WHY WOMEN CLERGY

LEAVE

PARISH MINISTRY

by


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PREFACE

Sociological studies on women clergy who leave parish ministry have not previously been conducted. This thesis attempts to fill in that gap. More specifically, it uncovers some of the reasons women leave parish ministry. The reasons are varied, as varied as are the individuals. Still, while upholding the particularity of each individual situation, it is possible to see general implications for understanding from a sociological perspective the professional ministry, the institutional church, and the place of women in today's society.

This thesis is dedicated to all women who do ministry--in a parish, at home, at work, with friends. It is dedicated to all women who struggle with transforming ministry, the church, and society into systems of greater justice and creativity. It is especially dedicated to two special friends, Cory and Bianca, who continue to teach me about ministry even though they are no longer "officially" in ministry.

Several people deserve my thanks: Dr. David O. Moberg, who, with his timely phone calls and letters containing leads, prodded me to keep working on this project when other activities threatened the complete occupation of mind, body and spirit; Susan Hogan/Albach, who willingly edited the final draft; and Lloyd and Liza Blackburn, who helped set up my computer, making the writing process so much easier!

Finally, a word of gratitude to the women clergy who participated in this research project: your words of joy and pain, of faith and struggle are deeply appreciated and cherished. I hope I have remained true to your stories. Thanks for sharing so much of yourselves.
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INTRODUCTION

1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

While analyzing the contents of a well-known and respected Christian periodical, I came across a short news report that stimulated thought on this research problem. It stated, quite simply, that women clergy in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) were dropping out of parish ministry at a higher frequency than their male counterparts (Christian Century, 1985). It stated further, that "a primary reason for the dropout rate was the reluctance of parishioners and Church staff people to acknowledge authority when it is vested in women."

I tried to uncover some background on that article, but was unable to do so. Apparently, the news brief came out of a gathering of women clergy and was reported because it seemed newsworthy. I then attempted to come up with statistics to prove or disprove the claim that women clergy are leaving parish ministry at a greater rate than men clergy, but found none. Denominational offices do not seem to keep such statistics, or for that matter, even a complete list of clergy--female or male--who leave parish work.

This thesis, therefore, cannot provide statistical evidence regarding the dropout rate of women clergy, even though people seem to think it is out there somewhere. As Ann Naylor (1988), a staff person with the United Church of Canada wrote:

Your choice of a thesis topic relates to an area deemed critical by several of us who work with women in parish ministry. Our perception is that increasing numbers of women are leaving parish ministry permanently, but we have very little statistical evidence to verify our observations. I expect that finding reliable data for your thesis will pose quite a challenge. I wish you well! (emphasis added).
The challenge of finding statistical evidence to support the claim that women clergy are leaving parish ministry at what seems, to some observers, to be alarming rates indeed was too great. But proving or disproving the rate of occurrence is not the research problem on which this study is focused.

The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the reasons behind why some women clergy are leaving, or have left, parish ministry. In this sense, the research is qualitative, not quantitative; it is exploratory in design, not based on hypothesis testing.

However, it is a topic suggested as worthy of further research. Bean (1987:393) highlights a number of research problems that ought to be pursued--free from denominational control--on women in ministry. Included in her list are the questions: "What happens when conflict arises in a clergywoman's congregation? To what extent are the conflicts resolved and to what extent are women leaving? Where are they going when they do leave?"

While this research is not based on hypothesis testing, certain hunches have been explored. For example, the two articles already cited suggest that women clergy leave parish ministry because of (1) a lack of role authority granted to them by lay people and their professional support staff (Christian Century, 1985) and (2) conflict, which may not have been successfully resolved (Bean, 1987). Other hunches based on prior research and on sociological theory also emerge when examining the exit of women from parish work, such as the sociology of occupations theory, which shows differences in professional career patterns between men and women, role ambiguity
surrounding the office of minister, and role conflict between being a minister and being a woman.

This thesis could very easily fall into the category of women's research. Shriver (1987) defines this as research on women and by women. She says that there are three challenges to doing this kind of research, the need (1) to discern the absence of women in research designs, (2) to re-vision, i.e., look again at past data from a "deliberately different standpoint--that of (an) autonomous women" (p.378), and (3) "to respect women as a source of data on issues of research, while not becoming simply biased in reverse" (p.378).

In preparing and writing this thesis, I have remained aware of Shriver's three challenges.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in gathering data for this thesis was that of the case study approach. The first step was getting names of women clergy who had left parish ministry. To do this, the offices of six denominations which ordain women were contacted: United Church of Christ, American Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Episcopal Church in America, United Methodist Church, and Lutheran Church (which was in the process of forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). Women clergy from the Moravian Church in North America also were contacted, but because of my personal association with that denomination, I knew the names of Moravian women clergy who had left parish work and contacted them without the aid of denominational personnel.
All denominational offices responded to my inquiry. Often they could not fulfill my requests for information on women clergy, statistics on the dropout rates of male and female clergy, or names of the women who had left parish ministry. They usually provided the names of further contact persons in their respective denominations.

The second step involved the development of an interview guide to use while interviewing the women clergy (see Appendix). This interview guide was developed after reviewing studies already conducted on women in ministry, as well as studies of pastors who left parish work. Past research on former pastors is almost exclusively based on the experience of men. Two specific studies were used in developing this interview guide: a thesis by Charles Wickman (1984) entitled "An Examination of the Reasons for Career Change from Church to Secular Work Among Pastors of the Evangelical Free Church of America" and a book by Gerelyn Hollingsworth (1985) entitled Ex-Nuns, Women Who Have Left the Convent. The interview guide was later used as a "Guideline for Written Responses," which I sent to the addresses of women clergy who did not live in the Milwaukee area.

In total, 20 letters were sent to denominational offices and further contact people. Five staff people and two additional resource people were contacted by telephone. From these letters and conversations, I received whatever help they could offer. Often this involved a denominational study done on women in ministry; sometimes it included the names of a few women clergy they personally knew about, and often it consisted of merely encouragement. One denominational official, however, took it upon himself to send out copies of my letter
to all the women clergy in his area; from that action, contacts made resulted in two interviews.

A denominational official associated with the United Methodist Church decided after numerous letters and phone calls not to support this project. Her fear was that "you will be dealing with a very limited geographical cross section of clergywomen. Results are then projected onto the whole population of clergywomen without knowing the real replicability" (Nickerson, 1988). United Methodist clergywomen therefore are not represented in this study. Nor are the responses of Lutheran (ELCA) clergywomen in this study, although this seems to be a result of disorganization due to its recent formation by merger, rather than a decision not to be involved. Unfortunately, neither are priests from the Episcopal Church included in this study.

Thirty-two letters were also written and mailed to the names and addresses of women clergy outside of my geographical area who therefore could not be interviewed in person. The letters stated the topic of the thesis, and that all participants were protected under "The Protection of Human Subjects" bylaws of Marquette University. In this way, anonymity and confidentiality was assured. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of the "Interview Guide/Guidelines for Written Response" form, and an addressed, stamped envelop for their response.

In total, eight completed written responses were received, and seven subjects were personally interviewed. The interviews were conducted in this area, as well as in Connecticut, Iowa and New York City. One interview was conducted over the telephone. The interviews lasted about an hour and were recorded so that transcripts could later
be prepared. Two potential subjects also responded to the letter requesting their participation in this study, but did not complete the written response form. They are not included in the bulk of this study because data on them is insufficient. However, their reasons for not participating will be discussed in Chapter Three.

After the first interview was conducted, question #8 was added to the Interview Guide/Guidelines for Written Response form. The subject of ministry style came up in the interview and seemed relevant to the topic.

The definition of whether or not one had left parish ministry was a decision for the subjects to make. This resulted in a wide range of situations, with some women clergy having left parish ministry completely, some having left to pursue other church-related careers, and some having left for only a temporary period of time. Some subjects accepted the definition of having left parish ministry but did not feel they had left ministry in general.

Before reporting the results of the interviews and written responses, some background is provided on the experience of women within Christianity, the rise and function of ordination, and an analysis of the minister from sociological perspectives. This is presented in Chapter One.

Sociological literature on women clergy, ex-pastors, and women in other professions is reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three contains a compilation of the data received through the interviews and written responses. In the process of studying and coding the materials, categories often emerged from which the data
could be summarized. In order to fully protect the identity of the participants, no identification is made concerning their denominational affiliations or geographical locations. This may make some of the discourse hard to follow, but it is the price to be paid in order to completely protect the identity of the participants.

The Conclusion gives a summary of the findings, implications of the study, and possibilities for further research.
1. THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN CHRISTIANITY

Neal (1975:33) writes that a second reformation is occurring in religious society,

calling the sister out of the cloister and the wife out of the nuclear family. It is a reformation that invites the uncommitted young woman searching for a new life to join a ministry geared ultimately towards the reshaping of religious systems (and hence all decision-making systems).... It is a reformation by and for women in religion.

Just why is this reformation occurring? Stated differently, what is it about Christianity that necessitates a reformation by and for women?

When Christianity began, it was perceived as a mere religious aberration at best. It consisted of a few followers of a man from Nazareth, a teacher and a prophet named Jesus. Jesus preached about the "kingdom of God." While doing that, he healed people and challenged them to think in non-legalistic ways and live with a faith fundamentally based on love--the love of self, neighbor and God. Before long, Jesus had more than a few followers; he had disciples and scattered, if not widespread, support throughout the populace. Most of us know the story: Jesus did not live very long, for shortly after he began his ministry, he was executed by the religious and political authorities of his day.

But the death of Jesus did not result in the death of the movement he began. Rather, the followers of Jesus insisted that he was not dead. They insisted that God had resurrected him from the dead; he was still very much alive. Christianity became a sect of Judaism,
persecuted as sects often are. With Constantine as emperor, Christianity was later established as the official religion of the Roman Empire. It was no longer a sect. It began to grow into a world religion. The many changes Christianity has undergone throughout the centuries can be studied, but for the purpose of this thesis, only those related to the place of women and women's leadership are discussed.

Jesus picked twelve close disciples, all men. However, women were involved in his ministry, as friends and followers, and many of these women held leadership positions. Spencer (1985:119) writes:

> The New Testament records many women leaders. But more than that, the New Testament writers have left us examples of women in significant positions, positions considered authoritative in the first century and positions considered authoritative today.

Others (Tetlow, 1980; Tucker and Liefeld, 1987; Parvey, 1974; Carr, 1978; Heine, 1988) have argued the same, saying that the New Testament points to the activity of women as apostles, prophets, disciples and witnesses. The evidence seems to indicate that Jesus was open, receptive and encouraging of women. However, with the transformation of Christianity from a sect into a church-type religion, the place of women in leadership diminished. Weber (1963:104) points out that this is a widespread occurrence in almost all religious movements: the leadership of women declines as the movement stabilizes.

Furthermore, in religious histories written after the biblical text, women appear to be nonexistent. Tucker and Liefeld (1987:15) say that women never made the pages of historical religious writings; they simply disappeared from that history.
[even though] women were very prominent in church history. The history of religion is probably the only field of history where women have had such an influential role—even though they were systematically denied positions of authority.

Krause (1975:175), writing of leadership positions in the church, points out the connection between acceptable leadership and political reality. This may have resulted in the absence of women from notable church leadership positions. He writes:

The actual history of the Church, and thus of the clerical profession, must be viewed as a form of political history, and viewed for that matter primarily in terms of power and conflicts of interest.

A quick scan of Christianity reveals that women were involved in the early movement, but over time, as the movement became institutionalized, their leadership was restricted. It is this restriction that Neal's (1975) call for a second reformation is addressing.

However, the debate regarding the proper place of women in the Christian churches is much more complicated, for it points to not only a sociological phenomenon concerning the formation of religious institutions in relation to society, but a tension in the theology—the rhetoric—of Christianity itself.

Carr (1978) writes that two theological strands dominate Christianity as it relates to women: (1) the equality, in baptism, of all people; and (2) patristic misogynism, which had its start in some very influential church "fathers", such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine. She claims Christianity has struggled with this tension throughout its history. Due to patristic misogynism,
women have been relegated "to private spheres of Christian life ... allowing only men in public spheres" (p.161).

Frey and Morton (1986:62) also point to the existing relationship between the Christian tradition and society at large. The so-called "women's nature" argument of Augustinian tradition, holding that women's nature was less perfect than man's nature and therefore more "sinful," infiltrated more than the religious institution. They notice that "positions of power and prestige within the church, as within the state and family, were held by men" (p.62).

Does the church mirror society, or does society mirror the church? Although this is a sociological and philosophical question beyond the scope of this study, it is clear that there is an innate connection between the place of women in society and their place in the church. I favor Carr's position (1988:31) that "the roles of women in the church for the most part seem to have reflected the subjected position of women in society."

However, this connection between the status of women in the church and the status of women in society at large is not a simple correlation. The church, it appears, has also been responsible for maintaining the position of women in culture. In this light, the church has been responsible for making sexism sacred, reinforcing through ideology a hierarchy of male-female roles in society at large.

The second reformation referred to by Neal (1975) has begun to affect the place of women in the church. Hargrove, Schmidt and Davaney (1985:117) suggest that "the general pattern of changing roles for women has changed the structure, both social and ideological, of
American religion." They see that the cult of domesticity, which relegated the American woman to her home during the mid-19th century, began to be disrupted with her involvement in the foreign mission movement.

Beaver (1968:35) confirms the importance of the missionary movement for liberating women, but he points out that even in the missionary movement, women did not have full opportunity:

American women rallied to the new cause of overseas mission with enthusiasm. In it they would soon find a role of ministry and status denied them in the churches in the homeland.... Yet once again women were kept subordinate to men, and the single women had to struggle long and persistently for the opportunity to serve.

When the foreign mission movement decreased, women in Lutheran and United Methodist denominations found that there was a place for them to work within the churches as professional lay workers. The deaconess movement, as it was called, began in the late 19th century in the United States. Although the movement had many positive aspects, it was not successful in recruiting a large number of capable women, nor was it able to provide those recruited with full, useful employment (Brereton and Klein, 1979:311).

There were many changes in the U.S. regarding the place of women in society and the church during the 1920's. These were both positive and negative. Hargrove et al. (1985) point to the loss of power women experienced when the mission societies were consolidated with the denominational boards (which were then run by clergy, i.e., men), and to the closing of the women's training schools (which had been established to train women for mission work abroad and/or for the role of deaconess). They also point to the successful passage of the 19th
Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (women's suffrage) and to the professionalization of society, which was to open up professions to anyone who trained for them. In addition, the development of the methodology of biblical criticism also was important, if only because such analysis of the biblical text enabled scholars to interpret scriptures both within and beyond their context. Therefore scriptures which had been used to suppress women (e.g., Genesis 3:16, etc.) now were weighed against scriptures which liberated them (e.g., Galatians 3:28, etc.).

The place of women in the church and in society has varied over time, sometimes allowing for the leadership of women, but most often holding them in a passive, subordinate position. Yet, by the late 20th century, perhaps due to the influence of the feminist movement (Lehman, 1985:3-10), this began to change, and the second reformation, that of a new place for women in religion, began to take effect.

2. ORDINATION

A. ORDINATION OF WOMEN

On the night before her ordination, a colleague jokingly, yet seriously, said: "Well, here goes ... initiation into the men's club."

My friend was referring to a number of things in that late-night comment. First, she was thankful and excited about being ordained. Second, it was obvious to her that she was entering--being initiated into--what remains proportionally, and perceptively (i.e., in many people's minds), a man's profession.
It is true that women, in most mainline denominations, have now been granted the rite of ordination. (The term "mainline" or "mainstream" refers to denominations in three Christian traditions: the Congregational, Reformed and Presbyterian traditions; the remnants of the state churches, namely the Episcopalian and Lutheran; and the denominations that grew out of the American evangelical scene, the Baptists, Disciples and Methodists.) The admission of women has occurred at different times for different denominations, and with differing degrees of interest and/or conflict surrounding the issue.

The majority of mainline U.S. denominations have only recently approved women's ordination. (See MacHaffie, 1986; Zikmund, 1984; Cazdon, 1983.) The United Methodist Church approved the ordination of women in 1956. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) did so in 1955, and the United Presbyterian Church (North America), in 1964. A.L.C. and L.C.A. Lutherans and the Moravian (North America) denominations approved the ordination of women in 1970, while it was not until 1977 that the Episcopal Church (U.S.A.) approved women's ordination. In contrast, the United Church of Canada approved the ordination of women in 1936.

A few denominations approved the ordination of women earlier than those cited above. The United Church of Christ has the distinction of ordaining the first American women, Antoinette Brown, in 1853. The American Baptist churches have ordained women for over a hundred years as well. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Cumberland Presbyterians approved women's ordination in 1888 and 1889, respectively. However, the number of women ordained by these
denominations has been minimal up to the 1970's. (For a complete listing of denominations, when they authorized women's ordination, the total number of clergy and the total number of women clergy, see Jacquet, 1978.)

How the ordination of women was received and approved by the various denominations differed greatly. Brereton and Klein (1979:320), in describing the issue of women's ordination in the Disciples, Presbyterian and Methodist denominations, write:

No major struggle accompanied discussion of the issue; no fanfare greeted the outcome. Apparently, the clergymen did not imagine that many women would seek ordination, nor did they expect them to alter the office in any significant way.

The reaction was quite the opposite in the Episcopal Church, which hotly debated the subject and then was forced into a public debate over it with the unauthorized ordination of eleven women priests in 1974. The issue is still not settled in the international Anglican church, with only those provinces in the U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Brazil and parts of Kenya ordaining women. (1) In September, 1988, The Rev. Barbara Harris was nominated to be the first woman Episcopal bishop in the U.S.A. After some controversy, her nomination was officially approved. Her ordination took place on February 11, 1989 (Howell, 1988:434; Woodward, 1988:60).

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1 For a concise account of the struggle for women's ordination in the Episcopal Church (U.S.A.) see Carter, 1979. For an account of a woman's personal story of her struggle for ordination in the Anglican Church (England), and her subsequent decision to leave the church, see Hampson, 1987. For a study of the impact of ordained women on the Episcopal Church, see Cole-King, n.d..
Hargrove et al. (1985:121) sum up the different reception to the ordination of women: "In general, the more priestly the conception of ministry, the slower that church would be to admit women to the ranks of clergy." Lynch (1975:178f.) echoes this observation:

Where the minister is regarded not solely or even chiefly as a priest and as a representative in a priestly fashion, but as a pastor, preacher and prophet, set aside for a special function from among believers who are all in some sense priests, the idea of a woman minister presents few difficulties of that particular kind.

