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The cover illustration is of the sculpture “Descent of the Spirit” by Jacob Lipchitz, found in the cloisters of the Abbey of St. Columba on the Island of Iona, Scotland.

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EDITORIAL

The United Church of Canada was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, trans-denominational union of churches, and its history since the union of 1925 has been an open-ended venture. While grounded in Methodist and Reformed traditions, it has had to deal sooner than many denominations with the impact of unanticipated social change. Especially affected by such change has been its understanding of Christian ministry. This has been the case from the beginning, but especially so in the last half-century as the United Church has produced a series of major studies and reports on ministry—without any apparent definitive conclusion and only brief resting places. This number of *Touchstone* is devoted to the doctrine of ministry, particularly as it has been understood in the United Church.

The lead article is the result of years of reflection by Steven Chambers on the history of the doctrine of ministry in the United Church, a project begun informally while he served in major roles dealing with ministry at the General Council Office of the Church. The length of his article reflects both the extent of his research and the challenge of trying to encapsulate the doctrinal significance of the several shifts in the studies and reports mentioned above. He asks whether the United Church doctrine of ministry is the result of intentionality (design) or simply the way things came about (default). He concludes that a developmental approach is the best way to understand the changes that have shaped the United Church doctrine of ministry thus far.

A further change seemed in the offing when the General Council authorized a remit, the approval of which would have created a single order of ministry in the United Church, uniting ordained and diaconal ministers together with designated lay ministers. (Chambers' article will clarify for readers what these categories mean.) During the period 2015-18, then, United Church presbyteries and congregations were asked to vote on the question of whether the General Council should approve this change. To help facilitate discussion in the Church, *Touchstone* introduced an online blog dealing with the One Order of Ministry remit. It generated substantial discussion, and may have had a role in lifting the quality of discussion in the Church, and perhaps even in defeating the remit. Adam Kilner, a *Touchstone* board member and our web manager, presents a report on the statistics and content of the blog in his article, "One Order of Ministry and the *Touchstone* Blog: A Nationwide Conversation on Ministry."

Not only have changes in understanding the content of the doctrine of ministry arisen over the years, but also there have been changes in the process by which prospective ministers are recruited, examined, supported, educated, and deployed. In her article, "God's

World Needs Leaders: Becoming a Member of the Order of Ministry in The United Church of Canada in 2019,” General Council staff member Bronwyn Corlett gives readers a clear picture of how things stand after several major changes in the current decade.

One of our younger scholars, Morgan Bell, offers us a substantial and intriguing theological account of what it means to be ordained in his article, “Sanctified Participation: An Ontological Theology of Ordination.” There is today an almost *de rigeur* functional understanding of ordination that is understandably asserted to guard against elitism, or the ranking of ministry personnel by status. But this understanding limits the significance of ordination to role only, leaving out the personhood of those ordained, as if such a disjunction could easily be made. While taking seriously the feminist critique of some ontological theories of ordination, Bell argues for an ontology based on new life in Christ, an approach that includes all Christian vocations. Those who are ordained also participate in this divine offer of new life, an offer that includes their personhood in the exercise of role, and that focuses on relationships.

Our profile is on the Rev. Harvey Forster and tells the story of his leadership in the iconic All Peoples’ Mission in Welland, Ontario. It is provided by Betsy Anderson who is a productive researcher on compelling figures in the history of the Canadian church, and whose work frequently appears in these pages.

Four reviews of significant books complete the number.

With thoughts of ministry and of the particular office of the ordained in mind, I recall one moment in particular from the evening of my own ordination in 1969. It was the words of the president of conference who said, as he handed each of the ordinands a Bible, “Take authority to preach the Word of God.” These words sent me forth with an abiding confidence in having been commissioned by church and Holy Spirit to proclaim God’s Word. Like others, of course, I have revised my understanding of what such authority means and how it is to be exercised. I also have had cause to reconsider the way in which the Bible may be regarded as the written Word of God. To find the Word in the words remains a challenge for every preacher, and the living Word is our best guide to what is faithful witness in the text, to what God truly may have inspired. Those of us who are preachers dare to hope that those who hear our sermons will feel addressed by a word from God.

Peter Wyatt

THE DOCTRINE OF MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH: DESIGN OR DEFAULT?

by Steven Chambers

Doctrine—“communally authoritative teachings”¹ regarding beliefs and practices—can be considered restrictive and stifling to some. A more positive view sees doctrine as a theological enterprise engaging “God’s relationship with human beings and communities.”²

Within the larger framework of doctrine, ministry has not generally been featured. The Trinity, Jesus Christ, the church—these doctrines have been preeminent. However, for Bernard Cooke, the doctrine of ministry is “inseparably tied to one’s view of the church, of Christ, of the church’s role in the transformation of human life.” Nothing about faith or theology can be considered, he wrote, without impact on one’s view of Christian ministry.³ Ministry emerges out of the community of believers and “is directed to nurturing the life and activity of the community as a whole.”⁴ Starting with the community of faith—the whole people of God—we consider how community is led, how that leadership is structured, and how it becomes articulated in the life of God’s people.

What can the community-grounded doctrine of ministry say to us today? How did the United Church get to this moment in its doctrine—was it by design or default? This paper will consider how the United Church of Canada’s doctrine of ministry—although somewhat static in its formal expression—has emerged from its antecedent traditions and its experience of time and place, to be part of the relationship of God to human beings and communities today.

The role, character, and theological understanding of the United Church’s ministerial leadership has been the subject of over two dozen studies and reports, most since the 1960s, focusing on the theology of ministry, aspects of particular ministries, vocation, call and settlement, ministerial ethics and isolation, who can be a minister, how much they should be paid and where they should live and what furnishings should

¹ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 74.

² Christine Helmer, *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 169.

³ Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 35-36. Also, Jürgen Moltmann says: “[Ministers] come from the community but come forward in front of it and act in Christ’s name.” *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution of Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 1977), 303.

be in their manses. Some of these studies have been repetitive, some essentially ignored, and some have ploughed new ground; at least one shook the foundation of the church.

“Christian ministry,” writes United Church professor emeritus Harold Wells, “is founded in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ which is God’s mission to the world.”⁵ Wells references Paul: “No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ” (1Cor 3:11). “The ministry of Jesus, initiated at his baptism and empowered by the Spirit (Lk 4:16), was one of servanthood.” Wells reminds us, however, that Jesus did not lay down an authoritative church structure for all time and Scripture gives us no timeless ecclesiology or ministerial blueprint. In this, Wells follows the thinking of an earlier professor at Emmanuel College, John Line, whose book, *The Doctrine of the Christian Ministry*, articulated the source and historical shaping of the doctrine. “God gave a Ministry for the Gospel but not tied to a special Order,”⁶ wrote Line, as he sought to describe the doctrine in the Protestant tradition at mid-twentieth century in relation to apostolic episcopal succession. Both episcopal and non-episcopal understandings of ministry could be valid, Line asserted, as they have each emerged historically. Frequently criticized by Ontario politicians and business leaders for his “socialist views,”⁷ Line understood the Christian faith as historically shaped, open to change, and yet grounded in the gospel. “Christianity in history is not something placed there full-orbed to go on without change,” he wrote. “Christianity in part *becomes* through history.”⁸

Union Discussions

The leaders of church union, whose efforts would bring to life The United Church of Canada in 1925, were eager to co-operate, believing that “their venture in ecumenism would not only improve the operational efficiency of the uniting churches but also create better persons, better

⁵ Harold Wells, “Christological and Biblical Reflections on Ministry,”

Touchstone Blog, 20 June 2016.

<http://touchstonecanada.ca/harold-wells-christological-and-biblical-reflections-on-ministry/>.

⁶ John Line, *The Doctrine of the Christian Ministry* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1959), 123.

⁷ Michael Horn, *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 111.

⁸ Still, Line says: “[T]he Church’s Ministry is not a mere human or ecclesiastical expedient; it is of the will of God . . .,” 179-180.

communities, a better nation,” wrote Phyllis Airhart; “. . . envision[ing] a national church that would relate in a special way to communities across Canada.”⁹ The ministers in those communities across the country, coming mostly from the former uniting denominations—Presbyterian, Methodist or Congregational—would see their day-to-day functions of ministry in a new church continue pretty much as before. A new church signboard would eventually go up and some names would change, but for those local leaders of the new church, their daily focus on church and community life would continue. As an almost unprecedented event in the long history of the church, this union broke through denominational boundaries. Geographic, political, social and economic realities gave union “the decisive nudge,” wrote historian John Webster Grant,¹⁰ but there was clearly a unique vision that “helped to shape the hopes of the founders for the church they envisaged.”¹¹

The founders’ vision included the emerging new church’s understanding of ministry leadership, deeply rooted in the understanding of ministry emerging out of community. A central principle of the Congregational Union of Canada was its understanding of the “communion of saints.” From both the Presbyterian and Methodist traditions, the United Church inherited a conciliar polity where the locus of church authority was grounded in the community of councils, where people would listen for God’s Spirit.¹² This vision was contained in the constituting document, the *Basis of Union*. The committee drafting the *Basis* drew on other articles of faith from other churches, but what is notable, according to N. Keith Clifford, is the presence of original material, the order of it, and the emphasis that emerged.¹³ Within the

⁹ Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), xviii.

¹⁰ John Webster Grant, *The Canadian Experience of Church Union* (London: Lutterworth, 1967), 5.

¹¹ Grant, “What’s Past is Prologue,” in *Voices and Visions: 65 Years of the United Church of Canada* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1990), 126.

¹² See Theology and Faith Committee, The United Church of Canada, “Theology of Call,” The Executive of General Council, March 1994, 14.

¹³ Essentially completed in 1908, a first draft of the *Basis of Union* was published in the *Toronto Globe*, 23 December 1905. As noted by N.K. Clifford, “The United Church of Canada and Doctrinal Confession,” *Touchstone* 2, No. 2 (May 1984), the doctrinal section was the first confessional statement created by a major denomination in Canada as other

Articles of Doctrine in the *Basis*, Article XVII, *Of the Ministry*, was one of those original sections and it stated:

ARTICLE XVII—Of the Ministry—We believe that Jesus Christ, as the Supreme Head of the Church, has appointed therein a ministry of the Word and sacraments, and calls men to this ministry; that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes and chooses those whom He calls, and should thereupon duly ordain them to the work of the ministry.¹⁴

There were some difficult issues in the union discussion and, significantly, two of these were connected to ministry. First was a struggle over examining potential ministers. In Congregationalism, it was a long-standing principle that written creeds were appropriate for the church's faith proclamation, but never acceptable as a faith test for future ministers. Presbyterians and Methodists, on the other hand, did use doctrinal questions to examine candidates for ministry. After more than a year of challenging debate, and the near-withdrawal of the Congregational Union from union discussions,¹⁵ it was agreed not to ask candidates to declare their adherence to a written statement of faith, but to ask for their "essential agreement" with the statement of doctrine (and its agreement with Scripture) in the *Basis of Union*. Although some saw this as an example of the union discussions reaching a "critical dialogue" moving the union forward, in a more specific sense it established within the United Church a strong characteristic for its doctrine of ministry: a tension between what constitutes orthodox belief and the competency of the Church to assess it.¹⁶

"Essential agreement" remains,¹⁷ and so does the tension. But it

churches would tend to adopt creeds and confessions of their parent churches in Europe, Britain, or the United States.

