more feminist perspectives on religious matters. Issues of what is appropriate or desirable in doing ministry were a normal part of the seminary conversation. The ministry styles of some women and men began to diverge. By the time the cohorts from 1981 onward became involved, those new features of seminary life had become quite well entrenched. Clergy who graduated in the most recent cohort manifested more of the sex differences in ministry style discussed above, and among them additional differences emerged in interpersonal style and involvement in social issues. More women than men manifested open and vulnerable ways of interacting with lay members of their congregations, and women tended to be involved with social issues more than men.

It is interesting to note that data from lay members of the clergy who participated in that study tended to confirm the ministry styles reported by their pastor. Some lay members from the congregation of each clergy participant were asked to describe their minister's approach to ministry. Their replies indicated sex differences in the pastors' ministry style on many of the same dimensions that emerged from the self-reports of the clergy. Two other patterns emerged in the lay members' data as well: (1) regardless of the sex of the lay people, they tended to ascribe more masculine traits to male clergy and more feminine traits to the women, and (2) regardless of the sex of their pastor, the lay women tended to perceive more feminine traits in the minister, while the lay men tended to ascribe more masculine traits to the same person.

In summary, then, the question of sex differences in pastors' approach to ministry involves no simplistic answer. It is virtually impossible to reply with either a simple "yes" or "no" to the question of whether women and men do pastoral ministry differently. Like all human beings, clergy are much more than simply either male or female. The complexities that enter into their formation result in a marvelous tapestry of unique individuals who are best served if they undertake the challenges of ministry as they believe God is leading, regardless of what others assert they ought to be doing.



CHAPTER SIX: THE IMPACT OF CLERGY WOMEN

For at least the last thirty years, members of Christian churches have reflected on the short- and long-term impact of women's entry into the ordained ministry. The expectations people have attached to the ordination of women range from the miraculous to the disastrous. Some apologists for women's ministry boldly assert that ordained women, joining men as pastors and denominational leaders, will purge the church's life of clericalism, sexism, power politics, impersonal and autocratic forms of leadership, segmental relationships, legalistic ethics, rigid theology, abuse of nature, and the exclusion of various minorities (Ice, 1987). Opponents of women's ordination forecast the quick demise of the Church and churches – an exodus of male clergy, disenfranchisement of conservative members, shriveling congregational rolls, shrinking church budgets, congregations composed entirely of women, and other intolerable events gushing from the wrath of a jealous male God.

Fortunately, while a few people are persuaded by such rhetoric, most church members who read or hear of those projections recognize the extremisms they contain. Human beings relate to change in far more complex ways than such scenarios portray. And social institutions, especially religious structures, are far more intractable than such prophecies imply.

Nevertheless, the question of possible impacts the advent of clergy women may have on the life of the church is a legitimate one. Indeed many of the researchers who have tried to analyze the movement of women into ordained ministry have addressed various ways in which clergy women might introduce change.

CHANGING MEMBERS' ATTITUDES

Both community leaders concerned with social policy and scholars interested in explaining human behavior have experimented with ways to modify people's attitudes. Most of that activity focused on eliminating prejudice and discrimination against members of minority groups, especially racial and ethnic enclaves in the United States (see, for example, Petty and Cacioppo, 1981).

One approach to attitude change that has shown promise is referred to as the "contact hypothesis" (e.g., Amir, 1969). The reasoning in the contact

hypothesis goes roughly as follows: (1) most people develop attitudes toward members of other groups *not* via direct experience with those groups but through *indoctrination* into the normative attitude shared by members of their own group (prejudice is learned), and (2) if people with negative attitudes toward members of the other group have *direct contact* with persons in that group, then they will perceive that their prejudiced attitudes are incorrect, and they will *develop more positive attitudes* toward the other group (prejudice can be *unlearned*). Such contact must be *non-hierarchical* in nature, that is, not as "superordinate/subordinate" or "high/low status." Church leaders seeking to promote the interests of clergy women have generally bought into this way of thinking, confident that if church members can just have some direct experience with clergy women, they will be more receptive to women as parish ministers.

The next question, of course, is obvious. Does it work? The most extensive examination of that question was undertaken in Lehman's (1985) study of attitude change among lay members of Presbyterian congregations. That research compared attitudes toward women pastors among three groups of lay members:

1. in congregations where the pastor was a man – *no contact* with a woman pastor
2. in congregations where a woman had been *installed* as parish minister – *contact*
3. in congregations where a woman had held a *temporary* appointment as an interim minister – *contact*

Any differences observed in members' attitudes toward women in ministry between these three situations could be attributed to effects of interacting with clergy women (or not), thus providing support for the contact hypothesis.

The analysis of the data indicated that, yes, some contact results in changing attitudes. Resistance gives way to receptivity. However, *not just any kind of contact will suffice*. Among the Presbyterian church members, just having *met, seen, or heard* a clergy woman in casual situations had little impact on attitudes (see also Lehman, 1979). Apparently those forms of superficial contact with women in ministry have no power to improve receptivity.

The research also asked members whose pastor was a man whether they had been involved in significant

interaction with women in a variety of other positions in and out of the church, such as:

1. “High status” religious positions – (associate pastor, assistant pastor)
2. “Low status” religious positions – (member of the session, Board of Deacons)
3. “High status” secular – (employer, doctor, lawyer)
4. “Low status” secular – (bus driver, gas station attendant, police officer)

The question was whether “contact” with women in those kinds of positions “carried over” to members’ attitudes toward women as parish minister. The analysis indicated that *interaction with women in each type of*

If allowed to experience a woman’s ministry, most church members tend to warm up to clergy women, and the legitimacy of women’s ordination is enhanced.

position was associated with higher levels of receptivity to women in ministry than observed among those who had not had such contacts.

There was indeed some carry-over. Moreover, the analysis indicated that interaction with women in

the “high-status” types of positions had greater effect on receptivity to women in ministry than did contacts with women in the “low-status” types. As was the case with research on racial and ethnic minorities, interaction *as equals or better* made the most difference in the development of positive attitudes.

However, the picture changed dramatically when lay church members had the opportunity to *interact with a woman as their parish minister*. When the levels of receptivity to clergy women among members who had actually been served by an ordained woman minister were compared to other members who had not, the following patterns emerged from the analysis (Lehman, 1985: ch. 7):

1. The highest levels of acceptance of women as pastors were found among those who had interacted with a woman in that role – the lowest levels of stereotyping, the least preference for men in clergy roles, and the lowest tendency to discriminate against female candidates for the pastorate.

2. Those effects of interacting with a woman as pastor were the same, regardless of whether the woman had been called and installed as *pastor* or had been placed as *an interim minister*. The “temporary” character of the interim minister’s appointment had the same effect on members’ attitudes as the more “permanent” nature of the installed pastors’ situation.
3. There was also evidence of *change* in members’ attitudes from the time before the clergy woman arrived on the scene to the present. Members’ tendency to stereotype, prefer men in clergy roles, and readiness to discriminate against women were significantly greater before the woman became pastor than those observed after she had been installed.
4. The realities of interacting with a woman as pastor almost totally overshadowed the effects of interacting with women in other religious and secular roles. Church members who had not experienced a woman as pastor had relatively positive attitudes toward clergy women after relating to women in other church-related and secular roles. Members served by female pastors were virtually unaffected by those other experiences with women in terms of their attitude toward women in ministry.
5. Predictions of large-scale withdrawal of church members in response to a woman pastor failed to come true. More often than not, members with women pastors tended to report slight increases in attendance, memberships, and financial contributions due to the influence of the clergy woman’s work.

