

Statistics and Stories  
Related to the Status of Women Clergy  
In  
The New England Annual Conference  
In the Year 2000

Prepared by

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December 15, 2000

as a research paper for

CI 210 United Methodist History

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As a certified candidate for Elder's orders within the New England Annual Conference, the stories I have learned about some of the women who have traveled this path before me have intrigued, challenged and nurtured me on my own journey. Whether I have come across these stories in my readings for my seminary courses, or through personal conversations and encounters, I am constantly amazed at the variety of backgrounds and experiences that my soon-to-be colleagues embody.

There are a fair number of essays and books written by or about many of the pioneers who paved the way for present day clergywomen both in New England and throughout the United States. However, I was surprised to learn that not much has been compiled since 1979 regarding the phenomenon of women entering ordained ministry with full clergy rights, which had been finally granted at the 1956 General Conference of The Methodist Church.

A sociological study of all active United Methodist clergywomen throughout the United States, authorized by the Division of Ordained Ministry and presented to the 1980 United Methodist General Conference, had been compiled during 1979.<sup>1</sup> However, a similar study specific to the area now comprising the New England Annual Conference has not been done to my knowledge; nor has any follow up studies to the nationwide survey been conducted in the last twenty-one years.

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Hale Jr., Morton King, Doris Moreland Jones, *New Witnesses, United Methodist Clergywomen* (Nashville: Division of Ordained Ministry, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980)

## **Methodology**

### **Gathering of Stories**

Borrowing from the extensive survey questions that were used in the 1979 nationwide study as a guide, I chose six questions that I hoped would provide a snapshot of clergywomen's experiences, and mailed or e-mailed this survey to a random list of thirty-five clergywomen currently serving in the New England Conference.<sup>2</sup> Since there are a total of 190 ordained women Elders in Full Connection and Probationary Members in the New England Annual Conference,<sup>3</sup> I hoped to receive a minimum 10% sample, or 19 responses. Of the 35 surveys sent out, fifteen responses were received.<sup>4</sup> This actually was an excellent return, considering the time of year they were sent (Thanksgiving week) and the very short time frame given for responding (two weeks).

### **Gathering of Statistical Data**

Roots and Branches, Historical Essays on Methodism in Southern New England<sup>5</sup> published in 1989 by the New England Methodist Historical Society contains an essay by Carmen Ward Dresser entitled "Contributions of Women" which, although specific only to the former Southern New England Conference, provided me with a basis from which to begin an update of statistical data. Conference journals from the former Southern New England Conference and from the current New England Conference provided most of the more recent data presented herein.

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<sup>2</sup>See "Stories" section of this paper

<sup>3</sup>As recorded in the 2000 Journal of the New England Annual Conference. A listing of names, dates of ordination and other related information compiled from the 2000 Journal record can be found in Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup>Of the other 20, 2 declined, 1 indicated she would respond, but didn't, 2 had wrong addresses, and 15 did not respond in any way.

## **Background Information**

### **The Formation of The New England Annual Conference<sup>6</sup>**

In 1796 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church created the New England Annual Conference. The original geographical boundary included the six New England states as well as portions of New York and Canada, but a reorganization soon removed the latter two geographic areas. The church grew strong enough in Maine (1824), New Hampshire (1829), as well as in Vermont to warrant independent annual conferences being formed in those states.

In 1840 the General Conference divided what remained of the original New England Conference and created the Providence Annual Conference, which was subsequently renamed the New England Southern Annual Conference in 1881.

The Maine Annual Conference reorganized in 1848 to form the Maine and East Maine Annual Conferences, which remained separate for seventy-five years. They merged again into the Maine Annual Conference in 1922.

In 1970, the New England and New England Southern Annual Conferences were merged under the name of the Southern New England Annual Conference.

Discussions began in the early 1980's regarding a further merger of the annual conferences in New England, but this did not happen until the 1992 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference took action that led to the merger of the Maine, New Hampshire and Southern New England Annual Conferences into the New England Annual

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<sup>5</sup>Jerry O. Cook, Editor, *Roots and Branches, Historical Essays on Methodism in Southern New England* (Boston: New England Methodist Historical Society, 1989)

<sup>6</sup>*New England Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, 2000 Journal*, pp. 8-9

Conference. The first session of this newly merged conference, which includes the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and the eastern half of Connecticut convened on June 2, 1994.

### **Important Changes in Women's Rights Within The United Methodist Church and Its Predecessor Denominations:**

During the same time period that many of the above mergers were taking place, some important changes were also taking place in the area of women's rights within several of the denominations that eventually merged in 1968 to form The United Methodist Church.

The Methodist Protestant and the United Brethren Churches led the way by granting laity and clergy rights to women in the 1880's.<sup>7</sup> However, when the United Brethren Church merged with the Evangelical Church in 1946 they agreed to give up the practice of granting full clergy rights to women; a very severe setback for United Brethren women which was not resolved until the merger with The Methodist Church in 1968.

The issue of woman's place and work in the church was hotly debated in the Methodist Episcopal Church at every General Conference from 1872 through the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Local preacher's licenses were granted by the Methodist Episcopal Church at their General Conference in 1920; and in 1924 a further step was gained when that year's

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<sup>7</sup>John G. McEllhenny, *United Methodism in America: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), p. 122

<sup>8</sup>Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient, A History of Women in American Methodism 1760-1939*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 154

conference approved the ordination of women as local preachers, giving them the right to administer the sacraments when no ordained man was present.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of full clergy rights for women was addressed at each General Conference since the 1924 conference, and narrowly missed being passed at the 1939 conference which united the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal, South Churches into The Methodist Church. In 1956 women were finally granted full clergy rights in The Methodist Church.<sup>10</sup> However, women in full connection were not guaranteed appointments under the itinerancy system until 1968 when the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Churches joined to form The United Methodist Church.<sup>11</sup>

## **STATISTICS**

### **The New England Annual Conference and Its Predecessor Conferences**

The several mergers that took place in New England prior to 1994 presented some difficulties in doing research within a short time frame. In 1970 there were still three distinct annual conferences - Maine, New Hampshire, and Southern New England - each tracking their own internal changes in regard to local churches, persons seeking ordination or local pastor licenses, and the appointment process. Additionally, I was unable to visit the New England Conference offices in Lawrence, MA where all the old journals are housed since I attend seminary in New York City. However, I hope that the information I have been able to gather will serve as a foundation for further research in this area.

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<sup>9</sup>McEllhenny, *United Methodism in America*, p. 111

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 121-122

<sup>11</sup>Harry Hale Jr., *New Witnesses, United Methodist Clergywomen* (Nashville: Division of Ordained Ministry, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980), p. 38

### **New England Southern Conference (1924-1970)**

At the time of the 1956 decision that granted women full membership in an Annual Conference upon receiving ordination as Elders, there were three women in the New England Southern Conference who were already ordained Elders (with limited privileges) under the 1924 ruling: B. Marion Hope, who was retired; Florence S. Stevens, who was serving as superintendent of the Deaconess Home in Providence, RI; and Zillah J. Dower, who was serving as superintendent of Fleidner Hall in Pawtucket, RI. Only two women were ordained Elder between 1956 and 1970 in this conference: Jeanette Yvette McGlinchey in 1962 and Marguerite Alice Hill in 1965.<sup>12</sup> Neither Ms. McGlinchey nor Ms. Hill are listed under "Pastors Emeriti" or "Our Honored Dead, Ministers",<sup>13</sup> so current status is not known.

### **New England Conference (1924-1970)**

Although there were six women in the New England Conference who were ordained Elder between 1925 and the 1956 rule, Jeanie M. Redstone, Annalee Stewart, Margaret Elizabeth Bee, Irene P. Hoyt, Ruth Howells Browning and Elisabeth Laura Butler, those still living or in the area did not pursue full Conference membership after the 1956 rule. Only two women were ordained Deacon - none as Elder - between 1956 and 1970: Leeda Elizabeth Marsh in 1967 and Carolyn Pearson in 1969. However, both were "discontinued" before being ordained Elder.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Carmen Dresser Ward, "Contributions of Women" in Jerry O. Cook, Ed., *Roots and Branches, Historical Essays on Methodism in Southern New England* (Boston: New England Methodist Historical Society, 1989), p. 105

<sup>13</sup>2000 Journal of the New England Annual Conference

<sup>14</sup>Ward, "Contributions of Women" in Cook, Ed., *Roots and Branches*, p. 106

### **Southern New England Conference (1970 - 1994)**

In 1970, Julieanne Sotzing Hallman was ordained a Deacon, and the following year she became a Probationary Member of the Conference. In 1973, she was ordained Elder, gaining the historic distinction of becoming the first woman admitted into full connection in this predecessor conference of the current New England Conference. She has been serving as Associate Director of Field Education at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary since 1987. Four more women were ordained Deacons in 1972: Ann Elizabeth Greene, Lynn Nell Rhodes, Ruth Edith Saunier Robinson, and Joanne Marie Whitcomb.<sup>15</sup> Current records show that Ruth E. S. Robinson was admitted into full connection in 1974, and retired in 1993. However, the other three women are not included in any of the current listings, so their status is not known.<sup>16</sup>

From 1972 until the 1994 merger there had been women in the group of ordinands at the Southern New England Annual Conference each year; and in 1986 there were more women than men ordained in both groups - Deacons (Probationary Members) and Elders.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Comparison by Gender Breakdown of Clergy Members of the former Southern New England Conference<sup>18</sup>**

<b>Year<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Elders In Full Connection</b>			<b>Probationary Members</b>		
	<b>Female/Male</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Female/Male</b>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>1989</b>	37	223	260	19	16	35
<b>1993</b>	55	198	253	27	15	42

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 106

<sup>16</sup>2000 Journal of the New England Annual Conference

<sup>17</sup>Ward, "Contributions of Women" in Cook, Ed., *Roots and Branches*, p. 106-107

<sup>18</sup>SNEC Journals, 1989 & 1993

<sup>19</sup>1989 is the first year female/male data was collected; 1993 was the last year the SNEC was in existence



This chart shows the first indication of a shift in gender that has become even more apparent in more recent years (see chart following): An increase in the number of women in each category; a decline in the number of men.

*“Firsts” relating to women of the Southern New England Conference after the 1956 rule:*<sup>20</sup>

- 1973 - Julieanne Sotzing Hallman - First woman Elder in Full Connection in SNEC; With husband, Harry Hallman, First clergy couple in SNEC
- 1976 - Julieanne Sotzing Hallman - First clergy woman to be elected a delegate to General Conference
- 1984 - Julia (Thomas) Doutaz - First Black American woman ordained as Deacon (Probationary Member) to SNEC
- 1985 - Yolanda (Rivas) Pupo-Ortiz - First Hispanic-American woman ordained as Elder
- 1986 - Young Kim Hong - First Korean-American woman ordained as Elder
- 1986 - Caroline Brewer Edge - First woman District Superintendent in SNEC
- 1987 - Frances Parker Swartz - First clergywoman to receive the Wilbur C. Ziegler Award for Excellence in Preaching (was first established in 1981)

**New Hampshire Conference**<sup>21</sup>

I was not able to get to the journals for this former conference, so the information is sketchy at best. However, I was able to garner a few facts from information sent to me by the Rev. Ann C. Partner, who was the second women to be ordained in the former New Hampshire Conference (1973).<sup>22</sup>

**Gender Breakdown of Clergy Members in the former New Hampshire Conference**<sup>23</sup>

Year	Clergy Members	
	Female/Male	Total
1983	10 71	81

<sup>20</sup>Ward, “Contributions of Women” in Cook, Ed., *Roots and Branches*, p.106-107

<sup>21</sup>Taken from articles submitted and telephone conversation with the Rev. Ann C. Partner

<sup>22</sup>Rev. Partner was ordained as a courtesy at the Southern New England Conference in June 1973, as she was unable to attend the NH Conference in May.