¹⁴ Ministry "appointed" by Christ is derived from Calvin, who considered it Christ's gift to the church, not just in the past but in the present. John T. McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology," in *Church History* 12, No. 2 (June 1943): 79. McNeill references this to Calvin's comment on Ephesians 4:11-12.

¹⁵ D.L. Ritchie, *The Genius of Congregationalism*, Ryerson Essay No. 33 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1926), as quoted by Grant, *The Canadian Experience of Church Union*, 38.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The United Church of Canada, Ministry Personnel, Section III, 13, 2, *The Manual* (2019), 44.

is a constructive, theological, and adaptive tension. According to John Young, the determination about “essential agreement” was initially, and remains today, an “indication of the importance the denomination places on theology.”¹⁸ The rigour with which an examining committee could test a candidate was in place, as well as the recognition that changing contexts and circumstances would elicit not only new statements of faith from the denomination, but also new articulation of the faith from a candidate under examination. This critical element in the development of United Church theological understanding clearly set a framework for ministry in the church.

The second issue at union that directly concerned ministry also involved matters that had to be resolved among the antecedent denominations. The polity, or governance, of the new church, was viewed by the founders to be largely consistent with what went before. Despite differences in names, the judicatories or courts of the new church would serve essentially the same functions or could be seen to be an adaptation of the former. However, there were differences in the deploying of ministers in the uniting churches. Churches in the Methodist tradition received new ministers through an appointment system, in which ministers were sent to local churches by a bishop or superintendent, and regularly were moved from one church to another.¹⁹ In the Presbyterian system, ministers were “called” by a congregation to come to minister with them. What emerged was an integration of these two systems of ministerial deployment into a national, church-wide system. In the new hybrid practice, “calling” (from a congregation to a minister) and “settling” (by the church courts into that local ministry) reflected the Presbyterian model. However, in instances where a minister was not successful in receiving a call, or a pastoral charge was not successful in calling a minister, a “settlement committee” would ensure that a minister was in place—reflecting the appointment model of Methodism enacted by committee rather than by a bishop or superintendent.

This “transfer and settlement” machinery, fully operational by the 1930s, meant that ordinands could be, and usually were, transferred from their home conference to another conference more in need of ministers. Matching ministers with the needs of pastoral charges, was

¹⁸ John Young, “Introduction,” in *The Theology of The United Church of Canada*, ed. Don Schweitzer, Robert C. Fennell, and Michael Bourgeois (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier, 2019), 2-3.

¹⁹ See Neil Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 422.

primary and pragmatic; it suited the context of the day and the vision of the planners of union.²⁰ In an optimistic, hope-filled promise, all pastoral charges were guaranteed a minister and all effective ministers were guaranteed a place of ministry. This concept remains to date.²¹ Transfer and settlement held the defining role of required entry point in the movement from ministry candidate to minister *in* the order of ministry. There had been a general understanding in the United Church, that “willingness to go through the Transfer and Settlement process [was] a necessary indication that a person’s call to ordered ministry was genuine.” Some accepted that understanding, believing strongly that the process should continue; others wondered if the church was “trying to make a virtue out of its necessity to meet the needs of the pastoral charges who had difficulty securing an order of ministry person.”²² Only recently—after massive changes in society and among the lives of people in ministry and numerous church reports²³—was the transfer and settlement machine retired.²⁴ The result is more independence for candidates and congregations in the “employment” search and, some might say, less common national vision for ministry. What is also clear is that a system of required deployment would no longer shape ministry.

Women in Leadership . . . and Ministry

It didn’t take long, after the initial blush of union, for questions to surface about who would be in ministry in the new church. A report came to the 2nd General Council in 1926 that brought forward four challenging matters: the question of the ordination of women and related implications; the admission of ministers from other churches; the nature and ordering of deaconesses, and the place and ordering of lay church workers, both women and men.²⁵ Although the *Basis of Union*, Article XVII, clearly stated that ministers in the new church were men, women were not absent in leadership. The same Council heard of the

²⁰ “Theology of Call,” 2.

²¹ Ministry Personnel, 10.1, 10.2, *The Manual* (2019), 43.

²² “Theology of Call,” 5.

²³ A major report went to the 29th General Council (1982).

²⁴ Transfer and Settlement Committees, and the process that they managed, were eliminated by a remit process that began with the 42nd General Council (2016), was voted on by all presbyteries and pastoral charges, and was enacted by the 43rd General Council (2018).

²⁵ Howard M. Mills, *Ordination in the United Church of Canada: An Historical Analysis* (Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1983), 2.

contribution of over 700 women in diverse ministries across Canada and around the world, including 116 in the Deaconess Order, 355 with the Women's Missionary Society, 135 appointed by the Board of Home Missions, 50 appointed by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service, 56 employed in congregations (non-aid receiving) and seven women working for para-church organizations.²⁶

Lydia Gruchy was the first woman to be ordained in the new church. She had been serving the church in Saskatchewan as a lay worker for several years, and was the first woman to graduate in theology at the Presbyterian Theological College (now St. Andrew's College) in 1923.²⁷ A modest and pragmatic individual, now legendary in United Church history, Gruchy didn't see herself as a forerunner, but rather as one who was well-suited to carry teaching skills, with theological training, into ministry leadership. She didn't really see a connection to ordination until others did. With the support of college and church officials, Kamsack Presbytery of the new United Church—emphasizing the key principle that it is the church that drives the process not the candidate—requested her ordination through Saskatchewan Conference at its first meeting in 1925.²⁸ The 2nd General Council meeting in 1926 authorized a remit, or a poll, to all the presbyteries about the question.²⁹ The question in the remit included both the matter of the ordination of women and the creation of a diaconate. Strong affirmation toward the ordination in some places, mixed with almost equally strong reluctance to move ahead, combined with a good deal of inexperience in the intricacies of the remit process, led to a defeat.³⁰

²⁶ John Shearman, "Changes to the Doctrinal Basis of Union of The United Church of Canada before and since 1925," *Canadian Methodist Historical Society Papers*, 13 (2001): 184.

²⁷ Mary Hallett, "Lydia Gruchy—The First Women Ordained in The United Church of Canada," *Touchstone* 4, No. 1: 20.

²⁸ Hallett, "Ladies—We Give You the Pulpit," *Touchstone* 4, No. 1: 8.

²⁹ The "remit" was a method of polling the presbyteries, and sometimes pastoral charges, to authorize the General Council to change the *Basis of Union*. This protocol, derived from the Presbyterians through the Church of Scotland, was to ensure a broad consultation process for major doctrinal change. See United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings (ROP)*, 2nd General Council (1926), 114.

³⁰ On the matter of the ordination of women, 32 presbyteries responded positively; 34 negatively and 23 were positive but recommended that action be deferred. On the matter of the diaconate, 13 presbyteries were in favor; 5 opposed. *ROP* 3rd General Council (1928), 29. The sessional committee

In the Methodist Church, debate on the role of women in leadership had been ongoing for several years, with strong support in the west, but stronger resistance nationally. In 1918, after women had won the vote in several provinces, “Methodist men had become more generous,” wrote Mary Hallett, agreeing that “a woman should have equal rights with men in regard to all the privileges of Church membership.” This sentiment took shape in a motion passed by the Methodist General Conference, permitting women to be part of local quarterly official boards and to be delegates at subsequent General Conference meetings. A logical next step to move toward women’s ordination apparently took the 1922 General Conference by surprise; it was defeated. Methodists and Presbyterians came into union having discussed ordaining women, but not permitting it.³¹

The Saskatchewan request to ordain Lydia Gruchy was reviewed by the *Commission on the Ordination of Women*, which reported to the 3rd General Council (1928):

Concerning this Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the position of the Church Universal, and of this Church has been, and is, that by ordination to this office, the functions and duties of the Ministry become the primary and life-long vocation of the ordained. He is to give himself wholly to this one thing. The calling is of such a nature that no other vocation of life can be primary. The Church and the young men who are ordained equally understand that their ordination is to a life-long service.³²

As it side-stepped the question of ordaining women, this report seemed to move to a “sacramental” or “life-imprinting” understanding of ministry—a departure from what some would regard as the more functional understanding that characterized the Reformed heritage. Rejecting both the ordination of women to ordered ministry, and to the diaconate, the General Council contradicted itself by stating that it nevertheless saw “no bar in religion or reason” to either of those actions.³³

recommended no action be taken on the remit, 120-21, and the council agreed, 69.

³¹ Hallett, “Ladies—We Give You the Pulpit,” 6-8.

³² *ROP*, 3rd General Council (1928), 365.

³³ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

Lydia Gruchy, fully supported by her mission superintendent in his report in 1934, continued in her work, despite those who said it could only be done by men. Improved clarity and effective use of the remit process would eventually bring a resolution. A remit, issued in 1934, asked the church to consider the inclusion of the words “and women” to Article XVII of the *Basis*. The result was positive, adopted by the General Council in 1936,³⁴ and Lydia Gruchy was ordained in Moose Jaw by Saskatchewan Conference in November of that year. As Howard Mills wrote in 1983, that change to Article XVII, preserved the interpretation that had been made by the 2nd General Council (1926), when it said:

Within the jurisdiction of the United Church of Canada, a minister is constituted by the call of God, the consent of the people, the election of the Conference or General Council, and the ordination to the office and work of a minister in the Church of God by prayer and the laying on of hands . . .³⁵

Although other changes would come, this pattern articulated shortly after union (and exercised in the case of Lydia Gruchy)—call, consent, election, and ordination—has remained constant over the years.³⁶

Issues remained, however, for the ordination of women, in particular pertaining to marriage. In 1947 Margaret F. Butler, who was married, was ordained by Montreal and Ottawa Conference. The Settlement Committee, however, refused to place her in a pastoral charge since she had a one-year-old child. She returned to school after her three children were grown, received a master’s degree in social work and worked for the Ottawa Children’s Aid Society. She died in 1980 without serving in pastoral office.³⁷ When Elinor Leard was ordained in 1957 (over the objection of the moderator of the day), Phyllis Airhart notes that the General Council was asked to clarify “the relationship of an ordained woman minister to her work following her marriage.” *The Commission on Ordination* (1962) reported that a woman couldn’t combine the calling of ministry with her role in the family: she couldn’t have a “life-long and primary vocation.” The General Council, sensing how problematic this report’s view was and not wanting a national vote, turned the matter to its

³⁴ *ROP*, 7th General Council (1936), 15.

³⁵ *ROP*, 2ND General Council (1926), 191.

³⁶ Mills, *Ordination in The United Church of Canada*, 22.

³⁷ Shearman, “Changes to the Doctrinal Basis of Union,” 186.

Executive, which turned to doctrine in the *Basis*—Article XVII—where it stated that men and women were called to ministry, without mention of marital status.³⁸

These actions, although long and tedious, illustrate the honing of the church’s legislative authority through the remit processes. As the church articulated its self-understanding, it was also crafting its “praxis”—even its doctrine—of ministry. Studies of ministry, generally established by the General Council based on a request from another court, began to be common from the early sixties. A concern would be raised; a study initiated. Where the first decades of the church’s life had focused largely on qualifications for ministry and specifically the place of women in ministry, the church now began to look more closely at the ministry of the laity and its relationship to ordered ministry, a project that would continue for decades.