Accordingly, we have some evidence of the “impact” women clergy can have on the church. If allowed to experience a woman’s ministry, most church members tend to warm up to clergy women, and the legitimacy of women’s ordination is enhanced.

EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF MINISTRY

Another way in which ordained women have had an impact on the life of the church is in redefining and expanding the concept of “ministry.” When most people think of the term “ordained minister,” they envision a person serving as pastor (or priest) of a local congregation. That definition certainly conforms to traditional patterns of ministry.

However, today increasing numbers of ordained clergy are serving in “ministries” that have little or nothing to do with local churches. They are of two broad types (Zikmund, et al, 1998: 114):

1. Church-related work separated from the parish, such as chaplains, educators, foreign missionaries, etc. The chaplaincies can be in hospitals, prisons, the military, or other institutions. The missionaries might be physicians, agricultural engineers, or media specialists. Those working in education might be teaching in institutions ranging all the way from pre-school to post-graduate advanced degree programs in universities.
2. Secular work separated from the church, such as counseling, social services, or education. Ordained persons sometimes decide to leave pastoral work to enter other fields (or never enter the pastorate at all) but choose activities outside of the church altogether. For many clergy, secular work is a temporary activity after seminary while seeking a call to a pastorate. For others it is a life’s work, like the “tent makers;” ordained persons who work at full-time secular jobs to support themselves and their families, but who also serve small congregations without remuneration. And, of course, some ordained clergy are in full-time secular pursuits because they have consciously left the ministry.

Both men and women may be found in these pursuits. Nevertheless, Zikmund, et al (1998: 114-132), credit these expansions of the idea of ministry largely to women, because there are about twice as many women as men in these activities, and their expansion has occurred largely since women have entered the field. When asked if they have “left the ministry” to work in these fields, most clergy involved in them are adamant that they have not left the ministry at all, but that these fields are their ministries, at least for the present.

Clergy find themselves in these situations for a wide variety of reasons. They might be waiting for a call to a church. They might have had a bad experience working with a parish and decided to abandon that form of ministry and seek another. They may have found that the requirements of parish ministry made excessive demands on them to the detriment of their family obligations. The “24-7-365” schedule some parish clergy face can lead to burn-out and departure. The low salary most parish clergy receive leads some

to seek work that will support them more adequately. Of all possible reasons clergy give for non-parish work, two explanations stand out as most prevalent:

1. They believe they are better suited for their present type of work than for parish ministry.
2. Their obligations to their family and their desire for flexibility in life are not compatible with the realities of pastoral work.

For whichever rationale, women are defining a broad array of work activities as their “ministry,” and it seems as though those patterns will be with us for the foreseeable future.

SETBACKS AND BACKLASH

Unfortunately, another kind of “impact” clergy women have had is negative. That is, some church members – especially some male clergy – feel threatened by ordained women, and they seek to limit women’s participation in organizational leadership. Nesbitt’s analysis of the feminization of ministry in the Episcopal and Unitarian-Universalist churches includes a discussion of such “backlash” movements (1997: ch. 7). The term “backlash” refers to a process in which churches recognize the inroads ordained women are making in the ministry and then react in such a way as to impede and further progress by clergywomen. Nesbitt points out that some forms of backlash have been present for many years and in many places. With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, for example, some church leaders expected a rapid demasculinization of the church and sought to oust women from leadership positions and rule out any more women entering those jobs. Another instance is the aftermath of the Great Depression when women were taking on struggling and defunct churches, rebuilding them, and then seeing them taken over by men once the congregations were revitalized. *The general pattern seems to involve women clergy increasing in number to some significant mass, the male leaders becoming threatened by the appearance of a challenge to their exclusive right to leadership positions, and then a stiffening of opposition to women to keep them in subordinate roles.*

Nesbitt’s examination of the emergence of women clergy in the Episcopal and Unitarian-Universalist churches identified several specific organizational changes at the

denominational level that are instructive examples of backlash. One development was the *proliferation of ordination tracks* in preparation for the ministry.

Historically seminary education resulted in ordination for one form of pastoral ministry. The Episcopal Church recently created new titles involving ordination to specific statuses such as “Permanent Deacon” and “Canon 9 Priest.” These new ordination tracks were assumed *not* to lead to regular ordination to the priesthood. Rather quickly they became *de facto* areas into which the church could shunt women and where eventually women in fact tended to outnumber men. As Nesbitt puts it, “The ordination tracks have become ever more discrete, implying a distinctively subordinate status for the more recent tracks that serve to enhance the occupational prestige of men in the primary [priestly] track” (p. 122). The same point applies to the development of non-stipendiary clergy – those who serve churches without remuneration. Not surprisingly, there are more women than men in non-stipendiary positions.

Another form of organizational backlash is what Nesbitt calls the “deconstruction of full-time work.” As the number of men entering seminary to prepare for the priesthood declined in the Episcopal Church in recent decades, numerous ministry positions that had historically involved full-time appointments were redefined as part-time situations. Women were placed in part-time jobs more regularly than men. The result was a two-tier clergy labor market with men dominating the full-time jobs and women occupying most of the part-time positions, or *de facto* job segregation by gender. Nesbitt calculated that in the 1990s the Unitarian positions were about 78 percent segregated by gender, and the Episcopalian appointments were 83 percent gender-segregated. Such machinations can likely be found in other mainline denominations as well.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

Nesbitt (pp. 164-173) goes on to ask what women clergy can do in the face of such seemingly organized resistance and frustration. Some have answered that women should give up on the church and form their own religious structures and programs as in the Woman Church movement. “Current structures are hopeless,” they say. “Leave them behind.” That move might give personal satis-

faction, says Nesbitt, but it fails to address the real problem, which is the sexism of the structures left behind. Women who take the exit approach often become marginalized, and they become relatively impotent as forces for institutional change.

Instead Nesbitt argues that women should continue to enter current mainline religious bodies and work for change from within. For women who take this approach, time is on their side. The march of modernity is constant. The ministry, with society, is slowly moving toward their feminist values of equality and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, for this transformative approach to be successful, some other events must also take place simultaneously:

1. Some men must agree to give up gender-related privilege and join women in pressing for organizational change.
2. To move beyond tokenism, women and men must develop shared definitions of what it means to be male or female in a religious context.
3. Women and men must develop a shared consensus to “renounce any perceived entitlement to privilege over others...” (p. 173) and to transform the structures that maintain that privilege.