<sup>23</sup>Based on a 1983 newspaper clipping/column written by Patty Howard of the *Union Leader* Staff

*“Firsts” relating to women of the New Hampshire Conference after the 1956 rule:*

1956 - Faith Chandler - First woman ordained as Deacon in NH

1975 - Ann C. Partner - First woman clergy delegate to Jurisdictional Conference

1980s- Ann C. Partner - First woman Chair of NH Board of Ordained Ministry

### **Maine Conference<sup>24</sup>**

By 1925 when women were able to be ordained as local preachers, two women were ready in the Maine Conference: Miss Maybelle H. Whitney and Mrs. Emma Eliza Harrison. In 1926 Audrey L. Hunt MacDonald and Inez Webster received their local deacon's orders. In 1927, Maybelle Whitney became the first woman in Maine to receive her elder's orders, followed by Audrey MacDonald and Inez Webster in 1928 (Mrs. Harrison died in 1926). Miss Webster was the first native Maine woman to be ordained.

According to Patricia Jewett's "Women As Pastors" written in 1984<sup>25</sup>, many more women joined the ranks of ordained deacons and elders under the 1924 rule, but she did not list their names, and I did not have access to records that might include them.

*“Firsts” relating to women of the Maine Conference after the 1956 rule:*

1956 - Gertrude G. Harris, Mrs. Alice T. Hart, Esther A. Haskard, and Mrs. Margaret Henrichsen - First women to be received on trial (Probationary Membership)

1958 - Ms. Harris, Mrs. Hart, Ms. Haskard and Mrs. Henrichsen - First women received into full connection in the Maine Conference

1961 - Clarice Bowman - First woman ever called to a major teaching position at Bangor Theological Seminary

1967 - Margaret Henrichsen - First woman District Superintendent in ME Conference

1980 - Lynne Josselyn - Second woman District Superintendent in ME Conference, making Maine the first state to have had two woman District Superintendents.

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<sup>24</sup>Patricia A. Jewett, "Women As Pastors" in *The History of Maine Methodism Through The Women's Sphere* (Portland, ME: S. Burke, 1984), pp. 32-40

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 37

## **New England Annual Conference (1994-2000)**

The merger of the Maine, New Hampshire and Southern New England Conferences in 1994 made it possible to get more accurate and complete figures for the last six years for comparison purposes. The following charts show the Gender Comparison not only of Elders in Full Connection and Probationary Members of the Annual Conference, but also that of Deacons in Full Connection, Associate/Affiliate Members with Vote, and Full Time and Part Time Local Pastors:

### **Comparison by Gender Breakdown of Clergy Members in the current New England Annual Conference<sup>26</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Elders In Full Connection</b>			<b>Probationary Members</b>		
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1994</b>	130	527	657	34	24	58
<b>1995</b>	138	519	657	29	27	56
<b>1998</b>	151	481	632	27	16	43
<b>1999</b>	157	471	628	24	16	40
<b>2000</b>	155	474	629	35	13	48

This chart shows us that the total number of Elders in Full Connection and Probationary Members have decreased fairly steadily between the years 1994 - 2000, although the 2000 totals have increased by one for Elders and by eight for Probationary Members over the 1999 figures. However, this still leaves a net loss of a little over 5% compared to the 1994 numbers.

<sup>26</sup>NEAC Journals, 1993-94 & 1998-2000

A further study of the above chart shows a shift by gender that was first reflected in the earlier chart for the former Southern New England Conference: the number of female elders has increased by 19%, while the number of men have decreased by 10%; the number of women probationers had fallen steadily between 1994-99, but a turn around in year 2000 brought the number to just over the 1994 figure. However, the number of male probationers has dropped to almost half the 1994 total.

Add to this scenario the fact that the number of certified candidates listed on page B-30 of the 2000 Journal totals only forty-three, and that approximately 74% of them are women. This brings us to a disturbing reality that fewer and fewer people, and especially men, are answering the call to ordained ministry.

Year	Deacons In Full			Associate/Affiliate		
	Connection			Members w/Vote		
	Female/Male	Total		Female/Male	Total	
1994				3	21	24
1995				3	18	21
1998	6	0	6	3	14	17
1999	9	0	9	3	12	15
2000	11	0	11	5	11	16

More of the same: more women, less men. While it is encouraging to see the continued increase in the number of women being called to ordained ministry, these facts

do point to an area of much needed study in order to understand why the downward shift in males is happening.

Year	Full Time Local Pastors			Part Time Local Pastors		
	Female/Male	Total		Female/Male	Total	
1994	1	9	10	Not Available		
1995	2	9	11	Not Available		
1998	8	8	16	14	19	33
1999	8	12	20	19	16	35
2000	13	16	29	17	24	41

The gender shift is not reflected in the Local Pastor numbers; there are actually more men and women serving churches in this category than in previous years.

#### Comparison with Total United Methodist Church Statistics:

The merged NEAC figures also allow us to compare some related statistics with the larger United Methodist Church:

Category	% Who Are Woman In	% Who Are Woman In
	Total UMC*	NEAC**
Ordained Elders	13%	25%
Of Racial Ethnicity	13%	11.6%
District Superintendents	15%	50%

\* Based on information posted on website of The General Commission on The Status and Role of Women, compiled from data available Spring 2000 (<http://www.umc.org/gcsrwhistory/>)

\*\* Based on figures in NEAC 2000 Journal, p. B-45

A Fourth Comparison that can be made between the NEAC and the larger UMC, although the year of calculation is different, is where we stand regarding compensation of women to men with the same number of years experience and same type of appointment:

*According to The General Commission on The Status and Role of Women website, clergywomen make 9% less than their male counterparts nationwide.*

*Based on statistics in the New England Annual Conference Statistician's Report that was delivered at Annual Conference in June 1997, clergywomen in the NEAC make 8% less than their male counterparts.*

The above figures show us that we are ahead of the larger United Methodist Church in the percentage of women who are Elders and District Superintendents in our conference; but are slightly behind the larger church (1.4%) on the number of racial ethnic women who are leading in our churches. The last comparison shows that we are slightly better (1%) than the larger church when it comes to salary levels for clergywomen in comparison to their male counterparts.

## **Stories**

*"The way has not been easy all the time, nor should it be! But we are never alone - God is always with us, and our faith, and the faith of others, sustains us!"* (Rev. Ann C. Partner-Nelson)

The surveys that were returned to me contained many wonderful, though sometimes sad and painful, sharings of these women's journeys to and through their lives in service to the church. Unfortunately, space does not permit a full sharing, but I have tried to include the stories and statements that give the best representation of their total answers to the survey questions, and that seemed to provide insight into what inspired these women to enter ordained ministry and what life has been/is like for clergywomen.

In spite of many mountains that had to be laid low and valleys filled along the way, fourteen of the fifteen responders ultimately expressed affirmation of and satisfaction with

their life in ministry. Thirteen are currently serving churches, two are retired, one is still in seminary. At the time of the survey, two were under the age of 40, two between 40 and 50, six in their 50's, three in their 60's, and two in their 70's. Four were in their 20's when they responded to the call to ordained ministry; six in their 30's; and five had been in their 40's. At the time of their call, four were single, eight were married; and three were divorced. Six mentioned having children at the time; two reported that responding to their call resulted in their marriages breaking up; two married after entering the ministry; one was part of a clergy couple; four are children of ministers; and two identified physical challenges that were seen by others as impediments to their doing ministry.

I have listed each of the questions contained in my survey, with a sampling of the responses give. If permission was given to identify the writers, I have included the respondent's initials after the quote.<sup>27</sup>

**At what age did you first understand your call to ministry, and how was this experienced?**

It was in the autumn of 1968 that I began to "know" the call to return to seminary. After much prayer, many "God-incidences" coming together, I entered BU in the fall of 1969 at age 25.(AP)

My first call to ministry came after I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at about age 25.

Actually, this decision at age 34 followed other revelations. The first was as a youth, when I stopped in my tracks while looking at the light coming through the window of our MYF room one Sunday night. I realized, "I love being involved in the church; I want to do this for the rest of my life." (FS)

My call to ministry was classic. While sitting in an Episcopal church in Bernardsville, NJ, having kept the hymnal on my lap open to the hymn we had just sung "O Lord and Father of Mankind", I received what I perceived to be my "call" in an instantaneous intuition that

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<sup>27</sup>A listing of the women identified by initials in this section can be found in Appendix II. A transcript of complete responses received are included in Appendix III.

translated into these words: "There is no place for you but the church." I interpreted that immediately as my having no choice but to enter professional ministry. I was 24. (JW) I had no idea what God was up to until a fine autumn Sunday morning in 1971. Previous to that day, I had felt restless and uncertain in my soul, waiting or searching for something or other but not knowing what. I walked into the vicar's office, went directly to the bookshelf, reached out and took down a small volume with no visible title and opened it. My eye fell on a passage from the ordination of deacons (Episcopal Church) which said the ordinand was to search out the poor, the sick, and the lost. As I read those words, I had an "AHA!" sensation, and I KNEW this was what God wanted me to do ("Details to follow"). It brought me to tears; it was such a deep feeling of assurance and knowing, finally, what I was moving toward in life. (MB)

Influenced by stories I heard in Sunday School, as a child I was convinced that God wanted me to be a missionary. As I look back, I do believe that God was speaking to me then. However, I quietly put my dream away without ever sharing it with anyone when I realized that I would need a college education to become a missionary. (RW)

I didn't experience a call to the ordained ministry until in my late 30's. However, when I was in college (1963-67), I made the decision to go into social work and felt at that time that I was answering God's call for my life. In both instances the call came in gradually through prayer that God was calling me to follow a specific road in my life. (PT)

I was 38, a new woman pastor came to our church. (EV)

I was working as a social worker with elderly persons. A woman called me her minister when I went to visit her, and several days later I heard the late Bishop Marjorie Matthews preach at BU. This was important because I didn't know that women could be ministers. I was 36 years old.

At age 47 I had a heart warming experience in which God's love surrounded me in an unbelievable way. I knew I was loved and a child of God, good, worthy, and gifted. This happened while I was praying and reading after my husband had been told he may have AIDS. I told God I couldn't handle this alone and turned it, and myself, over to God.

I was in my late 40's when I began to question a call to ministry. At the end of a three year course on spirituality, I felt the call to ministry. I particularly felt led to preach and share some of the spiritual learning that had come to me.

I first felt called to ministry at age 14 as I prepared to deliver my first sermon for youth Sunday in the American Baptist church in RI where I grew up. I knew as I got up and "preached" (it was more like a short testimony) that the pulpit was where I belonged. (AR)

Very few clearly defined moments; more of a process. At age 16, I remember being asked by Betty Schraeder at senior high church camp to lead the communion service. Leading this was a very powerful moment. (JT)



I suppose I knew from a very young age that I was called. I felt drawn to sacred music, sacred texts, the Gospel in song. I served for many years in Music Ministry. However, the call to ordained ministry became so strong and so clear that I could do nothing else! (LC)

I've felt close to God since I was a very tiny girl....but repeatedly heard messages as a child that ministry was inappropriate for women..particularly because their voices were ill suited to carry God's (His!) powerful message.