While many denominations ordain women, the number of women in the profession remains proportionally small because of its recent availability to women as a profession. Carroll et al. (1983:4) state that in 1980 women comprised 4.2% of the clergy. This is an increase over 1930, when women made up 2.2% of the clergy ranks, and 1970, when 2.9% of the clergy were women. Statistics from the Lutheran Church in America indicate that in 1985, 5.3% of their clergy were women (Smith, 1985), and in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 7.8% of the clergy were women in 1986 (Research Unit of the Support Agency, 1986). This increase is reflective of trends in other mainline denominations as well.

It has been predicted that there will be a great influx of women seeking ordination because the number of women enrolled in seminary degree programs that prepare people for ordination has increased substantially. In 1980, 45% of the student body at United Church of Christ seminaries was female, and 32% of the student body at United Presbyterian (U.S.A.) seminaries was female. Both women and black
enrollment is increasing in seminaries, with women comprising 27% of all seminarians in 1987 (Christian Century, 1988).

Why is it that in the last few decades women are being ordained? Moberg (1984:509) suggests that it is, at least partly, a matter of "economic limitations of church resources." Others suggest that the entry of women into the ordained ministry results directly from a shortage of men in the profession of ministry. It is a complicated matter.

Zikmund (1986:347f.) suggests five reasons for allowing the ordination of women and their subsequent entry into the ministry: (1) biblical scholarship, (2) the ecumenical movement, (3) political, economic and social factors, (4) economic patterns of supply and demand, and (5) the social context of women's lives.

The first factor affected the theology of the church, making it hard to proof-text biblical passages that were once interpreted as condemning women to silence and passivity in the church. (It is not so much that theology changed, as different strands of theology were given different emphasis.) Secondly, denominations struggled and debated together over issues which they may not have confronted on their own. After all, it was the World Council of Churches in 1948 which first studied the issues surrounding the possibility of ordaining women (Carr, 1988:45). The third factor reflects how the church is influenced by the surrounding society. Achieving the right to vote politically in 1920 led people to wonder why women did not have the right to vote on religious matters in their churches. The fourth factor specifically relates to the need for pastors. Zikmund (1986:347) writes: "It is no
accident that the periods of greatest advancement for women clergy in mainstream Protestantism always came when there was an undersupply of trained clergymen." The last factor concerns the overall change in women's lives: they were living longer, were better educated, and were working outside of the home.

B. MEANING AND PURPOSE OF ORDINATION

There is no disagreement about the fact that Jesus did not ordain people: Jesus called people to be his followers, to be his disciples, to be his witnesses, but he did not ordain. Steely (1980:23) states this but claims, more importantly, that there is "a lack of any notable development in the practical exercise of this function, and the absence of any coherent and generally acknowledged interpretation of its meaning."

Krause (1971:175f.) states that "in the first two centuries in the Christian world no major distinction was made between clergy and laity." Ruether (1988) says that "the concept of a specific type of ministry called priesthood" did not develop until the third and fourth centuries. It therefore appears that as Christianity attained secular power, the clerical profession developed. Krause also classifies the ordained ministry as one of the classical professions in society, along with the health, legal and military professions.

Although Jesus did not ordain men or women to the ministry, the church has biblical foundations on which it rests the practice of ordination. (For just a few examples of biblical texts used to uphold ordained ministry see: Matt.10:1-8, 28:18f.; Acts 2:42-47, 6:2-6,
The meaning of ordination, however, differs. In some traditions ordination is seen as the setting aside of a person to perform necessary functions which continue the teaching and practice of the "word and sacrament" in the church. In other traditions ordination is a symbolic gesture, whereby the one ordained is believed actually to mediate between humanity and God, as does Christ.

The "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" document of the World Council of Churches (1982) tries to clarify the purpose and meaning of ordination:

In order to fulfill its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus on its unity (Paragraph II.A.8)

It further states that "ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community and proclaim his message of reconciliation" (Paragraph II.A.11) and that "to be set apart means to be consecrated to service" (Paragraph II.B.15). These excerpts indicate that ordination is meant to be both functional and symbolic.

In practice and polity, different denominations emphasize to varying degrees the functional and symbolic aspects of ordination. Brereton and Klein (1979:302) write: "For the Disciples, ordination is a matter of practicality and not doctrine. For Lutherans, ministry is a mediating agency for the imparting of faith through the Gospel and the sacraments."

In the reformed Protestant tradition, it is often verbally stated and re-stated that all people are called to minister (i.e., the
"priesthood of all believers"), but that only some are called to be ministers. One is not better than the other, just different. Yet this difference has been important, especially for the female half of the population. The meaning and practice of ordination developed in correspondence with the establishment of Christianity as an institution in society. In other words, ordination became normative as women's leadership diminished. Based on tradition, women were denied the opportunity to serve in ordained ministry. The roles of men and women were not just different. Men were allowed ordination because they were perceived as better than women.

In denominations that do not ordain women, it is argued that women and men have complementary— but equal— functions, which "naturally" excludes women from ordained leadership. Or, it is argued, women cannot be priests because Jesus was a male, and therefore women cannot be true symbols of Christ (Baber, 1987; Ruether, 1988).

McSwain (1988:1) writes that in the Southern Baptist Convention, the "issue is no longer 'female giftedness' or 'female proclamation,' but instead it has shifted to 'female authority.'" From this comment, one is led to conclude that it is not believed that females can have God-given authority, whereas men have it regardless of their giftedness or capacity for proclaiming the message of the Gospel. Furthermore, while the idea of a personal call is still considered central in the desire to enter ministry (Niebuhr and Williams, 1983:272), the idea of call appears to go relatively unquestioned for men, while it is often closely scrutinized for women.
Baber (1987:157), in discussing the arguments against ordaining women, concludes: "The worst arguments against women's ordination are theological and those that come closest to being convincing are of a thoroughly pragmatic nature."

Indeed, the debate over whether to ordain or not to ordain women has been extensive (see Jewett, 1980; Tucker and Liefeld, 1987: Appendix C; Hewitt and Hiatt, 1973; Osiek, 1986; Proctor and Proctor, 1976; Carr, 1988; Hampson, 1987; MacHaffie, 1986). The "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" document of the World Council of Churches (1982: Paragraph II.D.18) best summarizes the positions of its members:

An increasing number of the churches have decided there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women, and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet many churches hold that the tradition of the Church in this regard must not be changed.

The Sheffield Report (Parvey, 1983:178) states that while close to half of the Christian denominations worldwide ordain women, the majority of church members belong to denominations that do not ordain women. This includes members in the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, and most Anglican traditions.

Carr (1978:160) states, however, that ordination is symbolic of the general position of women in the church. Carr's view is confirmed by Zikmund (1986:339):

The ordination of women is integrally connected to patterns of lay equality in the church. In most mainstream denominations, no progress is made towards the recognition of women clergy until women gain sufficient power and influence as laity.

In this sense, whether or not women are ordained in a denomination is reflective of the overall status of women in that denomination and of
women in society at large. Even in denominations that do ordain women, women clergy might feel, because of the relatively small percentage of them and the extensive history and tradition of men clergy, that they indeed have been allowed to enter what remains a men's club, and that they indeed are still tokens (Coger, 1985:5; Kanter, 1977:209).

3. THE MINISTER FROM SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The minister has been studied from a number of different sociological perspectives, but mostly from the perspectives of functionalism and role theory. It is useful to examine the minister from the perspective of these theories for the minister does serve in a functional capacity within the institutional church. In addition, as far as the ministry is an occupation, it is also a role one achieves.

Krause (1974:174) views the minister as a specialist upholding the values of society, "its charters, myths, and explanations of existence." Durkheim's interpretation of religion as serving an integrating force in society, preserving social order, is thus reiterated. "Each major profession possesses some particular skill, and plays, as a group, an important functional role in the ongoing social system" (Krause, p.194).

From the perspective of functionalism, then, the minister holds a necessary position in the operation of the institutional church, and the institutional church is a necessary part of society. The church verbalizes and maintains the myths of society. Integral with this perspective is an understanding of who the minister is (or should be),
and how the minister acts (or should act). Role theory is based on certain assumptions implicit in functionalism.

It has been found that the role expectations of ministers are varied. A misunderstanding of these roles or a divergent integration of these roles by a minister, can lead to role ambiguity and role conflict. Schuller et al. (1980:23f.) identified through a Readiness for Ministry Project at least eleven perceptions of styles of ministry, and four models of the ministry itself. The models include the ministerial role emphasizing (1) the spiritual, (2) the sacramental-liturgical, (3) social action, and (4) combining these models. Different denominations emphasize different models, and each minister emphasizes different models as well.

In analyzing the different expectations of the Protestant parish minister, Blizzard (1985:19f.) observes that they are expected to have the skills of a specialist in many areas; they are to be prophetic and priestly; they are to be administrators and professional organizers; and they are to be efficient executives. He further states that "an understanding of the minister's role is crucial to the effective functioning of the system" (p.33). To this end, he pursues a formulation of an integrative role analysis and presents a schema by which the traditional and contemporary ministerial roles are combined with occupational and personal roles. Role conflict occurs when there is irresolvable tension between any of the various roles.

The role of minister has changed over time. While the minister and the church have often played a functional part in upholding society's myths and values, they also, at times, have acted in conflict
with society. Krause (1971:189f.) points out that while ministers are usually on the side of the capitalists (i.e., the status quo), the thread of radicalism also exists. From the Old Testament time of the prophets to now, clergy have encompassed both the conservative and the radical elements of society. He suggests that the difference between these two elements is growing, and clergy themselves exemplify the "split between the activist clergy and the traditionalists" (p.178), as well as the "growing split between the clerical elite ... and the practioner mass" (p.192).

While Krause upholds a functional understanding of ministry, he also claims that this is getting more difficult, for in today's society clergy have little, if any, power. He concludes that the profession of ministry has no leverage, for it has "neither sacred nor secular power, but is a profession of untenured servants" (p.194).

Kleinman (1984a) argues much the same thing, saying that the profession of ministry has been "deprofessionalized" in an attempt to give it current relevancy: "...the clergy gradually developed a humanistic professional ideology, role, core activity, and rhetoric of autonomy" which has resulted in an "ambivalent identity" for the professional minister (p.4). Like Krause, therefore, Kleinman sees the profession of ministry as holding little power in society at large.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. WOMEN CLERGY

Only in recent years has the phenomenon of women clergy been studied with some regularity. A few extensive studies have been conducted and have received considerable attention outside of the sociological field (see Carroll et al., 1983; Lehman, 1985). Most studies, however, are found in sociological journals or in material researched and published by denominations.

One of the earliest studies was conducted by Bock (1967), who found that women clergy were marginal in their profession. He suggests that one of the primary reasons for this was the "conflict between roles expected of clergy and other roles expected of females" (p.533). While proposing a number of propositions (not all of which were supported by his findings such as that larger percentage of female clergy than male clergy are black), he discovered from 1960 census data that women clergy, on average, tended to be older than their male counterparts, that both white women clergy and black clergy had less education than white men clergy, and that women clergy were less likely to be married and/or living with a spouse than men clergy.

Wallace (1975), too, found that women experienced marginality in their churches, but interpreted this in a different way. She suggests that women are marginal in three ways: (1) marginals in preparation, (2) marginals in transition, and (3) marginals in the profession. The first category refers to women who want to be ordained and have started or completed their educational training, but cannot be ordained because
of institutional constraints. The second category refers to women who have completed their training and have been ordained, but who have not been able to enter the profession because of certain barriers blocking their entrance. The third category refers to women who have the qualifications for ordination, have been ordained and are working in the profession, but who seek not merely to be assimilated by the profession, but rather, to change it. They are actors of social change and therefore marginal by choice or as a consequence of their choice.

Other literature will be reviewed in the following sections: women in seminary, women in the parish, and women clergy issues. Major differences exist between the experiences of women clergy in mainline denominations and women clergy in Pentecostal contexts. (In most Pentecostal setting clergywomen have been accepted from the earliest history of the denominations. For example, the Assemblies of God authorized women's ordination in 1914.) Therefore, this literature review concerns only those women clergy in mainline settings.

A. WOMEN IN SEMINARY

Women in seminary usually came from backgrounds where the church was important and a significant part of their family life, i.e., they received religious socialization which greatly influenced their decision to enter seminary (Carroll et al., 1983:73f.). There is still some age difference between female and male seminarians. Women tend to enter seminary at a older age than men. However, most seminaries are now experiencing an influx of older students, usually second career
people, both female and male. This is referred to as the "graying" of the ministry (p.204).

Contrary to what Bock (1967) found, it is now clear that women have similar educational backgrounds to men. In fact, women who enter seminary are in the "high self-actualizer" group (Nason-Clark, 1987:332). (Women in non-mainline denominations, however, tend to be less educated, as do men clergy in the same denominations. This reflects a different understanding of the profession; see Kwilecki, 1987.) Carroll et al. (1983:106f.) found that seminary tended to be an influential environment for women, and that it usually was a positive experience. Women usually left seminary espousing at least limited feminist goals, such as the use of inclusive language and the desire to increase the percentage of women leaders at both parish and church administrative levels.

Jones and Taylor (1971:357) found that although women are attending seminaries, "dimensions of recruitment as related to the clergy have generally functioned to exclude or discourage women from seeking admission to the profession." In addition, the lack of institutional structures after the educational process is completed often keeps qualified women from becoming part of the clergy profession.

Others found (Carroll et al., 1983:82) that while men who enter seminary know they want to become parish ministers, women who enter seminary tend to decide to become parish ministers while in seminary. Most often they initially attend seminary to fulfill personal educational and/or spiritual goals or because they think they want to
fill a typical women's church role (e.g., become a director of Christian education), not as a way to seek admission into the professional clergy ranks.

Beyond the mere entrance of women into seminary is the fact that the seminaries socialize people into the clergy profession. While seminaries differ in their approach to professional socialization, and denominational seminaries tend to emphasize certain skills that university-related seminaries do not (Carroll et al., 1983:79f), Kleinman (1984a,b) argues that most seminaries have been affected by a humanistic ideology.

Humanistic ideology refers to the theology of equality and mutuality. In seminary education, recruits are taught that ministers are human; they are like other people, and their opinions and "special" knowledge are not more significant than anyone else's. They are taught that everyone does ministry, and one can do it whether or not one is in parish ministry. Kleinman (1984b) found that this humanistic ideology, which ideally ought to legitimate the place of women in the seminary and in the parish, most often did not. Indeed, this ideology caused both females and males to struggle with their authority in ministry, for it is "incongruous with the client's traditional expectations of ministers (as socially distant and formal)" (p.212). In addition, she claims that

Those who accept the humanistic understanding of the ministerial calling can also use it to exit from the seminary. If one can minister to others by "doing anything", one might very well do something else ... female students, in particular, used this definition of calling to justify exiting from an occupation which would pose problems for their interpersonal lives later on (1984a:47).
B. WOMEN IN THE PARISH

Currently, women do not have much difficulty receiving an initial parish placement. While women are securing initial jobs, Carroll et al. (1983:109f.) found that the positions women initially entered usually varied from the positions of their male counterparts "with more women than men serving in assistant or associate pastor positions or as part-time pastors." They state further that salary inequities exist between women and men clergy. More so, women clergy careers are flat when compared to men clergy, with most women continuing to serve small parishes or as associates even after the first placement. Women clergy have a difficult time securing a satisfactory second or third position, one that is better than their initial positions.

Carlson (1988:15) reports that there remains a serious lack of women clergy in the better churches and especially in the role of senior pastor:

In spite of this improved placement climate for women, it is clear that they do not have equal access to those positions often considered to be the most powerful and prestigious: the senior pastorates of multiple-staff churches.

Lehman (1985) explored the same factor in his research on the situation of women clergy in the Presbyterian Church. He found that both lay people and clergy preferred a man as head of staff. He concluded that the more a congregation upholds the minister as manager (rather than as teacher, for example), the greater is the demand for a male minister. In addition, he found that the resistance to women clergy is positively correlated with the size and wealth of a congregation.
Women who are part of a minority ethnic group encounter problems in addition to their gender. Schreckengost (1987:357) found that "laity in the white charges rate females 3.8 points below males, but not as low as ethnic minority clergy." The recently publicized case of the Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld who was rejected as minister by an ELCA congregation, allegedly because she was black, female, and involved in a bi-racial marriage, is an example of this problem (Milwaukee Sentinel, 1988).

A number of theories have been proposed to account for the experience of women clergy in the parish, especially as it relates to job attainment. Lehman (1981) suggests that the barriers experienced by women in ministry are due not so much to sex-role socialization and sex stratification, as to the need for the church to maintain organizational viability. He says that "a basic fear is that calling a woman will create problems of organizational maintenance" (p.104).

Churches which have resources at their command, therefore, will choose not to hire a clergywoman because of fears that members will leave the church or withhold monetary donations. Churches with few resources have no choice but to hire the cheapest minister, which is why, by and large, women clergy end up in small, struggling congregations. Lehman (1981:110) writes:

More clergywomen than clergymen accept pastoral positions at low salaries, with few benefits, and with little chance of "success" in terms of letting their positions serve as status symbols or as staging areas for upward mobility to a larger church.

While the refusal to hire a woman pastor may put a congregation at odds with denominational policies, Lehman (1981:116) concludes that "where
the values of organizational viability and equal opportunity for clergywomen are experienced as being conflict, church members and officials will tend to act more to protect organizational viability."

The argument that women clergy disrupt organizational viability is not supported with data. Lehman did not find evidence to support it in his many studies, nor did Carroll et al. (1983:205), who write: "Fears that having a clergywoman would bring on decline in a parish are not supported. Having a woman pastor is not an institutional threat to a congregation's future." This is true even of the Episcopal Church, where the presence of women clergy was intensely debated because of the fear that it would result in congregational schisms. In the preface of a report on women priests, the coordinator of the Division of Women in Mission and Ministry for the Episcopal Church, stated that:

The purpose of a report on "Women Priests and the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A." is to document the facts of the impact of women's ordination on the membership of the Episcopal Church. Official statistics of the National Church are presented to dispel any myths that the ordination of women caused defection of members (Cole-King,n.d.:i).

Contact theory is also used to account for the experience of women in the parish. It suggests that once given interaction with a woman clergy, negative attitudes will shift in a more positive direction. Royle (1982) found little support to uphold contact theory, but Lehman (1987:324f.) found that contact does tend to decrease negative attitudes or fears about women clergy, but this is not always the case. He says "it depends," for there is a strong preference to "go with tradition, not rock the boat, and settle back in their comfortable conventional church."
[This is not due to] conscious and malicious sexism. Rather it is the latent institutionalized assumptions about the nature of God, the Church, and its traditions that repeatedly call members back from the brink of experimentation and major change. The 'of course' assumptions that make up our taken-for-granted world still include the assumption of a male ministry (p.326).