Carroll, et al (1982: 207-211) take a similar approach. They point out that it would be a mistake to argue that women have made no progress in finding a place in pastoral ministry; they have in fact made great strides. But the process has just begun. Latent and subtle sexism still persists in the church and society. *Institutional sexism*, the hardest to crack, goes deep to our unexamined assumptions – our “of course” world – ideas, customs, and rules derived from the past that have acquired the aura of “nature.” They are often embodied in the very fabric of our language, the symbols with which we make sense of our world, including the world of other people. Carroll argues that gradual interpenetration of the churches by clergy women is likely to be the most effective approach. Nevertheless, the work of competent women alone may not be sufficient. They will need some prophetic criticism by *male* clergy and church officials – advocates. One area on which to focus immediately is the placement systems, in which denominational administrators act as gate keepers between clergy and positions in ministry. Until those structures become gender-blind, the remaining sexist aspects of church leadership will remain.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FUTURE

What then can we realistically expect in the foreseeable future? The most general answer, of course, is that we do not know.

The processes of the present often surprise us as they become recent history. Some observers “assured” us but a few decades ago that the Anglican Church in England and the Anglican Church of Australia would never ordain women as priests. They were wrong. In the United States, feminists thought decades ago that some Pentecostal and Holiness bodies were shining examples of openness to women in ordained ministry, but then some leaders of those groups opposed women’s ordination. Long-term predictions are always precarious.

Nevertheless, the two most recent studies (Zikmund and Nesbitt) each address this issue. Zikmund (1998: 132-133) lists a range of five possibilities or scenarios, some of which are positive and others negative (from the standpoint of clergy women’s interests):

1. The presence of women in ministry will force the churches to become more egalitarian. As leaders, women will create a system characterized by true equality.
2. Clergy women will experience a reactionary backlash. The men will not relinquish power, and the women who do find placement in ministry will become co-opted by the masculine system.
3. Successful entry into ministry will be a hollow victory. Women will find themselves captains of a sinking ship. Some observers say that the institutions themselves are in decline and are marginalized in modern society. By the time women have a stronghold in church leadership, their occupation will have lost its prestige as the influence of the churches continues to erode.
4. Women will be allowed into ministry, but they will be tracked into low and mid-level positions. Women will still be kept from the most powerful posts, because the men want to preserve those roles for themselves.
5. Zikmund herself takes the position that, while difficulties such as those noted above remain, the glass is “half full,” not half empty. Over time women will con-

tinue to redefine “ministry,” and their ministry style will fit better with the status and structure likely to characterize the mainline churches in years to come – membership and budgets declining, and pronouncements ignored by political and economic leaders structurally differentiated from religious institutions.

Nesbitt (1997, 164) tends to be a bit less optimistic. In her opinion the foreseeable future will look very much like the present:

“...the future of women clergy realistically appears to be one increasingly crowded with female colleagues in lower to mid-level placements as the occupation continues to feminize. Although some women will attain positions of religious leadership, it is doubtful that they will increase beyond a token level in either number or influence unless current gender-segregated practices in placements and opportunities are mitigated. In short, women will continue to labor in the vineyard while the masters reap the fruits of their harvest.... Most likely religious organizations will remain composed of small elite male clergy leadership that will give liberationist constituencies a long leash if pressures for diversity and the consequent redistribution of power do not become too intense” (1997: 176-7).

Nesbitt believes that in the foreseeable future the patriarchal system now in place will continue to allow men to define the nature of ministry and reserve its most powerful and prestigious positions for themselves.

Nearly two decades ago, Lehman (1985: 292-296) ventured predictions about women in ministry. While they were not as subtle or broad-reaching as the speculations ventured by Zikmund, et al, Nesbitt (above), over the short haul they have enjoyed some empirical support:

6. *Women will continue to press for acceptance as ordained clergy.* This pattern has indeed remained for all to see. Seminary enrollments by women continue to grow.
7. *Frustration levels of women clergy are more likely to increase than decrease.* Frustration of women entering pastoral ministry has at least remained constant. With increases in the numbers of women completing theological seminary and seeking placement in min-

istry, the churches still face a situation in which the number of congregations open to female pastoral leadership lags behind the number of women seeking ministry positions. Even after experiencing the pastoral leadership of a woman, some congregations assume that they have “taken their turn” having a woman minister and want to revert to calling a man next time. That orientation thus reduces the number of positions open to women.

8. *If allowed to serve, women will succeed as fully as men.* None of the research completed since the early 1980’s has documented differences in the extent to which clergymen and clergy women (as men and women) succeed as pastors. Gender does not appear to be a valid predictor of effectiveness in

ministry. Resistance to women in ministry by other church leaders or lay members of local congregations cannot be defined as a reflection of the quality of ministry given by the clergy women themselves.

These speculations

and projections discussed above deal with only short-term vision. They probably are best viewed as extrapolations from the recent past rather than *bona fide* predictions for the more distant future. Yet the long-term prospects for women in ministry remain a real question. The place to look for answers is as much outside of the churches as within them. The primary factor influencing future opportunities for clergy women probably resides in the broad cultural and social changes taking place in Western society in general.

In spite of all of the problems Nesbitt discovered confronting clergy women, she ends her analysis of their situation with the following optimistic observation (1997: 177):

“...we appear to be in the midst of a long-range social transformation. How far it goes will depend partly on external factors, involving a sufficient degree of economic security that can facilitate the building of trust

relationships, including the mitigation of male wariness that women won’t do to them what they historically have done to women, and partly on a brave willingness to explore how gender has been constituted and how it might be recomposed – gender assignment, attribution, identity, and roles associated with those attributions — and how these have been utilized to privilege or marginalize peoples. A conscious reconstitution of gender understanding, done concurrently with close exegetical and theological reflection, can open new directions for fresh understandings of commonality and appreciation for diversity that facilitate a functional religious, as well as cultural, pluralism in a global community. This is a long-range possibility for the occupational feminization of religious leadership, an outcome that might truly offer – across gender, racial, cultural, and orientation lines – both the vision and the guidance toward a holistic and humanitarian transformation of both our religious communities and the wider society with which they connect.”

There is hope, and some of that hope derives from the long – and seemingly irresistible – march of the ethic associated with modern humanistic consciousness. Perhaps it is more of a matter of faith than an empirically grounded theory, but it does seem that the gradual advance of secular humanism freeing individuals from rigid ascriptive roles is virtually unstoppable. As societies and sub-groupings within them encounter and internalize the values of democracy and the intrinsic value of the individual – core concepts in the ethic of modernity – the traditional social arrangements embodied in such forms as the family, racial and ethnic groupings, social classes, and gender gradually lose their power to ascribe status and life chances to individuals. People who have been placed at a disadvantage by institutions based on inequality begin to question traditional assumptions concerning “their place” in life, and they discover or develop ways of challenging and subverting the traditional arrangements that oppress them. Occasionally, enlightened leaders perceive the offensive nature of traditional structures, and they act to promote the process of change.

There is a particular glaring weakness in the position of those who discriminate in the churches which will probably eventually lead to its demise. Especially in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, *the core ideology*

There is a particular glaring weakness in the position of those who discriminate in the churches which will probably eventually lead to its demise.

involves values that contradict the policies of exclusion. Those values include the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, and other-centered love. In the United States and other English-speaking societies, and perhaps most of Europe as well, those very values have become a part of most secular institutions – politics, industry, commerce, law, education, athletics, and on and on. As matters of *policy* and increasingly also of practice, gender (like race or ethnicity) is not an acceptable criterion of exclusion or other forms of discrimination in determining which individuals may participate in various roles in those spheres. Various types of “glass ceiling” may exist *de facto* in some of those organizations, but where that is the case their leaders typically find it necessary to deny or disguise the barriers, and those glass ceilings are gradually being broken. The point is simply this: *secular institutions are doing a better job of applying core Judaeo-Christian values than churches that subordinate women as a matter of policy.*

The irony in that situation is clear. It is clear to observers outside of the churches that oppose women’s ordination. Journalists, historians, and other analysts of contemporary culture and society find the patterns of discrimination against women in the churches to be points of amusement and derision. Increasingly they raise the issue in the various media. And when they do, the resultant picture of those churches is quite unflattering, sometimes explicitly so.