**How difficult was it to decide to enter ordained ministry? At what age did you do this?**

I was 26 in the fall of 1970 when I began my journey that would lead to ordained ministry. I knew that I could not seek ordination, however, without an absolutely clear call. I was too traditional to take up what I must have understood to be a "man's work" without that deep inner knowing. That part of the journey was very difficult. I began to feel a great "chasm" within me, a heaviness, a "darkness", a weight that was hard to bear. I knew that this was from God. I did not know how to respond. However, I also began to know that I had to say "yes" or I would "surely die." I think I felt something like John Wesley must have felt. I know the meaning of being pursued by the "Hound of Heaven." When I finally said "yes", it was like Millay's "Renascence" and I was immediately set free from the weight and the darkness, and my direction toward ordained ministry was clear. (AP)

So at 44 I began my second career in ministry. I had an identity change in my second year at Theological School-from being a professional worker to minister. I had been working part-time while going to school and finally put that aside and behind me. Also around this time I really sought spiritual growth and was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I had already been to seminary, following college, in order to enter the Christian education field, which I did. When recruiters from the Central PA conference came to call at Drew, they suggested that I be ordained; I said "No". I rejected that outright; women did not belong behind the pulpit, I thought. I had never heard of that. But at about 34, with 2 small children and a crisis my husband and I were having about what his career would be, I had an insight one day while with a good friend and while working at the kitchen sink. Immediately I began to write to the DS's in the conference. (FS)

The energy and clarity of my call experience, when I was 37, spurred me into registration in 1973 as a special student at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA to which I commuted for five years. (MB)

I prayed for guidance in making decisions about the future. So when the DS asked me if I would be willing to serve two small country churches, I felt that God was answering my prayers. I was 51 years old. (RW)

I was in my late 30's, and at first I resisted the call, in part because I felt that the life that I had lived was not worthy of such a calling. I was, however, at a crossroads in my life, knowing that it was time for me to leave behind the social work which I had been doing in the Head Start program and begin something new. That is probably the reason that I did not resist as long as I might have. I had some debts that I felt needed to be cleared up before I went on to seminary. I finally realized, however, that I was just using them as an excuse, and went ahead anyway. (PT)

It was very difficult and I went to seminary in Sept. of 1983 at the age of 41. (EV)

I believed that my call to ministry at age 36 was to be a chaplain to the elderly. I was advised by a mentor not to let the BOOM know this because they wouldn't approve me

It was difficult because of what it meant and the path was not clear. Williamstown was so far away from any seminary, I was married and raising children, and had a full time job at the top of my profession. I became an assistant in my church on the local pastor route. I started seminary at age 49 and was given my first church as a pastor.

I was still questioning God's call but I thought I would at least try seminary, if I could be accepted, and take it one step at a time. I was worried about my age (47) and whether I was capable of doing seminary work.

When my husband left me in 1991, the call to ministry was still there, and I entered Candler in the fall of 1992 at the age of 33. I graduated in '94 and got my first appointment, but the Board in Florida deferred me for ordination, so my first year was as a local pastor. (AR)

I went to seminary because I wanted to teach comparative religion. I was 23/24 when I began to understand scripture in a deeper way, and that worship is intrinsically tied to a life of faith outside of church. The combination in seminary of church, worship, sacraments, and study of scripture helped me make the connection between service and justice both outside and within the church. (JT)

The decision was easy..for me alone. But I was a wife and a mother of three children (then ages 4, 2 and 3 months). I was blessed to be able to stay home with my kids; my husband was very well employed. So it seemed to make no sense to anyone but me. The jaw-on-the-floor stares and head shaking "Why on earth would you..." were the difficult things to deal with. I was 28 years old. (LC)

**What types of support or opposition did you receive while making this decision and during the ordination process:**

**From family?** There were 8 positive, 3 negative, and 1 mixed responses to this question.

**From friends?** There were 5 positive, two negative, and 3 mixed responses.

**Your local church (laity and pastor)?** 9 positive, 2 negative, and 2 mixed responses.

**District Superintendent?** 7 Positive, 1 negative, and 3 mixed responses

**Bishop?** 5 Positive, 1 Neutral Responses

**Seminary Professors?** 8 Positive, 1 Negative, 2 Mixed Responses

**After ordination did you receive support/acceptance by male colleagues, and has that changed over the years since? Note: comments made re female colleagues are also included here.**

After ordination I did receive support and acceptance by my male colleagues and that has only deepened and grown through the years. There were a few along the way who were patronizing but my general experience was very positive. (AP)

My clergy colleagues were most accepting of me. I really appreciated this because being a pastor can be lonely. During my first appointment I had a DS that you could not talk to. I have had several DS's who were supportive and had positive reports of my ministry. One of my DS's gave me an appointment where there was another woman in a nearby town-we were still pretty rare as this was about 1978.

Support from my male colleagues during those years (1976 to 1983) was superb, not only my UM colleagues in the district, but the local clergy, including the Catholic priests who were very active in ecumenical events. (JW)

In these twenty years I have had wonderful support and warm collegial relations, all in all. There has been only one colleague with whom I have had difficulties, largely due to a style clash and the animosity of his spouse who resented my competence. (MB)

I knew most of the clergy in the conference and was accepted as a friend by most. They were very supportive of me. (RW)

After ordination, for the most part, I received acceptance from my male colleagues (both within the UMC and outside). I was part of the Maine Annual Conference from 1985 until the merger in 1994. Lynne Josselyn and other women in Maine had worked hard to create an atmosphere of acceptance and support. Interestingly, I felt the tone changed somewhat once we merged. There were more signs of the old "male chauvinist" actions, though a lot were my own instincts rather than a lot of overt actions. (PT)

Yes, and it hasn't changed in this conference, but it certainly changed in the Yellowstone (Wyoming) conference in the short time I was there. (EV)

Male support has been OK since ordination. I have been more disappointed with my female colleagues who after receiving 'upper' appointments act like one of the guys.

I really haven't had any problems with male colleagues. Most have been cordial and accepting. My hearing problem raises difficulties with both sexes.

After ordination, I felt accepted by male colleagues, but have experienced in more places than one the feeling that "the good old boys" still run the show. That is all right with me because I do not care to be one of "the good old boys." I actually feel more discomfort when I'm with some clergy women who seem to have "clicks" and who do not invite others to be part of their "group" if you know what I mean.

Because my first appointment was a notorious church in rural, redneck Florida, my success there earned the respect of my colleagues right away. I don't think they expected me to succeed. I was the ninth pastor in ten years at that church. Colleagues in New England have been great, and since they gave me their top clergy honor after my first year here (a preaching award at Conference), I can hardly complain. My DS has been stellar and I was knocked out of my socks to receive the great appointment here that I did. (AR)

I've received support from male colleagues for the most part. I've experienced some patronage as a young woman, but no more that what I expect I'd receive in any other type of work. I think there is a certain kindredness felt between and among women clergy. (JT)

I have never had difficulty with male colleagues. Those with whom I work in this area are all wonderful. I have often had more difficulty with female colleagues. Few of them have much patience with a minister/mother who works very hard to balance both. They often don't understand the little things such as that I can't attend clergy women breakfasts at 7:30 AM...that's when I'm getting my children off to school...or that I choose not to go on overnight retreats...etc. (LC)

**How were you accepted in your appointed charges, and how has that changed over the years?**

I was the first woman to be pastor in the first four appointments I served (1971-1989). There were a few people who needed to be "won-over." I have had some strong supporters and good friends in all of my appointments. In this current appointment and the previous one (1990-) I have been preceded by women colleagues who were the first for these congregations and who have laid strong foundations. I did have a sad thing happen in one church on one of the first Sundays. A woman went out, shook my hand, and said: "I am so glad you did not come to chase our husbands." I must have said something like, "Of course not", in response, but I'm sure that there wasn't too much I could say at that moment! (AP)

I felt positive about my acceptance in the several churches I served. In one appointment I had two churches and served there for five years. The people asked for a change of pastors because some people did not identify with me, not so much that I was a woman, but because I was not a couple with children.

The local church was generally supportive, but there were a few incidences. One man told me honestly that he had trouble with having a woman minister. I commend him, because I believe that most people who object to a woman will not tell you this to your face. They may do other things, such as leave the church. I have always respected those who would tell me, but they do not add up even to the fingers on one hand. Another family, whose father I had visited rather than Jim (husband and co-pastor), put Jim's name in the paper as the minister in charge of the father's funeral. That did hurt, but I did the funeral and believe that the family didn't realize what they had done. A few people have left the church over the years over this issue. Others, and I believe most who had misgivings about my coming before I started serving at their church, quickly found out after my arrival that it would be all right to have me as the pastor. (FS)

I served for 7 years as associate pastor to two churches, and so did not draw the opposition that one might if one were sole or senior pastor. There was no clear evidence that the local church had trouble accepting me because of my gender at that time. At a later appointment I encountered what may have been serious gender opposition problems. I didn't see it as a gender issue at first, but as a huge amount of negative energy from a few women in their 40's and 50's who did not dissemble in any way that they disrespected me to the point of hatred. My reading on this now sees their problem as jealousy. In me they encountered a middle-aged woman who had resolved her identity issues, was fulfilled, independent, and, most annoying of all, joyful. I'm guessing this is the case because from other age groups, older and younger, support and affirmation for me was wonderful. (JW)

I have gone from church to church with a single goal: to love and serve God and his people. And everywhere I go, despite some "muddling along" from time to time, I have been welcomed, loved, and supported. My creative urges have been allowed to surface most of the time, and my intentions have generally been understood. I have found affinity with Massachusetts "townies" and Kentucky farmers and North Country folks, many of whom have become close friends. (MB)

In two charges I followed women, making it easier. After leaving one charge, I received a phone call with the message, "We just wanted you to know that we prefer women ministers, they work harder." Before I arrived at one church, a relative in the parish I was leaving wrote to say that they would miss me and that I had been a good pastor. The person who told me that confided that she had made up her mind not to accept a woman pastor, after reading the letter she decided to give me a chance. (RW)

I have now served in four parishes, and my experiences have varied. I was 39 years old at the time of my first appointment, while still in seminary. I had had a fair amount of life experience prior to going there, but I was nervous about being in my first parish. There was a woman who had become very involved in the parish, and I learned that after a little

while I became a real threat to her status and eventually she stopped attending and participating altogether. Because I was so insecure inside myself, it never occurred to me that I might be a threat to anyone. There were a couple of other women who would have preferred male pastors, but I developed good relationships with them and eventually those feelings passed away. Thus, in 3 out of 4 churches, I have had a really good experience and certainly that one was not totally negative. Why I had so much trouble there re: my preaching still remains, in part, a mystery to me since everyone else seems to love it. But perhaps that is the nature of church. And how much the fact that I was a woman had to do with it will probably never be known. (PT)

Very well in New England. Very well in Yellowstone, but that's where the support stopped there. (EV)

Until my current appointment, I have been accepted readily. This church is different and I think that femaleness has been only one issue of many. The church was very troubled and traumatized from their unfortunate situations when I came.

The laity of the churches I have served have been very welcoming and supportive. They may have questioned the idea of having a woman pastor, but they never said anything to indicate that questioning to me. The one exception was when I came to serve my present two-charge parish. At one of the two churches, a regime had been in power for many years, one completely devoted to a pastor who had served for 15 years. These 3 people gave me trouble from day one. Finally, when they saw other people supporting me and feeling I would never do things the way they wanted, they left the church. Since that time, everything has been uphill in our ministry.