Unity in Ministry

The *Commission on Ministry in the Twentieth Century*, reporting to the 23rd General Council (1968), boldly named the unity of ministry: “The One Ministry is the ministry of God himself whose relentless love for the hurting world broke into plainest view in Jesus Christ. This ministry God gives to his whole Church.”³⁹ From a classical Reformed perspective,⁴⁰ the Commission stated explicitly: “God initiates ministry . . . Within the Church, ministry is people, the whole people of God (*laos*) daring to do Christ’s work in the world.”⁴¹ This Commission offered a new emphasis, and new terminology, speaking about the “Professional Ministry” as the “order of ministry” that “enabled the Church to perform or fulfill the one ministry . . . The purpose of the professional ministry is to intensify the ministry of the people, not to substitute for it.”⁴²

³⁸ Airhart, 184.

³⁹ *ROP*, 23rd General Council (1968), 225. *The Report of Commission on the Ministry in the Twentieth Century* was issued in a pamphlet form, perhaps indicating its significance at the time. It was this commission that recommended the establishment of the Division of Ministry and Personnel Services alongside other General Council administrative and program divisions, 21.

⁴⁰ God “initiates, governs and maintains [the] community,” according to Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994 [1968]), 354.

⁴¹ *Commission*, *ROP* 23rd General Council, 223.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 225. The professional ministry was seen to be comprised of two categories: the ordained ministry and the lay ministry, which includes

Notable here is the inclusion of ordained ministry and specific lay ministry, both regarded as professional and both employed. This named the *status quo* in a way that defined the edges sharply. For the report's writers, this "professional ministry" occupied an educated and trained role within the "one ministry" of the Church—"that which is shared by the whole people of God." Ordained ministry held a continuing separate place, in the broad description, what some have seen as an ongoing extension of clericalism.

The "professional" label for ministers has deep and complex roots across North American churches. Historian Martin Marty traced the identity of American clergy through three evolving stages of professional development: the *public role* in the period of early church establishment, the *congregational-denominational role* where institutions emerged creating seminaries and bureaucratic structures, and then the era of *private religion and clientele* where "[m]odern, free, industrial, technological, media-dominated societies push religious institutions to the margins . . . [forcing] specialization."⁴³

Brooks Holifield notes that the increased differentiation in the professions in the United States, "meant that ministry began to seem unlike other professions at precisely the moment when professionals were striving to become more specialized, scientific, state-certified, and monopolistic . . ."⁴⁴ The problematic terminology (for some) of ministry as a profession shows up as early as mid-nineteenth century in Canada as schools and "professional degrees" emerged from the apprenticeship model of training ministers.⁴⁵ For the United Church, denominationally-led ministry articulation met increased specialization in the training and work of ministry. The United Church context saw the 1980s minister, as described by Marty, as one who "competes with *Psychology Today* . . . the airport newsstand and the guru, the encounter group and the classroom, the therapy of the season and the anti-institutional ethos."⁴⁶

deaconesses, certified employed churchmen, and commissioned lay ministers.

⁴³ Martin E. Marty, "The Clergy," in *The Professions in American History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 84.

⁴⁴ E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 219.

⁴⁵ N. Keith Clifford, "The History of Protestant Theological Education in Canada," *Sessions d'étude - Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique*, 56, 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1006956ar>.

⁴⁶ Marty, 85.

Ministers were professionals—some generalists, others increasingly specialists—even if that was difficult for some to accept. Eventually, the terminology that would encompass all categories of employed ministry in the United Church (lay, diaconal, ordained) emerged as the awkward but accurate terminology of “paid accountable ministry.”

Shared ministry of clergy and laity, reflective of the “priesthood of all believers” was hard-wired into the courts and the ethos of the church, if not always successfully implemented.⁴⁷ What remains true is that, if any aspect of ministry has intensified over the 90-plus years of the United Church, it has been the role of the *laos*, the whole people of God in ministry.

General Council follow-up to the *Report of the Commission on the Ministry in the Twentieth Century* was lacking: several recommendations were referred; some remits were contemplated but were not activated. The 25th General Council (1972) established *The Task Force on Ministry* to “work out the implications” of the *Commission*.⁴⁸ The Task Force offered clarification of the “one order of ministry known as ‘the Ministry of Word and Sacrament’ through which the Church performs and is enabled to perform its ministry” in three distinct functions: oversight, pastoral work, and service. Admission to this “one order” was through ordination, it said, with the relationship among the three functions exercised in a lateral, not hierarchical, way.⁴⁹ The Task Force reported to the 27th General Council (1977), which by this time had heard much concern about its work from theological schools, other church courts, and individuals. This Council raised the temperature, stating “There is urgent need to engage the whole Church immediately and intensively in a study and decision-making process with a view to

⁴⁷ Andrew Stirling suggests that the “priesthood of all believers” was “a negative doctrine through which the Reformers responded to the extreme sacerdotalism of the medieval church” and as such is not particularly useful for current ecclesial discussions. “The ‘Priesthood of All Believers’ is really a product of ecclesiastical battles of the past,” and is essentially only helpful for the church to see its ministry as a whole, but not in defining orders of ministry. See Stirling, “An Ecclesiology of Monism or Trinitarianism: Which Way Forward for the Church?” in *Touchstone Blog*, 7 September 2016. <http://touchstonecanada.ca/andrew-stirling-an-ecclesiology-of-monism-or-trinitarianism-which-way-forward-for-the-church/>.

⁴⁸ 25th General Council (1972), *ROP*, 54-55.

⁴⁹ *Report of The Task Force on Ministry*, established by the 25th General Council (1972), *ROP*, 54-55.

defining its belief about many fundamental issues . . . including . . . definition of ministry, *vis a vis* discipleship, clarification of the meaning of Sacrament, [and the] meaning of ordination . . .”⁵⁰ Council confessed further: “The United Church of Canada is not yet satisfied with its theology of the ministry of the laity or of the ordered ministry.”⁵¹ A further study was launched, but not before one key action was taken: without waiting for a decision on the ordination of commissioned ministers (Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen), the Council fully aligned the salaries and benefits of that group with ordained ministers.⁵² By making this clear and tangible decision, expressing the principle of equivalent compensation in the denomination, a direction was set.

The decade of the seventies saw ongoing studies on ministry move in ways that were not always connected. The focus also moved elsewhere in the early to middle years of the decade. Union discussions with the Anglican Church of Canada were top of mind for many—and ministry would become an important part of the discussions.

A Wider Conversation

The invitation to consider further church union came from the Church of England in Canada in 1943.⁵³ The United Church responded with interest and a joint committee was established in 1944. As early as 1946, a proposal for Mutually Acceptable Ministry was made, but not accepted. Two decades later, the churches agreed on *Principles of Union*, which moved forward as a working document culminating in the *Plan of Union*, approved by the General Commission on Church Union in November 1972. However, in 1975 the General Synod of the Anglican Church, reaffirming a commitment to Christian unity, moved away from any organic union, effectively bringing the process to an end. Ministry, and specifically ordination, was a key factor in the collapse. “Put simply,” writes Phyllis Airhart, “without ordination by a bishop in accordance with the doctrine of apostolic succession, was the ordination of United

⁵⁰ Report of *The Task Force on Ministry*, Authorized for Study in the Church by the 27th General Council of The United Church of Canada, August 1977, iv.

⁵¹ 27th General Council (1977), *ROP*, 71-72.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 83, 141.

⁵³ The invitation was issued to Christian churches generally in Canada, from the Church of England in Canada (so-called at the time). The General Commission on Church Union (The Anglican Church of Canada, Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] in Canada, The United Church of Canada: *Plan of Union*, 1973), 5.

Church ministers really valid?”⁵⁴ But, as John Shearman points out, the time spent in negotiation with the Anglican Church enabled the United Church “to rethink its theology and practice of ministry in much greater depth.”⁵⁵

This reflection on theology and practice of ministry also took place in a broader global context. The World Council of Churches’ document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM, 1982), solidly located ministry within the context of God’s people in community:

Though the churches are agreed in their general understanding of the calling of the people of God, they differ in their understanding of how the life of the Church is to be ordered. In particular, there are differences concerning the place and forms of the ordained ministry. As they engage in the effort to overcome these differences, the churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God.⁵⁶

While the BEM document explored the contemporary consensus—and remaining differences—in fundamental areas of the faith and life in the ecumenical church, the United Church’s official response noted “strong reservations” about the report’s articulated doctrine of ministry. While the church could support the BEM document’s central assertion that “it is the whole people of God who are called into ministry,” it expressed dismay that “little consequence seems to follow in the text from the affirmation of the ministry of the laos.” The non-ordained appeared in the BEM text to be “mere ‘supporters’ of ministry.”⁵⁷

The United Church response, prepared from comments solicited throughout the church, developed by the Committee on Theology and Faith, and authorized by the Executive of the General Council, noted that the church’s desire for Christian unity is not dependent on ecclesial or sacramental concurrence: “We have tended not to question the validity of the ministry or of the sacraments of other churches, even when the

⁵⁴ Airhart, 277.

⁵⁵ Shearman, 190.

⁵⁶ World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 20.

⁵⁷ World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Paper No. 132, *Churches’ Response to BEM: Official Responses to the “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” Text*, Vol. II, ed. Max Thurian, 281-282.

theology and practice of those churches seemed antithetical to our own.” But the response wondered if the language of BEM was simply too “catholic,” and whether “low church” perspectives and attitudes were sufficiently recognized.⁵⁸

The United Church’s response to BEM offers clarity and precision about the doctrine of ministry in the denomination. For the United Church, ministry is not a priority given to the *person* in ministry over their authorized *function*. The critique of BEM noted a “hierarchical tone,” in it; that it was “decidedly patriarchal in tone,” pleading “in a highly patronizing way” for the recognition of women and recognizing little about the context of current feminist critique. In summary, the United Church’s perspective was clear: “The United Church of Canada views ministry as granted to the whole community first, and then nourished and represented in its various constituent ministries, exercised equally by both men and women as lay and ordained servants of the church and witnesses of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, BEM has been a basis for many “mutual recognition” agreements among churches, and remains a point of reference today in ecumenical dialogue. Ecumenically, the United Church has engaged in conversations with a variety of partners over its history, and in these discussions, ministry has often been featured in an important way. There has been an acceleration of ecumenical consensus recently with the 2015 agreements of mutual recognition of ministries with The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and the United Church of Christ (USA).⁶⁰

Diaconal Ministry

The Presbyterian and Methodist churches came into union with orders of women in ministries of service, called deaconesses,⁶¹ which became the

⁵⁸ *Churches’ Response to BEM*, 284.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁶⁰ 42nd General Council (2015), *ROP*, 134.

⁶¹ Christian associations of women re-emerged in an organized way across Europe and Britain around the beginning of the nineteenth century. The ministry of the *diakonos* (servant/minister) was known in the early church and the term “deaconess” dates to the fourth century. Church history would see this ministry of mostly women grow and subside, but never totally disappear. Often identifying with those on the margins, members of the modern diaconate emerged in mid-nineteenth century Germany and their influence was felt in churches of the Reformation subsequently. See *The Diakonia of The United Church of Canada*, Part 1: Diaconal History.

Deaconess Order of the United Church in 1926 consisting of 116 members. Serving in Christian social work and in hospitals, immigration centres and indigenous communities in Canada, they also worked overseas, often in association with the Women's Missionary Society. Following the war, this ministry transitioned more into educational work in congregations.

Proposals were made soon after union to create an ordained diaconate with authority to preach and baptize. This was rejected by the Church on more than one occasion. In 1964 Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen (a lay body of church workers) became members of church courts. No longer isolated from the structures of the church, they became more visible. But ambivalence and complication continued—a theme that Nancy Hardy advances in a mid-eighties' history of diaconal ministry.⁶² Membership in church courts for Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen (who were considered lay) came at the numerical expense of lay congregational delegates. When the Commission on Ministry brought deaconesses into the Order of Ministry, this was resolved, but the question of ordination continued through the seventies and into the eighties.