Nesbitt (1997: 173) argues that time is on the side of women who will work from the inside of sexist religious institutions to transform them into egalitarian organizations. One process that makes such a statement possible is the recognition by more and more church members of the discrepancies between basic Christian values and ascriptive policies that serve to exclude or subordinate some members to others. As that happens, the structures open up. It has worked that way with race and ethnicity. It can work that way with gender. It may take a generation for church policy to become gender blind. It may take a century. But over time that day will come.



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THE STORY IS STILL UNFOLDING

A Response by **The Rev. J. Elise Brown**
Pastor, Advent Lutheran Church, New York, N. Y.

I have spent my entire life in and around the church. Growing up in a strong Norwegian, Lutheran family in the Midwest, the church was the center of our spiritual, social, and educational lives. After graduating from high school, I went on to attend a Lutheran college, as did my three siblings. When I graduated from college in 1986 and moved to New York City, I began attending Our Savior's Atonement Lutheran Church in northern Manhattan. This was the first time I ever laid eyes on a woman pastor. I was 22 years old. Up to that point, I had only experienced male clergy. And I must add that there were many of them, for I had seen clergy come and go from our home congregation and campus ministers come and go during my college years. It is remarkable for me to imagine that today I am a female Lutheran pastor. This was not a part of my upbringing, nor was it something I ever believed possible for me. But here I am.

I share this personal testimony as part of my response to Edward Lehman's analysis for two reasons: 1) I believe it shows how a significant shift can occur even if exposure to women clergy has not been a part of one's life or upbringing, and 2) I believe it shows we are still in the midst of an emerging ministerial system where women are continuing to find ways *into* the system and ways to *stay in* the system. In other words, the story is still unfolding.

I found Lehman's analysis of six major studies of women in ministry since the early 1980s to be a solid piece of work. While my own denomination has been ordaining women for 33 years, it still seems like a recent phenomenon. I will focus this response in three areas: 1) the distinction between personal failures and systemic roadblocks, which I believe, as Lehman suggests, has been blurred for women clergy in their training and congregational work, 2) the question: how are we training the laity theologically, emotionally and practically to respond to women clergy? And, 3) how have we arrived at what is considered a "successful" pastorate or a "good" call? I raise this third point because it is quite clear in Lehman's analysis that larger congregations in stable (often translated "suburban") areas are considered "better" calls than the small congregation. How has this notion been developed and does it hold true for our understanding of "success" in the ministry? If we agree that larger congregations are better, what else are we then saying?

Lehman appropriately suggests that women who were among the first to be ordained were more likely to interpret roadblocks and failures in ministry as systemic and not personal. These early women clergy saw themselves as "pioneers" and thus understood that the road to ordained ministry would be difficult and obstacle-ridden. Women ordained in the 90s, however, seem to have forgotten the difficult road of their predecessors. The failures and obstacles of these later-ordained women were more quickly internalized as a negative reflection on their personal pastoral ability and not the result of a sexist system.

I believe this has become a tricky area. How can we help women clergy make the appropriate distinctions between personal failures and systemic roadblocks? It has become the case that women clergy who *do* have personal issues or weaknesses in the ministry are quick to fault a sexist system for their problems, and vice versa. For example, women who encounter difficulties that *are* attributable to a gender-biased system might internalize them as personal failure, when in reality they are completely the fault of a sexist system not able to accommodate a woman pastor. Perhaps this is an issue of training women clergy to be able to make appropriate distinctions.

Sexism in the church should not be used as a shield behind which women clergy hide, and consequently, never deal with personal issues that do affect their performance in pastoral ministry. Further, learning to depersonalize issues that arise within ministry is a tremendously important survival skill. Ed Friedman was a genius in articulating this issue in his congregational systems work. Being a "non-anxious" presence and learning not to personalize issues help the pastor to not become the focus of a congregation's dysfunction. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go in this area.

The church will always have to deal with wounded healers who seek out ordained ministry as a way to work out personal issues. It is crucial that the ministerial formation process, whether it be during seminary or in the candidacy process, include ways in which both clergymen and women can work out personal issues before serving a congregation and not at the expense of a congregation.

The second issue I raise in response to Lehman's analysis is the training of laity regarding women clergy. I find it interesting that the results of the

written questionnaires filled out by laypersons (pp. 24-26) regarding their preferences for male or female clergy and their assumptions about ministerial styles do not show any major differences. Lehman notes a few times that these results are “good news” for women clergy. I believe these results should be met with caution.

Part of the “backlash” against women clergy Lehman speaks about reflects the difference between a layperson’s intellectual understanding of what is socially and politically acceptable regarding women in the ministry and their emotional and practical expressions of that understanding. For example, most educated laypersons in mainline Protestant denominations in the year 2002 would know that to articulate

I believe the backlash women clergy are facing today is the result of sexism gone underground.

an overtly sexist viewpoint about women clergy would be unacceptable and evoke a negative reaction. Filling out a written questionnaire about gender differences in clergy is an intellectual exercise. People know that to express overtly sexist attitudes in most contexts in modern society is unacceptable. How they feel about these topics and act upon them behaviorally is altogether different.

I believe the backlash women clergy are facing today is the result of sexism gone underground. Even though it may not be overtly expressed through intellectual exercises, sexism still exists at a repressed level that works its way to the surface. Here we see the true difference between what attitudes a person expresses in writing, verbally, and behaviorally. Helping laypeople understand the differences and find appropriate, healthy ways of expressing their repressed sexism will benefit all parties involved. Consciousness-raising exercises with church councils and call committees led by judicatory officials might be instructive. Including as part of clergy training courses on understanding and managing such repressed emotions could be helpful (not only emotions regarding sexism, but also issues of ageism and homophobia, for

example). We know that unresolved, repressed emotions lead to dysfunctional behavior. Finding a way for the appropriate expression and working out of these emotions could be lifesaving for clergywomen and their congregations.

Finally, I challenge the underlying assumption throughout Lehman’s analysis that serving larger congregations reflects a more successful pastorate. We should be careful about such articulations. Currently, over 50 percent of the congregations of the ELCA worship fewer than 80 congregants per Sunday. The percentage of congregations of this size is closer to 80 percent in the Metropolitan New York Synod where I serve. Ours has become a Church of small churches. Although there was certainly a time when many of our congregations were much larger, the last three decades have witnessed the exponential rise of small churches in all parts of the country. This phenomenon has resulted in a lot of struggling, waning congregations. But it has also resulted in congregations learning creative new ways of doing ministry and being the church in a post-modern world.