McClurg (1984:1) puts it much more succinctly, saying: "The male leadership assumption is still a major force in our churchly life together".

Related to the experience of women clergy in the parish are data concerning their career. To date, women clergy career paths are much more horizontal than that of their male counterparts. Carroll et al. (1983:133f.) attempt to explain this by saying that perhaps women are less likely to demand upward mobility because of their socialization toward service and nonmaterial goals. They suggest that "the different career lines, unequal in rewards though they may be, reflect different values that women bring to ministry."

At the same time, some women clergy are beginning to question why they do not seem to have opportunities for career advancement in the institutional church. An ordained Episcopal priest has written:

A career means you move from one place to another changing jobs as the 'time is right,' but never detaching completely and entering free fall.... Before my ordination in 1983 the Bishop told his assembled troops, men and women: 'There are two aspects of ordination: one is your vocation, given by God, and the other is your career in the Church. Nothing can take away your vocation. But your career can easily be destroyed. So trust in God's gift, your vocation, and pay attention to your career.'

Wise advice, I thought at the time. But now, five years later, I have discovered the reality: I do not have a career. As with hundreds of other women who have been ordained, the truth has hit home. The Church has chosen to recognize our vocation as priest, but has not
chosen to believe that we also have careers as growing and developing leaders in the Church (Watson, 1988:2).

This observation is reiterated by a conference minister working as an advocate for women ministry: "Women are doing ministry in bits and pieces. They have a half-time job here, an interim position there ... rarely a full-time job, but a bunch of threads strung together" (Novelly, 1988). In this way it may be accurate to say that "the male model of achievement may not provide the ideal model for females [ministers] to emulate" (Steward, 1983:171).

Given the above discussion, it is perhaps surprising that researchers are finding that generally women clergy find satisfaction with their jobs. Silman (1984:73) writes: "Our overall impression is that women are finding ministry on the whole a fulfilling and rewarding vocation." Other reports also communicate much the same thing (Schaller, 1983; Weidman, 1981).

There is, however, some evidence, including the high levels of job satisfaction on the part of clergywomen, which indicates that women themselves may have a definition of success that does not quite fit the American dream, clergy style. That may be one of the many gifts that women bring (McClurg, 1984:18).

Hargrove (1987:16) seems to second that statement, saying:

Many clergywomen simply refuse to take seriously the expectations of advancement in the clergy job market. They do not consider themselves to be in the ministry for purposes of getting ahead in any system, but rather to do the best ministry they can in the setting that fits them the best.

While it may be the case that most women do not buy the typical definition of success and/or career, those women who do want to get ahead in the "typical" way may experience the ministry as a frustrating profession.
C. WOMEN CLERGY ISSUES

There is no doubt that in many ways women clergy and men clergy deal with similar issues. For example, time management and conflict over role expectations are faced by all clergy. At the same time, studies have found that women clergy face issues that men clergy do not confront, or confront to a lesser degree. One stated,

While it is true that my male colleagues shared many of my woes, it is also true that I had a particular set of problems to overcome just because I am a woman.... Most of these problems center around the issue of one's proper role, or what is usually called "keeping in your place" (Jones, 1970:61).

Among the issues found to have significant impact on the ministries of women clergy are parishioner relationships, personal lifestyle, and support networks.

a. Parishioner Relationships

Women clergy have the most difficult relationships with those parishioners who are "businessmen and executives, middle-aged men, and middle-aged women" (Carroll et al., 1983:162). It is suggested that this is the case because of authority issues and negative transference. This is especially true in the case of middle-aged women, who may not have considered a personal career choice for themselves and therefore feel threatened by a career woman in the pulpit. Or, as suggested above, women clergy may have added difficulties because they are seen as "not keeping in their place."
It has also been found, however, that there is major difference between the leadership style of most women clergy when compared to that of most men clergy. The Herr Pastor model of ministry, represented by an authoritative and overtly directive style of interaction with parishioners, is not usually the model of ministry women adopt. Women clergy often strive to model "a ministry which is less hierarchical in nature, less rigid in its structures and which emphasizes people and relationships" (Nason-Clark, 1987:332). Therefore their leadership may not be perceived as being as strong as that of a Herr Pastor. Ironically, the more democratic a minister's leadership styles, the greater the likelihood of harmonious relationships with parishioners (Carroll et al., 1983:186; for an indepth account of the differences between leadership styles, see Rhodes, 1987).

It does not seem to make much difference whether or not parishioners had already encountered a woman clergy. Silman (1984:60f.) found that of the first woman clergy associated with a congregation, 30% said that after initial resistance, their ministry was accepted, while 15% said that the parishioners' response was "generally positive," 10% felt they were on "trial," 10% percent felt "trivialized as women," and 10% experienced outright "rejection." Of women clergy in situations where a woman had previously served, 25% said that "the previous woman/women paved the way to easier acceptance." However, a negative prior experience with a clergy woman made acceptance more difficult for a new woman clergy.

Coger (1985:16f.) refers to women clergy as "zoo exhibits":

Thus when a clergywoman succeeds or fails, it is often interpreted to mean something in general about all
clergywomen's ability to succeed or fail. This creates pressure on women to overachieve so that the door will be more open for other women in the future.

Coger (p.5) understands women clergy as zoo exhibits through the use of Kanter's (1977) token/dominant studies suggesting that "tokens are often treated as symbolic of their category, rather than as individuals."

An example of women clergy being seen as tokens rather than as individuals can be given. There are two women clergy in a small midwestern town. They serve as pastors in different denominations. One has blond hair and is short and slender in stature; the other has dark hair and is of medium stature. One is single; the other is married with a young child. It never ceases to amaze these women clergy that the town people continue to confuse their identities, even after working and living in town for more than two years. They joke together, saying, "All women clergy must look the same!" The truth is that, to many people, women clergy do look the same because they perceive them as tokens and not as individuals.

b. Lifestyle and Personal Issues

Women clergy often deal with matters concerning lifestyle and other personal issues. For example, one's manner of dress is a significant issue. Carroll et al. (1983:173) found that women clergy were 13% more likely to be very conscious of their clothing than men clergy. This was because women clergy felt people judged their appearance as appropriate or inappropriate more so than they did for men clergy.
More significant issues, however, are faced by women clergy. Silman (1984:9) found that two-thirds of the women clergy respondents were unmarried at the time they entered ministry, compared with less than one-quarter of the men at the same point. Her research suggests that entering the ministry lessens the likelihood of women's marrying. This has obvious implications for women who desire to have both marriage and ministry as part of their lives.

Carroll et al. (1983:190f.) suggest that there are several reasons many unmarried women clergy do not marry. One is the desire for an equitable marriage relationship. Another may be the difficulty of meeting possible spouses, given the isolated living locations of many woman clergy. However, it is not unusual for women clergy to marry men clergy. Sixty percent of the women clergy studied by Carroll et al. (1983:191) were married to clergy. At the same time, marrying within a profession is not a phenomenon reserved only for clergy ranks. It is found in other male-dominated fields such as law, medicine, science, and engineering (p.191).

Related to the marriage issue is the fact that the most ideal minister a congregation perceives of is in his mid-30s with a young family. As a synod executive in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) said: "Congregations still want a married minister with a family" (Raymond, 1988). This desire on the part of congregations excludes not only single clergy and married clergy who decide not to have children, but it also excludes older clergy whose families are no longer living at home.
Certain issues are faced by women clergy whether they are single or married. Single women clergy may have more difficulty separating private and professional time, and they may suffer from a higher degree of isolation or feelings of loneliness. Married women clergy may have difficulties surrounding the juggling of professional and home responsibilities. In a two-career marriage, problems may arise concerning whose job takes priority if one has the possibility of a move out of the geographical area.

Another crucial issue related to women clergy is sexual harassment, a topic overlooked in all studies reviewed except in the one conducted by The United Church of Canada (Silman, 1984). It defined sexual harassment as "unwelcome verbal or physical behavior related to sexuality" and as "a course of vexatious comment or conduct, related to sexuality, that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome." Thirty-five percent of the respondents responded affirmatively to the question, "Have you ever been the victim of sexual harassment as a theological student or in any job as a woman in professional ministry?" Fifty-five percent of the victims deemed the harassment serious enough to "seek support and advice from others." No significant difference was found relating to marital status, although younger women tended to report more sexual harassment. Harassment came from senior pastors, male clergy colleagues, and parishioners.

c. Support Networks

Regardless of marital status, the importance of connecting with and/or building a support network cannot be overlooked. While some
women clergy may find support with colleagues, clergy groups or women's groups, many have a difficult time developing a support network. Coger's (1985) study on Women in Parish Ministry suggests that one of the most important factors leading to "the ability to thrive in ministry" is the availability of support for both one's professional and personal life. It is important for women clergy not to become isolated but to have people with whom she can be authentic.

Coger (p.26f.) says that such networks do not evolve naturally, but must be "fostered and intentionally worked out." Adapting Pierce's Support System Grid, she suggests that every woman clergy needs a comforter, a clarifier and a confronter, in both personal and professional roles. She found that it was easier for a woman to develop professional than personal support.

Carroll et al. (1983:197f.) found that the ability to develop satisfactory support networks was related to three factors: where the clergy lived, whether or not they were married, and their age or how recently they had been ordained. Also related to this was the degree to which women clergy felt challenged by their job situation, versus suffering from boredom and frustration in their attempts to do something worthwhile.

2. FORMER PASTORS

Each year several hundred ordained ministers either voluntarily or involuntarily decide to make the transition from the profession in which they are very pivotal actors in the world of the church to a world or work where the language, economics, values, and rewards are very unfamiliar.... the number of clergy making this decision (or having it made for them) is small, certainly no more than 3 or 4 percent, but the costs are
high in personal trauma, in human time and energy, and in parish and family dysfunction (National Council of Churches, 1987:1f.).

A review of pertinent literature confirms that there are many reasons why pastors leave the ordained ministry.

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In an early study of former pastors Duncan (1932) questioned 111 former pastors, analyzing their reactions toward leaving ministry. Ninety left because they felt restricted by pastoral expectations and the rigidity of congregations. Forty-three left because of inefficient organization and administration, citing inadequate training in seminary for parish duties, poor job placement and uncertainty of job tenure, mismanagement of church finances and disillusionment regarding low scholastic standards and practices. Some of these former pastors were thanking God that they were no longer involved with the church, but most felt that they had neither disgraced the cloth nor forsaken the faith and were still doing ministry. Yet only 8 of the 111 expressed a desire or intention to return to parish work. It appeared to be the more highly trained clergymen who withdrew from ministry, rather than those who were poorly trained.

Moore (1957) said that young ministers were leaving the church mainly due to "the conflict between the role the minister is expected to play as a minister and the kind of life he wants to live as a human being" (p. 65). He suggested that many ministers may be mismatched for the ministry in the first place. Unlike other professions, it is
harder to get out of ministry than it is to get out of another profession, due to the emphasis on a call.

Moore suggested other reasons as well, such as (1) the theological schism between clergy and laity due to biblical criticism, which may lead clergy to preach the Gospel as they no longer believe it, but as their parishioners expect, (2) problems associated with family life in the parsonage, of which Moore says, "Nowhere in our present society, I think, is the egotism of the male more easily and more unjustifiably excused than in the Protestant parsonage" (p. 68), and (3) the presence of politics in the church, with clergy "forced into playing the role of a politician if he is going to get ahead in his profession" (p. 68). His observations conclude, "The church is a conservative thing. It changes very slowly. Yet it must move—or die" (p. 69).

In a more recent study, Wilson (1971) found that clergy leaving the parish had a "fairly rigid view of what the church ought to be," whether the view was liberal or conservative. Such pastors tended to move on when their personal expectations could not be matched to the reality of the church. But MacDonald (1980:188) says that the more liberal the pastor, the higher likelihood of his or her leaving, because he or she "does not operate from a sense of a heaven-sent 'call,' nor might he/she feel the sort of thing Paul called an 'obligation' to God."

Related to this are feelings surrounding the institutional church itself. Naylor (1988) writes, specifically relating to women pastors in the United Church of Canada:

In our denomination we are experiencing both a growing acceptance of women in parish ministry in some parts of
the church along with growing resistance in other sectors. More and more women are concluding that the institutional church life does not offer the spiritual nurture they require in order to sustain energy and vision.

While conflict between a pastor's own theological views and those of the church may exist and lead a pastor to leave parish work, other reasons for this role exit are postulated. MacDonald (1980) found that most pastors who left parish work were between ages 30 and 49, and most came from large denominations where they served small congregations (under 300 members). Nelsen and Everett (1976:67) found, too, that church size had a definite impact on clergy careers, with "clergy serving small congregations ... more likely to consider career changes than those serving larger ones." They suggest that church size is a more important variable than church location in predicting clergy consideration of career change.

Certain crisis stages have been identified for those in parish ministry. Bustanoby (1977:14) says that the first crisis occurs three to five years after ordination, "when ideals are shot by reality"; the second is a mid-life crisis occurring around age 40 "when the pastor realizes he has not reached the goals set for himself"; and the third crisis occurs near retirement age, when the pastor envisions inadequate financial security.

Steele (1987:xiv) suggests that to function effectively all pastors need to face and successfully overcome crises of "faith, identity, professional integrity, role and authority."

Contrary to popular opinion, few former pastors cite monetary concerns as a major reason for leaving parish work. In perhaps the
largest study on former pastors (Jud et al., 1970:50f.) monetary problems were the reason cited by only 6.2% of former pastors, while the combined factors of inadequacy (personal and professional), inability to relocate, and problems of family constituted 45% of the reasons. Just over 9% left because they felt their training and skills were not being used to the fullest potential; 8.5% left because of illness or breakdown; 7.8% because of dissatisfaction with parish work, and the same percent left because they found "the lack of church's spiritual growth and relevance stultifying." Only 7% left because of divorce or separation, and 5.4% because they had a more attractive job offer.

B. ROLE EXIT THEORY

As illuminated by the above discussion, there are many reasons associated with pastors' leaving the parish ministry. Role exit theory helps one understand that exiting such a primary role is a unique sociological process. This theory is based on previous research done in the fields of gerontology and life transitions (Allen and Vliert, 1984; Cumming and Henry, 1961; Ebaugh, 1977). Its basic premise is that the exit process is not just socialization in reverse but displays uniquely identifiable stages. Role exit is defined as:

The process of disengagement from a role that is central to one's self-identity and the re-establishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one's ex-role (Ebaugh, 1988:1).

Four stages of role exit theory have been identified (Ebaugh, 1988): (1) first doubts, (2) seeking alternatives, (3) the turning point and (4) creating the ex-role. The stage of initial doubts occurs when the
actor begins to "reinterpret and redefine a situation that was previously taken for granted" (pp. 41f.). These doubts may result from changes in the organization to which one has pledged allegiance or from burnout, disappointments, drastic changes in relationships, and other specific events.

The second stage evolves from the first. At some point, people in specific roles begin to realize that they are not trapped in their current role. They are then able to weigh options and shift reference groups (pp. 87f.). This second stage of exploring other possibilities may then develop into the third, that of a turning point. A turning point may come for several reasons, including the occurrence of specific events, and last straw happenings. The turning point functions (1) to enable the actor to announce his/her decision to others, (2) to reduce cognitive dissonance, and (3) to mobilize resources needed to actually exit the role.

The final stage is that of creating the ex-role. Ebaugh (1988: 149) writes:

A person in the process of establishing him-or-her self in a new role struggles to become emotionally disengaged from the self-perceptions and normative expectations of a previous, role while at the same time people in society are expecting certain role behavior based on a previous identity.

This final stage involves disengagement; it varies in difficulty depending on the role being exited. Some role exits are socially desirable--such as becoming an ex-alcoholic or ex-prostitute--while other role exits are socially undesirable--such as transsexuals, ex-physicians, ex-nuns. Thus, labelling theory is involved in the process of role exit (Ebaugh, 1988: 149f.).
The one ex-minister included in Ebaugh's study found that he "faced less stigma in giving up his ministerial post than he did in simultaneously leaving the church with which he was affiliated" (p.197).

3. WOMEN IN OTHER PROFESSIONS

The place of women in the work force has changed significantly during the last century. This has resulted in greater opportunities for women along with continued discrimination. The creation of some new professions, namely, nursing, teaching and social work, resulted because well-educated women were denied access to other, still male-dominated, professions (Rix, 1987:34).

The purpose of this section is not to summarize the changes related to women in the workplace. Neither is it to discuss the plight of women globally, where "women are half the population, perform two thirds the world's work in terms of hours, earn one tenth as much as men earn, and own one hundredth the property that men own" (Eisler, 1987:197). Neither will the feminization of poverty or women in clerical occupations be discussed, although such reviews would be interesting. This section provides a background to help compare women in the profession of ministry, with the experience of women in other professions.

Statistical similarities and other comparabilities are found between women in various professions, especially relating to the tension between being feminine and professional, the importance women
place on social affiliation, and the need to transform the concept of career.

A. STATISTICAL DATA AND COMPARISONS

In 1980 women comprised 12.8% and 10.8%, respectively, of the professions of law (lawyers, judges) and medicine (physicians, surgeons, osteopaths) (Carroll et al., 1983:4). These percentages reflect a remarkable increase over a period of 50 years; the percentages in 1930 were 2.1 and 4.6, respectively. While women in the ranks of professional clergy also show an increase from 2.2% in 1930 to 4.2% in 1980, women are clearly less represented in the clergy than in other professions.

While the increase in women in professions is encouraging, it has been observed that the place of professional women still differs from that of men in the same professions.

There is a substantial pay gap between men and women within the broad occupational categories that reflects a concentration of women in relatively low-paying specialties within them. For instance, in medicine, women predominate in specialties like pediatrics and nutrition, both of which pay considerably less than a male-dominated specialty like surgery. And the few women attorneys entering prestigious law firms are often assigned to library research rather than to the courtroom, or to the less prestigious and less lucrative fields of trusts, estates, and domestic relations (Rix, 1987:121).

The same appears to be true of women scientists employed by academic institutions. In 1985 women comprised 21% of the scientists employed at colleges and universities. Of these, 31% were either untenured or on an untenured track (Rix, 1987:212), compared to less than 18% for both men and women in similar situations. In addition,
tenured women advance more slowly than tenured men; "among academically employed scientists who earned doctorates during the 1960's, more than 70% of the men but only 42% of the women had reached the rank of professor as of 1983" (p.212).