Following the alignment of salaries in 1978, continuing study processes, and the growing experience of the breadth of ministry throughout the church, Deaconesses and Certified Churchmen were named Commissioned Ministers and then Diaconal Ministers. The 28th General Council (1980) established that Diaconal Ministers would be *commissioned* to a ministry of education, service, and pastoral care; Ordained Ministers would be *ordained* to a ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. A remit changed Article XVII of the *Basis* to reflect this. Diaconal ministry is distinctively characterized by its calling, formation, way of ministry leadership, and its relation to the world-wide *diakonia*. Licensing diaconal ministers to preside at the sacraments became possible in 1982, but inconsistent application across the Church and perceived inequality led to continuing debate about this aspect of diaconal ministry. A standard approach to that licensing exists now, following a change to the policy by-laws (avoiding a remit) that requires regions to “grant a diaconal minister a licence to administer the

Background document in consideration of General Council Remit #6, distributed in October 2016.

⁶² Nancy Elizabeth Hardy, *Called to Serve: A Story of Diaconal Ministry in The United Church of Canada* (United Church of Canada, Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, 1985), 34-35.

sacraments when the diaconal minister is serving in a call or appointment, or are employed in another ministry position.”⁶³

Nancy Hardy identifies the *Task Force on Ministry Report* (1977)⁶⁴ as a low point in the history of diaconal ministry. The Task Force, in its effort to articulate the lateral (not hierarchical) functions of ministry—Service (Diaconal), Pastoral (Presbyterial), Oversight (Episcopal)—and that ministry was either lay (dispersed and spontaneous) or ordained (ordered), proposed no continuing place for commissioned ministers. Those who were already commissioned would be offered ordination, and the categories of Certified Churchman and Commissioned Minister would be ended. “The authors of the report were undoubtedly sincere in their efforts to redefine the ministry of the people of God, but, nevertheless, their recommendations were seen by many in diaconal ministry as a denial of their vocation,” wrote Hardy. “Many felt that if they had wanted that route (ordination), they would have chosen it; since many had done post-graduate study (not in courses required for ordination), they wanted to continue in the path they had set for themselves.”⁶⁵ The *Report of Project: Ministry* (1980) rejected the earlier report’s proposal that commissioned ministers be ordained, and indeed offered an apology to deaconesses and those in commissioned ministry for the church’s historical failure to honour and respect their calling.⁶⁶

Project: Ministry was tasked with helping the church study the *Task Force on Ministry Report*. Following a robust round of study and consultation, utilizing the General Council’s Research Office, aspects of the *Task Force Report* were tested in congregations and survey data was tabulated. “The United Church of Canada has always been noted for incorporating within its theology and polity a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices,” wrote Anne Squire, then chair of the *Project: Ministry* steering committee. The project aimed not at telling the church how wide its ministry might be but at attempting to listen. Thus, the conclusion was a recommendation to revise Article XVII of the *Basis*, given the “deepening consensus among us that the church as a whole is ‘a ministering community.’” In that recommendation, the article would be

⁶³ *The Manual*, I.2.4.2. This licence is for the duration of the call, appointment, or other ministry position. Although a proposal was discussed at the 43rd General Council (2018), it was referred and later approved by the Executive of the General Council, 29 September 2018, 184-185.

⁶⁴ Received by the 27th General Council (1977) as a “working document.”

⁶⁵ Hardy, 35-36.

⁶⁶ *The Report of Project: Ministry* (1980), 54.

retitled, “Of Ordination,” and it would be specific to the ordained. Then the other sections of *The Manual* would be edited to use the terms “ministry” and “minister” to correspond “to the understanding that the whole church participates in the ministry of Christ.”⁶⁷ The recommendation was not approved.

Ministry discussions would often get heated. In 1985, Anne Squire, then about to retire as General Secretary of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, described the mood of the debate:

Some have accepted with enthusiasm the concept of ministry as the ministry of Jesus Christ, a ministry which is shared, by all, and thus are living in the church as if that were the norm. Others are having more difficulty. Some ordained persons are reluctant to relinquish the power and prestige which they consider rightfully theirs through the rite of ordination. Some laity are reluctant to accept the responsibility which comes with the acceptance of a share of ministry. And diaconal ministers are wondering where they fit into the scheme of things.⁶⁸

Studies Continue

Studies of the family and of human sexuality through the early years of the 1980s, and a request from a lower court about ordination, would press the General Council toward a ground-breaking change in ministry in 1988. Following an extraordinary study process, and after receiving hundreds of petitions and letters, the 32nd General Council approached the question of sexual orientation and ministry with a precise two-step response. First, it clarified church membership, stating: “all persons regardless of their sexual orientation who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to him, are welcome to be or become full members.” Then, about ministry eligibility, it said: “All members . . . are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry.”⁶⁹

Of course, there was extensive theological, biblical, and historical background work lying behind the two-step conclusion reached by General Council. Without diminishing the painful and exhausting work that engaged so many (before, during, and after), this pivotal moment marks a point of precision in the Church’s understanding of

⁶⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁸ Anne M. Squire, *Envisioning Ministry* (Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1985), 13-14.

⁶⁹ 32nd General Council (1988), ROP, 111.

ministry. The clarification of membership, and then of eligibility for ministry, was an eloquent action of change, achieved not through the legislative process of remit, but rather by establishing a foundation from which people could move to either new understanding and practice, or not. This hard theological and ecclesial work further defined the United Church's doctrine of ministry, changing much in the church's ethos, practice, and self-understanding, but nothing in Article XVII of the *Basis*.

Studies continued: *Ministry Together: A Report on Ministry for the 21st Century* (2000) articulated connections to wider ecumenical developments, changing educational approaches, and the intricacies of the denomination's polity and governance. It re-articulated the broad call to a ministry of all, which would later be strongly affirmed in the 2006 *Song of Faith*:

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.

For the sake of the world,

God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.

In the church,

some are called to specific ministries of leadership,

both lay and ordered;

some witness to the good news;

some uphold the art of worship;

some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;

some build up the community of wisdom;

some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.

To embody God's love in the world,

the work of the church requires the ministry and

discipleship of all believers.

Song of Faith (2006)

Ministry Together initiated the category of Designated Lay Ministry (DLM) from the previous lay employment structure. The DLM category was envisioned as a local, time-limited professional appointment in ministry. If this seemed to be an opportunity to clarify ministry categories, it appeared to have done the reverse. The church found it hard to handle questions about who would be ordained: what their training would be, and how and where would they serve? As the century turned, categories of ministry in the United Church seemed to be more complicated than ever.

At about the same time, there were also some troubling indications about the health of ministers and, in that, of ministry itself. It

was small consolation that the United Church was not alone in this. From 2001 to 2005, a comprehensive research project in the United States, *Pulpit and Pew Study*, conducted in-depth interviews with pastors, held numerous conferences, and produced dozens of articles, reports, and books. Study director Jackson Carroll would conclude that “the ministry is in many respects a troubled profession.”⁷⁰ It wasn’t a new conclusion. None other than H. Richard Niebuhr, in his 1956 book *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, had referred to ministry as “The Perplexed Profession.”⁷¹ Howard Mills, a former General Secretary of the United Church’s General Council and, before that, of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, wrote in 1980: “There is a lot of pain, frustration and uncertainty among those who are ‘in ministry’ . . . Morale in ministry seems . . . threatened . . . All of us (in ministry) feel powerless, even oppressed, in a world that is rapidly growing more complex and unmanageable.”⁷² Indeed, the 21st General Council (1964) had established the *Commission on Ministry in the Twentieth Century* to respond to resolutions from across the church that revealed a “growing sense of frustration amongst congregations, presbyteries, and ministers as they seek to actualize the church’s ministry in our changing society.” Several boards and bodies of the church were also dealing with this kind of concern.⁷³

By the late 1990s, the United Church had become aware through its Employee Assistance Counselling Program of a high degree of isolation—not geographic, but individual and relational—among people in ministry. The findings were a wake-up call. A significant number of ministers, this study found, were feeling overwhelmed and isolated, and having difficulty finding people in whom they could trust or confide.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Jackson W. Carroll, “Protestant Pastoral Ministry at the Beginning of the New Millennium,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Scientific Study of Religion and Religious Research Association, Houston, TX, 18 October 2000, 1. See the archival site of this Lily Endowment-funded research project: <http://www.pulpitandpew.org/>.

⁷¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, in collaboration with Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafson, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 48.

⁷² Howard M. Mills, “Clergy morale: ministering in hard times,” Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, *Perspective* 4, no. 3 (August 1980).

⁷³ *Report of Commission on the Ministry in The Twentieth Century*, 23rd General Council (1968), 1.

⁷⁴ Warren Shepell Research Group, *The Survey of Ministry Personnel: Study of Isolation in Ministry for The United Church of Canada*, 1998.

The Isolation in Ministry Report, as it became known, was a watershed moment for the Church; it did not stay on the shelf. Conferences (mostly) worked hard to address many of the report's findings by establishing supportive processes for people in ministry. The key point of this outside report was a systemic one: there is a "lack of denominational clarity concerning the various categories of paid accountable ministry."⁷⁵ Was this lack of clarity true? Had a focus on the ministry of all with a "professional ministry" category encompassing ordained, diaconal, and lay individuals resulted in confusion, with some serious, isolating results?

Building on the need for more clarity about ministry, and attentiveness to isolation, and following the broad acceptance of the *Song of Faith* (2006), which achieved theological clarity for many, a *Statement on Ministry* was approved by the 41st General Council in 2012. It carefully described the *status quo*:

1. The ministry of all, the *ecclesia*, called into existence by the presence of Jesus and the call to continue Jesus' ministry in the world.
2. Ministries of Leadership—specific ministries, both lay and ordered, volunteer or paid, these are ministries that may include youth and worship leaders, pastoral visitors, licensed lay worship leaders, community and outreach workers and ministries of oversight at all courts of the church.
3. Paid Accountable Ministries—the Order of Ministry in two expressions, ordained and diaconal. And lay expressions of paid accountable ministries, either accountable to a presbytery or to a congregation.⁷⁶

The "ministry of all" was there, the multiple categories were all there, and, some might say, the reality of the confusion was there too. Everyone saw oneself in the picture. The 2012 *Statement*, grounded in mission, recognized the continuing need for transformation:

⁷⁵ The United Church of Canada Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Services, "Isolation in Ministry," Executive of General Council, April 28- May 1, 2006, 19.

⁷⁶ "Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada (2012), approved by the 41st General Council.

The church is about God's mission in the world. Therefore, the Holy Spirit continually calls the church to renew its understanding of ministry, opening itself to new expressions that serve the needs of the present day.