Much of our challenge today involves helping clergy learn effective ways of doing ministry in smaller congregations where resources are different (not necessarily worse, just different) than previous times and more work is necessary to keep the ministry vibrant. This sort of pastoral leadership requires different skills—skills that can be much more challenging to develop and much more hands-on than being the “manager” pastor of a large staff. If we continue to articulate the notion that bigger congregations are better or that being Senior Pastor in a staff ministry is the ultimate in successful pastoring, then we must be prepared to see the majority of our congregations consolidate or close because pastors seeking what the church understands as “upward mobility” won’t want to serve those calls.

The notion of bigger being better is one that bows to the ideals of corporate America. Can we begin to shift this notion by changing the way in which we regard serving a small congregation? Who created the understanding that serving a larger congregation is better, more challenging, or more reflective of suc-



cess? Offering courses in seminary on “Pastoring the Small Church” or “Creative Ways of Doing Ministry in the Small Church” and actually requiring all students to take such a course might begin to instill a more realistic understanding in new clergy of what the Church is in today’s world. This might begin to distill the notion that the ultimate goal for the new pastor is to serve a large church someday. Most candidates for pastoral ministry coming out of seminary today will never serve a large church, because there aren’t enough large churches out there anymore! Mainline Protestant church life in America has changed drastically in the last 30 years. Can our training of new pastors change accordingly to address the needs of the world in which we live?

Without going over the specified length for this response, I wish to raise a few final points for consideration, which I will not cover in detail. First, I do not believe the phrase “the feminization of the church” is a helpful one. “Feminine” is an adjective that does not necessarily apply to all women. Does being a woman make one “feminine?” The Webster definition for *feminize* is “to make effeminate.” I don’t think making the Church or ministry effeminate is anyone’s desire.

Secondly, there is no mention of the power of tradition within the sacramental churches. Being Lutheran myself, I know how deeply the notion of tradition runs in the Church. Lehman makes the point (pp. 9-10) that a denomination’s acceptance or rejection of modernity is crucial in its ability to accommodate women’s ordination. What is not mentioned is the power of that denomination’s tradition with respect to women’s historic leadership (or not) in the church. Adherence to tradition and maintaining the continuity of what has gone before us is a strong component of the sacramental church heritage. How tradition applies to the acceptance of women’s ordination is a crucial part of the conversation, which is not mentioned in the Lehman study.

Finally, at the end of Lehman’s analysis (pp. 36-37) he mentions that the implicit values of our Judeo-Christian heritage are inclusive of all people and not exclusive. Lehman states, “Especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the core ideology involves values that contradict the policies of exclusion. Those values include the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, and other-centered love” (p. 37). I believe these values reflect more the ideology of Jesus than the tradition. Male head-of-household ideology and concurrent tables of authority underlie our entire Judeo-Christian tradition and certainly were the context in which all of the scriptures were written. This reality must not be underestimated.

While Jesus’ ideology, values, and practices were inclusive of all peoples, Jesus was well aware that his message was coming forth to a society where clear distinctions were drawn between the insiders and outsiders. We would be well served as a church if we would focus more on the practices of Jesus than on the practices of our own Judeo-Christian heritage.



SHAPE THE DEBATE BY THE “UPSIDE-DOWN GOSPEL”

**A Response by The Rev. Dr. Mary Jane Hitt
Pastor, Providence United Presbyterian Church, Scranton, Pennsylvania**

As I sit in a hospital waiting room contemplating my response to Ed Lehman’s monograph, I am struck by the irrelevancy of the characterization of my role as a clergy *woman*. A member of the congregation I serve is having emergency surgery this afternoon in a hospital affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. Today I have walked the halls of the emergency department and intensive care unit with priests and pastors – have anointed with oil provided by the nursing staff – have prayed with my parishioner and sat with her family. In this place where a male priesthood is the norm, my own status as a clergy woman has been accorded every consideration.

And yet, I know from experience that my clergy woman status may become highly relevant next week or next year, on those days – days that are sure to come – when others will attempt to marginalize my work, my views, my experiences, or my credentials based explicitly or implicitly on my gender. And so I come to Lehman’s work with a personal and professional interest that sometimes resonates with, but sometimes struggles against his arguments and conclusions.

As one who holds that the particularity of one’s experience and social location is essential to her views, let me briefly explain that my path to the ordained ministry has been “non-traditional.” After a twenty-year career in higher education, I headed off to divinity school just in time to celebrate my fiftieth birthday. My sense of “call” to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament was not unlike my understanding of my vocation as a university administrator or wife or mother or elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA). I understand life, with all of its opportunities and challenges, to be the gift of a gracious God who calls all people to discipleship and service.

Because the last seven years of my university employment were spent as Executive Officer for Social Justice at West Virginia University – a senior administrative position responsible for working on and off campus to establish a climate of respect and opportunity for all people – I entered divinity school and ministry with a special interest in issues of oppression and marginalization. I know, both personally and professionally, the issues with which the higher education community struggles as it tries to address systemic discrimination against women, and I recognize many similarities in the church’s struggle over this same issue.

My personal interest in this regard focuses primarily on the failure to “walk the talk” of those churches that assert the theological equality of men and women. While I thank God for women and men who are fighting the battle over gender equality in denominations that refuse to ordain women to the priesthood or pastorate, that is not my principal battle. My own sense of urgency is not to try to convince those who reject the ordination of women to change that position, but rather to work on behalf of equity for women in denominations like my own, which have yet to realize the fullness of their theological stance.

I am struck throughout Lehman’s monograph by the apparent optimism he brings to the research he has examined. In the simplest of metaphors, he seems to see the glass as “half-full,” and in that, he has hope for the future. Perhaps the most striking statement of his paper is the assertion that “it does seem that the gradual advance of secular humanism freeing individuals from rigid ascriptive roles is virtually unstoppable.” Lehman goes on to argue that bureaucratic structures will open doors of opportunity for women, as church members become aware of the “discrepancies between basic Christian values and ascriptive policies that serve to exclude or subordinate some members to others.” He concludes by saying that the day will come – perhaps in a generation, maybe not for a century – when church policy is “gender blind.” That conclusion makes me pause.

As a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) – a denomination that already holds to the equality of women and men in the church – I would argue having a “gender blind” ecclesial policy is a very different thing than achieving true gender equity in the church. In fact, Lehman’s own research on clergy in the PC(USA) would seem to argue against his proposition. That research seems to indicate that there are powerful anti-equity forces at work both within and outside the bureaucratic systems in which candidates are prepared, ordained, and called to ministry, however gender blind those systems appear to be.

Such forces, some of which are suggested by the research Lehman examines in this monograph, reflect an underlying tension evident not just in the church, but in Western society at large. Lehman’s argument that “(e)specially in the Judaeo-Christian tradition,

the core ideology involves values that contradict the policies of exclusion” reflects only a partial truth. It can also be argued that the tradition of which we are a part also involves values that *facilitate* the policies of exclusion. And therein lies a troublesome tension.

The very notion of *equality* is one example of such a tension. That value cannot, in itself, address the thornier issue of whether policies should focus on equality of ends or equality of means, as our national debate over affirmative action demonstrates. And there are other tensions within the core values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as well – for example, that between the individual and the community – which further complicate any discussion of gender equity.