B. EMERGENT ISSUES

Issues surrounding the entrance of women into professional fields have been studied. Frieze (1975:168) suggests that not only do women have to overcome social barriers in entering professions, but they also "must overcome their internal lack of confidence." She suggests that in order to change these internal expectations, there must be female role models of successful professional women.

This idea that women must overcome internal norms relates to the idea of who a woman is and what a woman does. Hoffman (1975:114) writes:

The belief that the successful career woman is unfeminine is widely held by men and women alike.... Because of the prevailing stereotypes about the career woman and the prevailing belief that a woman should not be more competent than her husband or boyfriend, many highly capable women, including those in the professions, feel that they are under pressure to prove their femininity. One way to prove one's femininity is to have a baby.

Being perceived as feminine--by oneself and one's culture--is therefore an internal struggle with which professional women may need to deal. In addition, women may have different aspiration motivations than their male counterparts, being more attuned to the need for social approval.

The evidence supports the hypothesis that social skills are a central area of achievement concern for many
females, not that female achievement efforts are instigated primarily by affiliation motives or desire for social approval per se. The goal is attainment of a social standard of excellence, but the areas where such attainment is most important are somewhat different from male areas (Stein and Bailey, 1975:153).

The subject of career patterns is also a concern of women in the professions. Career patterns of women differ substantially from those of men. Dex (1987:44) suggests that "women who set out in professional jobs are less conventional in occupational attachment than other women, and possibly more flexible with a wider set of options." She further states:

Women's priorities also appear to vary over their life-cycle. In their early years of working, occupational preferences have priority whereas during the family formation period women trade off their preferred occupation in order to obtain a job with fewer hours. Much downward occupational mobility resulted from women taking part-time jobs after childbirth (p.122).

White (1979:360f.) explores this topic of career patterns even further, saying that the problem for professional women is the expectation that their career patterns ...will be the same as men's. When they are not, there are many phrases ('lost to marriage,' 'didn't pan out,' 'dropped out') which indicate the disappointing nature of their acts, the hopelessness of their making choices which are uniquely theirs as women. Many [women], possessing energy and talent, will choose the same career paths and find great personal satisfaction in meeting the same demands as many others. But others who live life differently, and who may choose differently from the traditional career pattern, also have much to offer, and our gain is greater if we can utilize their talents.

White says that different models of what it means to a professional are needed which encompass--not devalue--part-time work and seemingly interrupted careers. While writing specifically about women in
science, her observation seems to be applicable to women in any profession and would grant greater flexibility to both genders. Such changes in the perception of career would separate "standards of excellence from time schedules" (p.369) or, put another way, career patterns would no longer be defined "in the rhythms of a male life-cycle" (Rix, 1987:65).
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings discussed below are based on information received from 15 women clergy who left parish ministry. Two additional subjects responded to my request for participation in ways that could not be integrated with the general findings, but their responses will be referred to in appropriate places within this summary of findings. The discussion follows the outline of the "Guidelines for Written Responses and/or Interview Guide" (Appendix).

1. SUMMARY OF PERSONAL DATA

The mean age of the respondents was 40.3 years with a range from 29 to 64. Ten are married, 3 to ordained clergy. One describes herself as in a "committed relationship" (heterosexual). Three are single, and one is divorced (prior to entering seminary). Six of the married and divorced have children that are grown and not living at home, and five have children at home or "on the way."

Five of the respondents could be described as second-career people, coming to the ministry from either previous careers or full-time homemaking. All have bachelor's degrees and Master of Divinity degrees. Three have master's degrees in addition to the M.Div., one has a Doctor of Ministry degree, and one has but one course left to complete an additional master's degree. Three more are currently working on advanced degrees: one in a Doctor of Ministry program and two as full-time students in Doctor of Philosophy programs. Two have undergone additional training in the counseling field, doing extra
clinical work in Gestalt theory and practice and in clinical pastoral experience. As these data indicate, all these former parish clergy are highly educated, refuting earlier assumptions regarding women clergy (Bock, 1967).

The respondents now live in Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Three are American Baptist, six United Church of Christ (one indicates that she is still in the UCC records but no longer considers herself part of any denomination), three Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and three Moravian Church in North America. Five changed denominational ties, either in college or while attending seminary, having formerly been affiliated with the Unitarian Church (one), the United Methodist Church (one), and the Southern Baptist Convention (three).

2. DECISION TO ENTER SEMINARY AND/PARISH MINISTRY

The women clergy have various understandings regarding their decision to attend seminary and/or enter parish ministry.

A. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Four stated that growing up in a family where they were active in the church was significant. Most of these women received affirmation in the church community that later led them to consider full-time professional ministry. One writes: "In the church I was welcomed, affirmed, and loved for myself—an energetic, dreamy teenager—and my gifts were lifted up." Another stated, "The church was always like an extended family, and it was the place where I felt at home.... I always
had the feeling of being loved and accepted in the church." Still another said, "I found a place in the church family which helped a great deal as a child, because I wasn't a socially confident person."

However, another women clergy writes, "Originally, I did not want to enter the ministry because my father was minister, and I knew I didn't want to deal with all of the night meetings and expectations for perfection and availability."

Most of the women clergy had to deal with early socialization which said that women don't become ministers. One said,

[Ministry] just seemed to ring some bells because I was always drawn toward professional religious service. From the time I was five...I can remember playing preacher!... During the adolescent period I became indoctrinated with the notion that women are just not clergy.

She then thought of becoming an executive secretary for a large congregation, for then "I could do ministry and nobody would be upset."

Another said, "When I was 10 or 12, I took one of those occupational tests, and one of the occupations that came up was minister. Both my parents said, 'I don't think you can do that.'" It was not until college that she realized she could do that, and began talking to people about the possibility of her entering seminary and going into parish ministry.

B. ACADEMIC INTERESTS

Several of the woman clergy went to seminary out of an academic interest. One said that although she grew up being involved in the church and her father probably always wanted to be a minister, her decision to attend seminary and enter ministry were "two separate and
distinct realities." She went to seminary because of an "academic interest." Over time she came to realize "that much more was going on than an academic interest" and came to see that she "had a definite sense that this is what I wanted to do."

Another voiced a similar experience: she entered seminary at the age of 18 for basically intellectual reasons and for something to do for a few years, thinking that she would later go into medicine or law. She said, "Had anyone told me that I would end up in parish ministry, I would have thought they were slightly insane." However, over time and with exposure to "different styles of the church and worship experiences," she underwent a transformation "from someone detached from the church, and merely intellectually interested in it, into someone who knew in [her] heart that God was leading [her] into the parish ministry."

Another found that the academics of seminary definitely attracted her, for she wanted the education--she wanted to learn. Yet she also said that "fundamentally, all I ever wanted was to be a good pastor."

Still another found herself going to seminary for both academic and spiritual reasons: "I was fascinated with the concept of God, and I wanted to be closer."

C. PRAGMATIC REASONS

Several of the women clergy attended seminary as a means toward an end. Three intended to pursue fields different from parish ministry: two originally planned to enter counseling careers, and one attended
because she needed the seminary credentials in order to do liaison work for bilingual congregations.

In the process of the seminary program, these people realized that parish ministry was not only an option for them, but that their gifts were well-suited to it. One who planned a counseling career writes: "While there [in seminary], I realized I was really far better suited to parish ministry." Another would probably have intended parish ministry from the start (rather than counseling), but "felt a problem with being divorced." The other, who "had absolutely no intention of going into parish ministry," found in the process of fulfilling seminary field education requirements that she did "have gifts and skills for pastoral ministry."

Yet another woman clergy who had been involved in professional camping programs decided to go to seminary so she would have the credentials to combine professional camping with Christian education.

D. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

A number of the women went to seminary and/or entered ministry because of concerns for helping people and society. One writes that in college she knew she "wanted to do something for people and was drawn to cross-cultural situations." She was drawn to social work but found the "spiritual dimension was missing." She writes, "The philosophy and religion classes increasingly were attractive. I also found a vision of ministry as enabler and equiper attractive. I decided to go to seminary--not certain that I wanted to be in a parish."
Another writes: "I was very much under the burden of what I ought to do. I wanted to please, to help make others happy, to serve and find my worth through helping other people."

One, in addition to a long family history of church involvement, found that her involvement in the women's studies program at college led her into ministry. She said: "I felt like I wanted to make a change in terms of what I learned in becoming a feminist, but in a place I cared about, which was the church."

Another remembers attending a memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, after previously deciding not to go into ministry. She said this event presented her with a dilemma: "What do you do in the face of violence?" At that point, she said she began to look at religious studies and ministry "as a possibility for impacting good."

E. DESIRE FOR AFFILIATION

Two of the women clergy were aware that their decision to enter seminary resulted at least partly from their search for community. One said, "Looking back on it now, too, I think I just wanted a place to belong." Another wrote: "I was looking, after my parents' divorce, for a place to call home, a community, and I thought seminary was it." She went on to write, "A community through the church had never been part of my experience prior to seminary and none came of seminary other than on an individual level."
F. SPIRITUAL FACTORS

Most of the woman clergy talked also of spiritual reasons for their decision to enter seminary and the parish ministry. One writes: "After divorce at the age of 43 I had a renewed relationship with the Lord, and felt a calling to return to school." Another describes an "ah hah" experience while taking a year off between college and further graduate work. She was trying to decide between a career as an English professor or as a minister:

And you know like there're these moments in your life when you just go "ah hah," and you go, "ok, I give in." I was sitting back in my cubby hole office, and I asked myself, "Why is it that I believe? Where did I get my faith?" It was because the little old ladies at the Baptist church came out every summer and served me kool-aid and baseball cookies at Bible School. They maintained the status-quo! They just did what they could to keep the institution going. And because of that I had grown up feeling very loved, and I had an experience of Christ. So, I said, "well, there's something to be said for maintaining the status quo in the church, even if you never make any progress, if you just do that. If the people who are already there have faith, then it's ok."

Another woman clergy writes about how she "experienced a call to Christian service" while doing summer work with a church when she was in college. She decided to go to seminary: "At that time I really did not realize it was possible for women to be ordained and do pastoral ministry, or really be a campus minister, which would have been my choice. I had no models." She ended up going to seminary and getting married. While she did finish a degree in Religious Education, after her children were raised, she went back to seminary for a Master of Divinity degree.
Another said in regard to her attending seminary and entering parish work: "I guess I resonate with Jeremiah--I was destined to do this even before I knew it."

One woman clergy who worked as a Director of Christian Education after college, wrote: "As a high school student there was never any doubt that I wanted to be in full-time Christian work, even if it was just as a minister's wife." She married a minister. Later, when her children were in high school, she said: "I went through seminary without any clear idea of what was at the other end, other than that the Lord would show me how I could best be used."

3. EXPERIENCES IN SEMINARY

Many of the women clergy describe their seminary experience as "positive," "excellent," "really good...better than good," or "great." Only three had any major negative feelings about their experience, and another wrote: "I was not (am still not) pleased with the attitudes at seminary, but I was able to do all right, getting what I needed at that point."

One woman related how she struggled with her own feeling of inadequacy about her decision to apply for seminary:

I was real nervous because I didn't think I'd get accepted [at seminary], although I had a good, solid grade point average, real good references.... There was no reason not to be accepted. But I kind of grew up with the thought that college was one thing, but graduate school was for the really, really smart people.

Overall, most of the women look back on their seminary experience as a time when they gained self-confidence, broadened their thinking, and felt affirmed. One, who described her time in seminary as "the
most wonderful of times, and the most horrible of times," said "Even in the times I was really depressed ... I felt like I was really growing and it was worth it. I felt like there was support for me there."

Part of the positive experience for some of these women clergy related to the presence of feminism in their seminary communities. One said,

It [seminary] increased my self-confidence. I felt better about my ability to study and relate to people. I learned to be much broader in my thinking about people different from me. There was a real feminist presence. I was really strengthened.

Another said:

I went in the 70's, so the women's movement was really formative, with a lot of people thinking, and a strong women's caucus. Lots of ecumenical sharing. It was terrific ... consciousness raising for me ... it was terrific! It was really exciting, and in part, I think that contributed to my awareness or readiness for conversion, because this Christ who frees and unites all peoples, had a special freeing and liberating message for me as a woman.

Another woman clergy wrote: "I enjoyed the ideas and concepts raised--my language consciousness was raised, but not the alternative or feminist ways of thought and approach to life."

One woman, who attended seminary both in the 1950's and the 1980's compared the experiences. She writes:

As a woman in seminary in the 1950's, I did feel separate-and-not-quite-equal.... When I got married after my 1st year, the Dean tried to talk me out of continuing as I'd "never use" the education, but I made the choice, continued and was allowed to finish.... When I returned to seminary in the 80's, the issues were different.... We had become aware of sexist jokes, non-inclusive language, old-boy clubbiness, lack of woman professors.... There was also some concern for inclusive language, some countering of 'conservative' views that exclude women from ministry, and the women were
demanding and getting their own courses and support network.

One woman, however, sensed a division between the women attending her seminary. She said, after describing her positive experience at seminary:

On the other hand, there were some women who were very upset with the atmosphere and felt it was still very repressive and oppressive. I guess there was sort of a struggle going on at that time, and I felt to some extent that there was some hostility between groups of women in the school, between those who felt affirmed and those who felt that more needed to be done.

Perhaps two who felt that more needed to be done are the ones who wrote:

#1: I can't say that in seminary there was much I related to in theology class. The more I read of women's journeys in faith, the more these were the stories I needed to hear told in class. They weren't except on rare occasions to be, with great effort, inclusive. But this was still not considered a norm for faith. There was little offered in the way of stories/theology of women's stories through the ages.

#2: When I got there [seminary], it was kind of like I thought it would be, but the longer I was there, the more I realized it was more like I didn't want it to be: real cliquey, real male-orientated.

Even given the positive experience women felt at seminary, they did not sense the complete absence of discrimination. One writes that seminary was very positive, "with some exceptions." "One professor would always start class with 'Gentlemen, this morning we will be discussing....' I sat in the front row throughout the year, and he never acknowledged my existence. This was an unusual experience, however." Another wrote: "Women had to find their own housing, while men lived on the third floor--I think free, but I'm not sure."
Another woman relates how her seminary was out to recruit "white males, since they were the folk who'd rise to the top of the hierarchy and secure [the seminary] with fame and fortune in future years."

The seminary experience, however, encompassed more than these concerns. One woman described a faith crisis she went through while at seminary, relating to a class on biblical criticism. She said:

My God, you're asking me to believe in a Christ that all we've got is a very subjective reporting of his life from people who lived several generations later who wrote about him from a very slanted viewpoint--this may or may not be true! It really did create a crisis for me. Not that I had ever grown up being a literalist or believing the Bible was inerrant, far from it. We got through the Pentateuch and the Document Hypothesis, and I didn't bat an eye; but when we got to the Gospel's, it was like ... shit!

Her faith crisis was resolved the following summer while she worked at a shelter for homeless people. She said:

I had been there maybe 3 or 4 weeks, and one of the problems that bag people have is that their feet are in really bad shape so I did a series of pedicures, and one night I was sitting on the floor scrubbing Walter's feet, getting ready to scrub his toe nails, and he looked at me and said: "You know, you're washing my feet like Jesus washed the feet of the disciples." [pause] I don't know, I think Walter in a way gave me my faith back, because he could see the presence of Christ in the world. It dawned on me, reflecting on that experience, that really, fundamentally, what I had a faith in was my experience of Christ in the world today. And that Christ was real to me because I had seen it make a difference in our lives, in the lives of people who had served me and whom I served.

Another woman found that seminary, rather than creating a faith crisis for her, enabled her to think about Christianity in more than just a detached, intellectual way. For her, seminary years were "good years, but hard years." Having come from a conservative, fundamental church background, she found herself "going back into the heart of a
Christian community that had burned" her, and inwardly reconciling those hurts. In addition, coming from the south to attend seminary in the northeast, she found it took time to adjust to unexpected cultural differences.

As part of the seminary curriculum, two women mentioned Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as a highlight of their educational experience. One said: "CPE is the one thing that sticks out in my mind that I felt really challenged by." Another said, unlike the experience of some of her classmates who found CPE to be a stressful experience, that CPE was a good, "healing experience" for her.

Relationships with male students was also raised by a number of the women. One woman wrote, "For the most part I felt accepted and was even introduced to a trustee of the seminary as one of the boys. The trustee bristled at the comment, but I took it as a compliment." Another said:

[I was] glad I came from an all women's college where I gained a sense of self, because then I went into a virtually all male environment. The skills transferred. I found I still had a strong sense of self. The men were competitive, and began to realize that me--a woman--was getting the grades!

She went on to say that she enjoyed the time with her "fellow" students, and the contact she had with them as "brothers."

In addition to relating with men as student peers, two of the women found that they experienced major romantic relationships during their seminary years. This added personal stress for them.

A couple commented on the competition between male and female students. One wrote, "I was the youngest in my class. Fifty percent
of us were women, and generally, the women were stronger than the men."

Another said:

It's just amazing that there weren't knock out, drag out battles [between the women and men], and there weren't. It's just amazing to me there weren't more problems. We had a big joke that all of the men on the floor were passive aggressive personalities, and they were! They knew how to manipulate, and here we were learning to say what we thought.

However, one woman, in summing up her seminary experience, wrote:

Seminary was a good, affirming experience. [The seminary] has women professors and they serve as mentors and models, and that has been extremely important. Seminary was a very androgynous experience.

4. SEEKING ORDINATION AND FIRST POSITION

On the "Guidelines for Written Responses and/or Interview Guide" (Appendix), seeking ordination and receiving one's first call were separate questions, but most answered these as one question. This is because in many denominations one cannot be ordained until one has received a call (i.e., been offered a position).

Of the 15 subjects, four initially received calls to sole pastorates. These positions included placements in a small rural parish, a small town parish, a two-point charge, and a "tentmaking" position in a small city parish. (A two-point charge is when one pastors two congregations, dividing time between them. "Tentmaking" refers to a set-up where the clergy works outside of the parish for income, but serves a parish as the "legitimate" pastor. This program enables many small parishes to secure professional leadership, even though they cannot afford to pay for professional leadership.) Nine received calls as associate or assistant pastors in places that reflect
the gamut of the North American church scene. One was originally ordained to "specialized" ministry, working in a college setting. She later went into a parish. Another was ordained specifically for interim parish work.

Four of the subjects encountered few problems in securing ordination and/or their first job. One wrote:

I was one of the first women in my area, and had recently changed denominations. They [the hierarchy] were a bit awed by me, I think, since I talked them out of licensing me for a year and right into ordination.