In particular, existing paradigms of congregational identity are changing. People no longer maintain formerly expected patterns of participation. The United Church is challenged to re-image the nature of life in the church. As the church has begun to experiment with new expressions of community it will develop a greater variety of forms and models of ministry that will involve all of the people of the church. As the church carries God's Word into the world in new ways, ministry will be characterized by more collaboration, networking, and transparency as well as a variety of educational approaches. Ministry will be transformed as the church itself is transformed.⁷⁷

Following this statement, and echoing *Project: Ministry* (1980), an addition to the church's bylaws appeared as a legislative and ecclesiological reminder: "All ministers, members, and adherents in the United Church are engaged in ministry."⁷⁸

Another critical action would accompany this work at the 41st General Council. As we have seen, the fundamental elements of the doctrine of ministry are simply expressed in the Doctrine section of the *Basis of Union*, but they also emerge throughout the rest of the *Basis* and in other documents and statements of the church. While these subsequent documents are changeable and not as authoritative as the Doctrine section, it is certainly also true that ministry takes its form and shape from the interplay of the lived experience of the church with that foundational expression. As John Young notes, there was an underlying principle held by the authors of union related to the concept of "subordinate standard," namely that subsequent statements of faith could emerge to "express the faith tradition in the context of later generations."⁷⁹ This continues and, at the 2012 General Council, the

⁷⁷ 41st General Council (2012) "Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada," 165-169.

⁷⁸ *The Manual* (2019), H.1.

⁷⁹ Young notes that the concept of "subordinate standard" played a large role in the thinking of the framers of the 1925 *Basis*, but it became "lost in the UCC's institutional memory until its rediscovery in 2009," "Introduction,"

Church incorporated into the Doctrine section three previously authorized faith statements as “subordinate standards.”⁸⁰ These now provide a more complete picture of the doctrine of ministry within the Doctrine section of the *Basis*.

Mission and Ministry

The Statement on Ministry (2012), with its strong grounding in mission—“The church is about God’s mission in the world”—was a reminder of the connection between mission and ministry. In the period following the First World War, coinciding with a time of significant theological growth for the United Church, there was a major missiological shift across the Protestant churches. As opposed to seeing mission in soteriological terms (“as saving individuals from eternal damnation”), or cultural terms (“introducing people from the East and the South to the blessings and privileges of the Christian West”), or in terms of salvation history (“as the process by which the world . . . would be transformed into the kingdom of God”), missiologist David Bosch proposed that mission was shifting in the mid-twentieth century to seeing it in theocentric terms, as having its origin in God: “Mission has its origins in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.”⁸¹ The concept of mission originating in God, *missio Dei*, would grow, develop, and expand over the middle to later years of the twentieth century. “Since God’s concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of the *missio Dei*,” wrote Bosch as he assessed this movement. “The *missio Dei* is God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate.”⁸²

Alongside the development of *missio Dei*, the concept of “partnership in mission” emerged. People in mission would go to other locations to serve “in partnership,” responding to the invitation of co-workers and colleagues in mission there. By 1988, the United Church articulated these two themes in one document, stating, “our partnership is not primarily in the life and work of our partners. It is rather a partnership

The Theology of the United Church of Canada, 17.

⁸⁰ Added to the 1925 “Articles of Doctrine” were: “A Statement of Faith” (1940), “A New Creed” (1968), and “A Song of Faith” (2006).

⁸¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigms Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 392.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 391.

with them in God's mission."⁸³

The United Church's understanding of ministry has developed together with these evolving understandings of mission; both have been of critical concern. David Bosch noted it this way, "The crisis we are facing in respect to ministry is part and parcel of the crisis church and mission face in this time of paradigm shifts, when virtually every traditional element of faith and polity is under severe pressure." The United Church's doctrine of ministry, when viewed together with mission, acknowledges that it is people who participate in it, that community is the location (however broadly that may be defined), and that God is the source of it. Once again it brings to the fore the "ministry of the whole people of God." Grounded in, and emerging out of the heart of God, mission that is mutual and in partnership requires the leadership of both clergy and laity.

Educated Ministry

The United Church inherited the importance of an "educated ministry" from its antecedent denominations. Ministers would have "an open and critical mind attained through intellectual rigour."⁸⁴ Educational curricula were established at union, with all three churches agreeing on the "normal" educational route for the preparation of a minister: an undergraduate degree in arts, followed by three years of theology, including a strong practical element: students were expected to serve "in the field" during summers. There was a consistency in this for most of the middle to late years of the twentieth century. Lois Wilson, a former moderator ordained in 1965, recalls that a prerequisite for entering theological education at one time was successfully passing a test on the content of the Bible. She has championed both the rigour of theological education as well as expressing the wish that "more male clergy had exposure to group dynamics, which many women of my generation experienced through youth groups such as C. G. I. T. (Canadian Girls in Training)."⁸⁵

Conflict and division often emerged in discussion about

⁸³ The United Church of Canada, "Seeking to Understand 'Partnership' for God's Mission Today," approved by the 32nd General Council (1988), ROP, 615.

⁸⁴ Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, *Educated Ministry in the United Church of Canada* (1984), 6.

⁸⁵ Lois Wilson, "Which Way Will the United Church Go?" *Touchstone Blog*, 14 March 2017. <http://touchstonecanada.ca/lois-wilson-which-way-will-the-united-church-go/>.

educating ministers: How much learning? Does learning instill elitism? Was learning a Christian duty? Was the unlearned preacher more “spiritual”? And on it went. Changes in curricula emerged toward the later decades of the twentieth century as increasingly it was recognized that ministers needed to have more preparation in the social sciences, in the complexity of pastoral care in a variety of settings, and in evolving learning models. Theological educators and church leaders clarified needs for adequate ministerial preparation, and funding to provide that, sometimes struggling with each other to do what seemed right from their points-of-view. Having said that, a 1980 report on the preparation of ministers envisioned that students leaving theological schools

would not be “university academics” or “professional managers.” They would be “persons of God”—spiritually orientated, whole, called by God to be servants of the church in, but not of, the world. They would be prophets who, upon hearing the gospel, [would] enable others to discern and act upon it in the world of which they are a part. They would be humble and flexible learners rooted in the faith.⁸⁶

Educational requirements, outcomes, and benchmarks, although highly valued, have continued to challenge the denomination with its broad band of ministry categories and expectations.

Critical Issues and One Order

The critical findings of the *Isolation in Ministry Report* and proposals at the 2012 Council created some momentum for a critical moment to emerge at the next council. One proposal, as an alternative to the category of Designated Lay Minister (DLM), asked council to establish a study on “local ordination”: ordain people to local contexts in need of continuing ministry, and restrict their function to meeting local needs in that location. A second proposal called for sacramental authorization of Diaconal Ministers to be included as a rite of their commissioning. Two committees that had been studying ministry issues for several years, noted these previous proposals and ominously addressed the 42nd General Council in 2015: “What is at stake relates to the integrity of the church’s ministry . . . Current practices cannot continue without damage to the ministry and ministers of the church . . . Current definitions and

⁸⁶ The United Church of Canada, *Report of the Theological Education Task Force for Curriculum Research, Consultation and Development*, 1980.

expressions of ministry do not have theological integrity;” they “cannot be explained simply and theologically to ourselves and to others.”⁸⁷ This was strong language for even a General Council report, but the pressure had finally built up and come to the surface; it was clearly named for the whole church to consider—“the church’s lack of clarity in its current multiple streams of ministry and the complexity and confusion they create.”

The General Council agreed to determine by remit if the time had come to unify the two streams of the Order of Ministry (ordained and diaconal) and professional lay ministry (Designated Lay Ministry) into one order. Would a unified order eliminate confusion? Would it lower the heat and clarify confusion about ministry both within and outside the church? Could educational processes be appropriately adjusted for the functions that people would carry out in ministry without lowering standards or expectations? Would one order be the best way ahead? The church, in the remit response of 2017, said No—it would not be the better way. The multiple categories would remain. In the opinion of some, so would the theological and ecclesial confusion about ministry, although significant discussion had taken place.

This moment in the history of the United Church offered an opportunity for wide conversation about the doctrine of ministry, within the context of determining the shape and definition of the “order of ministry.” Some people were interested in the discussion; others had no energy for it. *Touchstone* journal invited discussion in a blog connected to its website during the debate on the remit. In it Mardi Tindal, a former moderator, wondered how the church might use the moment as “an extraordinary opportunity to consider what leadership is needed within—and from—a postmodern church.”⁸⁸ She picked up on the suggestion in the remit study material that “various surveys have pointed to congregations not being concerned about the differences between the various streams of ministry, but rather deeply concerned about effective and faithful ministry leadership.”⁸⁹ It may be that the church will need to

⁸⁷ 42nd General Council (2015), *ROP*, 256-257. The two committees were: Permanent Committee, Ministry and Employment Policies and Services and the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee.

⁸⁸ Mardi Tindal, “Reflecting on One Order of Ministry,” *Touchstone Blog*, 7 September 2016, 1.
<http://touchstonecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/TINDAL-Mardi.pdf>.

⁸⁹ The United Church of Canada, “Comprehensive Study Guide for Remit 6: One

“become clearer about matters of identity, equity and education within a more explicitly diverse order of ministry . . . What might a fully adaptive response be if we are to live anew into ‘the ministry and discipleship of all believers?’”⁹⁰

Although the one order of ministry remit did not pass, other remits enacted by the 43rd General Council have begun to have a significant impact on ministry. The four courts that had existed since 1925—pastoral charge, presbytery, conference and General Council—became three at the beginning of 2019: communities of faith, regional councils, and a denominational council.⁹¹ *The Manual* of the United Church offers: “This flexible and responsive structure enables us to come together to embody the gospel and vision of Jesus Christ in our current context.”⁹²

In this new structure, ministry personnel reside in the regional council where responsibility for the pastoral relationship—the coming together of the minister and a community of faith—takes place. However, the credentialing, oversight, accountability and discipline of those ministers is now lodged in a national Office of Vocation. What was once the primary function of presbytery, the body that took the place of a bishop—holding the membership of ministry personnel and conducting their oversight—is now split. Decades earlier, *The Report of Project: Ministry* (1980) asserted that this “corporate and collegial bishop” function of presbytery was like that of a lynchpin, where the critical “pastoral function” of the church was located. It was the part of the structure that connected the “ministry of the whole people of God” (lay and ordered, the members of local congregations and members of the Order of Ministry).⁹³ The “flexible and responsive” new structure of 2019, splitting the historic Reformed style of communal episcopacy, will have emerging implications for the church’s understanding of ministry; it remains too soon to tell what they will be.

Order of Ministry,” (2016), 5.

⁹⁰ Tindal, 2.

⁹¹ Church structure has been reviewed many times, with the most recent process initiated by the 41st General Council (2012). The 42nd General Council (2015) approved this new three-council structure, which was later enacted, following a remit to the whole church, by the 43rd General Council (2018).

⁹² *The Manual*, Polity, I, 3.0.

⁹³ *Report of Project Ministry*, p. 22-24.

Design, Default, or . . . ?

Has the doctrine of ministry in the United Church emerged through design or default? With sixty-two words in Article XVII to begin with; two more added in 1936 (“and women”), and seventeen more added with the articulation of ordained and diaconal ministries in 1980, one could say it was a *simple design* over the years. A few words may change in the near future as a request will likely come to the next General Council, to seek non-gendered language (“[T]he Order of Ministry shall be open to persons of all genders . . .”)⁹⁴ But the concept and reality of ministry in the United Church has been more than this doctrinal article can express.

In ways legislative and practical, the ministry of the United Church has continued to evolve. Recent questions about how ministers relate to church doctrine and what is expected of them as they express their beliefs after their ordination or commissioning are stimulating lively debate, notably in the matter of the Rev. Gretta Vosper, “a self-professed atheist.”⁹⁵ According to the Rt. Rev. Richard Bott, 43rd Moderator of the United Church, “As a Christian church, we continue to expect that ministers in The United Church of Canada will offer their leadership in accordance with our shared and agreed upon statements of faith . . .”⁹⁶ The principle that ministers, and the church that oversees them, continue to articulate faith in real time is strongly rooted in our history.