I felt God calling me to return to my New England roots to contribute to ministry there. I am the first woman in a regular appointment at my present charge, and the first woman appointed to what is considered a major charge in the SNH District. A few people have confessed their initial reservations about a woman. One man told me he had seen my picture in the paper and said, "Oh great. We're getting the Vicar of Dibley!" But we are now great friends and any who still have issues are silent...at least to me. (AR)

I'm in my first appointment. I feel that I have been fairly well accepted as a woman. The previous pastor was their first woman pastor, and she had a tougher time. Some people left the church. But she broke the ice for me. I am aware that some lay people are not accepting of woman pastors. I sometimes feel that my authority is questioned because of being a young single woman. Also, I get a lot of comments on appearance. (JT)

I am the first woman that this 207 year old congregation has had...no problems whatsoever. I'm fortunate, I suppose. I've been able to set the mark for those who might follow me. (LC)

**Any other affirmations or obstacles along your journey that you would like to share?**

Next August, I celebrate my 30th year of full time ministry in the local church. The way has not been easy all the time, nor should it be! But we are never left alone-God is always with us, and our faith, and the faith of others, sustains us! (AP)

Another obstacle would be that of being a clergy couple, which Jim and I were for 8 years. One prejudice was against Jim. One PPRC committee member told us that she could never respect a man who preached to her if she knew that he would be going home to do the dishes. The DS wisely decided not to appoint us to that church. Another was toward me: One church we served complained to the DS that Jim did not go to certain meetings they felt he should have been attending. I told the DS that I had been there at those meetings, and so the minister was present. He agreed with me. (FS)

Maybe I should have paid more attention to gender issues over the years, but for the most part it didn't enter into my analysis of what was going on. There were many, many other issues, mostly having to do with my personal needs, maturation, and spiritual journey that strongly and often negatively affected my ministry. (JW)

I am one of the fortunate ones who can truly say I love what I do and the people with whom I do it. I have been allowed to fulfill every professional goal, including a doctorate in bereavement counseling at BUSTH. It may sound corny, but I feel most profoundly blessed. To God be the glory! (MB)

Perhaps because I came to the ministry later in life or because I came as a lay person first, I do not have a lot of stories about obstacles in my way. It was difficult bringing up children, going to school, paying for my education and for theirs, dividing my time between family and parish, but I feel richly blessed with the gift of it all. (RW)

The biggest problem that I continue to have is that I don't think I've ever enjoyed preaching quite as much as many pastors. But God seems to continue to call me to parish ministry. So I guess God is pleased. And in the end, that's all that counts. (PT)

No, except to say that Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen, Lynne Josselyn and Vicki Woods are the reason I'm in ministry today. New England is a great place to minister. I am always raising dust, but even the conservative lay folk love me anyway. But not everyone is in the Northeast Jurisdiction. (EV)

If I had to do it all over again, I would have gotten my MSW and served as a deacon. The power problems in the UMC are overwhelming and right now I feel as if I have paid too high a price to this system.

Obstacles are former pastors who do not prepare their congregations for a new pastor, much less a female one.

People have been patient with me as I have been learning the ropes over the years. It does take good old fashion "experience" before one can start getting a clearer picture of how to

be in ministry with others. I know I still have a great deal more to learn after 9 years of ministry. I have felt supported by the DSs under which I have served and by the Bishop as well.

I think women clergy as a whole need to do a lot more work on supporting one another rather than being in competition with one another, and I confess I haven't done anything to work on this myself.

There are petty annoyances...like we have to pay much, much more for a pulpit robe with pockets (A standard ship robe has nifty slits so you can slide your hands into your trouser pockets). Or lapel microphones that assume you have a belt to attach the battery pack to. In less formal services when I don't wear a robe, I get lots of comments about my clothes or jewelry. I feel like the robe serves a different purpose for women than for men. It's definitely a plus for me...confers authority when I need it, and takes away the distraction of dress. I don't think women are as distracted by male pastor's suits as men are by their woman pastor's clothing. (AR)

**Affirmations:** In supervising women student interns, there come up many questions/ concerns regarding authority and power; there is skepticism or uncertainty about how to use it in proper ways.

**Obstacles:** I do not believe in climbing the ladder of success, but I understand that men are still predominately the ones in power. Our liturgy is very patriarchal; I use "God" versus gender specific terminology to try to overcome this, as I believe in simplicity. (JT)

Working 1/2 time at a church and 1/2 time at Camp Mechuwana, most of the time it feels like I have two full time jobs, not two halves! (That is, of course, in addition to being the mother of three kids now ages 9, 12 and 13!) Life is full and WONDERFUL! (LC)

I am sorry (for not being able to respond to the survey) but I have got to get back to work (Five seminary courses, applying to the BOOM for commissioning...all their paperwork is due by Jan....and a part time church and a family with two adolescents...one a graduating senior in high school and one a freshman, and a husband with a demanding job too).

### **Conclusion:**

I feel that a more in-depth and complete study needs to be done before a full understanding of woman clergy and their relationships to each other, with their male colleagues, within the local churches, and within the New England Annual Conference structures can be made. I hope that my research, which I acknowledge as being far from complete, will provide the impetus for someone to take on this very complex but intriguing task.



PLEASE NOTE:

APPENDIX I  
(Chronological Role of Women Members of  
The New England Annual Conference in the Year 2000)  
(Consisting of 5 Pages)

IS LOCATED AFTER

APPENDIX IV  
(Survey Questions)

## Appendix II

A total of 15 clergywomen responded to the survey questions. My heartfelt thanks go out to each and every one for taking the time and energy, during a busy holiday season, to respond to this survey.

Five of the women either requested that their names not be used, or did not respond to my question concerning same. The other ten are listed below; statements they made can be identified by the initials included at the end of each statement. If there are no initials, the person quoted did not wish to be named in this paper.

(MB) Reverend Margaret W. Bickford

(LC) Reverend Laura E. Church

(AP) Reverend Ann C. Partner-Nelson

(AR) Reverend Anne R. Robertson

(FS) Reverend Frances P. Swartz

(PT) Reverend Patricia J. Thompson

(JT) Reverend Julie M. Todd

(EV) Reverend Elizabeth Vernon

(RW) Reverend Ruth C. Williamson

(JR) Reverend Julia R. Wilson

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### Appendix III

#### TRANSCRIPT OF COMPLETE RESPONSES RECEIVED TO SURVEY QUESTIONS<sup>28</sup>

##### **Rev. Ann Partner-Nelson**

1. I believe that I first understood a call to ministry in 1968 at age 24. I had graduated from college in 1966 with a major in philosophy and religion and a minor in English. I went immediately to Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, where I did my earliest work in theological studies. I was there for a year and during the winter and spring quarters I directed a residence hall on the campus of Northwestern University.

I left Garrett in the spring of 1967 after a year because I was not sure of my direction in ministry and because I received a call from the former dean of women of the college I had attended (Kansas Wesleyan University) who was on the staff of the Dean of Women at the University of Oklahoma as an Assistant Dean of Women and Director of Women's Housing. I attended the University of Oklahoma for two years (1967-1969) and returned in the summer of 1970 to complete my degree and was graduated with a Master of Education in Student Personnel Administration/Counseling and Guidance in Higher Education. It is a degree for those who will be college administrators. While at OU, I opened and directed a residence hall of 1,500 undergraduates, managed a staff of 44 upper-class student resident assistants, and an employed service staff.

It was in the autumn of 1968 that I began to "know" the call to return to seminary. After much prayer, many "God-incidences" coming together, consultation with Dr. Wayne Coffin, pastor of McFarlin United Methodist Church in Norman, OK where I had attended while a student, assistance with financial aid from Boston University School of Theology, I entered BU in the fall of 1969 at age 25. At BU I was again director of a residence hall-this time of our graduate women's hall at 196 Bay State Road. There was no women's center at that time and only a hand-full of us were in the School of Theology. I majored in Christian Education-that was the most common form of service in the church for women in that era. I had not considered ordained ministry because I did not know women "could be ministers"! I had no mentors, I had never heard a woman preach. I had never thought of being an ordained minister!

In the fall of 1969 and 1970, I was employed by local churches on the weekends in supervised field education. I was well received and supported by the pastors and congregations, first in Weymouth, MA and then in Lawrence, MA. My experience in Lawrence leads into question No. 2. When I went to Lawrence, Dr. Charles Kern, the Sr. Pastor, asked if I was going to enter the ordained ministry because they were going to be seeking an associate pastor. No, I told him, I was planning to pursue Christian Education!

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<sup>28</sup> Included are the responses of the ten clergywomen who agreed to be identified in this paper. The questions to which they were responding are included in Appendix IV.

2. From the beginning I was treated as an equal by Dr. Kern. My work in Christian Education, youth work, etc. was well supported and respected. Charles Kern is/was an outstanding administrator and teacher and I received the best possible education in the practice of ministry during my years there. I was 26 in the fall of 1970 when I began my journey that would lead to ordained ministry. I knew that I could not seek ordination, however, without an absolutely clear call. I was too traditional to take up what I must have understood to be a "Man's work" without that deep inner knowing. That part of the journey was very difficult. I began to feel a great "chasm" within me, a heaviness, a "darkness", a weight that was hard to bear. I knew that this was from God. I did not know how to respond. However, I also began to know that I had to say "yes" or I would "surely die." I think I felt something like John Wesley must have felt. I know the meaning of being pursued by the "Hound of Heaven."

When I finally said "yes", it was like Millay's "Renaissance" and I was immediately set free from the weight and the darkness, and my direction toward ordained ministry was clear. By now it was March, 1971, and my DS sought the recommendation from the only local church I had at the time which was Porter UMC in Weymouth. Letters began to go to the Board of Ordained Ministry of the former NH Conference and I went for interviews. I had a previous commitment on the day that the ordination was scheduled in May for the NH Conference and so I was ordained Deacon at the SNE Conference by courtesy for NH in June of that year by Bishop James K. Matthews. (I was ordained Elder at the NH Conference session by Bishop Edward G. Carroll, in May of 1973, at age 28.) I was graduated from Boston University School of Theology in May, 1972 with the Th. M. degree and a major in Christian Education! (I had begun as full time associate in Lawrence in August of 1971 and served there through December, 1973.)

3. I know that it was by the grace of God that I did not encounter any serious opposition while making this decision. My parents only wanted me to do what would make me happy. I know that my mother had questions about what it would mean, especially in relation to marriage. My father was always my greatest encourager. They both supported my decision and participated fully in the ordinations. (I still wear, on occasion, the black academic-style robe that they gave me in June, 1971 for my ordination gift.) My "home church" is in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. They did not know about me because I had been away so long. Many years ago, however, I stopped by the church to visit and a long-time member and friend of our family visited with me and told me that I was the only young person from the church to have ever entered the ministry up to that time.

I was well supported by my friends, the people of Weymouth and Lawrence, the DS, the Bishop, and seminary professors (I especially remember a most supportive conversation I had with Dr. Walter Muelder who was Dean of the School of Theology at that time.)

4. After ordination I did receive support and acceptance by my male colleagues and that has only deepened and grown through the years. There were a few along the way who were patronizing but my general experience was very positive. I was/am an ordained minister because I knew a call that was strong and identifiable to me and to others. That

has deepened through the years, as well. I was not concerned with being a woman in ministry-I was/am a minister. I have always fully entered into the life of the annual conference, I am a colleague among colleagues, and many of us are close friends. The NH Conference was small enough so that the leadership of both genders could be appreciated and we could know one another well. Many wonderful opportunities presented themselves as a result. I have held many of the leadership positions, served on a variety of task forces, and served on and chaired numerous boards and committees.

5. I was the first woman to be the pastor in the first four appointments I served (1971-1989). There were a few people who needed to be “won-over.” My motto is that such people will grow to understand that one is either a pastor to their people, or they’re not, whether the pastor is a man or a woman. Those who would be in opposition learn quickly that I have come to “do a job” – to love them and to be their pastor, not, as they might be expecting, to make a point or take up some cause.

I have had some strong supporters and good friends in all of my appointments. In this current appointment and the previous one (1990-) I have been preceded by women colleagues who were the first for these congregations and who have laid strong foundations. I did have a sad thing happen in one church on one of the first Sundays. A woman went out, shook my hand, and said: “I am so glad you did not come to chase our husbands.” I must have said something like, “Of course not”, in response, but I’m sure that there wasn’t too much I could say at that moment!

6. Next August I celebrate my 30<sup>th</sup> year of full time ministry in the local church. The way has not been easy all the time, nor should it be! But we are never alone-God is always with us, and our faith and the faith of others, sustains us!