While I agree with Lehman that concepts such as justice, equality, freedom, and other-centered love are integral to our Christian tradition, none of these, with the possible exception of other-centered love, stands in clear contradistinction to the values of the society in which we live. One need not be Christian to hold the fundamental values of justice, equality, and freedom. Perhaps that is why Lehman expresses optimism grounded in the inevitable “advance of secular humanism.”

But I believe it is a mistake for the church to ground its debate regarding gender equity (or, indeed, the status of other marginalized groups) in the terms of the larger society. I have no quarrel with secular humanism. In fact, I welcome it. But I find it different from, and less than, the promise of the gospel. I am unable to identify a model in the corporate world, in higher education, in the political arena, or elsewhere, that comes even close to the ultimate core of our faith – a core that is not, in my opinion, simply “justice, equality, freedom, and other-centered love,” but the good news of a world turned upside-down by Jesus Christ.

Such an “upside-down gospel” approach to ministry has important implications for the consideration of the challenges facing clergy women today. At the outset, such an approach accords privilege to the voices and experiences of women and others on the margins. It simply is not good enough for even the best-intentioned and most-experienced men to control this agenda. Nor is it enough for women who have achieved success in today’s ecclesiastical hierarchies and systems to do so. It is precisely those women who have not been embraced by the system whose views and experiences need to be heard.

In addition, an upside-down gospel approach to ministry makes problematic the whole notion of success in ministry. As Lehman’s monograph makes abundantly clear, the church is essentially indistinguishable from the institutions of the larger society in its understanding of professional success. Salary, number of parishioners, complexity of programs, number of staff supervised, roles in the administrative structures of one’s denomination – these define the success of the clergy in much the same way as success is defined in corporate America. There is within our denominations and our churches a clear career ladder of success, and women are not faring as well as men in climbing that ladder. If we are going to hold to a career-path model of ministry, it is, of course, essential that we find ways to move women along the path of success. But is that really the best we can do? Must success in ministry be defined in terms of upward social mobility?

I, for one, am weary of discussions that take for granted the economic assumptions and mechanisms of the larger society. I am unwilling to concede that clergy salaries within my own denomination should vary tenfold or even more, depending on the resources available in a given congregation. I am unwilling to accept a system that implicitly requires pastors to move from congregation to congregation in order to earn enough money to put children through college. I am unwilling to accept a system where women clergy earn less than their male counterparts for doing the same job.

But then, I *cannot* accept such inequities, because as a follower of Christ, I have an obligation to confront oppression – to challenge sin – wherever I find it. Exploitation of others within the church is as reprehensible today as it was when Jesus confronted the money-changers in the Jerusalem temple. To stand silent in the face of the social and ecclesial forces that oppose the ministry of women is to deny the good news of the gospel.

Of course, the church lives in the eschatological tension between the “already” and the “not-yet” of the gospel. It is a struggle to live in that tension without succumbing to it – without acceding to the economic and social assumptions of our society. And so Lehman’s monograph is useful in demonstrating areas where the categories of discussion and debate have been shaped not by the gospel, but by the secular world.

We can do better.



VIEW FROM THE FIRST WAVE

**A Response by The Reverend Charlene P. Kammerer
Bishop, Western North Carolina Conference, United Methodist Church**

The year 2002 marks my 27th year serving as an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church. My experiences in ministry would mirror those of other women who represent the “first wave” of clergy-women who made a visible impact on the mainline Protestant denominations. In the year 1996, I was elected and consecrated a bishop in the United Methodist Church, the first woman to be elected in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of our denomination in the United States. The number of women bishops in the United Methodist Church now numbers 13, with only one to date from the Southeast.

Today, as I meet with women in seminary, I often hear the attitude expressed that “there is no more sexism in the church.” Women, particularly younger women, do not expect that there will be any barriers for them in serving out their vocational calling. This attitude is less true in second-career persons, but still exists. In 1974, when I first applied for ordination and probationary membership in my home conference, I was turned down. The reason given, was that “since I was a woman, I might have an identity crisis in the future, and would not be suitable. If I felt I have been called to be a pastor, I should pursue membership and ordination in other conference.” At the time, I was naive enough to think my rejection was a lack of clarity about my call, or insufficient responses to the doctrinal and theological questions put to me, or my inability to convey a pastoral perspective and heart. None of that was true. The Conference simply did not know what to do with me, and was not ready to commit itself to appointing me. After significant struggle and further preparation, I re-applied and was eventually accepted as a deacon and given an appointment as an associate pastor in a large membership church. I also experienced significant discouragement when I applied for elder’s orders and full membership two years later. It took the intervention of the resident Bishop and several advocates on the Board of Ministry to clear a path for me. Later, I also learned that one, and only one, district superintendent said he would have a place for me, thus signaling that indeed I could be appointed. I reflect on these initial experiences a quarter of a century ago, knowing the path to seminary graduation and ordination is now wide open to women. That path still requires of women that they be exceptional, articulate, compassionate, and gifted to be fully accepted at the credentialing level.

In each pastoral appointment where I have served, I was the first woman the congregation had experienced as a pastor. I moved from the apprentice associate position to pastor a small church of 200 members in a Gulf Coast community in Florida. My other appointments include campus minister at Duke University, senior pastor at an 1,100 member church, district superintendent, senior pastor at an 1,800 member church, and bishop. The only setting of ministry where I followed a woman was in campus ministry, and because of that, there were no gender barriers in that appointment. It is still true that women must lead the way in helping congregations or other setting of ministry experience a woman as a pastor. This takes enormous energy and a need to validate yourself with each new setting that our brothers simply do not encounter.

It has been my own experience, and that of most women I now appoint, that once congregations experience women in the role of pastor, acceptance comes. Furthermore, appreciation and admiration of women in ministry is possible in many settings. I expect that in my lifetime, the church will still need these first experiences of women in their pulpits to become open to the calling and gifts of women in ministry.

It is clear to me that the strong support and encouragement of women clergy by men in the ministry, particularly lead pastors, make the path more open for acceptance of women. It remains true that bishops, district superintendents, and other judicatory leaders have enormous opportunities to open up places for women and to promote women within the churches for all kinds of ministry appointments. This championing of women is necessary for women to have any room to move in appointment or placement.

There are occasions when I visit with a staff-parish relations committee when I am trying to place a woman pastor in the church, when I deal with resistance to that possibility, along with respective superintendents. After offering specific examples of successful ministry taking place, and respectfully answering any and all questions, I am astounded by the fact that some lay members don’t register the fact that I am a woman! When negative comments are made to me about a woman, they don’t make the connection to me, their bishop, who happens to be a woman. We have a long way to go before the church can be “gender blind” in considering the gifts and graces of prospective pastors.

I was particularly interested in the studies which address possible differences in ministry style with women and men clergy. The arguments for both the “maximalist” and “minimalist” positions are compelling, and I could quickly site examples of women I know who would fit both these models. What I also observe in multiple staff meetings is that these differences blend and strengthen a team for ministry if particular attention is given to a balance of gender, ethnicity, theology, and style available to a congregation, and is led by very open and flexible senior pastors. The differences in gender in these settings becomes minimal.