The union era discussion of “essential agreement” places ministers and the doctrine of ministry, at the centerpiece of the church’s theological discussion and in the context of the community. A recent document produced by the Theology Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee at the request of the 43rd General Council (2018), states:

Essential agreement . . . is important because of the role ministry personnel take on in the life of the United Church. We ordain, commission, recognize, admit, or re-admit persons for authorized ministry in the United Church because we, as the United Church, have a particular story, the Christian story, to tell. That story is conveyed to others through educational activities, through services of worship, through the pastoral care delivered in and through communities of faith, and through the contacts and conversations that are part of ministries of

⁹⁴ 43rd General Council (2018), GC43 – 06. A remit will be required.

⁹⁵ See her personal website: <https://www.grettavosper.ca/about/>.

⁹⁶ The United Church of Canada, <https://www.united-church.ca/news/moderators-message-rev-gretta-vosper>.

outreach and service. United Church communities of faith invite ministry personnel into their midst to offer leadership in these areas. United Church ministry personnel have a primary responsibility in our communities of faith for educating and nurturing persons in the Christian faith. They take on such responsibilities so that the members of our communities of faith are able to understand the Christian tradition more fully and are enlivened and strengthened for the living out of their ministry in the wider world. Determining whether candidates for ministry are in essential agreement with the United Church's Statement of Faith is an effort to ensure that those who will carry out authorized ministry in the name of the United Church stand sufficiently within the faith tradition to be able to represent it faithfully, intelligibly, and with integrity . . .

Essential agreement has never meant literal agreement with every word of the Statement of Doctrine. At the same time, it has never implied that a candidate for ministry, or anyone in paid, accountable ministry, can profess theological views which represent a radical departure from the historic Christian Tradition.⁹⁷

For pre-union Congregationalists who “believed that the Spirit of God could come to a person and, through the leading of the Spirit, new expressions and understandings of the faith could arise,” the ‘living Church’ was a fundamental assumption.”⁹⁸ For Presbyterian T.B. Kilpatrick, on the Joint Committee on Union, “The United Church . . . does not exact from its members and office bearers adherence to forms of thought, which, however serviceable in an older day, no longer . . . express the mind of the living church.”⁹⁹ Methodist Nathanael Burwash also took a “developmental approach to doctrine and church history.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Theology Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee, The United Church of Canada, “A Background Document on Essential Agreement,” May 2019.
[https://commons.unitedchurch.ca/Documents/Governance/General%20Council/43rd%20General%20Council%20\(2018\)/Updates/Essential%20Agreement,%20Final.pdf](https://commons.unitedchurch.ca/Documents/Governance/General%20Council/43rd%20General%20Council%20(2018)/Updates/Essential%20Agreement,%20Final.pdf).

⁹⁸ John H. Young, “Sacred Cow or White Elephant? The Doctrine Section of the Basis of Union,” *Touchstone* 16, No. 2: 41.

⁹⁹ T.B. Kilpatrick, *Our Common Faith* (Ryerson Press, 1928), 64. As quoted in Young, “Sacred Cow,” 43.

¹⁰⁰ Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal and Kingston:

And for the *Song of Faith* (2006), a living church continues:

We are called together by Christ
as a community of broken but hopeful believers,
loving what he loved,
living what he taught,
striving to be faithful servants of God
in our time and place.

A *developmental approach*, rather than doctrine by design or by default, may be the best way to understand changes in the United Church doctrine of ministry over the last ninety-three years. While little has changed in Article VXII itself, much has changed in polity and practice. Taken together these become “communally authoritative teachings”—the doctrine of ministry. What seems clear is that the United Church is not so much a “church with a plan,” as some of its founders might have imagined, but rather a “living church” with a developing, evolving doctrine of ministry.

SANCTIFIED PARTICIPATION: AN ONTOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION¹

by Morgan Bell

Following the “One Order Proposal” put to the wider church in anticipation of the 42nd General Council of The United Church of Canada, there has been robust discussion on the nature of ministry in the denomination. In particular, the nature of *ordained* ministry has served as a locus of debate and exploration. Much of that discussion focused on the tasks and functions of ordained ministry, and on who could serve in such a role and with what education and training. While debate on the praxis of ordained ministry is likely natural for a tradition enthusiastic about active participation in God’s mission in the world, little light has been shed theologically on the *nature* of ordained ministry. What follows is a re-description of an ontological theology of ordained ministry, rooted in justification and sanctification, and marked primarily by the minister’s relations and only secondarily by her functions. While this paper attends to the nature of ordained ministry, and not to diaconal and designated lay ministries, nor the ministry of the whole people of God, it will offer implicit corollaries impinging on those expressions of ministry.

Biblical Foundations of Ordination

Any Reformed theology of ministry must begin with the conviction that all the baptized are inheritors of Christ’s ongoing ministry in the world and are called to participate in that ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. The priesthood of all believers thus provides the fundamental grounding of any theology of ordained ministry.² In baptism, our old selves die with Christ so that we may be raised with him and walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4). We are adopted as children of God (Gal 4:4-7). Having been no people, we are now God’s people: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation: set apart “to proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light” (2 Pet 2:9-10). At Pentecost, the Spirit is poured out, igniting various ministries in all flesh (Acts 2:17ff). These varied passages from the biblical witness testify to the ministry which the risen Christ continues throughout creation in the power of the Holy Spirit: a ministry in which all have been called to share. Prior to any specific human ministry, or any Christian mission broadly, is the reality that the Word and Spirit surge through

¹ I am grateful to Miriam Spies, Richard Topping, Adam Kilner, and Mitchell Anderson for their incisive insights and generous support.

² See Justo Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 234ff.

creation advancing God’s mission. “The ministry of God’s people” thus refers to our participation in *God’s* mission by virtue of our vocation as baptized ministers.³

What, then, of a specifically ordained ministry? Both ancient Israel and the early church set aside leaders through the laying on of hands and prayer (Num 27:18-23; Acts 1:21-23; 1Tim 1:18). While terminology in the New Testament is elastic (seemingly employing “bishop,” “presbyter,” and “elder” interchangeably), a pneumatically-empowered ministry of leadership is clearly present from the church’s inception.⁴ Christ gives various gifts to all, that “some would be apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry [and] for the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12). A theology of ordination grounded in the biblical witness will thus emphasize that the ordained office exists at the pleasure of the Lord of the Church for the sake of God’s whole people and the advance of the gospel; that it is primarily a gift of the Holy Spirit; and that it exists as one office of service among many in the church.

Functionally Framing Ordination

Does the functional framing of ordination as “emphasizing the tasks of ministry, with diverse workers enriching the ministry of Christ in the world”⁵ not, then, adequately describe ordination? Undergirding this framework is a deep commitment to praxis—ecclesial leaders, after all, exist to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). Generally, in this schema, little emphasis is placed upon the identity of the individual *qua ordained*; rather, her identity *qua ordained* is constituted by the functions she performs in that capacity for the sake of the church. In this view, one embodies ordination insofar as proclamation, presidency, and pastoral care (the threefold marks of ordination in the UCC) are enacted. Simply put, the minister is what she does.

³ See Wessel Bentley, “Karl Barth’s understanding of mission: The Church in relationship,” in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30, No. 1 (July 2009): 25-49.

⁴ R. Eduard Schweizer, “Ministry in the Early Church” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 835-842.

⁵ Charlotte Caron, “A Look at Ministry: Diversity and Ambiguity,” in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, ed. Don Schweitzer (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 203. Caron’s fine article gives historical examples of when and where this understanding has been centred by the denomination.

The functional view of ministry has been promoted by some feminist theologians as a vital corrective to the abuses of the ontological framework.⁶ Particularly in traditions that emphasize the “natural resemblance,” which supposedly needs to exist between Christ and the ordained individual, the “ontology” in question is generally masculinity.⁷ That is, in order to be ordained, one must in some way *physically* resemble Christ—one must be male. The maleness of Jesus’s role as High Priest (rather than, say, his Jewish faith or deep skin colour) is centred to exclude women from this office.

Against this exclusionary ilk of an ontological theology of ordination, Letty M. Russell notes her ambiguity toward her own ordination: “I do not view ordination as an indelible order, and whether to remain a clergyperson continues to be an open question for me and for many others.”⁸ Russell prefers to centre the ministry of all believers, arguing with Rosemary Radford Ruether for a church in which “there is no clerical caste but instead a variety of ministries of function, such as liturgists, teachers, administrators, community organizers, and spiritual counselors.”⁹ Rather than the ordained minister serving as *the* minister, she promotes a church in the round where authority is exercised by sharing power and “effectiveness is related to how well the leader empowers those who are assigned marginal roles because of systemic racism, heterosexism, classism, sexism, disableism [*sic*], and the like.”¹⁰ Ministers, ordained or otherwise, are marked by their *functions* and not by a “magical” ordination which comes from “above.”¹¹

Russell and her theological colleagues offer desperately needed correctives to theologies of ordination that would posit the minister *above* their community and the various ministries thereof, and in so doing reinscribe the systemic oppression rife within the church. These critiques and constructive additions to theologies of ordination are to be heeded and valued. Yet the functional framework in which those contributions

⁶ See Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 46-77; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology & Practice* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 75-95.

⁷ Teresa Berger, “Christmas: ‘And Became Hu/man’” in *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016), Kindle, location 6046.

⁸ Russell, 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹ Ruether, 77.

are constructed is itself perhaps prone to similar abuse, and is theologically and anthropologically incomplete.

In 1962, the 20th General Council of the United Church of Canada questioned the ability of married women to serve as ordained ministers. Implicit in the discussion was a thoroughly functional understanding of ministry—an ordained minister is defined by her proclamation, presidency, and pastoral care. How could a married woman, many argued, fulfil the heavy functions of ordained ministry as well as her vocation to housewifery?¹² While we can balk at the overt and reductionist sexism of this question, this episode puts its finger on a great weakness of framing ordained ministry functionally. Also demonstrated is the insidiousness and plasticity of sin in hindering God who has given others the same gifts as men received through belief in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17). A theology of ordination must, then, be more fundamental than whatever human worth is ascribed to that office and its functions in a given context.

Functional theologies of ordination are further complicated by their easy co-optation by the predominant conceptual framework of the west: market economics. The unique contribution any profession offers to the wider market and, corollary to this, the skills and aptitude an individual brings to their profession are the markers of that profession's identity, value, and viability. To determine the nature of the ordained office by its functions—that is, those concrete services and goods it offers—makes intelligible the translation of ministry's worth into neoliberal notions of work. Economically put, the functional view of ordination conceives the minister as possessing certain capabilities and skills: such as analytical insight and communication, theological acumen, ritual leadership, and/or interpersonal care. (Overlooked is the church's enduring conviction that these are all *God's* gifts of grace.) These skills, in turn, are rendered to the service of a community for as long as the minister remains in that community; his labour is contractually pledged for the community's good and growth. Much like a consultant working for a corporation delivers expert service in return for remuneration, the minister provides specialized services to the community of faith in return for economic stability (along with other non-monetary benefits).¹³

¹² See Caron, 209. Indeed, United Church deaconesses were still required to resign upon marriage. My thanks to Rev. Daniel Hayward for helping me with the history of this episode.