### **Rev. Frances P. Swartz**

I decided to enter ordained ministry about age 34. I had already been to seminary, following college, in order to enter the Christian education field, which I did. But at about 34, with 2 small children and a crisis my husband and I were having about what his career would be, I had an insight one day while with a good friend and while working at the kitchen sink. Immediately I began to write to the DS’s in the conference. Actually, Jim and I both sought to be appointed together as a team.

This decision at age 34 followed other revelations. The first was as a youth, when I stopped in my tracks while looking at the light coming through the window of our Methodist Youth Fellowship room one Sunday night. I realized, “I love being involved in the church; I want to do this for the rest of my life.” Then as a college student, while serving as a counselor of church camp, I suddenly thought, “I have never been happier than I am now, working with children.”

My family was supportive prior to age 34; in fact, my mother urged me to major in religion in college when I was unhappy in my major of home economics. She said, “You’ve always been interested and involved in the church.” My family was stalwart churchgoers, and so I had always participated. But after announcing that I was going to

go into "the ministry", my mother objected at first because of my little girls who were pre-school then. I must say, upon reflection, that she had a very good point. When I actually did assume my first appointment, it was much, much harder than I had every imagined because of my two little girls, and I am sure that they have suffered their share, unfortunately. But in every other way, my family was supportive and expressed pride in me.

The Church was supportive. In fact, while in seminary, the recruiters from the Central PA conference came to call at Drew. They wanted me to be ordained, but I said "No." I rejected that outright; women did not belong behind the pulpit, I thought. I had never heard of that. Once I did begin the process in my 30's, I was not opposed by the Church because of being a woman. However, I was questioned about my stuttering. I will have to say that I have far more anguish about being a stutterer, than a woman, in the ministry.

The local church was generally supportive, but there were a few incidences. One man told me honestly that he had trouble with having a woman minister. I commend him, because I believe that most people who object to a woman will not tell this to you to your face. They may do other things, such as leave the church. I have always respected those who would tell me, but they do not add up even to the fingers on one hand. Another family, whose father I had visited rather than Jim, put Jim's name in the paper as the minister in charge of the father's funeral. That did hurt, but I did the funeral and believe that the family didn't realize what they had done. A few people have left the church over the years over this issue. Others, and I believe most who had misgivings about my coming before I started serving at their church, quickly found out after my arrival that it would be alright to have me as the pastor.

Another obstacle would be that of being a clergy couple, which Jim and I were for 8 years. One prejudice was against Jim. One PPRC committee member told us that she could never respect a man who preached to her if she knew that he would be going home to do the dishes. The DS wisely decided not to appoint us to that church. Another prejudice I remember was toward me. One church we served complained to the DS that Jim did not go to certain meetings they felt he should have been attending. I told the DS that I had been there at those meetings, and so the minister was present. He agreed with me.

### **Rev. Julia R. Wilson**

My call to ministry was classic. While sitting in an Episcopal church in Bernardsville NJ, having kept the hymnal on my lap open to the hymn we had just sung, O Lord and Father of Mankind, (and I think the word was still "feverish" and not "foolish" regarding our ways), the sermon as I remember it being unremarkable, I received what I perceive to be my "call" in an instantaneous intuition that translated into these words: "There is no place for you but the church." I interpreted that immediately as my having no choice but to enter professional ministry. I was 24.

There was no difficulty at all, that I was aware of, in my whole entrance process in the New York Conference. I encountered no opposition except from the Ecumenical

Institute of which I was an active member. They opposed my path because they considered the institutional church, as such, to be obsolete. Seminary years were extraordinarily difficult to the point of despair because EI disdained the ordination process and everyone at seminary hated EI. I had more than my share of opposition from those two arenas, but no opposition at all from family, my local church, clergy colleagues, the district committee, etc.

My mother tells an anecdote about the PPR at my local church, Watertown, CT. She was serving on this committee during the years I was serving my first church in North Canton. Watertown was in pastoral transition and the District Superintendent told the PPR that there was a chance the new pastor would be a woman. My mother reports that someone's response to that was: "We spawned one, but we don't want one." Whenever, now, I remember that anecdote, I open and close my mouth in imitation of a fish.

I served for 7 years in North Canton, CT, 1976 to 1983. There was no clear evident that the local church had trouble accepting me because of my gender, and support from my male colleagues during those years was superb, not only my UM colleagues in the district, but the local clergy, including the Catholic priests, who were very active in ecumenical events. After North Canton, I served as an associate pastor for two churches and so did not draw the opposition that one might if one were sole or senior pastor. Mystic, CT brought what may have been serious gender opposition problems. I didn't see it as a gender issue at first, but a huge amount of negative energy came from a few women in their 40's and 50's who did not dissemble in any way that they disrespected me to the point of hatred. My reading on that now sees their problem as jealousy. In me they encountered a middle aged woman who had resolved her identity issues, was fulfilled, independent and, most annoying of all, joyful. I'm guessing this is the case because from other age groups, older and younger, and from less needy middle-aged women, support and affirmation for me in Mystic was wonderful.

Maybe I should have paid more attention to gender issues over the years, but for the most part it didn't enter into my analysis of what was going on. There were many, many other issues, mostly having to do with my personal needs, maturation, and spiritual journey that strongly and often negatively affected my ministry, not gender issues.

### **Rev. Margaret W. Bickford**

I had no idea what God was up to until a fine autumn Sunday morning in 1971. Previous to that day, I had felt restless and uncertain in my soul, waiting or searching for something or other but not knowing what. Two new charismatic Catholic friends had encouraged me to deepen my prayer life (which was very superficial at the time, to say the least). They also prayed over and with me for a sign or discernment, for they had received messages from the Holy Spirit that "a fish was about to be landed." I really didn't "get it" but my curiosity was certainly aroused.

That morning I was wakened earlier than usual (which is remarkable for a non-morning person like me), and went in early to the little local Episcopal church where I was a choir member and lay reader. I walked into the vicar's office, went directly to the bookshelf, reached out and took down a small volume with no visible title, and opened it.



My eye fell on a passage from the ordination of deacons (Episcopal Church) which said the ordinand was to search out the poor, the sick, and the lost. As I read those words, I had an “AHA!” sensation, and I KNEW this was what God wanted me to do (“Details to follow”). It brought me to tears; it was such a deep feeling of assurance and knowing, finally, what I was moving toward in life. The vicar watched me in surprise, and finally asked if I were OK. I remember stammering “uh, uh...yeah...I think I’ve just been called into ministry...”. He didn’t react much, but I suspect that his impression that I was an ambitious, over-imaginative middle-aged (35) housewife with delusions of grandeur was confirmed. This was the way he treated me ever after. I found out later that he and a colleague of his in the area spoke against me when I tried to begin candidacy in the Episcopal Diocese of NH the following year. They branded me “neurotic, undisciplined, and something of a misfit”. Furthermore, I had dared to challenge the local church to get out beyond its comfortable four walls and get into the community in mission. That was not “comme il faut. The energy and clarity behind by call experience spurred me into registration in 1973 as a special student at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA to which I commuted for five years. That was a political mistake: I went on my own recognizance; I was not sponsored or endorsed by the Diocesan Committee on Ministry. BAD! I was labeled a maverick. Worse, I entered seminary at a time when the Episcopal Church was being seriously challenged over the question of ordaining women, which culminated in the “irregular” ordination of eleven deacons to the priesthood in 1975. Two of these 11 became faculty members at EDS during my years there, and I became friends with one of them, who later mentioned my experiences in her book on women’s ordination. I was immediately identified as another of these disobedient aspirants, guilty by association. But I was accepted and supported by several other faculty members including John Booty, Professor of Church History, who became my senior advisor and champion.

During my last year at EDS, in a last-ditch attempt to secure endorsement by the Episcopal Diocese of NH, I went to talk directly with the bishop. He was cordial but patronizing, and remained unmoved. His message was clearly, “put up or shut up.” To be obedient to my call I could not, in good conscience, shut up, so I put up. My last service as an Episcopalian lay reader and member was Christmas Eve 1977. When I left my church of 41 years I felt like an orphan. But down the street was a small Methodist Church, where I had already found fellowship and understanding at a weekly prayer group. When I went to him “hat in Hand” the following week and asked to be taken in, his welcome was unqualified. The love of his congregation and his church surrounded me, and I have never looked back. All the doors that had been closed to me have been opened, and these twenty years since have been an unfolding adventure of discovery!

The candidacy process in the NH Conference was very relaxed and collegial, and I loved it. As I look back and have come across my two sermons which I submitted for review, I am amazed that I was accepted, for my frustration with church systems and my defensiveness from the former rejection by the Episcopal Church was pretty obvious. However, my new colleagues understood and made allowances. Because of this, I am aware of how much I owe to NH Methodists, all along my walk in ministry, and I try to live out that gratitude. I am also a good deal more sensitive to the candidacy process and all the feelings attached, having sat on both sides of that process. Currently, I am on the

NEC Board of Ordained Ministry, Candidacy Mentor Trainer, and clergy mentor to a local pastor and two probationary elders. It's hard to be on an interviewing committee: I am aware of having a person's life in my hands, so to speak, and I am awed by this responsibility. Time was when that was me, sitting in the "hot seat"/"standing in the need of prayer!"

In these twenty years, I have had wonderful support and warm collegial relations, all in all. There has been only one colleague with whom I have had difficulties, largely due to a style clash and the animosity of his spouse who resented my competence. In addition to spending four years ABLC in Hospice (which I loved), I have been appointed to three stressful charges, all of which have needed healing. It seems I am one who gets sent to stand "in the breach." While it might have been more comfortable to be appointed into a relatively healthy parish, such has not been my experience, and I wonder if I would not have been able to respond to my original call as effectively. Not to say that I have been the healer--NO WAY!--but it has been a privilege, though taxing, to be the agent of The Healer of all. I have gone from church to church with a single goal: to love and serve God and his people. And everywhere I go, despite some "muddling along" from time to time, I have been welcomed, loved, and supported. My creative urges have been allowed to surface most of the time, and my intentions have generally been understood. I have found affinity with Massachusetts "townies" and Kentucky farmers and North Country folks, many of whom have become close friends. I am one of the fortunate ones who can truly say I love what I do and the people with whom I do it. I have been allowed to fulfill every professional goal, including a doctorate in bereavement counseling at BUSTH. It may sound corny, but I feel most profoundly blessed. To God be the glory!

### **Rev. Ruth C. Williamson**

When I was a child I decided I would be a missionary influenced by stories heard in Sunday School. I was convinced that was what God wanted me to do with my life. I would go to India, Africa or China and "help people." One day while looking at Life Magazine, I saw pictures of people in the ghettos of NY City and decided that I could be a missionary there. The people looked hungry and dirty, I would bring them food and soap. As I look back, I do believe that God was speaking to me then. Somewhere between playing missionary with my dolls and high school, I realized that I would need a college education to become a missionary. My parents were happy that their four girls were graduated from high school, college was never discussed. I quietly put my dream away without ever sharing it with anyone.

Life went on. At 34 years of age, I found myself divorced with three small children ages 3, 6 and 8. While struggling to understand what it meant to be a single parent, a minister suggested that I could be anything I wanted to be, I only had to decide what that was and do it. I knew just what I wanted to do, I wanted to be a Director of Christian Education. I felt that if children right from the cradle had a positive experience in the church, they would not drop out, and if they did they would return as adults.

To jump ahead five years, I was graduated with a B.C.E. and found a position as DCE at Wesley UMC in the New Hampshire Conference. After 7 years of rewarding

ministry, I began to feel restless. I prayed for guidance in making decisions about the future. So when the DS asked me if I would be willing to serve two small country churches, I felt that God was answering my prayers. I have always felt that when God thought I was ready, God pushed me along to the next thing planned for my life (God got sick of calling, I never seemed to hear.)