She went on to describe her first position and evaluate some of the significant issues raised in the initial meeting with the church boards:

The [church administrator] was very paternal and blazed the trail. I took a two-point charge. One of the two [churches] would have taken anyone who could talk coherently, and the other found me to be a good match and we had a fine seven year relationship. Important points: In the interview I raised the questions they were afraid to ask—namely: "Did I plan to get pregnant? and would I leave them?" (Yes, No). Without the church and I getting those out into the air, I suspect they'd have answered them for me, assuming I'd leave.

Another woman, who had no problem with securing either ordination or her first call, said:

I had no trouble. [My denomination] will not ordain without a call to ministry. I had my ordination council hearing and was approved for ordination on condition of a call. I graduated [from seminary] in May, was called in June, and so I was ordained and came out [to first position] in July.

Another woman similarly writes:

I received both [ordination and call] quickly, but later found out that experienced 'men' had turned down the call to the position ... because it was ill conceived and poorly supported.
Yet another said that her experience in getting approved for ordination and her first call was "great." While she had two factors against her--she was young (only 23 years of age), and had recently joined her denomination--she found the ordination committee very supportive of her, and enjoyed their meetings together and the opportunity they provided for dialogue on issues of faith and call. She had several interviews with potential congregations before she graduated, but waited for a position she definitely felt called to accept and in which the congregation definitely felt called to hire her.

Other candidates for ordination and ministry describe a harder process toward entrance into their desired profession. One said:

Well ... my record [in seminary] was as good as anybody's, and I was the last to get a call. The [church administration] had absolutely no idea of what to do with me. They knew 3 years before, when I went to seminary, that I would be coming out ... and they spent those 3 years not doing a heck of a lot to prepare for the fact.

Shortly after graduation, she was offered a three month interim position "for half of what a called position would pay." That position, however, was "an experience of grace," for her ministry was affirmed. Shortly after this position expired, she was offered a permanent position when one of the few assistant positions opened up in her denomination. She said:

It was like me, or nobody. So they called me. And I think they called me, in part, because the senior pastor had been there 25 years and they figured "assistants come and assistants go."
Another described seeking her first position as disconcerting:

I knew it wouldn't be easy, and it wasn't. I did have a call by the time I graduated, which is not the case now. I was hired as an assistant, and had been recommended for the wrong reasons. I was grateful, though.

She said later she became aware that one of the positions for which she applied but for which she did not get interviewed, was due to the fact that "the seminary wouldn't recommend me because the minister was a bachelor and I was single." She said that what kept her going during this time was her motto.

My philosophy was, and still is, that the reality is that not all churches will call a woman. I need only one job, and I'd rather work for a church that wants me, than for one that doesn't.

Another woman "worked as a receptionist at the seminary switchboard for half a year before finding something I wanted and someplace that would interview me."

Other women, while not having a difficult time in receiving ordination or their first call, found themselves filling typical women's positions. One wrote that ordination was no problem, since she was ordained into a DCE (Director of Christian Education) position. She said "there was one major difficulty--the men with equal training and experience were paid $10,000 more per year. When I raised the question in my seventh year there, I was told I was single and a woman."

Another describes the major process toward ordination as positive even "through several detours my journey took (marriage, job)." Her "ordination exam was a real crisis" because the ordination committee was "infiltrated by some [denominational] fundamentalists." She found
this situation to reflect "true ambivalence when it comes to ordaining women. My home church was pleased as punch to ordain me but would as soon fold as call a woman." She then found that the only job offered her was a "woman's job" (DCE position). She wrote:

They were desperate, and so was I--we wrote a few things into the job description to make it ordainable (a common practice). I have yet, other than my interim position, to be offered a sole pastorate although I have excellent credentials.

One who was the first woman ordained in her denomination foresaw the difficulty she might encounter in securing a position so that she could be ordained. She decided not to "exert any pressure on them [the denomination] for placement" and began to interview with other denominations. When she was asked by her denomination if she "would be interested in a part-time relationship with [a congregation]," she agreed and was ordained.

Other women had more unique situations concerning their ordination and first church position. A second-career candidate had some trouble seeking ordination with her denomination because of her "age more than gender." She later switched denominations and secured a position.

Another said that her experience in getting her first call was difficult because she was also disabled at the time. But she went on to say that the fact that she "had to wait almost an entire year to get a church" was probably equally a result of her claiming the "label feminist, and believing in social action as a part of ministry." She finally received a call to a small church. "It was dead long before I got there. It should have been closed 15 years before I got there.
But I felt, at that point, that was going to be my only way into the system."

Another knew that being married and settled in a certain geographical area limited her availability for both ordination and a call. However, she found her denomination willing to help women clergy in such situations and was ordained for interim ministry.

One who attended seminary in a large city and was approved for ordination in that city, said:

Because it was [that urban area], there was no problem. I didn't run into opposition. In some ways, that was kind of a misrepresentation of the reality of the denomination. The level of sophistication of consciousness present in my ordaining council was not operative in other places outside of the area.

She went on to say that partly due to the fact that her fiance had accepted a call in a certain area, she "had to find whatever [she] could in a reasonable geographical area." She accepted a call to a small, rural parish 80 miles from her home.

One woman was not originally ordained for or initially plan to enter parish ministry, but went into college work after graduating from seminary. She said she did not seriously consider parish work after graduation because "fairly realistically, I did not want to live under the lifestyle constraints that a single woman in a rural area would be under,... and I didn't want to live in a rural area." Two years into her college work she approached her denomination seeking ordination to specialized ministry, feeling "very definitely that what I was doing was a ministry, and very definitely that the church ought to be recognizing that [ministry], and recognizing that in me." She said she had a hard time convincing the church that what she was doing was
indeed a ministry, but succeeded. After some years in the college setting, she entered parish ministry.

A woman who was ordained for interim ministry said that there was some debate regarding whether or not such a ministry constituted a legitimate call. However, her denomination seemed "pretty open" to this alternative ministry.

5. EXPERIENCES IN PARISH MINISTRY

The experiences of the women clergy varied immensely due to a number of factors: the geographical location of the parish, the parish itself, the position held by woman clergy, the attitude of the senior pastor (if called as assistants or associates), and personal standards and expectations. For many, as well, there was a definite connection between their professional and personal lives. The following discussion highlights these points.

A. BASICALLY POSITIVE

Four of the women found parish ministry, in general, to be a very positive experience. Such experience tended to be related to their ability to balance both professional and personal roles. One wrote:

I loved parish ministry. It's the right mix of people-time, worship, study, desk work. Personally, raising kids and pastoring has been a good mix, too--lots of time flexibility helps, though night meetings and weekend events interfere with kid things some, as kids get older.

Another wrote that her parish experience was very positive: "I had no bad experiences; occasionally some humorous ones. I felt very
accepted.... Some expressed later to the head pastor that initially they felt awkward with me, but that passed."

Another woman clergy described her experience as "wonderful", and then went on to say:

[My] attitude has always been "I'm a pastor who happens to be a woman, and all I ask for is the chance to pastor." I have found people very open to that and willing to give me a chance.

Another had times of "stress and awkwardness," because she was new at ministry and because the congregation had to get used to her, yet had a very positive experience. She also said that after about a year at her congregation, she came to grips with the tension between "deciding whether I was committed to ministry in this place, or to my way of doing it, my agenda." She said that both she and her congregation let go of some of the expectations they had for each other, and this enabled them to work together. In summing up her experience she said:

I never have been more loved and cared for, and I never had more fun in my life. It was the experience of family—we loved each other and we fought together. Even through the real bad times, no one questioned that it was the will of God that I was there, a gift of God, a gift of the Spirit. That commitment to each other was so much there that it gave us the freedom to fight some things out.

B. MIXED EXPERIENCES

The majority of women clergy in this research project found their experience in parish ministry to be both positive and negative. One wrote:

I found in the local church setting a great deal of fulfillment, fun, learning, frustration, excitement,
growth, sorrow, joy, pain.... You name it, it's there. I found support both professionally and personally in many ways.

The definition of ministry of another differed from that of her parishioners. She said:

[My parish experience was] both exciting and frustrating. I am stimulated by Bible study and sermon preparation and working with colleagues on issues that arise in ministry. I love being involved in [denominational] level affairs and ecumenical meetings. But the rural church seems to resent such involvements, resist suggestions from the "outside", and often does not want to see peace and justice issues brought up.... I see that as central to the Gospel.

Still another described her experience as "mixed". She wrote:

I loved the new church development and the small worshipping congregation was eager to experiment and experience worship in non-traditional ways. My youth but not my sex was sometimes a cause for concern.

One who served three congregations described her first position as one where she basically was "bored" for three years. She now understands that this was because the senior pastor "didn't want to share the ministry," and therefore, she "never had a power base." In her second position, she "experienced some of the best of life and some of the worst". While her skills for ministry improved, she said that "in the same way some husbands physically abuse their wives, the senior pastor abused me emotionally." She finally had the courage to begin taking care of herself, and, after counseling, described what she understands to be "an Easter resurrection experience." She then applied for a position as senior pastor of a congregation. She found that just receiving that position was encouraging and that she "stepped into some things very easily ... [but] that the loneliness of the sole pastorate became very clear" to her.
Reflecting on the mixed nature of her ministry, one wrote:

I ministered very successfully to the 'marginal folk' of the community, starting a suicide support group, providing counseling post rape, finding many single women and elderly women would seek me out....Problem was, it became increasingly clear, because my ministry did not touch in the same way, the lives of the powerful (unless they had children in groups with me), most of it was invisible. Much of it took place outside of the church building, too. I met most folks at shopping malls and in the hospital.

Part of the reason some women clergy describe their experience in the parish as mixed seems partly due to the fact that, while they were accepted by their own congregation and their denomination, they experienced rejection and even hostility from some of their colleagues.

One said, in relating her professional experience in ministry:

It was like being between a rock and a hard place. I found my clergy colleagues were virtually unaware of Christian feminism. It posed the dilemma of keeping silent and giving tacit consent to having clergy referred to as clergymen ... or speaking up and feeling, not only nonverbally, but verbally, the animosity that came with being identified as one of those "lady libbers." It's kind of like you can't do anything right, so you decide whether you're going to be true to your convictions....

Another with a very positive experience in parish ministry, said her "worst problems came from outside the denomination, from colleagues of other denominations." Still another "felt accepted and supported by mainline pastors", but not by pastors representing more conservative or fundamental denominations.

C. PARTICULAR CONGREGATION

The particular congregation that a woman clergy served was also extremely significant. One describes her first parish as "a rural
meat-grinder" where the longest any pastor had lasted was three years. Like her predecessors, she stayed three years before resigning to take another parish position.

Another said:

I definitely would not like to go through that [parish experience] again. I felt professionally I was left out on a limb....At some level the denomination, to give them a half ounce of credit, was trying to find a place to put me, so they filled a hole, and put me in a nice pit!

Her congregation had about 75 members, mostly older people, and an average Sunday worship attendance of under 30 people, including children and teenagers. She said:

The people who did things in the church had a real need to control the congregation. There were about 15 people total who really did things, and although they complained a lot about things not happening and things not changing, they were so stuck in patterns, I didn't see it ever changing. I felt like I was beating my head against the wall.

One clergywoman who described her parish experience as wonderful, said:

Basically it was sink or swim. But there are two things about that congregation [she served]. First, they are an extremely loving, welcoming congregation who know how to care for a pastor, and as a single woman, which I was at the time, that was very important. The other thing is that they sort of pride themselves on being more liberal than a lot of churches. So it was a point of honor for them to have a woman pastor. They thought it was really sharp! They were proud of themselves for being so forward, so progressive!

Given the mixed nature of experience some found in the parish, they often tried to find outlets in some other related arena. Several did this by becoming involved in denominational or ecumenical committee work.
D. ROLE CONFLICT, AUTHORITY AND EXPECTATIONS

Several of the women clergy found they were facing situations regarding female role expectations versus ministerial role expectations, differing understandings of what it meant to be "the church," the feeling that women clergy had to prove themselves and their authority. One said:

In general, I would say that a woman in ministry is accepted as long as she doesn't violate too many preconceptions about women's roles, as long as she remains nonthreatening, and almost, as long as you stay irrelevant ... don't rock the boat in terms of role.

Two others had similar comments:

#1: I was very well received, but I have the sense that it was the golden rule: As long as I didn't make any waves too overtly, and didn't insist too much on certain things, everything would be fine,... but I have the sense that female clergy change everything.

#2: My very presence was very problematic for many people. Even if I had never opened my mouth, if I had been very mambee-pambee, you know, milk toast, my physical presence, being female, screamed such a different way of thinking.

One compared the expectations placed on her, versus those placed on her male colleagues. She said:

Ministers often feel like they must be everything to everyone. This is more true for women than men. Also, women must be incredibly good to be given even grudging acceptance. I have heard men preach terrible sermons and seen them do a lousy job in youth ministry---basically, they have room to be imperfect. Much, much more is expected for women--traditional roles as well as doing traditional male ministry (like being a housewife who gets a job, but still must do all the work at home).

Another clergywoman relates how the president of Church Women United (CWU), an ecumenical women's organization, told her it was too bad she
was a minister, because that excluded her from being a member of CWU.

Yet another wrote:

I really think we have to prove ourselves in the leadership role, as understanding financial matters, in questions of authority—just because we are women. Even in preaching, our voices are heard differently (one man complained that I sounded like his mother), without, somehow, the ring of truth.

She continued:

I'm frustrated when people see the church as a club, when no one should do anything except as it's always been done, when any action is scary, when financial bottom line is all-important, when outsiders are always suspect (maybe especially the minister), when the minister is hired and not a partner, when others' hurts cannot be felt. Most frustrating of all is when no one is willing to really talk about their expectations or differences with each other or the pastor. I know these are common attitudes and all pastors feel used and abused and not treated as individuals, but I wonder if there isn’t (still) extra pressure on a woman pastor....I have been willing to accept that extra pressure, try to go the extra distance, be that much better than the next “fellow,” to help make way for other women to be accepted, but of course I wonder if what I do ends up having the opposite effect.

A clergywoman who is married to a clergyman found that her congregation supported her husband's ministry more than hers:

I walked into a group of women discussing my ministry. My husband had taken a [different denominational position], and these women were discussing their puzzlement over "why doesn't she support his ministry?" I often wonder why they weren't asking "why doesn't he support her ministry," but obviously, that wasn't their question. So there was that sense of well, you can do this, but it's not really it, or it's not really as good or as valuable as a male performing the same pastoral functions.

E. SENIOR PASTOR RELATIONSHIP

As previously alluded, the presence of a senior pastor posed difficultly for some women clergy. One said:
Professionally, it was the pits. [The senior pastor] is just very, very introverted, and very afraid of conflict, very set in his ways, and I know I'm using the word very, but very controlling.

She then went on to say that the senior pastor went daily to pick up the mail and typed the weekly bulletins himself. It took her a whole year to get him to agree to a regular weekly staff meeting. She said that the unspoken congregational rule was "Do not think, do not hope, do not be creative, do not make any suggestions, because the senior pastor may not like it." Since the senior pastor, who had been there for over 25 years did not want feedback, she found that even when she asked for it, no one knew how to give it. She described working in such an environment as being "surrounded by silence."

Another similarly said:

[There] were lots of problems with authority issues. I was constantly in situations where my hard work, caring and presence were negated by the presence of a male pastor. There were times when I was literally ignored.

She went on to write about how she had taught the confirmation class for an entire year. When it came time to sign the certificates for the students, the "real" pastor was asked to sign them, but she was asked to write up the certificates because she had such "pretty" handwriting.

Still another said:

I knew the senior pastor [before I went there]. I knew what he could do and I knew what a pain in the ass he was, and even with that, he was hard to deal with. I don't think he personally undermined me, but I'm not entirely sure.

Only one woman described a very positive relationship with her senior pastor. They respected each other. "He would never let people bad mouth me, but would send them directly to me," she said. He became
her mentor, even though there were fundamental differences between them. She said:

The wonderful dynamic that started to occur when he trusted me and knew I was going to steal part of his congregation was that he became my greatest praiser. Ultimately, he wasn't out to rank out points for himself, or me for myself.... We worked together and trusted each others' abilities.

A few years after coming to the congregation as an associate pastor, at the initiative of the senior pastor (who had been there 30 years), they became co-pastors. The senior pastor envisioned her as his successor.

F. PERSONAL FACTORS

Intertwined with the professional experiences of the clergywomen were personal experiences. Some of these have been mentioned in the preceding sections, because some made no distinction between their professional and personal lives. This could be due to the fact that the ministerial role is so primary and central to one's self-definition that one cannot separate "what one does" from "who one is." However, about half the women in this research talked specifically about personal experiences in the parish, such as the lack of support networks and the amount of time spent working.

The lack of an immediate support network was a significant factor for some. One said that she was able to be a part of a support group, comprised of some of her contemporaries from seminary who were employed in the same geographical area. This was helpful for her, but they met only every other week. Her parental family became her primary source of support. She said:
Bless their hearts. I know they got tired of dealing with me. I mean, it was them or nobody. There were a couple of people at the church that were very supportive and listened, but I felt like I could not abuse that too much.... Basically, I was really alone,... and I really didn't have time to do the things that might have fed me, what with all the evening meetings, committee work, and those things.

Another said:

A lot of being at that church was having no friends around, no support. I had a nice big house. The job wasn't horrible,...but it was just the lack of support. I got to the point where I was spending over $200 a month on long distance telephone calls, just to have friends to talk with.

Still another said:

As a single person in a small town, there was not much to do! Everyone was interested in my every move and usually knew what I did, where I went, and found this appropriate to comment upon (usually to the senior pastor, and not to me).

She had very few chances for dating, as she eliminated her congregation from such possibility, thinking that this might not be wise professionally. Regardless, this was a "moot point", since there were no single males in her congregation under the age of 60 years. Moreover, though, she had less than ten invitations to lunch or dinner over the year and a-half she spent at her congregation. In addition, she was "expected to be on call 24 hours a day, six days a week,...or call in when more than 15 miles out of town."

Another woman clergy found out very quickly that she had a high visibility. She said:

I had to be careful about what I wore downtown on my day off. I enjoyed it more than I resented it, though I was aware of the liabilities. If I had had any significant social life, I would have had to be extremely careful. But it was nice to be greeted and recognized by people.
However she found much support from other women clergy:

I've always been intentional about building networks with clergywomen. I take those things very seriously. Women in ministry do not necessarily have to like one another, but we can be supportive of each other.

One found it difficult to balance professional and personal time:

[There was] no time at all for myself, my family. Male ministers complain of this too, but I had to constantly work at developing my assertive self in and out of the church to avoid being run over completely.