¹³ For a fine examination of the interplay of economics and theology on similar issues, see: Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress,

Lest this economic characterization of functional theology seem sensational or reductionist, consider the language used by the United Church (UCC) in reference to the ministry. The UCC's e-page on entering ordered ministry describes "jobs" an ordered minister might "do."¹⁴ Ministers are commonly and formally referred to as "ministry personnel"¹⁵ or as serving in "paid accountable ministries of leadership."¹⁶ The danger of this theology of ordination is that it approaches a professional rather than vocational understanding of ministry, whereby the Lord served seems not to be Jesus Christ, but a market economy in the church.

Framing Ordination Ontologically

The ontological view of ordination I offer is not metaphysical speculation about what happens when hands are laid on the ordinand. Rather, it is a theological tool to understand the scope and therefore the nature of ordination. In the Catholic Church, ordination "is conferred by the laying on of hands followed by a solemn prayer of consecration asking God to grant the ordinand the graces of the Holy Spirit required for her ministry. Ordination imprints an indelible sacramental character."¹⁷ The emphasis in this iteration of an ontological theology of ordination is placed on the moment of ordination and the purported change in the ordinand at that moment. While this understanding of ordination is right to centre the agency of the Holy Spirit in imparting the grace needed to fulfill the ordained vocation, in focusing on the "moment" of ordination it offers an incomplete picture of the depth and fundamentality of the call to ordained life. It simply does not dig deeply enough.

I retain the language of ontology even if I will be describing what it means in relation to ordained ministry differently than indicated above.

2005), esp. 31-86.

¹⁴ The United Church of Canada, "Ordered Ministry," https://www.united-church.ca/leadership/entering-ministry/ordered-ministry_ (Accessed on 3 May 2019).

¹⁵ Office of Vocation, "Candidacy Pathway: Policy," January 2019, https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/candidacy-pathway_policy.pdf. (Accessed on 15 May 2019).

¹⁶ The United Church of Canada, "Statement on Ministry in The United Church of Canada," 2012, 3. <https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/statement-on-ministry.pdf>. (Accessed on 1 May 2019).

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2012), #1597.

I could equally use the language of “missiology” or “participation” to characterize the view of ordination I offer. However, I remain with “ontology” because it emphasizes that in vocation, God creates, consecrates, and calls the *entire person*. God does not merely sanctify her functions but graces the individual so to use her entire being as she participates in the ongoing mission of the risen Jesus Christ in creation.¹⁸ Hans Küng writes that “ordination is a call to office, which is linked with the mission of the Church as a whole and must be understood as a participation in the mission of Christ.”¹⁹ The ministry of Jesus Christ attested in the biblical witness comprises both his person and work; therefore Christian participation in that mission will encompass not only function but person.²⁰

As explored above, the fundamental identity of the Christian is determined by her redemption in Christ: her justification before God and her sanctification by the Spirit of grace. All other identities—including vocational identities—stem from her character as a child beloved of God, saved by Christ, and secured by the Spirit. In this vision, nothing of the human person is untouched by salvation, following the patristic principle that that which is not assumed is not saved. All of creaturely existence—body, mind, spirit, capacity—is assumed by Christ so to be healed, renewed, and made receptive to grace.²¹ In justification, not only are creatures made righteous before God, but through the Spirit the work of our vocations is vivified, rectified, and sanctified by God.²² In short, to be saved is to be given a new identity before God.

Sanctification is the means by which the Spirit conforms us to that new identity in Christ. All human vocation is thus a spirited participation in the life God has set out for us even before our creation (Jer 1:5). “The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself,” enabling us by grace to live the abundant life which the mercy of God has made possible.²³ Our move by God’s grace from estranged sinners to beloved children is thus the foundation of an

¹⁸ See Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 308-313.

¹⁹ Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 493.

²⁰ See Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

²¹ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, III.11-17.

²² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.XVII.8.

²³ *Ibid.*, III/I/1.

ontological theology of vocation generally, and ordination particularly.²⁴

New life in Christ is indeed the ontology we speak of in an ontological theology of ordination. The vocation of ordained ministry is the specific shape that some Christians' sanctified lives take. What it means for the minister to live fully into her sanctified life of participation in Christ is precisely to be as one ordained. For these individuals, to follow Jesus Christ and live in communion with him results in proclamation, presidency, and pastoral care for the good of God's reign. Again, Küng: "It is God himself who creates and arouses a vocation through the Holy Spirit; each vocation is a manifestation, individuation and concretization of the one Charism of Jesus Christ who is himself *the* apostle, prophet, teacher, evangelist, pastor and deacon."²⁵ This point is common to all vocations. Take the example of someone called to participate in Christ's ministry of justice as a lawyer. The Spirit sanctifies the lawyer in this task, engrafting her to the ministry of Christ. Her vocational work as a lawyer witnesses to Christ, and it is indeed sanctified by the Spirit to further that mission, yet that work stems from the *fundamentum* that God has created and consecrated her to live in this way. Indeed, to speak of her vocational identity as *witness* is to point to vocation's communal shape: all vocations—ordained ministry included—exist for the sake of others, for the service of God, and the sharing of the gospel.²⁶

For the ordained minister, to exist fundamentally as a redeemed and sanctified follower of Jesus Christ is to navigate life *as* an ordained minister. This fundamental identity flourishes in proclaiming the Word in, to, and outside of the Christian community. It manifests itself as being taken up by the Spirit to facilitate the sacramental life of the church. This identity takes shape in the pronouncement of forgiveness, the silence of presence, or the offering of prayer in pastoral care. Yet the identity of the minister is never reducible to these tasks. It is not enough for one to preach "well," or have a pleasing presence at Table, or be notably kind and insightful in pastoral care. Indeed, the ordained minister may not be particularly exceptional in any of those tasks. As Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon powerfully state, "Being a minister . . . is not a vocation merely to help people . . . In fact, we are *not* called to help

²⁴ See Oliver Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 145-164.

²⁵ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray & Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 395.

²⁶ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2009), IV/3.2.

people. We are called to follow Jesus, in whose service we learn who we are and how we are to help and be helped.”²⁷ None other than Augustine of Hippo understood his own vocation as simply the way in which the Spirit sanctified him to lay aside his own human aspirations and to concretely follow Jesus in that way.²⁸ To sum up: for Christians, we are not what we do—we do what we are. Function flows from our new identity in Jesus Christ.

The Fruits of an Ontological Theology

At first blush, this may seem an overly spiritualized rendering of vocation and of ordained ministry. Yet, in my estimation, concrete and important corollaries flow from this understanding. In this ontological rendering of ordained ministry, the wholeness of the person is sanctified by God for the living out of the pastoral office. This has ethical import for persons whose identities are systemically erased in favour of the functions they can perform in the service of others or, conversely, those who are marginalized on account of the functions they cannot or do not perform. Specifically, on the erasure of the identities of women in Christian accounts of sanctification, Serene Jones writes that:

a woman cannot inhabit the space of this sanctifying reality and still remain invisible or effaced. When she enters this territory, she is given flesh and bone as her embodiment is affirmed and her agency is instantiated . . . She can be said to have, in grace, a skin of her own (and God’s) best desires. She is clothed in grace.²⁹

The sanctification of the whole person for Christian vocation is a commitment Letty Russell holds, for example, yet her framing of ordination as primarily a function cannot but render the person ancillary to her functions. Rather, the fullness of the creature must be understood to be sanctified and affirmed by God for the living out of her vocation. Life experiences, bodily differences, and cultural particularities are not sidelined in favour of what function any person can offer to the church in

²⁷ Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 25th anniversary ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 121.

²⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), VIII.xi.29.

²⁹ Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), Kindle, location 995.

their particular office. Instead, the fullness of their created life is inspired by God and swept up in their calling.

Furthermore, an ontological understanding of ordination and vocation more broadly serves as a powerful witness to the neoliberal conceptions of work and labour as briefly explored above. If the ordained minister is irreducible to her functions, she is consequently irreducible to any appraisal of her by the standards of market economics. She is never finally one who renders goods and services (proclamation, Sacraments, pastoral care) to an identified market segment. If, as Tom Reynolds has argued through a disability lens, “[human] beings are personal beings . . . agents identified by the relationships we have with others,” an ontological theology of ordination will centre the theological relations that persons in ministry share, rather than the economic relations they uphold.³⁰ The primary relationships which define the ordained minister are her covenant relations with God who has created, consecrated, and called her to this office, and with the church that God has appointed her to serve and be served by. The grace of God flows through these personal relations which take shape in functions rather than being chiefly determined by any capital produced by vocational office.³¹

This, then, is primarily the call of the ordained individual and any persons called by God: that there might be “personal union for each one [by which] the riches of the glory of [God’s] inheritance . . . will be made manifest in the saints, in the union fulfilled by the multitude of human persons.”³² We are not that which we do—we do that which we are by God’s justifying, sanctifying grace.

³⁰ Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008), 103.

³¹ Simone Weil, in an excerpt on vocation and the sacredness of the person, recounts a telling parable: “Let us imagine that the devil is purchasing the soul of some unfortunate and that someone, taking pity on that unfortunate, intervenes in the debate and says to the devil: ‘It’s shameful of you to offer that price – this object costs more than double!’” Simone Weil, *La Personne et le Sacré*, (Clermont-Ferrand, France: La Source d’Or, 2016 [1951]), 31. (Translation mine.)

³² Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 1957), 184.

ONE ORDER OF MINISTRY AND THE *TOUCHSTONE* BLOG: A NATIONWIDE CONVERSATION ON MINISTRY

by Adam Kilner

In January 2016 *Touchstone* invited leaders from the United Church of Canada to offer their own reflections on a remit from the General Council. The question asked of presbyteries and pastoral charges by the 42nd General Council (2015) was:

At present there is one order of ministry that is made up of ordained ministers, ordained to word, sacrament and pastoral care, and diaconal ministers, commissioned to education, service and pastoral care. There is also a category of ministry made up of those who are recognized as designated lay ministers following successful completion of a specific program of study.

Does the presbytery/pastoral charge agree that there should be one new order of ministry encompassing the present categories of recognized designated lay ministers, diaconal ministers, and ordained ministers, with ordination to the ministry of word, sacrament, education, service and pastoral care as the single rite of entry, and with provision for the continued identity of the diakonia within the ordained ministry?

In the *Touchstone* blog, the introductory submission came from Emmanuel College systematic theology professor emeritus Harold Wells, who outlined the Reformed and Methodist heritages that inform United Church ecclesiology and its doctrine of the church. This includes, but is not limited to, polity or governance, and the church's relationship to Jesus Christ, its role in salvation, the church's discipline, its leadership, and more. Wells contrasts these traditions with Roman Catholic "authoritative ecclesial polity," saying:

We do not imagine that Jesus himself laid down a permanently correct ecclesial structure. We differ from Catholic ecclesiologies, which regard ordination as a sacrament, make very sharp distinctions between the ordained and the laity, and teach that the threefold hierarchical ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon is permanently normed by scripture. Our United Church has never claimed that the particular details of its structures are divinely mandated.¹

Wells offered this broad distinction to help United Church disciples of Jesus Christ understand how our tradition has approached ecclesiology, acknowledging what appears to be a paradox: that Jesus Christ is both

¹ Harold Wells, <http://touchstonecanada.ca/harold-wells-christological-and-biblical-reflections-on-ministry/>.