Over the next eight years, I earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Divinity degrees, while still serving churches. I had served as Local Pastor, then Deacon and finally was ordained Elder. My experience of entering the ministry was different than that of a young woman just out of seminary. I entered the conference as a D.C.E., no one is threatened by a D.C.E. During the seven years that I served in that capacity, I was on many conference boards and committees and spent time each summer at the conference summer camp program. Consequently, I knew most of the clergy in the conference and was accepted as a friend by most. They were very supportive of me, as were my family and friends. When I first started seminary and received some low grades, the Dean called me into his office to suggest that I should drop out. I asked if I had to leave. He became angry and said that I did not have to, he was just suggesting what he thought was best for me and my children. I stayed! I do not recall any other opposition to my study or ordination. In two charges I followed women, making it easier. After leaving one charge, I received a phone call with the message, "We just wanted you to know that we prefer women ministers, they work harder." Before I arrived at one church, a relative in the parish I was leaving wrote to say that they would miss me and that I had been a good pastor (Thank God for cousins). The person who told me that confided that she had made up her mind not to accept a woman pastor, but after reading the letter she decided to give me a chance.

Perhaps because I came to the ministry later in life or because I came as a lay person first, I do not have a lot of stories about obstacles in my way. It was difficult bringing up children, going to school, paying for my education and theirs, dividing my time between family and parish, but I feel richly blessed with the gift of it all.

### **Rev. Patricia J. Thompson**

1. I did not experience a call to the ordained ministry until I was in my late 30's. However, when I was in college (1963-67), I made the decision to go into social work and felt at that time that I was answering God's call for my life. In both instances the call came in gradually understanding through prayer that God was calling me to follow a specific road in my life. In relation to the call for ordained ministry, like many others, I resisted for awhile – though only a relative short period of time – probably less than a year. Then I decided, again, to follow what I felt God was asking me to do.

2. As I said in 1, at first I resisted that call. In part, because I felt that the life that I had lived was not worthy of such a calling. I was, however, at a crossroads in my life, knowing that it was time for me to leave behind the social work which I had been doing in the Head Start program and begin something new. That is probably the reason that I did not resist as long as I might have. I had some debts that I felt needed to be cleared up before I went on to seminary. I finally realized, however, that I was just using them as an

excuse, and went ahead, anyway. Unlike many others, however, I went on nearly a full merit scholarship and so came out of seminary with a very small debt and managed to pay off all of the debts within two years of graduation.

3. All along the way, I received incredible support from everyone once I shared my decision. My pastor and the folks in my church (York-Ogunquit UMC, York, ME) and my DS, in particular, were supportive. Lynne Josselyn was most supportive. She did a great deal to support many women on the road to ordained ministry. I was single (never been married at the time) and my family were also very supportive, as were my friends. I attended BUSTH on a full merit scholarship and had a wonderful time while I was there. It was a time of transition between some very stressful times when women had been fired, and I was able to help bring some healing in the process. I was on the hiring committee for Margaret Wiborg, the current director of the Shaw Center.

4. After ordination, for the most part, I received acceptance from my male colleagues (both within the UMC and outside). I was part of the Maine Annual Conference from 1985 until the merger in 1994. Lynne Josselyn and other women in Maine had worked hard to create an atmosphere of acceptance and support. Interestingly, I felt the tone changed somewhat once we merged. There were more signs of the old “male chauvinist” actions – though a lot were my own instincts rather than a lot of overt actions. And, by and large, I have always been accepted by other denominations, as well. There is a rare exception, but it is rare.

5. I have now served in four parishes since my student days at BUTSH. And my experiences have varied. My first was on a little island in Casco Bay, out of Portland, ME – Evergreen UMC. I served there from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, following my freshman and middler years at school. I was not the first woman to have served there. At least one, and maybe others, had served before me and I never felt that I was not accepted – with one exception. I was 39 years old the first summer I was there and had had a fair amount of life experience prior to going there. I was, however, nervous about being in my first parish. There was a couple there, about my age, who had moved to the Island not long before. The wife became very involved in the parish, and as is the case in some small parishes, in some ways became central to the parish. I found after a little while that I became a real threat to her status and eventually she stopped attending and participating altogether. Because I was so insecure inside myself, it never occurred to me that I might be a threat to anyone. There were a couple of other women who would have preferred male pastors, but I developed good relationships with them and by the second summer most of those feelings had passed away.

Interestingly, I have found that most of the overt negative behavior has come from other women rather than men. And I believe that whoever said that the minister may be the only warm, caring male that some women know is true. Some prefer to have a warm, caring female, but not all.

My second parish was in Limestone, ME (near Caribou) where I was the first ordained woman to be assigned. There had been, however, a female student from the Boston University School of Social Science (I can't remember the exact name, it was part of the theology school back in the 20's and 30's) Viola had been sent all the way to Limestone to supply for a pastor who got sick and she had eventually married and remained there. She felt a kinship to me and since she was one of the matriarchs, her

acceptance certainly helped. I had a wonderful time there and only remember one woman who had a hard time with me. She and her husband had a very close relationship with the previous pastor and so she had a hard time accepting me – though it was on again, off again. I did the unacceptable there and married one of my parishioners who had been a long-time member of the church. That cemented my relationship with that parish forever. It is now my charge conference since I am serving outside of the New England Conference. (A note here is probably in order. The pastor before me was not particularly well liked. He wasn't really disliked, but he didn't so much, I guess, and that made my acceptance much easier.)

My next parish was 22 miles down the road in Presque Isle. At that time, 1991, it was fairly unusual to appoint a pastor that close to a parish s/he had been serving. Since the merger when it has been difficult to find pastors to go to northern ME, that has become a much more accepted practice. I was well-known by the parish because I had served nearby for five years and we had a very active cooperative parish (Maine conference name for clusters). I was also the first ordained woman to serve in this parish. I was, and remain, good friends with the previous pastor and that helped with the initial transition and acceptance. Richard and I, however, had very different styles of preaching. He was an excellent and entertaining preacher, but also a fairly straightforward preacher. I do a lot of storytelling in my preaching and don't follow any prescribed pattern. I do not preach from behind the pulpit, but preach without notes in the middle of the chancel. For the first year, things were fine, but after that, they began to go downhill for me. There began to be constant complaining about my preaching. Many people disliked my narrative style of preaching and thought that I preached too much from the Bible. During the seven years that I was there, I worked constantly to try to deal with the issues (which frankly, were vague at best – “not entertaining or interesting enough, do not have anything to take away with me, etc.”) I never did exactly understand what went on there and it was the only place that I have ever received criticism of my preaching and thus, it threw me somewhat.

During January of my fifth year there, two young men broke into the church and started a fire which completely destroyed the church building. We were two years in a rebuilding process and I decided to see it through. I stayed for six months after the opening of the church and then went on family leave, wondering if I would ever serve a parish again. I was literally and figuratively “burned out” and exhausted. During the rebuilding process, however, I began to realize that I had a lot of left-brained folks in my church with hardly an ounce of creativity. Thus, I think, the reason that many did not care for my creative style of preaching. Also, on any Sunday we would have from 90-180 persons in worship, and a very diverse congregation. Not ethnically, but in regards to interest, education, socio-economic status, etc. On one Sunday, for some I might preach the best sermon they'd ever heard and for others the worst. The following Sunday it could be reversed. Although the PPR Committee never would accept the fact, I believe that a great deal of my problem there had to do with the fact that I was a woman. And, I was a self-sufficient woman. The previous pastor, though well liked, also had a myriad of problems and the congregation had to “take care” of him and his family during a number of crises. That was not the case for my husband and myself, and to some extent I became the scapegoat for other issues. We also had a very different administrative style. He was very

directive, while I was more laid back. It had always been my goal to try to help folks to identify their own gifts and graces and to do their ministry, so that I can do mine. I was successful enough so that by the time of the fire, they were able to direct the rebuilding process themselves. I was never asked to leave, nor were there any hints of that. After four years, I was feeling frustrated and told the PPR Committee that if I did not feel more support from them in the next few months that I would ask for a new appointment. At that point, it was decided to call in a consultant and that helped a lot. And, the ONLY area where I ever had any criticism had to do with my preaching (and the length of service, which had been an ongoing problem). I did a lot of visiting and folks loved that. And, I was a good administrator. So, you figure.

For the next two years, I took family leave – returning to Vermont to live with my 80-year old father who was recently widowed. It was a time for me to reassess where I was going with my ministry. I promised that I would try to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit and go where I was led. For eleven months, I did almost no ministry with the exception of singing in the choir in my home church where my husband, my father, and I were attending. I preached a couple of times, covering for the local pastor and another colleague. In June, I began a four month interim for this colleague, who was taking a study leave. I had a wonderful summer in a three-point charge, and the folks loved my preaching, which began the healing process for me. In July, my father remarried and moved in with his new wife. My husband and I are currently living in my father's home. I finished my interim ministry on the first week end in October and on the last week-end, I went to fill in at a little community church about nine miles from where I live. Their pastor (of twelve years and a second career pastor in his first parish) had left under a real cloud. I agreed only to fill in until Epiphany. I was still not sure that I wanted to return to parish ministry. After a couple of months, however, realizing how much healing had begun to take place, I agreed to stay until the end of May. I am the first female pastor in this church, however, but that has never seemed to have been an issue. In February, I realized that if I were to even think about an appointment, I had to start the process. After a great deal of prayer, I decided to seek a part-time extension ministry appointment to a non-United Methodist Church. I received the appointment in July and will seek to stay here at least for the time being. Not only has the church received healing but so have I. At the present time, I continue to feel that God is calling me to parish ministry even though there are some other things I would like to do (i.e. work in the area of UM history). But the doors have not opened, and so I remain where I am until God calls me to a new place. Thus in 3 out of 4 churches, I have had a really good experience and certainly my experience in PI was not totally negative. Why I had so much trouble there re my preaching still remains, in part, a mystery to me since everyone else seems to love it. But perhaps that is the nature of church. And how much the fact that I was a woman had to do with it will probably never be known.

6. I guess that I have shared most of those. For the most part, my ministry has been successful, and even though I had so much difficulty in Presque Isle around my preaching, I believe that my other skills were necessary to get them through the pain and healing around the fire and the building of a new building. The biggest problem that I continue to have is that I don't think I've ever enjoyed preaching quite as much as many pastors. But

God seems to continue to call me to parish ministry. So I guess God is pleased. And in the end, that's all that counts.