Reflecting on how satisfactory the balance was between her professional and personal life, one said:

The best thing that ever happened was that I didn't live near the church and that I wasn't working there full-time. Either one of which would have sucked me into the downward spiral.

Another had to be very intentional about setting personal boundaries. She said that when she first started her job she did not take a day off. She then began to resent it and blame her congregation. Later she realized it was her responsibility to take care of herself. She said that although parishioners expected her to attend every meeting, she learned to say no. She remembers saying to one parishioner, "Tom, you're so sweet, you think I'm God. But I can't do that. I'm so flattered, you think I can do anything and everything." In a humorous way, she was able to set limits and communicate those limits to her congregation. She also developed interests outside of the congregation, making it a point, however, to share these with the congregation, so they wouldn't be threatened by them.
6. DECISION TO LEAVE PARISH MINISTRY

No subject cited only one reason for her decision to leave the parish ministry. There appears to be a correlation between one's experience in the ministry (i.e., whether it was basically positive, mixed or negative) and one's reasons for exiting it. However, this research is not specific enough to measure this correlation. What is most clear is that there many factors are involved in leaving parish ministry. The bulk of this section categorizes these reasons.

A. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Four factors are discussed under the general heading of institutional issues. These factors pertain to the operation of the system.

a. Lack of Full-time Employment

Contrary to what one may normally assume, four of the women clergy were not employed full-time as parish ministers. This led three of them to seek employment in other areas. The other did not want work full-time work.

One had accepted a call as a "tent-maker." This meant that while she was the pastor of a small congregation, she worked full-time as a social worker in a nursing home. One of her reasons for leaving parish ministry was the difficulty of juggling what had become two full-time positions. When deciding which position to keep, she realistically chose the one that paid her a salary on which to live.
One woman was initially salaried as three-quarters time, with the agreement that after one year the position would be increased to full-time compensation. This did not happen. In her words, "no male minister would have been expected to work full-time, but only get paid for 3/4 time."

Another, significantly the first woman in her denomination to be ordained, wrote: "I would have stayed [in the parish] if the call had been more than one-third time. With two sons entering college at the same time, I felt I had to move on to a full-time call." She left parish ministry to enter a specialized ministry.

b. Lack of Hierarchical Support

A number of the women clergy cited the lack of support from various denominational administrators--especially in terms of conflict intercession--as leading to their decision to leave parish work. One said:

"It's one thing to deal with hostility from your parishioners. It's another to deal with hostility from the person you pastor with. It's another thing to have the hierarchy say we don't care, because we are afraid that if we support you, we will be labelled liberal,...and you aren't worth it. I felt like I was worth more than that to them. I felt like the church rejected me. I had no professional security or support.

In describing a conflict she was going through with her congregation, another stated:

The denomination at one point said: "well, if you need counselling, then go ahead and get it, and we'll find a way to pay for it." I thought, "Oh my God, all you're doing is slapping a bandage on this. You don't care about me, all you want to do is keep the hole filled [i.e. the parish with a pastor], keep me happy, keep me quiet, and that's all you care about." When I said that
I wanted to leave, that I was going to resign, the [denominational official] got all upset and started to panic, and started to guilt-trip me, saying, "What about your call to God? What about your commitment to the church? How can you do this? There won't be another job for you if you leave." And I said, "I don't care." I felt like I was not treated as a person.

c. Structural Sexism

The presence of sexism in the church hierarchy and in the local congregation were reasons given by three clergy for their decision to leave. One wrote:

The schizophrenia of church politics and sexism make me nauseous. I am emotionally tired of battling all the time to keep my anger in check, to justify myself, to keep my mouth shut so I don't threaten someone else. The sexism of the Church makes me literally ill. I cannot justify such sin--so justified.

Another woman clergy found that the hierarchy was helpful to her, but even it could not combat the sexism found in a local congregation:

After one year [of serving the church she was called to], I was told to leave. In trying to work out what the problem(s) were, the only one that seemed clear was that I was a woman and couldn't seem to please everyone (some people didn't approve). I was a woman when they called me, but I was a last-ditch effort, too. After nine months of attempted problem-solving in which our [denominational hierarchy] helped, I decided to resign.

d. Mismatch with Congregation

In regard to their first parish, several clergywomen said they left because they were placed into, or accepted employment in places or situations that did not match their skills for ministry. One in particular said:

I doubt that I was a good choice for a small, rural parish. You know, theology is real important to me,
reflection and analysis are real important categories for me. That was not what their life as a congregation was all about. It was about enjoying the fellowship of one another, being who they were together, and just maintaining the status quo. That's not to denigrate what they had going. The church had been there since 1903, so that says something. It was just a mismatch.

Another said, "The church was dead long before I got there."

Still another realized, regarding her position as associate minister, that there was a great lack of congregational support for the position but not really for her. She wrote: "I had no trouble accepting this, but was amazed that many in the congregation could not separate me from the position." Much to the dismay of many congregational members, her position had not been re-evaluated after the departure of her predecessor. If it had, she contends, the position would have been discontinued.

B. PASTORAL ISSUES

In this section issues relating to the functioning of the clergy with their senior pastor and congregations are discussed. In addition, issues relating to health and of support networks are discussed as "pastoral" because they relate to how well one is able to function, professionally and personally, in her clergy role. Tension between these various aspects appears to hasten the exit of women clergy from the parish ministry.

a. Senior Pastor

While several of the clergy had authority and power conflict with their respective senior pastors (see Section 5.E.) only one identified
the "total lack of support from the senior pastor" as the primary reason for her decision to leave the parish ministry.

Another left her second parish to try a third (which turned out to be her last parish position). She said:

While I learned much from the senior pastor--about administration and accountability--in the same way that some men abuse their wives physically, he abused me emotionally. Three months after I left I got a phone call from him accusing me of undermining his ministry. What happened is that finally people started confronting him on how he interacted with people.

b. Role, Gender and Lifestyle

Several of the women clergy state as reasons leading to their exit from parish ministry issues of role, gender and lifestyle restrictions and/or expectations. One wrote:

Lack of room to be myself was a big one. Somehow in any ministry I've done I've never felt I could be me, more than there were expectations galore up to which I was expected to live, many of them irrelevant to my view of ministry or irrelevant to women or both!... My rejection of ministry within the church is most largely based on this problem.... The stereotypes haunt us and are indeed powerful.

Another said:

The decision not to seek employment, as a matter of fact, downright turn it down, came because I still have the sense that the church wants to own me. That those lifestyle considerations that I thought were there when I was a single woman getting out of seminary and into something are still there, and I'm not willing to do that. I'm not willing to devote my life to the church.

Yet another discovered the difficulties of combining personal and professional life: "I learned in a big way that you're not a private individual."
Another found that there was a "definite mixing of times I spent personally with people, versus the times we were together as parishioner/minister. I felt like they used that [personal] relationship as a weapon against me."

Others talked about the contrast between the expectation of "being a woman" and that of "being a minister" (see Section 5.D.). They found it hard, if not impossible, to successfully fulfill both expectations.

c. Loss of Health/Burnout

Several of the women clergy left parish ministry because they were suffering from the loss of mental, physical and/or spiritual health. A few identified this as burnout.

While going through a stressful time at work with her senior pastor, one started getting chest pains, in addition to dealing with depression. She said: "I was at the point where I either died or left. I started applying to schools. It was a good step toward achieving mental health, a strategy to give me options." Two others wrote:

#1: I am burned out--first of all by all the overwork. My initial reasons for leaving full-time parish ministry were personal discouragement. My first church was such a professional nightmare, though I handled it well—that it precipitated a spiritual crisis.

#2: Psychologically, I was kind of depressed, caused by the real concern that I wasn't meeting the needs of the congregation. I tend to be hard on myself, but I had no way to check it out. I was burned out spiritually and had a difficult time preaching. I went through a lot of soul-searching, going to a career center to figure out what I should do.
Even a woman clergy who was having a very positive experience in her parish cited burnout as a reason for leaving parish ministry.

d. Lack of Support Networks

Several of the clergywomen cited the lack of a network of friends or supportive colleagues as a reason for their decision to leave parish ministry. This was especially the case for younger, single clergy, though certainly not exclusive to them. Several were very intentional in building a support network; in some of these cases, their efforts worked.

However, other women clergy, though they also tried to build support networks, or at least establish a social life (i.e. a life beyond their work), were unable to do so. This appears to be related to several factors: the geographical area in which their congregation was located (the more rural, the more difficulty in meeting people), the congregational size (the bigger, the better opportunities to meet folks with whom to socialize), and the ability to find or make time for one's personal life. The presence of some kind of support network appears to be of utmost importance. The woman clergy who found herself in the situation with the emotionally abusive senior pastor (cited above), found herself able to cope with that work situation because she had a friendship group that provided support and caring.

C. FAMILY ISSUES

Not unlike women in other professions, women in ordained ministry may interrupt their professional careers to have children and raise
families. Some also may find themselves unable to get a parish job because of inability to relocate.

a. Desire for Family Time

Three of the women clergy in this research left parish ministry at least partly due to the need or desire to have family time. One writes that after seven years in the parish, "When my kids were four and two, I took a part-time position.... Why? I wanted part-time."

Another currently on leave of absence said: "I've been a full-time mother since [the baby] came. It's been nice." This is not to say, however, that she feels no conflict over her decision to be a full-time parent:

I'd like to be in the parish, but I'm not just able to do it. I did want to take time to be home, and that's where I've had the real conflict, which is, as much as I love being home with [her child] and I'm having a ball, I still feel that emptiness and that need to be in an ongoing relationship with a congregation.

A recently married clergywoman said that at least part of her reason for leaving parish ministry was the desire to have more time at home. She and her husband are also thinking of starting a family.

b. Inability to Relocate

One woman clergy, married to a university professor, is unable to move in order to get a permanent position. "Besides," she said, "we can't afford to try to live on a beginning minister's salary, which for a woman has been below the (denomination) guidelines." She wrote:

I have left parish work because I cannot find a nearby church to work in. I may yet do some interims if and when they show up. It's frustrating to always be
looking for a job, and then always saying goodbye, but there are challenges in the interim work too. But I guess it's not going to be a very dependable career.

One who was taking time off for parenting (quoted in the above section) also talked about how difficult it would be to find a job in her area because of the size of her denomination and her inability to move:

Opportunities for even interim work is slim, because of the location of the churches, and there aren't that many openings at any given time. My husband works for [a company] so we've been pretty much settled in this area.

D. CONFLICT ISSUES

This section contains data relating to overt conflict. The first part discusses the occurrence of a "precipitating crisis," which led to the final decision of some women clergy to leave their parishes. The second discusses how greater conflict erupted through the desire to avoid conflict. The third section raises issues of theological consequence leading some to experience inner conflict regarding their involvement with the institutional church.

a. Precipitating Crisis

At least four of the women clergy described in some detail particular crises that led them to at least seriously consider leaving their parishes. The precipitating crisis of one revolved around her marriage ceremony. She said that, while parishioners had been invited to a reception, they also had a dinner for family and friends. Some parishioners thought they had been excluded from the real reception.
Though it may seem to be a minor incident, this caused an unbelievable amount of conflict between members in the parish, and it isolated the minister from some powerful, key parishioners, including the church secretary. Shortly after this crisis the clergywoman decided to leave the parish, finding it almost impossible to work effectively.

Another clergywoman described a different kind of precipitating crisis. She said that while she was out of town for a few days attending a continuing education workshop, a meeting was called without her prior knowledge to evaluate her performance. She felt this unfair. Shortly after finding out about the meeting, she decided to leave. She said:

I'm not saying I did everything perfectly. I had a right to make some mistakes, but I don't feel I was given the space. I felt like they were attacking me for every minister before me who ever did anything wrong, which was every minister before me! So this kind of thing was within the church's history, but to me, that didn't justify their behavior. There was no reason to treat me that way.

For two women clergy the precipitating crises revolved around the issue of inclusive language. In both situations, they felt that the process leading the congregation in the decision not to use inclusive language, and in one case, forbidding her personally to use it, were "pills too big to swallow." It went against their personal convictions. One said that the decision not to use inclusive language was actually made by a select group in the church who had promised that the congregation would have the chance to voice their opinions on the issue. That did not happen. The senior pastor, who had initially supported the use of inclusive language, also decided it was not an
issue worth fighting. The clergymen decided she could not stay in that parish:

I never said it in a public statement, but I did tell the senior pastor that this is like taking a vote in an Afrikaaner church, saying "Well, we anonymously decide that we are not going to consider black people as equal human beings, and it's 100 percent official, therefore it's morally right." I thought their decision was morally reprehensible, so I left.

For the other woman, the issue of inclusive language emerged when she preached a Mother's Day sermon on "imaging God as a mother." She said:

I did what I thought was a very mild sermon on the image in Isaiah of God as a mother and said, "Well, we talk about God in many different ways, and these ways are perfectly acceptable, and we can't find one image that says all there is to say about God, so let's just occasionally think about God as mother, in addition to God as father, king, etc.," and I used all the traditional metaphors. But I made the fatal mistake of using the pronoun she. I said we call God father when he,... and we call God mother when she.... Well, all hell broke loose! It was like everybody had just been waiting for me to do something so they could come out of the woodwork and yell and scream. I mean, they couldn't fault me for not doing my job; they couldn't fault me for being rude to people. I mean, they just couldn't fault me! So, it was like they had been waiting.... Well, they came out in full force and did their best to get me fired, and [the senior pastor] laid down and played dead, and essentially said "go for her," not on grounds of bad theology, but on grounds that I should have had more sense than to refer to God as she in a sermon.

She attempted to problem-solve on this issue by asking denominational officials to mediate. They refused. The congregation did not fire her but decided that either she "stop changing the language in the liturgy or leave." The woman then went through a period of depression. She said:
My analogy is like asking a black person to go somewhere and use the word nigger because people aren't ready yet to use the word black: You might offend them if you use the word black instead of nigger! It was like forcing me to do something I believed was wrong. The only way I could justify it in my mind was to say that this was the lesser of two evils ... keep myself from being fired, and prevent all women clergy being forever branded [in that geographical area].

b. Conflict Avoidance

At least one woman clergy describes the congregation she served as a place that avoided conflict by "sweeping it under the carpet." She said that no one would talk about how they felt or what they thought. She received no feedback from parishioners--positive or negative--even when she directly asked for it. The senior pastor was afraid of conflict and had trained the congregation not to give feedback.

She stayed through a conflict that erupted in her congregation, thinking that doing this would be a good way to model that not all conflict is bad, but that it can be creative as well. She said: "I decided that if I leave I would at least leave them with the memory that there was once upon a time a pastor that they had to face as a human being, one who would face them as human beings."

Another clergywoman, who has just started an advanced degree in Family and Marriage Therapy, said that one of the things she would like to do in the future is help congregations deal with conflict. She said: "This kind of service is really needed, to help congregations get conflict out in the open, to talk about it, and to work it out in a healthy way."
c. Inner Conflict

Half of the women expressed some disillusionment and/or struggle with the institutional dimension of the church. Some said their congregation "was a social club and weren't concerned with things beyond themselves," or their congregation wanted to come to worship for an hour on Sunday and then go home. Some felt there was no commitment or growth in their congregations.

One wrote that while she received a great deal of personal support and love from her parishioners, she felt that the exploration of feminist issues, many social issues, and conflict was not allowed. She felt mixed "receiving love but being denied the space for growth." One of her reasons for leaving parish ministry was the desire to seek "a larger vision of church and a connectedness to a wider group of folk."

Two had more serious concerns about the church as an institution. One described this inner conflict:

I still worry about what it means for me to be associated with this institution that can stand for so much that's bad. I take a look at what the church does to women, what the church does to homosexuals, to lesbians; what the church does on major social issues of our time. For the most part, the national denominations do a pretty good job on the national level of being pretty true to what I see as the gospel, but the person in the pew is what the church is identified with. The national pronouncements don't mean anything if the people on the local level are not in line. And so that's the dilemma, and when I stand on the outside, when I'm not taking money from it, it's easier to be a prophet about it than when I'm on the inside and dependent on it for my salary.
E. POTPOURRI

A number of factors relating to the departure of women clergy from the parish ministry do not fit into the categories above. One is age. Only one clergywoman mentioned that she left parish ministry because she could not find a job due to her age. (She is in her early 60's.) Other reasons are discussed in this section.

a. Different Perception

One woman clergy simply wrote:

I didn't leave parish ministry, they left me. I continue to be a member of my local church and actively participate.... For some 10 years I participated very little in the church. When my anger (and rage) was worked through I was able to come back, although I find much of my spiritual and faith growth outside of the institutional church.... Lord knows there have been times when I would have liked to leave. Many of my closest friends and peers left the church (both laity and clergy) and I felt affirming for them and abandoned by them. I continue to support their journeys. I also believe I have been a facilitator in bridging the rift between persons who have left and those who remain.

b. Called to Leave

One said that while she could give many reasons for her decision to leave parish ministry, she basically felt that it was time to leave. She said:

Bottom line was that for almost a year before I left, whenever I would center and pray, all I got was it's time. I can give you a lot of reasons, but what is most clear is that it was time to go on to something else. I remember driving down the highway, sobbing, because I didn't want to leave. And it was crazy to think about in some ways. I was heir apparent to this pretty amazing congregation, a pretty extraordinary feat for a woman,...but I was called to radical trust, because I
didn't know where I was going, only that it was time to go.

Another gave as her final reason for leaving parish ministry the desire to pursue another talent. She wrote:

I left to follow art, something which I upheld when I was hired as a delightful contribution on my part to the ministry of the church, but which, in reality, no one had time for. Having no spare time to pursue it, I needed to leave in order to have time for this if nothing else. I would have postponed this I'm sure if things had been going better, more positively.

7. CURRENT WORK AND/OR LIFE SITUATION

The first part of this section reports what these former parish women clergy are currently doing in terms of occupation and/or life situation. The second discusses their responses to the question, "What difference has it made in your life to no longer be involved in parish ministry?"

A. CURRENT ACTIVITIES

The clergywomen who participated in this research are involved in many different fields and situations. One described herself as recently retired, another as unemployed. One is a social worker, another a secretary, and yet another an "exercise technician." Three are in specialized ministries, serving as staff people in denominational offices. One works half-time as a church administrator and half-time in a public clerical position. Two are full-time graduate students, and another a "part-time student, mommy and lady of the manor." Two are involved in interim ministry, i.e., serving vacant
parishes in their area when the need arises. Another is a full-time mother who also does temporary office work.