What is not addressed in these studies is the necessity of women to stay connected with one another in order to serve effectively in ministry. I know women who drive long distances to join a support group of other sisters. There are women who meet for lectionary study and sermon preparation. There are clergy women who meet on a day off to play together and share together. Clergy women do not thrive as “lone rangers” in the ministry. They need to see each other, to hear each other’s stories, to support each sister’s struggles, to be advocates, to speak up on justice issues. The need to hear women preaching, singing, and reflecting together is deeply valued. I know I could not have survived in ministry without this kind of web of support and validation by other women in ministry. Examples of other women who serve in ministry can model and empower women who will follow. I hear male clergy name the fact that they do not work on their friendships, don’t share in the same depth, and don’t give priority to support groups like their sister clergy. Most of the time I hear this being said in a wistful tone. I believe that part of the strength and impact of clergywomen is corporate in the whole body of Christ.

One major challenge for all denominations that ordain women is the glass ceiling in place for women senior pastors. In order to continue breaking through this barrier, male clergy will have to be willing to share the “high steeple” churches with their women colleagues, and promoting their names and possibilities for placement. The large membership churches, in general, have issues of fear around women with this kind of authority and leadership. The small numbers of women who are modeling these ministries across the country are providing successful examples and serve as sources of hope for their sisters. The pressures around such appointments are very high and the role strain is greater for these

women. I look forward to a time when as a bishop I can present to a church several pastors, men and women, of similar gifts and not have the women be rejected because of assumptions or myths about women in those positions. I truly hope this will be possible in my lifetime.

In general, I believe this report has accurately portrayed the experience of women clergy over several decades and their impact on the church and society. I encourage the continued use of women’s voices to tell our own story, to offer our analysis, and to celebrate the calling and vocation of clergywomen. When I reflect on my own journey, it could not have been more difficult because of the path of resistance expressed by the institution along the way. On the other hand, the lay persons and clergy colleagues who affirmed and confirmed gifts of ministry in me kept me going when I wondered if I should continue. The presence of other sisters in my journey has been a source of hope, strength, and comfort. Because other women went before me and showed me the way of integrity, service and authenticity as a pastor, so too can I keep saying “Yes” to this calling. The calling of God has taken different shapes over different chapters of ministry but that clear sense of being where God wants me to be and fulfilling a purpose has given me indescribable joy along the way.

Now I serve as a bishop in our denomination, something I could not have imagined might ever be possible. In 2004, I will have waited eight years before my region of the church seriously considers additional women to elect as bishops. This is not right because the women with gifts to do so have offered themselves. The church continues to say “no” to women at this level of leadership, and that is painful. The struggle for acceptance goes on, and it is a slow process. Yes, I can see changes in the doorways now open for women clergy, particularly in my denomination. Yet, I also know the struggles that women encounter daily to stay true to their call, to fight gender resistance, to honor family and children as a vocation, and to proclaim the Good News of Christ to a broken world. Many clergywomen are strong, gifted, creative, effective and contagious in sharing their faith. My hope and prayer is that our Church will open wide her doors and heart to embrace the gifts of clergywomen and to celebrate those gifts. The God of all creation, who calls women and men to ordained ministry, will bless and sustain me and my sisters for the road ahead. This I know, and in these strong arms I rejoice!



A SNAPSHOT OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

A Response by **The Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods**
Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of Ohio

Edward C. Lehman provides an excellent review of the 20th-century research pertaining to “Women in Ministry.” The review is concise, true to the original findings, and informative. The summary is particularly helpful in its synthesis of multiple research projects into a cohesive snapshot of the current status of women in ministry in American congregations.

In responding to various findings contained in the document, I write from the perspective of a middle judicatory executive responsible for nearly 300 American Baptist congregations in the state of Ohio. Our denominational policies officially endorse women in ministry at all levels of congregational and denominational leadership. Personally, I regularly advocate for women in ministry because I believe that God indeed calls women to be pastors and because I believe that the scriptures support such callings. In responding to the literature on women in ministry, I sought the assistance of one of the Area Ministers on our staff, Rev. Jane Gibbons. I am grateful to Jane for her valuable insights, suggestions, and contributions to this paper. The comments that follow are divided into five categories, namely, the call of clergywomen, the placement of clergywomen, justice issues, pastoral care issues, and the future of clergy women.

THE CALL OF CLERGYWOMEN

Lehman’s research reveals that individual and congregational views toward clergywomen are strongly influenced by their denomination’s views. Peer influence on this issue extends even beyond the denominational level. Lehman’s research also reveals that a denomination’s stance on the ordination of women can be easily predicted according to the denomination’s membership in other organizations. To me, it is sad that an issue with potentially such acute impact upon individual lives and the lives of congregations is so heavily influenced by socially acceptable responses. Even biblical authority and sacramentalism are viewed as merely providing increased justification in the fight to construct an “antiliberal collective identity” (p. 12). I had hoped to see more influence from theological reflection from “right thinking” on this issues.

In addition to organizational groupings, Lehman’s research suggests that a denomination’s stance on

clergywomen also is predictable according to the extent to which a denomination has embraced other issues of modernity (pp. 10-11). While the author makes little distinction between these two issues, i.e., women and other modernity issues, I see them as clearly separate. One notion suggests that congregational views toward women in ministry will be affected by theological norms, while the other notion suggests that congregational views about clergywomen will be influenced by traditional norms.

Regardless of whether or not others support one’s call to the ministry, the fact remains that women report being called by God to religious vocations. The article reveals that 90 percent of both males and females seeking ordination identify being “called by God” as their primary reason for doing so. The article, however, did not reveal how denominations and congregations that choose not to affirm such calls deal with this issue. Do people unsupportive of clergywomen simply believe that all those women “got it wrong?” Or, are they saying that “the places that God prepares for women who are called to be pastors are elsewhere and not here?”

Lehman’s research suggests that seminaries have had a positive effect upon the calls of clergywomen. His article indicates that “most women entered seminary from motives other than ordination to pastoral ministry,” but that “once enrolled, many of them decided to pursue vocations in ministry” (p. 7). Seminaries appear to provide a congenial environment either for experiencing one’s call to the ministry or for announcing one’s call previously kept silent due to external pressures.

In terms of encouraging clergywomen, denominational officials often share anecdotal evidence as to whether men or women are more supportive. I was a bit disappointed that Lehman’s research did not answer this ongoing debate. One Presbyterian study revealed that men were clearly more opposed to women in pastoral ministry than were women. The statement on page 25, however, directly followed a finding related to a particular group of respondents who were older, had less formal education, and were not married. Are Presbyterian men in general more opposed to clergywomen, or are older, single men with less formal education more opposed?

THE PLACEMENT OF CLERGY WOMEN

As a denominational minister I was pleased to read that “the best predictor of success in placement is a realistic placement strategy that takes advantage of structures that link candidates with churches.”

Focusing upon barriers rather than the ultimate outcome is seldom productive, and I believe, inconsistent with the language of “the call.” The more that obstacles are perceived as “legitimate threats,” the less clear the original call becomes.