### **Rev. Elizabeth Vernon**

1. I was 38, a new woman pastor came to our church.
2. It was very difficult and I went to seminary in Sept of 1983 at age 41.
3. (Family) My husband said we'd have to separate and he was right; (Friends) somewhat encouraging; (Local church) much encouragement; (DS) Very helpful; (Bishop) Neutral; (Seminary professors) Very helpful and encouraging.
4. Yes, and it hasn't changed in this conference, but it certainly changed in the Yellowstone Conference in the short time I was there.
5. Very well in New England. Very well in Yellowstone, but that's where the support stopped there.
6. No, except to say that Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen, Lynne Josselyn, and Vicki Woods are the reason I'm in ministry today. (Margaret Wiborg and Pat Thompson are friends of mine. Pat and I went to seminary all three years together. Margaret was my Women in Ministry professor and a good one. She's a great friend. I wish I had opened this (e-mail) earlier, but it came to the computer at the office and I wasn't there to open it. New England is a great place to minister. I am always raising dust, but even the conservative lay folk love me anyway. I was ordained Deacon in 1985, and in 1988, Elder – both before the merger. In 1993, I went back to Montana to be near my aging parents and family. They received me into membership before I even got there. Why, I don't know. Yellowstone was awful in that the Board of Ordained Ministry is absolutely unforgiving of anything that is of women risking. They are tolerant of a few women in the conference and we should be grateful to them. The BOOM and the Bishop, Mary Ann Swenson, know that as long as you act like a cute helpless little girl – and are married!!! – they will “let you” serve. I can't go on, but it was simply horrible. I felt I was dying and they set it up so I would have to leave—at least leave the Conference. They refused to take me off LOA, saying I had not given them any indication I was not depressed and angry. I assured them that I was angry, but didn't think that the reading of a form was adequate resource to determine my “depression.” They never even met with me when they were deciding whether I would have an income for another year. I felt my future was at stake. It was. I called Vicki Woods—a dear friend of mine and she said, “We want you back here.” Folks in churches I had served here, in NE, called and wrote asking me to come back. My father is a retired UM minister, past DS, and was placed in nomination for the Episcopacy in the Western Jurisdiction. He knows and I know, very well, that we could do the same things and he would be praised, while I would be called angry and depressed. He's a wonderful minister and has had a very productive ministry in Yellowstone. This almost killed him. Were you hoping for good news about how much better it is NOW for women in ministry? Not everyone is in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

## **Rev. Anne R. Robertson**

I first felt called to ministry at age 14 as I prepared to deliver my first sermon...for Youth Sunday in the American Baptist church in RI where I grew up. I knew as I got up and "preached" (it was more like a short testimony) that the pulpit was where I belonged. The call stayed with me, but when I graduated from college, the thought of three more years of school for the M. Div. was not as appealing as marriage and a job. By the time I was ready to do seminary, my husband was in the Army and we moved from place to place too frequently for me to do school. When we settled, it was not anywhere close to a seminary. He left me in 1991, the call to ministry was still there, and I entered seminary (Candler) in the fall of 1992 at age 33. I graduated in '94 and got my first appointment. But the Board in Florida deferred me for ordination, so my first year was as a local pastor. I was ordained deacon in '95 and elder in '97.

I received tremendous support from everybody except the Board (the first time around). They actually apologized the next year and I sailed through. My first year in ministry had been very successful. Because my first appointment was a notorious church in rural, redneck Florida, my success there earned the respect of my colleagues right away. I don't think they expected me to succeed. I was the ninth pastor in ten years at this church. My DS was a good ole Georgia boy and knew what it meant for a divorced Yankee woman from a liberal seminary to succeed in Dixie County, FL. He talked about me in the Cabinet and everywhere he went, so I had no trouble with colleagues. The church fought my coming pretty strongly, but they got over it quickly. The town took a little longer, but most of them came around. To a good part of the town I was actually evil when I first came. I made a considerable difference in the town and certainly for women in ministry in that area, but it came at a tremendous personal cost. I stayed three years (the longest pastorate in their 75-year history was four years) and finally asked to leave out of exhaustion. It was a poor, desperate area and most of my ministry there was crisis ministry. But other Methodist churches in the area later told my DS that they were now willing to accept a woman pastor because of their contact with my ministry.

My second charge was as an associate in a 3,000-member congregation in Gainesville, FL. Being a university town, they were more open and had a woman associate in their history (although never the senior). There were still some that fessed up after a bit that they were either skeptical or downright opposed, but if any remained opposed, I never heard about it.

After two years as an associate, I felt God calling me to return to my New England roots to contribute to ministry here. I will formally transfer into the New England Conference in June 2001, at the end of my second year at my charge here. This church in Dover, NH (St. John's UMC) had a woman for one year as an interim...which had not worked out well for most people. I was the first woman in a regular appointment at this charge and the first woman appointed to what is considered a major charge in the Southern New Hampshire District. St. John's has a membership of just over 500. Like my second charge, a few people have confessed their initial reservations about a woman. One man told me he had seen my picture in the paper and said, "Oh great. We're getting the Vicar of Dibley!" But we are now great friends and any who still have issues are silent...at least to me.



Colleagues in New England have been great and since they gave me their top clergy honor after my first year here (a preaching award at Conference), I can hardly complain. My Ds here has been stellar and I was knocked out of my socks to receive the great appointment here that I did.

Most of my war stories are related to my first church...the huge bra (I mean Titan-size) draped across the front steps of the church just after my arrival...the girl in my youth group who said, "My mother says you're evil, why?"..my Ad Board Chair telling me at the meeting where I was introduced to PPR that he and his wife both believed that it was wrong for me to be there...the active church member who would not even shake my hand when we were introduced...that sort of thing. It's draining to always have to defend your right just to be in the pulpit, let alone pass the tests of adequacy that any new minister has to face. I tackled it head on and it worked, but for many women in Florida it did not. Bishop Charlene Kammerer was the first woman bishop elected out of the Southeastern Jurisdiction and she came out of Florida. She was elected Bishop in 1996, so I had a chance to know her a bit in the Conference. It took her 11 times through the Board to get Deacon's orders. She was the first woman ordained in Florida. When I told people in Florida that I was coming to New England someone said "But are they as good with women in ministry as we are?" I tried not to choke as I explained that in New England the Bishop was a woman and that half of the Cabinet were women. At the time, there was one female DS out of 14 in Florida. Now they have two.

There are petty annoyances...like we have to pay much, much more for a pulpit robe with pockets. A standard-ship robe has nifty slits so you can slide your hands into your trouser pockets. If you want pockets in the robe, that makes it a "custom" robe and it costs about twice as much. Or at least it did the last time I bought one. Or lapel microphones that assume you have a belt to attach the battery pack. In less formal services when I don't wear a robe (like a lot of literature suggests) I get lots of comments about my clothes or jewelry. I feel like the robe serves a different purpose for women than for men. It's definitely a plus for me...confers authority when I need it, and takes away the distraction of dress. I don't think women are as distracted by male pastor's suits as men are by their women pastor's clothing.

### **Rev. Julie M. Todd**

Very few clearly defined moments, more of a process, especially influenced through camping. Camp setting and growing up at Rolling Ridge helped develop a sense of ministry outside of the church. My first memory is, at age 16, being asked at senior high church camp to lead a communion service by Rev. Betty Schraeder. Leading this was a very powerful moment.

While in seminary, my original thought was that I wanted to teach comparative religion. At about 23/24 years of age I began to understand scripture in a deeper way; that worship is intrinsically tied to a life of faith outside of church. Church and worship and sacraments and study of scripture made the connection between service/justice outside and within the church. Isaiah 58/early Nicaragua Covenant meeting with the Rev. Eric Swanfeldt was also a big influence.

I always received support from all quadrants of my life. My friends from high school were possibly the only ones who didn't understand, but still supported me.

I received support from male colleagues for the most part. I have experienced some patronage, but no more than what I expect I would have received in any other type of work. I'm aware that some lay people are not accepting of woman pastors. I feel that there is a certain kindredness felt between and among women clergy.

I am in my first appointment, and I feel fairly well accepted as a woman. My predecessor, who was the first woman pastor for this church, had a tougher time...some people left the church. But she broke the ice for me. Being a young woman, I feel that some question my authority based on age, gender and being single; also being single means some question my sexuality. I get a lot of comments on appearance.

Affirmations re gender, in supervising women student interns, I encounter many questions of authority and power, and skepticism/uncertainty about how to use in a proper way. Obstacles/barriers – I am not a believer in climbing the ladder of success, but I understand that men are still predominately the ones in power. Liturgy is very patriarchal. I use God vs. gender specific terminology; aim for simplicity.

### **Rev. Laura E. Church**

1. I suppose that I knew from a very young age that I was called. I grew up with a preacher Dad...we spent a great deal of time together. I was involved in youth groups, choirs, church camp, often in leadership roles. I felt drawn to sacred music, sacred texts, the Gospel in song. I served for many years in music ministry. It wasn't until my mid-twenties, however, that the call to ordained ministry became so strong and so clear that I could do nothing else!
2. The decision was easy...for me alone. But I am a wife and a mother of three children (then ages 4, 2 and 3 months). I was blessed to be able to stay home with my kids; my husband was very well employed. So it seemed to make no sense to anyone but me. The jaw-on-the-floor stares and head-shaking "Why on earth would you...?" were the difficult things to deal with. I was 28 years old.
3. I had the most opposition from my female, young mother-type friends. My parents were supportive, but silently so...they knew this had to be my decision. My husband is the best! He simply said that we'd do whatever we needed to do to make it work. I received loads of support from our local church...love and prayers, financial support, help with children while at school, moral support for them in my absence. My DS was very supportive! Even appointed me to a church prior to even completing my undergrad work. I was very blessed! My seminary professors were unbelievable. I attended Boston University...commuting daily from Central Maine. I found the professors, the Dean of Students, and Field Ed Directors to be very understanding of my situation.
4. I have never had difficulty with male colleagues. Those with whom I work in this area are all wonderful. I have often had more difficulty with female colleagues. Few of them have much patience with a minister/mother who works very hard to balance both. They often don't understand the little things such as that I can't attend clergy women

breakfasts at 7:30 am...that's when I'm getting my children off to school...or that I choose not to go on overnight retreats...etc.

5. I am the first woman that this 207 year old congregation has had...no problems whatsoever. I'm fortunate, I suppose. I've been able to set the mark for those who might follow me.

6. Life is full and WONDERFUL!

#### ANONYMOUS STATEMENTS/STORIES<sup>29</sup>

I would say that one of the things I find most disconcerting about the ordination process as I have understood it in recent years is the rudeness and isolation that some of the candidates encounter from members of the Board of Ordained Ministry. I am greatly disturbed by some of the reports I have heard. I hope that there can be some recovery of Christian hospitality that some have found lacking.

One Sunday, an elderly lay leader asked if he could "ad lib" the scripture reading, and then in doing so referred to the fact that I was wearing black stockings and inferred that it was unfortunate that I was wearing pants so they couldn't see my legs. When I confronted him after the service and told him his statements had been inappropriate, this opened up a confrontation which disclosed that he felt "everyone" was questioning my sexuality because I was single.

I remember a parishioner in my first church who said that when I was behind the pulpit, in my robe, preaching, it didn't matter to her that I was a woman. She wanted to listen to the word that God was giving me. That kind of affirmation was most helpful. In the same church, I remember that the chair of the Administration Council would come over to the church office to discuss agenda and I was given the word that his wife was upset about his coming over – the office was the enclosed porch of the parsonage. I dismissed it, but later I wondered if she suspected her husband of hanky-panky!

The only discouraging times I had was when I was going through the ordination process with the Board of Ordained Ministry. I know they need to ask tough questions, etc, but some of them seemed overly "tough" to me. I went through a lot of pain and questioning of my call when they evaluated me in negative ways (The women were much more confrontational than the men). I'm sure that is probably the normal way for things to happen, but it was very hard for me, as I'm sure it must be for others going through the ordination process.

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<sup>29</sup> Included are statements/stories that were provided in response to the survey questions with the understanding that the respondent would not be identified.

## Appendix IV

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. At what age did you first understand your call to ministry, and how was this experienced?
2. How difficult was it to decide to enter ordained ministry? At what age did you do this?
3. What types of support or opposition did you receive while making this decision and during the ordination process – from family? From friends? Your local church (laity and pastor)? District Superintendent? Bishop? Seminary professors?
4. After ordination, did you receive support/acceptance by male colleagues, and how has that changed over the years since?
5. How were you accepted in your appointed charges, and how has that changed over the years?
6. Any other affirmations or obstacles along your journey that you would like to share?
7. May I use your name in my paper, or do you wish to remain anonymous?\*

\*Please note that I have been asked to provide a copy of my completed paper to Margaret Wiborg of the Anna Howard Shaw Center for the Center's archives, as well as to Rev. Pat Thompson for her use in compiling information toward an upcoming project for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of women receiving full clergy rights in The Methodist Church.