On the whole, it appears that they are fairly satisfied with what they are currently doing, although several are employed in fields far below their educational level and work experience. The clergywomen working as a secretary and as an exercise technician think of their work situations as temporary, until they can find something more fulfilling to do. However, even a couple who are employed in work somewhat equivalent to parish ministry have discovered unexpected liabilities in their work. The one who left parish ministry to work half-time as a church administrator found the job much more solitary than expected. One who became a staff person in a denominational office found that it is hierarchical and even more political, although she is "growing and stretching again" and has been able to develop a vision of ministry that is "larger and more focused."

B. DIFFERENCES IN LIFE WHEN NO LONGER INVOLVED IN PARISH MINISTRY

The fifteen clergywomen who participated in this research project experienced parish ministry in many different ways, so it is not surprising that they interpret their departure from it in different ways. This section highlights the various interpretations they have on the difference being no longer formally employed in parish ministry has made in their lives.
a. Disassociation

Four have disassociated themselves from parish ministry in particular and, to a great extent, from the church in general. Most did not do this, however, without going through periods of grief, as one wrote:

I have only been free of parish work [for three months]. I'm just beginning to relax. I struggled with feelings of depression during the weeks after I submitted my resignation. I have much ambivalence of feelings—sadness, grief, anger—biggest of all, relief. I feel free.

Another "went through a great deal of grief," feeling as if the church hierarchy had rejected her. She does not miss the clergy function of leading in worship, "feels so free," and is back in school now:

I don't miss it. I go to worship still, and am glad to sit in the congregation. I'm glad that someone up front has something to say, because I don't have anything to say anymore, or right now.... Being back in school gives me a chance to regroup, to get my strength back. The question is, "What is this preparing me for?" Maybe so that the next time I will have enough strength and courage to keep going.

Another who has disassociated herself from the church to a greater extent wrote:

We don't go near churches. I'm not repulsed by them exactly, but I find nothing of any meaning within them personally. If anything, I come away more convinced that there is nothing within them (except the possibility of acquaintance with a few interesting people) for me, that they are not the places where the questions I have to ask of the institution are welcome. I have no need for the church right now. I still feel too many 'oughts' pressing upon me at church, but this may be a bit of projection. (I think most women I meet with similar experiences are MORE than willing to examine themselves! It's when this self-examination is all there is that the church fails us again and again. It isn't US!)
She went on to write that she feels "free" to be herself without the clergy role; this has allowed her to feel more happiness and wholeness than while a parish minister. However, she too went through a difficult adjustment period:

I am finally able to let go of a nearly overwhelming sense of guilt that I had fallen short of a congregation, and in myself in failing to be successful and enjoy it as a minister. I half regret my theological education, or at least spending so much time and money on it. On the other hand, it brought me to where I am today, and this is a good place.

One of the clergywomen who did not answer the written response form fully and whose data are not included throughout this report appears to be going through a period of disassociation. She wrote:

I appreciate the effort you have undertaken, and if circumstances were different I would have gladly become involved. The truth is, however, I cannot. To do so would pull me into a world I have only recently detached myself from significantly enough to experience healing energy and renewal. To answer your questions faithfully would require an intimate review of the past which I choose at this point to let rest.

She is currently pursuing a doctoral program. "It is exciting and gratifying to know I have successfully begun a new adventure," she reported.

b. Lay Involvement

A few of the subjects in this research project have maintained a high level of involvement in local congregations, not as professionals but as lay people. One said:

While I'm not involved [in the church] in terms of a professional call, I am involved in parish ministry. I do a lot of what I consider to be professional ministry. In some ways, I'm replicating the role of pastor's wife, and if I don't think too much about it, I don't agonize
over it. But there are periods I go through when I think I am undermining other women clergy by just reinforcing the stereotypes.

Another said, "I don't believe I ever left [the ministry]. I just hung in there as a highly trained lay person."

One who is unable to find a parish job, wrote:

> I have things to finish, volunteer work that keeps me busy, but I'd like to find satisfying work. Again, there's the feeling of not being part of the action, not being real, somehow.... I'm still active in the church I've belonged to for 24 years.


c. Interim Ministry

Two of the subjects are involved in interim ministry. One said that she has a call to be an interim minister, and her denomination has utilized her skills four times in the past. She wrote: "I enjoy the variety, the challenge, the part-time work load (most times), the part-time emotional commitment."

The other woman involved in interim ministry wrote:

> I plan to continue to serve in an interim capacity for awhile. My denomination views me as on leave of absence. In a sense, I'm an uninvolved minister. I took this interim to re-center myself. This church has been loving, supportive and encouraging even in their doubts (which is refreshingly honest). In the time I've had extra [by not working full-time], I've been able to get my bearings, feel my competence, and begin to grow again. I feel like this is what ministerial leadership is supposed to be about--the growth and health of the leader. I have gained a broader sense of my call beyond the professional--a more integrated sense of pastor/person. Not being busy with the minutiae of parish work ALL THE TIME has given me room to grow as a Christian. My whole life is happier and more centered for it. I am seriously beginning to question the system of ministry.
Participating in interim ministry seems to be an option for women clergy, but it has professional drawbacks. One who did not fully respond to my request for her participation in this study phoned to tell me why. She had been involved in interim ministry for years, but is listed "on leave of absence" by her denomination. Apparently, clergy who do not hold permanent parish positions are not considered to be officially in ministry by her particular denomination.

d. Advocate for Parish Ministry

One of the woman who left parish ministry to take a non-parish denominational position was very clear in saying that she took that position in order to help clergy in parish ministry:

I do not feel like I've left parish ministry, although defining it in one way, I have. It's out of my commitment to the life and possibility of what churches can be in this world, that I'm doing this work.

e. Aspects Missed From Parish Ministry

A number of the clergywomen cited aspects of the parish they miss when responding to the question, "What difference has it made in your life to no longer be in parish ministry?" One said, "I miss a strong, local community." Another, currently working in a denominational staff position, was more specific. She wrote:

I miss the easy access to the congregation and the preaching. Some of the reasons for ministry--the joys and concerns--are missing at this time. The larger, systemic issues are more real than before. At times I feel more cynical because I see more of the systemic racism, sexism and survivalism than ever before.
One was more philosophical about not being able to get a full-time parish position and going into a specialized ministry:

What I miss from parish ministry is witnessing the growth in individual people because you are with them year around. At times I have felt cheated of experiencing a full-time local parish of my own, knowing that after a time both my sex and age were against me. Although I will always regret that I didn't have some full-time parish experience, I realize that part of that may be that it is one of the mountains I have not climbed; and more recently I have felt, in the end, I am probably in what the Lord wants me to do anyway.

8. OCCUPATIONAL AND LIFE GOALS

One participant said that she had achieved her occupational goals and that, at the age of 60, she had no great ambitions. Another said that she was finding retirement a "delightful challenge.... My hope is to continue being involved as a committed (and challenging) member of the local church. I will do supply preaching--possibly some pastoral counseling, when requested."

Others were more specific about their occupational and life goals, as categorized below.

A. FURTHER EDUCATION

Two of the subjects want to further their education. One wants to pursue graduate work in women's studies and then "somehow work that in with some chaplaincy, part-time parish work, or work in a women's center." Another wrote, "I am still in a flux. I expect to go back to school for another degree, and doubt that I will stay in any formal ministry. Pastoral counseling is a strong possibility." She added, "If I return to the parish, I will seek a co-pastor or part-time
position. I may try tent-making to keep me from being absorbed back into a parish."

B. SPIRITUAL GOALS

Several of the clergywomen answered this question in terms of their faith and a desire to live spiritual lives. One wrote in response to this question:

My goals? Primarily to remain a centered Christian, keep my marriage happy, my children on the right track, and share the good news. I don't order these things 1-2-3, I think they are all one piece.

Another wrote, "My occupational goals are to continue to grow so that each year is new and there is something new about my work. What I do not want to get into is business as usual."

Still another said her life goal was to be "faithful":

There's no place I'm trying to get. I do have a commitment to stay healthy, to be financially responsible for my own life, and to be a good steward of the gifts God has given me.

C. CREATE OWN MINISTRY

A number talked of the desire, or necessity, of creating their own place in ministry.

The thing I've become increasingly aware of is that given my skills, interests, abilities, and training, I'm going to have to create my opportunities for ministry. I don't fit into any convenient niches. For a while that was very painful to know. Then I realized how freeing that could be, although it does have drawbacks monetarily--I don't have any predictable income. But the flexibility of it, the excitement of generating specific projects is real freeing. The thing is that I don't think most people would consider what I do [theater] to be ministry.
Another wrote:

The rejection by the church I'd been called to raises questions about what work I might best do. One thing I've always been interested in doing is writing, ... and one basic goal is enabling women in ministry, both lay and ordained women.

One clergy said that she was in a sense pursuing her own ministry while doing interim work during her leave of absence. She wrote:

I also want--and hope--to accomplish this in my interim capacity—to open more parishes to women. As I am active in state and local church concerns, I am conscious of forging new paths for my sisters down the road. Women may eventually reject the system, but I think we need to have an in--an option to change.

D. POSSIBILITY OF RETURNING TO PARISH MINISTRY

Only one of the clergywomen said she would refuse to return to parish ministry. She said:

Get real! I find ordination a problem, something I never desired, and felt very uncomfortable with. I like the Quaker idea of a more literal ministry among all, better. And I'd need art to be possible as most of my ministry. It will be, but not within the church.

Seven of the fifteen said that they would consider the return to parish ministry, usually under certain circumstances, and two are planning to do so. One wrote, "I have no plans to quit interim ministry until my kids are older. But I expect to return to the parish at some point." Another said, "I plan to return to parish ministry, probably by 1995, or some type of ministry."

Several said consideration of parish ministry depended on the position available. One wrote, "Yes, I would return to parish ministry if the appropriate opportunity surfaced." Others were more specific. One would "probably consider" returning to parish ministry
but would be "very, very careful" about who she worked with. Another woman clergy, who had a very positive experience in the parish, said that part of the reason it was so positive was that she was "very careful to pick out who my boss would be.... I knew he wouldn't stab me in the back." She would follow the same principle again if she returned to parish ministry.

One who would like to return to parish ministry probably would want to have a sole pastorate:

I think I've gotten too independent to go back to an associate position. You get used to being on your own. I have no desire to be pastor of Riverside Church or anything like that. [Riverside Church is a large, prestigious congregation located in New York City. The senior pastor position was open at the time of this interview.] I don't care about the size of the church, and I have the luxury, at this point at least, that we're not dependent on my salary for our living, so it could be a part-time church. But I'd like it to be full-time.

Others would be more choosy in terms of what congregation they served, although none talked about the size or geographical area of the congregation, as in these two examples:

#1: I would like to work in an environment that was open to experiential learning, that was strongly committed to a faith life that was immediate and significant, a place committed to consensus; if a minority voice was raised, we would not proceed until that voice was really heard.

#2: I would go back into parish if there was a place that I could truly make a difference. You need groundwork laid, so the place is not closed. I've already paid my dues. And I wouldn't go back into a team situation to work with someone who doesn't want to work together.

Several of the women clergy said they would be more discriminating
based on their previous parish experiences. Before she would accept a parish position, one said:

[I would] be much more questioning and not so naive and wide-eyed. I would say, "This is who I am folks, and these are the things that are real important to me," and "What are the things that are real important to you? Let's see how these fit or conflict or whatever."

9. DEFINING MINISTRY

This section deals with how the women clergy define ministry. It is based on a question added to the interview guide/written response form after the first interview was conducted. It was added because it seemed possible that clergywomen had definitions of ministry that differed from the norm, or were more humanitarian than overtly religious (Kleinman, 1984a). This may or may not be the case. It is clear that their definition of ministry enables them to continue whatever work in which they are currently involved. Also, their definitions of ministry provide insight into their vision of what they are called to be and do and of what the institutional church is to represent.

This section is divided into three parts: a "traditional" understanding of ministry, a "community" oriented understanding of ministry, and an emphasis on "ministry of all people." Only one response could not be included under any of those three headings, for it seemed to encompass them all. This woman clergy wrote:

Ministry: To be called to, to care about, to be invested in, to support, to challenge, to seek justice and peace, to proclaim the Gospel, to resist that in the institution which is unjust, to be a model of a human being on a pilgrimage with others, to feel, to touch, to
listen, to speak, to be political, prophetic, proclamational, priestly, pastoral.

A. TRADITIONAL

Three of the clergywomen defined ministry in traditional ways. One wrote, "I see ministry as spiritual nurturing of individual souls to bring them into a closer relationship with God as Father and Christ as Lord." Another said that a minister is "a servant of the church." The third declared, "Ministry is serving God in any way that God seems to be leading."

B. COMMUNITY EMPHASIS

The greatest number of women clergy seem to understand ministry in ways differing from the traditional concept. By doing so, they also seem to be critiquing what they were taught about ministry or how they see it commonly understood in the church at large. One said:

I think part of what happens in the church is that there is this hierarchical understanding of how the world runs, and what ministry is, and how we should teach these people. And that's not at all what I understand the world or ministry to be. Mine is a much more horizontal view. Ministry is much more relational than proclamational. The traditional understanding of ministry has this separation between ministry and people, between ministerial role and person.

Another said:

I don't think of the church as an institution. Or maybe I should say, I don't think of the institutional church as the church! I think of community first: People I care about, and who care about me, who have gifts and strengths and weaknesses. I think ministry is caring and using what you've got, it's trying to identify to the best of your ability spiritual strengths and weaknesses, and helping other people do that--not to
judge people about that, but to be supportive of the whole person.

Another woman clergy defined ministry as "helping to open up for, to articulate with each other, our relationships with God, each other, and the world." She went on to say that community must be a major concern of ministry, but she does not think that community is necessarily the church.

Making a similar distinction between the church community and ministry, another said:

Ministry is varied and not limited to the church. Ministry is what the church does at its best. Ministry is being there for people, all kinds of people. Ministry is visioning along with God and working out love. Ministry is done wherever you are, but not limited to where you are. Ministry ties the spiritual and temporal world together, gathers the fragments of life into a whole, and gives meaning beyond our limited selves. Ministry is relationship, back and forth, not only giving. Local church leadership should be shared in covenant. It should involve programs, worship, sharing, learning, growing beyond self, commitment to God's purposes, joy. Local churches should be in partnership with each other ecumenically and with the wider church in the world. Ministry is creating, along with God. Ministry is God at work among us.

Another wrote:

Ministry is to utilize the gifts God has given for the good of the community; to work for growth, to encourage others' gifts and my dreams and visions to the dream of the community. It is to share the Gospel in word and deed, bringing the Kingdom's hope to this world and God's people.

One defined ministry as the church becoming more aware of its ministry as a force in the greater community. She said:

Ministry today is leading people toward an understanding of what it means to be the church, and what it means to be the church is something significant and vital and important to the lives we all lead. It's also discovering what's unique about the ministries of
justice and compassion, to which we're all called. The problem is that so many community and social services do this better than us--but this is what we're to do.

One woman clergy describes how her understanding of ministry has changed over the years. She wrote:

I have a much broader sense of pastor and ministry than I did 3 or 4 years ago. The church models ministry as a profession, with a straight road to the top--associate pastor, sole pastor of a small parish, medium-sized parish, senior pastor, urban church--a ladder of sorts. As I experienced it, I feel it's much more personal. [It's about] feeding hungry people; about one-on-one life transformations of the ordinary. Little struggling flocks need love and leadership, too. It's also about the community, caring and reaching out to people--not trying to increase the size of the congregation but helping people in spiritual and financial need.

She went on to write about the unity of the person/pastor roles, saying:

I also see pastors enriched in ministry when they take detours. A good pastor has an abundance of life experience from which to view the gospel. Ministry isn't something one does or is called to--it's a whole. It's a way of being and there is no separateness as with career and person. That doesn't mean the pastor is also working, but is always growing. The basic task of ministry is to understand and share the gospel in the whole of life--their own and others'.

C. MINISTRY OF ALL CHRISTIANS

Three of the respondents made the distinction between ordained ministry and the ministry of all Christians. One said:

I think you have to make the distinction between clergy/professional ministry and ministry of the laity. Every Christian is called to ministry. Professional ministry means finding ministries to enable the ministries of one's Christian colleagues. In terms of what constitutes the call to ministry in churches, the definition of the personal call, the call of the church, the divine call, and one's converting gifts all go together to validate the call. And the ministry that
one is called to is to find the authentic construction of service found in the paradigm of Christ.

The above distinction between "ministries" is reiterated by another woman clergy who said:

I think God calls all of us, everybody, to serve. God endows everybody with gifts. Ministry is affirming ourselves to God's service. In the church, some people are set apart for specific functions, but we are all called to be faithful to what God calls us to be. There's a distinction between what I call the whole ministry of God's people, and that in the church, which requires authorization by the institution of the church.

The final person in this category understands her ministry "as one of being an enabler and reconciler, helping people be reconciled to God, to themselves, and to each other." She wrote that she had a very broad definition of ministry:

[I am] a very firm believer in the ministry of the laity, and working and helping people consecrate what they do, whatever it is, to see that as their place in ministry.

10. WORDS OF HURT, THANKS, AND WISDOM

The final question the clergywomen were asked to answer was "If you could say anything to your former congregation(s), or your denominational officials, or former colleagues, or even current seminary students, what would you tell them?" Respondents answered this question very differently, and while the answers could probably be categorized, they cover such a wide range of items that it seems most appropriate just to let the words speak for themselves. Therefore, this section contains the answers of fourteen women clergy who have left parish ministry; they include words of hurt, words of thanks, and words of wisdom. (One did not respond to this question.)
QUOTE #1: [I would tell them that] those who are called by God are human, too; that they desperately need prayer support and concern.

QUOTE #2: I don't know. I don't know because I don't have any hope for the church really, fundamentally. When I got into the middle of it, for awhile I thought that maybe something would happen that would surprise me or that would change my perspective, but when Robert Schuller is held up as the ultimate in Christian ministry, I fear for Christian ministry; when we can't utter the word 'sanctuary,' without causing all sorts of problems in the church, I really have concerns about what the church is all about; when people are aghast that we would even consider the ordination of lesbians or gay men, I really wonder what we're dealing with here, and I don't want to be associated with that. On the other hand, I'm almost compelled, and so I'm still working on that. So, what would I say to these people? I don't know. I guess it would come down to saying, look at what we need here: what we need is for our churches to be open and flexible and tolerant in a very positive way, not just "Yeah, there they are," but embracing. And when we aren't that way, we aren't the church of Jesus Christ. And right, we aren't that way!

QUOTE #3: During the time in worship for sharing joys and concerns I pray, and I pray, "Save my church. Bring it to life again." I hate it, and I love it all at the same time. I was talking with a friend shortly after I left [parish ministry], and he said, "Oh, my God, look at the people, look at which pastors are leaving the church." The people who leave have life and compassion and creativity. They get pressed down. That's the problem with the institutional church. The leadership, the hierarchy, is not searching for life. We've lost three of the best pastors last year alone.