The placement findings also challenge denominations to embrace programs that encourage congregations to call women as interim ministers. While the contact hypothesis (If church members can have some direct experience with clergywomen, they will be more receptive to women as parish ministers.) proved true in both high and low status situations, the type of contact clearly made a difference. In Ohio, one of our congregations recently embraced a national program encouraging the call of women clergy as interims. The fact that a clergywoman had just left this congregation confirms another finding in Lehman’s article, that “once in churches for a while, clergy women tend to be well accepted by their parishioners” (p. 26). The confirmation of the contact hypothesis also would suggest that encouraging search committees to interview clergywomen would ultimately have a positive effect upon attitudes toward clergywomen in general.

Perhaps another way for denominations to enhance the placement of clergywomen would be to hold a conference for search committees willing to explore the concept of calling a clergywoman. Such a conference could include panels and presentations by members of search committees who had previously called a clergywoman.

JUSTICE ISSUES

While I celebrate the fact that gender placement differences are diminishing (p. 15), continuing inequities related to salary, upward mobility, and career paths are appalling. The fact that women receive approximately 10 percent less pay for equal work is clearly wrong. Denominations need to share the results of this study with staff members, search committees, and pastoral relations committees, and other who may be in a position to combat such injustices.

Denominations that support clergywomen also need to do all they can to address the “locked in” feelings that pervade clergywomen who receive their first calls in very urban or very rural locations. Because the gender disparities related to salaries, benefits, and opportunities are present throughout the entire career process, forums and discussions on justice issues need to address not only the first position placements of women in ministry, but also second and third position placement issues. Denominational ministers may be tempted to place less emphasis upon the placement needs of women who already have been called to a first congregation.

Lehman’s article noted that congregations and denominations have been exempt from equal employment opportunity practices. It seems to me that equal employment opportunities policies were not applied to religious institutions out of respect for doctrinal issues that may run contrary to such mandates. Should hierarchical denominations that have the authority to set standards for local congregations and that fully embrace the ordination of women voluntarily apply the equal employment standards? Shouldn’t the church lead the way in justice issues wherever there is compatibility of doctrinal issues?

While in some hierarchical denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, an unequal proportion of women have been encouraged to serve in the “lay track” as permanent deacons, “thus bifurcating the potential clergy labor force into career paths of greatly unequal opportunities and rewards” (p. 13), the dual track system has created a difficult set of problems in other denominations. In denominations with congregational polity, where search committees are free to set their own standards and select their own potential leaders, men and women often enter such “lay pastor” tracks in similar proportions. As search committees review the dossiers of potential pastoral leaders, a new justice problem has emerged in churches willing to offer a lesser trained male the same position, salary, and benefits, as a seminary-trained female.

I applaud the fact that most people do not hold gender biases related to clergy competency issues, but instead labor over how to further diminish such statistics. The finding that lay perceptions of pastoral ministry ranks as the “single most important determinant of clergywomen’s feelings of satisfaction: (p. 24) is consistent with other research findings for clergy in the Pulpit & Pew project. External conditions matter much less to clergy than the intrinsic value of enjoying the nature of one’s work.

PASTORAL CARE ISSUES

The need for pastoral care is heightened by the fact that injustices still exist for clergywomen. In supplying pastoral care, it appears that denominations are uniquely positioned to enhance the three primary coping mechanisms identified by women clergy in Lehman's article (p. 19), namely, specific action focused on a goal, adjusting, and ritualism. Denominational officials were identified as "potentially the best friend of clergywomen may have in the placement process" (p. 20). In most instances, "pastoral care of clergy" already is a significant item in the job descriptions of middle judicatory staff. Denominational officials regularly draw together clergy groups for mutual support and theological reflection. Increasingly, such groups are being formed around content issues rather than geography. Such *affinity* groups could prove extremely beneficial in addressing the issues of failure identified by Lehman, on pages 9-10.

All of these coping mechanisms, however, were identified among women trying to *achieve placement* rather than women coping with *current ministry struggles*. Unfortunately, most women seeking initial placement are not yet a part of a denomination's infrastructure and do not have access to geographic clergy groups, affinity groups, or a denominational official as their primary caregiver. This is where the system fails. Denominations need to offer pastoral care more aggressively to women seeking their first position of placement.

FUTURE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

I confess that I struggled with some of the conclusions offered by Lehman in the section "What to expect in the future." For example, while I agree that one of the goals of future research should be to "identify shared definitions of what it means to be male or female in a religious context" (p. 34), this goal appears inconsistent with another identified goal of becoming "gender blind" (p. 34). The gender blindness issue also is not supported by other reported information. Differences in work styles were found to be statistically significant (p. 29), and an entire chapter was devoted to the impact that women have made in ministry.

Whether or not one chooses to view gender as relevant to the practice of ministry has a bearing upon the future of women clergy. Earlier, Lehman reported, "another factor helping to open up the seminary was the fact of declining applications from the male students for the pastoral tracks" (p. 7). The Pulpit and Pew project has identified several denominations currently experiencing a clergy shortage. Temporarily supporting clergywomen due to an economic shortage is made more possible if one chooses to ignore the unique contributions made by women clergy.

I also found that naming denominational administrators "gatekeepers" (p.34) seemed inconsistent with earlier findings that identified denominational administrators as the most favorable group toward women in ministry. Finally, naming one of the futuristic problems that of seeking to disallow men from defining "the nature of ministry and reserve its more powerful and prestigious positions for themselves" seemed inconsistent with earlier findings that pointed to more systematic causes of the problem.

Earlier in this paper, I suggested that the two predictors, identified in Lehman's paper, for how one views women in ministry are potentially very divergent. The answer as to whether or not congregational stances toward the ordination of women are tied to other theological issues or whether such stances are tied to postmodern issues will have a huge bearing upon how the issues proceeds in the future. Where an organization falls on the theological spectrum is a matter of organizational culture, and thus, is fairly consistent over time. Issues of practice, however, are potentially more dynamic. Even congregations that are "late adopters" of new ideas eventually embrace change or die. It will be interesting to track whether or not shifts in local congregational views toward women in ministry coincide with congregational shifts in other aspects of modernity, such as multi-generational worship, empowerment of the laity and viewing the congregation as a mission outpost.

Overall, I was very impressed with and appreciative of Lehman's article. It weaves together diverse topics and even diverse findings, into a comprehensible framework for understanding the status of clergywomen in America.

ABOUT PULPIT & PEW

Pulpit & Pew is a research initiative of the Duke Divinity School funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., and aimed at strengthening the quality of pastoral leadership (clergy and lay) in churches across America. The goal of the research is to strengthen the quality of pastoral leaders, especially those in ordained ministry, through (1) understanding how changes in the social, cultural, economic, and religious context in recent years have affected ministry, (2) forming pastoral leaders with the capacity for continual learning and growth in response to these changes, and (3) identifying policies and practices that will support creative pastoral leadership and vital congregations as they respond to a changing environment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward C. Lehman, Jr., is a distinguished professor emeritus of sociology at the State University of New York at Brockport. A noted researcher on the sociology of religion, he has focused his work on variations in religious commitment among college and university faculty, occupational attainment among clergywomen, and lay church members' receptivity and resistance to women as ordained ministers. His best known book, *Gender and Work: The Case of the Clergy* (1993), explores differences in ministry style. Lehman has served as president of both the Religious Research Association and the Association for the Sociology of Religion.

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