APPENDIX I: Chronological Role of Women Members Of The New England Annual Conference in the Year 2000 (Based on information in the 2000 Journal of the NEAC)									
ELDERS IN FULL CONNECTION & PROBATIONARY MEMBERS									
Name	Prob.Mem.	Full Mem.	Transf. In	Date Ret.	In Local Church	Ext.Ministry	Other		
Tomila J. C. Louise	1958	1962	1970	1980			Transferred from Ohio West Conference 1967		
Lynne Josselyn	1963	1966			*		SME DS 1980-85		
Julianne S. Hallman	1971	1973				1987-00			
Ann C. Partner-Nelson	1971	1973			*				
Joanne M. Berlin	1972	1974				1988-00			
Marjorie L. Hiles	1972	1975		1991			Eastern PA Conference in school 1972		
Ruth E. S. Robinson	1972	1974		1993			CME DS 1992-99		
Linda Campbell-Marshall	1973	1977			*		L 1993-98; D 1999-00		
Wendy E. VanOrden	1973	1975							
Helen M. Oliver	1974	1977		1992					
Gwendolyn M. Purushotham	1974	1976				1995-00	RISM DS 1995-96; CMA DS 1997-00		
Marilyn O. Robb	1974	1980	1981			2000	Transferred from No. Illinois Conference 1981		
Jean L. Marsh	1974	1976			*				
Margaret Dewyer Goad	1975	1981	1981		*		Transferred from Nebraska Conference 1981		
Frances P. Swartz	1975	1977			*		RISM DS 1990-94		
Julia R. Wilson	1975	1978			*		NY Conference in school 1975-76 & 83-84; Transf 1984		
Helen Zigmund	1975	1977		1991					
Linda Littlefield Grenfell	1976	1979			*				
Barbara B. Herber	1976	1979			*				
Shirley S. Hoover	1976	1978		1988					
Janet E. Smith-Rushton	1976	1979				1997-00	NNH DS 1997-00		
Eveline H. Starbird	1976	1984			*				
Shirley R. Buehl	1976	1980	1983		*		Transferred from No. Illinois Conference 1983		
Caroline B. Edge	1977	1979			*		CMA DS 1986-89		
Christine K. Elliott	1977	1985	1979		*		Wisconsin Conference in school 1977-79		
Susan B. Hoffman	1977	1980			*				
Elizabeth H. Schrader	1977	1983	1980		*		NY Conference in school 1977; Transf 1980		
Phyllis C. Dodd	1978	1986		1987					
Wendy Monson Alley	1979	1983					In school 1999-00		
Shirley A. Mader	1979	1985		1990					
Ruth D. Merriam	1979	1981	1987		*		Transferred from Minnesota Conference 1987		
Patricia V. Williams	1979	1981			*				
Vicki Woods	1979	1981				1994-00	NME DS 1994-00		
Laura Delaplain	1980	1988	1982			1990-00	Transferred from Wisconsin Conference 1982		
Nancy C. Hetherington	1980	1983				1994-00			
Linda B. Wood-Boyle	1980	1984				1995-00			
Mary E. Miller	1980	1986	1982		*		Transferred from No. Dakota Conference 1982		
Dee Estelle Webber	1980	1985	1983			1990-00	Transferred from So. Carolina Conference 1983		
Margaret W. Bickford	1981	1983			*				
Janice W. Davis	1981	1985							
Virginia Trask Jones-Newton	1981	1985			*				
Sally P. Poland	1981	1984		1999					

Linda A. Shevlin	1981	1986			*			
Ruth C. Williamson	1981	1984	1995					
Lois J. Bailey	1982	1986	1982					Transferred from Western NY Conf 1982; D 1994-00
Alta Louise Chase	1982	1986			*	1988-00		
Elizabeth A. Davis	1982	1988			*			
Priscilla R. Dreyman	1982	1984				1992-00		
Roberta Williams	1982	1984			*			
Ruth P. Morrison	1982	1983			*			
Elizabeth Bacheider-Drost	1983	1986			*			
Susan G. Curtis	1983	1986	2000					In School 1992-00
Lynn L. Euzenas	1983	1985						Transferred from Iowa Conference 1985; L 1993-96; Suspended 1996-00
Joyce E. Sheehan	1983	1987	1985					
Grace M. Bartlett	1984	1988			*			
Julia A. Doutaz	1984	1992			*			
Kathleen J. Greider	1984	1986				1991-00		
Young Kim Hong	1984	1986				1987-00		
Susan F. Jarek-Glidden	1984	1988			*			
Pat MacHugh	1984	1989			*			
Marjorie W. Mollar	1984	1986			*			
Susan Morrison	1984	1986			*			
Deborah E. Shipp	1984	1987			*			
Susan D. Carlson	1985	1989			*			
Miriam A. Chamberlain	1985	1988	2000					
Ann Marie Hunter	1985	1996	1992			1998-00		Transferred from New Mexico Conference 1992
Kathryn J. Johnson	1985	1988				1990-00		
Sandra E. Junier	1985	1988			*			
Judith J. Kohatsu	1985	1988			*			
Sammie C. Maxwell	1985	1987						F 1996-00
Carol A. Stine	1985	1990			*			
Patricia J. Thompson	1985	1988						F 1998-99; United Church of Johnston, VT 00
Elizabeth Vernon	1985	1988			*			Transferred to Yellowstone Conference 1993-97
Dana Beth Wells-Goodwin	1985	1990			*			
Marie Bent	1986	1988	1994					
DiAnne E. S. Carpenter	1986	1989			*			
Ellen H. Casey	1986	1990						F 1993-00
Lori V. Johnson	1986	1989			*			Wyoming Conference 1994; D 1995-00
Sharon G. W. Jones	1986	1990						
Sharon L. Link	1986	1989				1993-00		
Kathryn McGregor	1986	1989			*			Nelson Charge-Ohio East Conference
Shirley Mattson	1986	1989	1999					
Valerie M. Roberts-Toler	1986	1990			*			
Catherine Howe Anderson	1987	1989				10/1/99-00		
Susan Frost Bennett	1987	1989						L 1990-92; F1993-00
Patricia Bristow-Carrico	1987	1990			*			
Cynthia A. Good	1987	1989						F 1999-00
Joyce L. Gray	1987	1990			*			

Sharon N. Miesel	1987	1991				*			
Carol A. Parsons	1987	1990				*			
Lucille J. Richard	1987	1991						D 1/1/99-00	
Betty Westhoven	1987	1990	1997						
Henrietta Aiello	1988	1990				*			
Inell Richardson Claypool	1988	1996					2000	No. Central NY Conference 00	
Susan Marie Heafield	1988	1996	1992				2000	Transferred from Wyoming Conference 1992;No. Georgia Conference 00	
Freda E. Maier	1988	1995						F 2000	
Roxy J. Moses	1988	1991				*			
Mary J. O'Connor-Ropp	1988	1992				*			
Nadine L. Strout	1988	1990	1996						
Joan-Anne M. Westfall	1988	1992				*			
Joyce M. Whetstone	1988	1992				*			
Inn Kyong Chung	1989							????	
Aida Itzary Fernandez	1989	1991	2000				2000	No. NJ Conference 1993-99, Metro Boston No DS 2000	
Maureen M. Grady	1989	1992						L 8/25/97-00	
Betty Higgins	1989	1991				*			
Avis Hoyt-O'Connor	1989	1991					1996-00	L 1995; Kentucky Conference 1/1/96-00	
Pamela J. Maden	1989	1997				*			
Charlotte S. Nachbar	1989	1993							
Linda Peabody	1989	1994				*		D 4/1/00-00	
Sandra J. Rehe	1989	1991				*			
Anne Y. Roberts	1989	1992				*			
Maria L. Coleman	1990	1993					1998-00	CT/MVA DS 1998-00	
Susan M. Davenport	1990	1992				*			
Joan DeSanctis	1990	1993				*			
Marguerite C. Gage	1990	1994				*			
Stacey G. Lanier	1990	1995				*			
Mary A. Lawrence	1990	1993				*			
Charlotte Pridgen-Randolph	1990	1992				*			
Jean M. Trench	1990	1993	1995						
Amy L. Aletzhauer	1991	1994				*			
Laurel U. Brown	1991	1993				*			
Krisann Byrne-Scheri	1991	1993						D 2000	
Barbara Carole Calhoun	1991	1996				*			
Barbara L. Cann	1991	1995				*			
Heidi N. Chamberland	1991	1995				*			
Donella C. Siskberg	1991	1994	1998						
Sandra L. Smith	1991	1994				*			
Janet M. Wallace	1991	1994				*			
Dorothy Asare	1992	1998				*			
Anna Carrier Beach	1992	1996				*			
Nancy Nitzman Behr	1992					*			
Arlene Louise Bodge	1992	1996				*			
Louise Cole	1992	1994						D 1/1/96-00	
Marcelle Dotson	1992	1996				*			

Michelle S. Grube	1992	1995		*				
Debra Hanson	1992	1997		*				
Margaret Long	1992	1999		*				
Jean Russo-Parks	1992	1995		*				
Tracy A. Reeves	1992	?		*				
Beverly Ellen Briden Stenmark	1992	1996		*				
Meredith Joan Bennett	1993	1999		*				
Eva D. Cutler	1993	1998		*				
Lorlene Eldredge	1993	1997		*				
Jane Lawrence	1993	1998		*				
Sydney Ann Pierce	1993	1995		*				
Linda Hartman Reynolds	1993	1996		*			F 2000	
Lomagrace Grenfell Stuart	1993			*				
Thelma Nauth	1994	1997		*				
Imani-Sheila Newsome	1994	1997		*		1994-00		
Ruth Stalmsmith	1994	1997		*				
L. Sue Job	1994	1998	1998	*				Transferred from Louisville Conference 1996
Lisa J. Bruget-Cass	1995	1998		*				
Yoo-Yun Cho-Chang	1995			*				F 1998-00
Virginia L. Fryer	1995			*				
Judith A. Gould	1995	1998		*				
Yoo Cha Yi	1995	1999		*				
Jung Sun Oh	1995	1996	1997	*				Transferred from No. Georgia Conference 1997
Yong Ja Kim	1996			*				
Margaret Louise Stowe	1996	1999		*				
Julie Marie Todd	1996	1999		*				
Paula Fletcher	1997			*				
Hope N. Luckie	1997		1998	*			1998-00	Transferred from Alabama-West FL Conference 1998
Ruth Oduor	1997			*				
Margaret Queior	1997			*				
Michelle St. Cyr	1997			*				
Kathleen H. N. Towns	1997	2000		*				
Rwth Samson Pugh Ashton	1998			*				
Laura E. Church	1998			*				
M. Case Collins	1998			*				
Ho-Soon Han	1998			*				
Boyoung Lee	1998			*				
Sarah Mount	1998			*				
Hikari Chang	1998		1999	*				Transferred in to NEC 1999
Louise J. Durnas	1999			*				
Michele M. Ewers	1999			*				
Gabriella Ruth Garcia	1999			*				
Lynn M. McCracken	1999			*				
Cynthia J. Nickerson	1999			*				
Melissa Anne Pisco	1999			*				
Rebecca E. Baumann	2000			*				



Ellen M. Churchill	2000					*		
Johanne Dame	2000					*		
Barbara Kszystyniak	2000					*		
Carol Szulic	2000					*		
Nancy Gieseler Devor		1986						??????
Ha-Kyung Cho-Kim		1999					1999-00	
Karen L. Munson		2000				*		
Paula Payne		2000				*		
TOTALS:								
Currently Serving a Local Church in NEC	124							
Appt elsewhere under pp 337.1	3							
Appt to Extension Ministries	23							
Appt to School	2							
Currently on Leave of Absence	1							
Family Leave	7							
Disability Leave	7							
Suspension	1							
Retired	18							
???? = Status Unknown	2							
TOTAL *	188							
*The 2000 Journal states there are 190 Women Probationary Members and Elders in Full Connection.								
The discrepancy is my listing is probably due to not being able to identify whether a person is male or female based on name.								
My apologies to anyone who is not listed who should be (or is and shouldn't be).								