QUOTE #4: The gospel isn't whole. To have wholeness, we have to incorporate our experience, and only by welcoming, and actively inviting, and reaching for the Other to us, can we know what that wholeness might actually be. And it has to be more than lip-service. From 1 John we read that our love must be not just words and talk, but it must be action. In the long run we not only discover the is-ness, but the ought-ness, and it can be!
QUOTE #5: I think I would start off with "grow up." With the [congregation] I served I would just want them to look at themselves and accept themselves and move on. Either let go of the church, or decide you're going to do it. With the denominational people, "Grow-up, and thank-you for dumping your shit on me." I would really like to say that. I mean, let's get real. "I know you're playing the game, and I never said I would suck in and be exactly what you wanted me to be." And their basic line is, "We've never promised you a job." "Well, you never promised that you'd screw me, either. But that seems to be what's happening with people you don't want, who don't fit the mold, who don't know how to work the system." I just want to look at them and say, "Look, I'm not asking for a job, I'm asking for respect." And, I'm not going to ask them anymore, because obviously, they are incapable of giving it. I'm sorry I don't fit the mold, but you don't have to blame me for that because that brings in variables I can't always control. I make choices about what I believe, but I couldn't make a choice about being disabled, and I damn well don't want to be a male.

QUOTE #6: Whenever there is injustice in your own lives or in those around you (near and far) seek justice. If you don't know what injustice is--listen to your pain or the pain of others. Trust your feelings, and don't neglect your intellect. Be a learner as well as a teacher, for we all have much to learn from one another. Be rooted in the Gospel, not the American way of life. Stop taking yourself so seriously--learn to enjoy God's world--not destroy it. Be attentive to the spiritual life of another. Let go of the grip on the Institution, you may find it has a life of its own (if it could breathe freely).... Letting go is not giving up.

QUOTE #7:  [To my] congregations--be honest and fair. [To my] denominational officials--stop pretending this will take care of itself. Make women in ministry a #1 financial, staff and faith priority. Get involved in affirmative action. [To] former colleagues--thanks to the many men who have been supportive, affirming, gone out of their way and out on the limb for me. [To] current seminarians--the job market is rough and the going is hard. (No one told me that--they were overwhelmingly optimistic--many of my optimistic sisters are presently unemployed!)
QUOTE #8: I'd like to say that partnership is the missing ingredient needed to make pastoral relationships work. Not working for, in the interest of, or in competition with, but in covenant with one another, on all levels of church organization and between churches and the "little ones" of the world. When church officials, or lay people, or other pastors have really worked with me, I have been enabled, enriched, empowered. I hear the plea for "working with, being with" (compassion) coming from the different oppressed peoples, and I guess I am one of/with them.

QUOTE #9: [To my] congregation--thank you, because of what you've taught me about ministry, and because you allowed me to be a pastor, allowed me into the most intimate parts of your lives, not because of my personal authority, but because of what I represented. [To my] women colleagues--it distressed me that so often when we got together, what we ended up doing was having bitch sessions. There's a whole lot to celebrate, too, and I often leave those feeling left-out. And I realize there's a lot of pain, there's a lot of hurt, and I believe deeply we need to share that, but I also believe we need to celebrate. As the pain belongs to all of us, the victories belong to all of us, too. And we need to celebrate that and encourage each other in hope. [To my] male colleagues--sometimes I think you've let me be too much "one of the boys." But I would say that the [denominational] pastors here are just a wonderful group of people. There is a sense of closeness and caring for each other. I really appreciate that. I've just been helped by so many people along the way.

QUOTE #10: I believe that our denominational officials have really tried to get women placed, but have been hampered by congregational attitudes. Women are going to be accepted in parishes everywhere, but it is going to take time--in some areas more than others.

QUOTE #11: Loosen up and enjoy life. Follow your bliss. Can the hierarchy. And don't take yourselves--or the church--so seriously.

QUOTE #12: The hierarchy with its ladder defeats its own purpose. It encourages weakness in the laity and survivalism in its clergy. The process of climbing denies one's basic value and inhibits gifts not valued
in society. Work together. Value the strengths that allow conflict to be creative. Discover the validity of community, mutuality and ministry in a world which fears connections and solidarity because of the strength which will bring in a new order and different norms. Hope--trust--get angry, feel your fear and act to make the world a better place. Don't survive--live. And sometimes living means death.

QUOTE #13: [To seminary students] It's a hard era in which to be the church. The church is not the place right now for a superficial understanding of ministry. We need a high quality of ministry. Too many of us are too mediocre in what we do. [To colleagues] We need to really work on the "gate-keeping" function of ministry--helping one another out to make good matches, for instance, in team ministry. There is still a uniqueness in being a woman in ministry, and each of us handles that in ways we are called to do. Some of us are more activist, some of us aren't. I knew, at times, I was discriminated against, but I work hard to maintain the principle of no discrimination. Confronting people with competence is one of the best arguments we have. I don't run people over with anger, but with competence. That should be enough.

QUOTE #14: [To my former congregation] Thank you for the opportunity to love and serve you. I'll always love you from the bottom of my heart. You showed me, and embodied for me, the grace of God. [To current seminarians] A scripture comes to mind--"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Go into the churches and love the people. Be willing to minister faithfully to what God is calling the church to be, rather than fulfilling your notion of what people in the church ought to be. Pray constantly. Find a trusted mentor, or two or three or four or five. If possible, make sure your call to ministry is God's call, and not your desire. Damn it, if you are in this because you want to be, you're crazy! It's a lot of work. You're underpaid. What will make it work is if it is God's call.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

This chapter includes a brief summary of the findings of this study related to the exit of clergywomen from parish ministry. Possible implications of the findings are also proposed, especially as they relate to the operation of the church as an institution. Lastly, suggestions are given for further research.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The data retrieved through this research project substantiate much of the previous research done on women clergy. The backgrounds of these women, their reasons for attending seminary, their experiences in seminary and in receiving initial job placement, replicate the findings of previous studies. In addition, the mixed reception and experience of women clergy in parish ministry have previously been documented.

More importantly, this study suggests that there are some unique reasons associated with the exit of clergywomen from parish ministry. The reasons are not necessarily similar to those cited by men clergy for their exit from parish work. An overview of these findings is provided below.

A. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

At least part of the reasons women clergy exit parish ministry are institutional issues. This includes (1) lack of hierarchical support (perceived or real), (2) mismatches with specific congregations, (3) the presence of structural sexism, and (4) lack of full-time employment
opportunities. The first two reasons are also cited by men clergy for their exit from parish ministry, but the remaining two appear to be specifically related to the experience of women clergy.

The presence of latent sexism and the inability to attain satisfactory full-time parish employment may exist because the entrance of women into the ranks of parish ministry is still a relatively new phenomenon. There appears to be a lag between what institutional leaders proclaim regarding gender equality of clergy and the desire to place clergy regardless of gender, on the one hand, and their actively promoting the successful placement of women clergy among congregations and working to dispel ingrained sexism, on the other. Fears for institutional viability and of promoting a growing schism between institutional representatives and congregants may be underlying reasons for the presence of these institutional issues.

In addition, many of these former clergy expressed concern about the operation of the church institution itself. Many felt it to be too hierarchical in structure. Many found ministry within the church was too limiting and too narrow. They felt constrained by the institution. Some left parish ministry because of these institutional barriers. Others were seeking to transform the institution by working within the hierarchy itself.

B. PASTORAL ISSUES

Women clergy also leave ministry for reasons related to the pastoral office. This includes the inability to achieve an adequate support and power base when working with a senior pastor; restrictions
and expectations related to role, gender and lifestyle; the loss of health; and the lack of a necessary support network. Men clergy may leave the parish ministry for any of these reasons, but in the research already conducted on former (male) pastors, these reasons were not so apparent.

Previous research found that the size of the congregation, not its location, was a determining factor in the decision of clergy to exit parish ministry. This study suggests that for women clergy, the location of the congregation and the presence of a non-supportive senior pastor—not the size of the congregation—may be crucial elements in the exiting decision. The more isolated the congregation, the greater the difficulty they have in building adequate support networks. An unsatisfactorily working relationship with a senior pastor, combined with the barriers clergywomen experience in securing better second or third parish positions (i.e., the likelihood that they will spend much of their professional life working as assistant or associate pastors), enhances this problem. Significantly, no clergy in this study expressed the desire or hope of "working her way up" in the system by achieving a larger or more prestigious congregation.

The integration of one's role with one's personhood was also significant for women clergy. Former clergymen also encountered this issue. However, men did not have to deal with the conflict between their gender and their office. This study confirms that not only do women clergy have to work at establishing a significant pastoral role, overcoming the apparently powerless nature of the contemporary clergy office and the many role conflicts caused by differing expectations
surrounding the clergy office, but they must also overcome the conflict between being "female" and being "minister." This role conflict has been maintained and perpetuated in society at large, but it is also a product of the mixed theology of the church itself. In addition, some of the clergywomen may internally experience the conflict between being female and being minister, which makes it even more difficult to resolve.

The loss of health was related to the inability of some women clergy to function adequately in their pastoral role. The loss of mental, physical and spiritual health is an important issue for clergy of both genders.

The lack of support networks also may affect clergy of either gender. However, given the higher percentage of women clergy who are unmarried and living in geographical areas unfamiliar to them, the ability to build support networks may be a more important requirement to women clergy in parish work than for men in similar settings.

C. FAMILY/CAREER ISSUES

Previous studies of former clergy found that the desire to spend more time with one's family and the unwillingness or inability to relocate to secure new or different parish employment were important contributors to the decision to leave parish ministry. These factors, therefore, are faced by any clergyperson. However, women clergy especially encounter these issues due to their different career patterns and life-cycles.
For women clergy who desire to have a family, it appears that a choice must be made between one's career and one's family. While taking time off to raise a family seems acceptable to the church hierarchy, it appears that such "leaves of absence" result in downward career mobility. In addition, while many couples regard the raising of children to be a mutually shared responsibility, women still seem to carry the bulk of that responsibility. This not only has consequences for their careers, but it sometimes results in internal conflict as well. Some women clergy want both to have a career and to raise a family. At this point in time, however (unlike the experience of most Protestant men clergy), many women clergy must choose between these two goals.

D. CONFLICT ISSUES

This study confirms that conflict issues play an extremely important role in the decision to exit parish ministry. A precipitating conflict may be the "final straw" that results in clergy deciding to exit parish ministry. Or the conflict may be the inability to overcome an ideal of what the church ought to be versus what it actually is. These conflicts occur for any clergyperson. However, this study suggests that there are some unique conflict issues related to the experience and ideals of women clergy. This includes, most especially, the use of inclusive language and the integration of a more feminist theology within the life of the church.

It is interesting to note that two of the four precipitating crises related in this study (see Chap.III,Section 6,D,a) could be
classified as feminist issues. Some women involved in the institutional church no longer want mere equality, i.e., the opportunity to serve as clergy, but seek to transform the institution itself (Woodward, 1989). Certainly the promotion and use of inclusive language in people-talk as well as God-talk is part of this desire to make the scriptures, the church, and the Christian belief system itself less patriarchal (Russell, 1976; Hardesty, 1987).

The two clergywomen cited in this study who left parish ministry over these issues felt they could not live with themselves if they were forbidden at least to speak inclusively or to try to raise people's consciousness about the male and female qualities of God. While some men clergy may desire this same kind of systemic and theological transformation, previous studies have not shown this to be one of their concerns.

Some kind of inner conflict was experienced by more than half of the participants in this study. Many of these reasons are similar to what was found in previous studies on former clergy. This includes balancing one's expectations with reality. For some clergy, too much of a tension develops between ideals and what is actually experienced in the church. As one woman said in this study, "I still worry about what it means for me to be associated with this institution that can stand for so much that's bad." The inability to successfully balance this tension may result in the decision to leave parish ministry.
E. OTHER

This study also suggests that some women clergy leave parish ministry because they desire to promote parish ministry and the place of clergywomen from within the hierarchy itself. This is specifically true for one woman in this study. It could also be true for three others who continue to work within the church structure, but not on the parish level.

Only one clergywoman in this study said she left parish ministry to pursue another field to which she felt especially attracted. This may be significant. In reviewing what these former clergy are currently doing professionally, excluding those pursuing advanced educational degrees or working within the church hierarchy, the majority are involved in traditional women's work, such as homemaking, secretarial or librarian work. A couple are even unemployed. This differs substantially with the experience of former men clergy. Jud et al. (1970:Table B16) found that former men clergy most often entered careers where the monetary compensation was equal to or better than what they were receiving in the parish. This is not the case for the former women clergy interviewed in this study.

2. ROLE EXIT THEORY

Role exit theory provides a possible framework from which to understand the exit of women clergy from parish ministry. While the data collected in this study are not detailed enough to analyze completely from the perspective of role exit theory, they do point toward supporting it.
Many of the clergy identified times when they first doubted their decision to enter the parish ministry. Some searched on their own or with the aid of professional counseling for occupational and life alternatives before making the decision to leave. Many described turning points when they realized that they no longer wanted to remain in the parish. Finally, most described the process by which they are creating, or have created, a new role. This process usually involved dealing with considerable inner struggle and anger. It involved assuming different points of reference, usually achieved through separating oneself from the church for at least some period of time. It also involved a growing excitement and an appreciation of feeling "free." While some of these clergy have completely re-defined themselves separately from the role of clergy, others have retained the self-understanding that they are still ministers but have defined it in a way acceptable to themselves.

The most helpful aspect of role exit theory as it relates to the topic of the exit of women clergy from parish ministry, therefore, is that the occurrence is not just socialization in reverse. Exiting such a major occupational and personal role is an intensive process. It usually involves formulating a new definition of one's self-identity, as well as, possibly, a different framework for expressing one's theological convictions. The respondents in this study seem to have acquired a wider theological understanding of both the occupation of ministry and the place of the institutional church in society, possibly because of their exit process.
3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The issues discussed above have practical implications for the operation of the church institution. Some of the reasons surrounding the exit of women clergy from parish ministry can be addressed without changing much of how the church operates.

Church officials could be more intentional in matching clergy personnel with congregations. While there are limitations in the number, size and location of congregations in any denomination, a more intentional match between the specific congregation with the skills, gifts and needs of the clergy could greatly reduce dissatisfaction. Straight-forward communication between potential parish clergy and congregations would be helpful. Pastors would then know the situation they are getting into, and congregations would know what kind of pastoral leadership they are hiring.

The need to train senior pastors on how to work successfully with assistants and associates is crucial. This would substantially decrease much of the conflict and stress many clergy feel in their roles. It would enhance the operation of team ministry, and would it naturally benefit the congregation served.

Support from the church hierarchy is necessary in enabling clergy to work through issues of conflict, loss of health and feelings of isolation. It may involve active mediation, as well as providing counseling services for clergy who are encountering difficulties or questioning their choice of ministry as a professional career.

Other changes would require a more concerted effort. One is the need to create space in the professional ministry for interrupted
careers. This is necessary because of the desire of many clergy--especially women--to take time out from professional work for the purpose of raising children and nurturing family life. One step toward achieving this change would be to elevate interim ministry to a standard of normalcy and professional acceptance, rather than mere tolerance.

The attitudes that surround the place of women in Christianity and in our society in general, as well as the remaining ambiguity surrounding the place of women clergy in particular, need to be addressed. This could be done through intentional educational processes and the active placement of women leadership in significant church positions. There is a need, as well, for a more thorough re-examination of the theological framework from which the church operates. There is an element of Christianity that is innately sexist. The church needs to directly deal with this element if it truly desires to promote equality and justice for all people. For example, one specific question raised by this study is this: If the roles of minister and female are in conflict, how best can this conflict be resolved?

In addition to studying the place and role of women in the Christian tradition, work needs to be done on the general role of clergy. Ministry seems to be understood differently now than it was before. Clergy--women and men--are approaching the ministry in a much more humanistic way. More emphasis is given in mainline denominations to the community element of the church than to the salvation element. However, many parishioners are still operating with the "old" mindset.
This may be resulting in a growing gap between clergy and parishioners. It may also be adding to the role confusion of contemporary clergy, resulting in an inability to assume legitimate power and authority.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Additional studies on the exit of clergy would be helpful. Direct comparisons of the experiences of women and men clergy who exit parish ministry would provide clearer insights on whether the reasons for such exits are substantially different due to gender. In-depth studies on the dynamics surrounding the process of role exit would also enhance theory development in this relatively new sociological field.

Finally, more research is needed on the experience of women clergy in parish ministry. Questions still abound: What remains unique about the experience of women in ministry? How can some of the problems women encounter be addressed so that the church becomes a healthier, more inclusive organization? How is the role of minister changing, and how is this related to the place of religion and the church in society as a whole? If the church has indeed lost its unique place in society, having been replaced by social service agencies, recreation and social clubs, what place is left for the church to fill? And how will the church have to change in order to remain true to its purpose: namely, the spread of the good news?

Many more questions are suitable for further research. This study raises more questions than answers. But it is offered as one little piece in a huge puzzle, in the hope that one day we will see and understand the church and society in a more holistic way.
APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE ON
WOMEN CLERGY WHO LEAVE PARISH MINISTRY

I. PERSONAL DATA

Age?
Marital Status (or significant relationship)?
Children?

Formal Education (degrees and/or advanced graduate work)?)

Denominational Affiliation?

II. GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN RESPONSES and/or INTERVIEW GUIDE
(All data provided are protected under The Protection of Human Subjects bylaws of Marquette University. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured.)

1. Describe your personal journey in deciding to attend seminary and/or desiring to enter parish ministry.

2. What was your experience as: (a) a woman in seminary? (b) a woman seeking ordination? (c) a woman seeking her first "call" and/or placement?

3. Please tell about your experience in parish ministry, from both professional and personal perspectives?

4. What factor(s) led you to leave parish work?

5. Describe your current work and/or life situation. What difference has it made in your life that you are no longer involved in parish work?

6. What are your occupational and life goals? Would you ever return to parish ministry? If so, under what circumstances? If not, why?

7. How do you understand "ministry"?

8. If you could say anything to your former congregation(s), or your denominational officials, or former colleagues, or even current seminary students, what would you tell them?

9. Do you know of any other women clergy who have left parish ministry? If you think they might be willing to participate in this study, could you please share their names, addresses and/or phone numbers with me.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. IF YOU WOULD LIKE A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY, PLEASE LET ME KNOW, AND I WILL FORWARD THEM TO YOU WHEN COMPLETE.
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