Lord and Servant. Though the Scriptures sing of Jesus Christ who is Lord (Phil 2:9-11, Rom 10:9, Lk 2:11), they also remind the church of the type of Lord that Jesus is, one whose primary role is to serve. Wells quotes Mark 10:45 in which Jesus says that he “came not to be served, but to serve,” and reminds us of the Reformed tradition’s choice of the word “minister,” a word that means “servant.”

Many leaders from across the denomination responded within the theological framework introduced by Wells. The blog was a remarkable journey for both *Touchstone* and for the United Church. We are eager to share with our readers how the One Order of Ministry interactions have had an impact on *Touchstone*, and how the reflections of ministry leaders in the United Church in the blog are a continued expression of our Reformed and Methodist heritages.

Impact on Touchstone

Prior to the decision to support the United Church through digitally engaging church members on the issue of the One Order of Ministry remit, *Touchstone* had slowly, since about 2011, been moving toward becoming a theological journal that exists in both the print and digital realms. The Editorial Board introduced options for online donations, a refreshed website with archived content, and ways to subscribe online, and also participated in the digitization process of the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) Religion Database. All numbers of *Touchstone* are digitized and made available electronically through ATLA. The Board had also introduced its readers to the blog through at least four entries prior to the invitation statement released on 21 January 2016 by editorial board chair Rob Fennell and me as webmaster, entitled “One Order of Ministry Discussion Papers.”

This move into the digital sphere allowed *Touchstone* to offer its readership new ways of engagement within the Church. We discovered very quickly just how important the topic of One Order of Ministry was to folk in the United Church as online blog submission numbers began to take off, and website statistics began to be noticed.

The website traffic data for *Touchstone* is, for the most part, a story about the refreshment of the website, the introduction of the blog, and the introduction of a blog series that engaged the church widely. In 2013 *Touchstone* refreshed the website and had 215 visits; in 2014, with a blog now posted, views of the website exploded to 2023 visits, including 109 views of the blog. In 2015 views of the website more than doubled to 4170, with blog views increasing incrementally to 176. In 2016, however, with the introduction of the One Order of Ministry

discussion, views of the website more than doubled again, swelling to 9763, with the blog becoming, for the first time, the most viewed page on our website—even eclipsing the welcome page (the blog had 2507 views while the welcome page had 2091). The year 2017 saw a slight decrease in engagement as presbyteries and pastoral charges submitted responses to the remit, while 2018 saw a return to pre-blog engagement with the *Touchstone* website.

Presenting the numbers is important in demonstrating that the blog series really touched a nerve. The conversation was significant enough to the Church that contributions were received from former United Church Moderators Lois Wilson and Peter Short; then-Executive-Secretary of London Conference, Cheryl-Ann Stadelbauer-Sampa; former Principal of the Centre for Christian Studies, Caryn Douglas; and former Senior Advisor at the General Council Office, Bruce Gregersen.

Peter Short's blog entry appeared to have a particular impact on our online readership, given that his blog entry is the fifth most accessed page of all time on the website with 1041 views. The *Welcome, Blog, Home Page/Archives*, and *About Touchstone* pages are the only pages with more views than Short's blog on One Order of Ministry. The top most-viewed blogs on *Touchstone's* website were: Lois Wilson, eleventh; Harold Wells, fifteenth; Connie den Bok, seventeenth; and Kimberley Heath, twenty-second. Each of these blog posts had a unique perspective for the Church to explore. Below are some perspectives.

Perspectives Shared

Peter Short's entry left an enormous imprint on the website. Instead of asserting a position about the One Order of Ministry remit, and discussing what would happen to the United Church if three streams were morphed into one, Short reminds those who are called to ministry, regardless of the category, of the life to which they give themselves. Ministry cannot be defined by categories. Short says that he knows that "beneath the explanations and the categories of our art there is a substrate of human frailty."² Short's opening paragraph canvasses the complexity of the pastoral vocation:

The work of a minister is a bewildering array. Are you not a counsellor? Are you not a mediator? Community development leader, educator, advocate? And aren't you a public speaker, an administrator and a servant? You preside at the sacramental beginnings and endings of life. Surely you are comforter and

² <http://touchstonecanada.ca/peter-short-reflections-on-ministry/>.

priest. Isn't it you they call when all human strength has ended? When every technique of modern medicine has been tried and exhausted and a family stands helpless around a hospital bed isn't it you they call? They call you to come and be with them in the helpless place. That's the place where ministry is learned, if ever it is learned at all. You are musician and liturgist. You are janitor, stacker of chairs after everyone has gone home. Turn out the lights, lock the church door, and walk alone into the night. You are peacemaker. You are the prophet voice crying out in the wilderness. And when you stand as you often do before an open grave looking down into eternity, you are the wilderness crying out in a voice. I respect what this work demands of you, does to you. Nobody is adequately equipped for such a bewildering mandate. Nobody has it all together.³

This opening statement reminds those called to accountable ministry of the life to which they have been called—the life of service. This life commitment of service to the community of Christ is there, no matter the category names. No matter the bureaucratic boundaries placed around a ministry position, whether Designated Lay, Diaconal, or Ordained, it is the “minister” who is most often called to be close in times of trial; it is the “minister” who is the go-to person to offer guidance when personal relationships are rocky. Short is underlining the motivation for ministry—to serve God and humanity at its best, its worst, and all of the vulnerable and joyous spaces in between.

Lois Wilson's submission focused on reminding readers of the purpose of the ordained ministry. She recalls her earlier life as a layperson, and how “the congregation had recognized God's call in [her] work,” leading her to answer a call to ordination. Moving into ordination from the laity “did not devalue lay ministry,” but rather “was a different contribution.”⁴ Wilson further recognized that having different categories of ministry personnel can sometimes lead to resentment of the authoritarian approach of those who display “high and mighty attitudes.” Hence she quotes Paul the Apostle, who says “not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think” (Rom 12:3). The role of the ordained is “not to dominate but to represent the church through all the ages, to serve and facilitate the ministry of laity.”⁵

In her contribution, diaconal minister Vicki McPhee discussed

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://touchstonecanada.ca/lois-wilson-which-way-will-the-united-church-go/>.

⁵ Ibid.

the several ways that misunderstandings can arise about diaconal ministry—because of a different formation than that of ordained ministry. McPhee acknowledges one of the challenges head-on:

A key reason why Diaconal Ministers cannot be simply grandfathered into an ordained status and, consequently, be firmly understood as equal in all ways to the Ordained Minister is because of the suspicion that exists around the equivalency of the educational process for diaconal candidates. There still exists, after all the years that Diaconal Ministry has been recognized as Ordered Ministry in the United Church, a misunderstanding of the quality and depth of training and education a diaconal student undertakes. One common misconception is that the training received during the Pastoral Care Year at the Centre for Christian Studies is not equivalent to the CPE course often taken by those in the ordained stream when, in fact, they have equal standing.⁶

Many challenges exist for the *diakonia*, including transferability of credentials across denominations. Ordination may be recognized across denominations, but commissioning to the *diakonia* is not. Challenges also exist for the *diakonia* within the United Church. McPhee suggests that there are challenging conversations the church needs to have, and it appears that overcoming suspicion of diaconal ministry within the United Church is a key aspect of acknowledging and practising an equality between the ordered streams of ministry.

In his post Andrew Hyde articulated a concern for how the United Church values youth ministry and young people in the church. As a designated lay minister, Hyde appeared to have concern for how the One Order of Ministry proposal relegates paid accountable youth ministry staff to the level of congregationally designated minister (CDM), a form of ministry leadership burdened with lower compensation and no benefits. Hyde expressed his concern for a single-tiered approach to youth ministry in the One Order of Ministry proposal saying:

And while I think today's CDM level is important and makes many things possible for ministers and congregations, there is much to be lost if there is not a place in our structure for people with a specific life-long calling to work with young people. If all youth ministry staff were at today's CDM level, there'd be even less youth involvement in our regional and national courts. There'd be less theological insight in our work with

⁶ <http://touchstonecanada.ca/vicki-mcphee-reflections-on-one-order-of-ministry/>.

young people. There'd be less ability to pass on a uniquely United Church vision to our youth, and fewer leadership resources to create dynamic new forms of youth ministry to our church.⁷

The One Order of Ministry conversation that emerged across the church in 2016 and 2017 had a tremendous impact on *Touchstone*. The blog inspired thoughtful leaders to share a diversity of ideas, and allowed *Touchstone* to become an important resource to the conversation about the remit. The editorial board wonders how the journal might be of service to ongoing national dialogues for the United Church in the future.

Continued Expression

To return to our beginning, we recall Harold Wells' observations that the convictions of the United Church regarding ministry and ecclesiology have never been rooted in a divine authorization of an hierarchical structure mediating grace, but rather that "it is every Christian, then, and the church as a whole who mediate God's grace to the world."⁸ One of the gifts of the United Church's heritage is that "we do not imagine that Jesus himself laid down a permanently correct ecclesial structure,"⁹ and are reminded that "our United Church has never claimed that the particular details of its structure are divinely mandated."¹⁰ Because of this, the church is challenged to have ongoing dialogue on how best to structure itself to serve God's mission, for as Wells indicates, "What we find in the New Testament and early church history is a dynamic, fluid order, evolving to meet the needs of a rapidly growing movement in that ancient context."¹¹ The twenty-first century Canadian context for ministry is dramatically different from that of the first century context of Judea/Palestine. So the Church needs to continue to ask how it should be structured to minister effectively in God's world.

⁷ <http://touchstonecanada.ca/reflecting-on-one-order-of-ministry-andrew-hyde/>.

⁸ <http://touchstonecanada.ca/harold-wells-christological-and-biblical-reflections-on-ministry/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

GOD'S WORLD NEEDS LEADERS: BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA IN 2019

by Bronwyn Corlett

The Call

When God first called Moses, Moses was hesitant. Eventually, when Moses was willing to answer God's call, Moses was ineloquent. Moses needed time and training, experience and education to step into his role. In the end, Moses led a whole people into freedom, and even kept them united while they wandered in the desert for forty years. Moses ultimately called the elders of his community together and demonstrated to them how God was providing for them in the desert, as well mentoring the leadership to understand and lead going forward (Ex 3-17). This lofty example is what any ministry training program would surely hope to accomplish: transforming the doubtful into poised, prophetic leaders. But not all ministers are called to be Moses-like leaders. There are also Miriams and Samuels, Deborahs and Jonahs, Pauls and Marys, eunuchs and tax collectors, men climbing trees and women at the well.

Ministers will describe their calls in a variety of ways. Sometimes people speak of a pushing sensation, sometimes a pulling. Almost all will explain that their call story is unique in some way. Some people will tell of avoiding their call, trying to do anything but answer the call to ministry until they simply could not say no any longer. This can happen at a variety of ages and in a variety of situations. Some will feel like a lightning bolt has struck, while others will grow into their understanding of leadership gradually, slowly realizing that their gifts and passions are leading them to ministry.

Candidacy Pathway is the process for entering ministry in The United Church of Canada. It has been designed, piloted, and adjusted to allow for a variety of calls, experiences, and ministries. There are standards and learning outcomes that must be met along the way, and the Candidacy Pathway process allows for some flexibility so that, with the guidance of a Candidacy Board, individuals are able to explore and test their individual call, as well as discover the ways in which the church needs them to serve.

Discerning a call to ministry is no easy task. Anyone considering pursuing ministry in the United Church should be encouraged and celebrated. The Church process will test their promise, suitability, and readiness in various ways, at various stages, and it is up to the whole church to support, challenge, and affirm those putting themselves forward for ministry leadership.

Culture of Call

Samuel hears a voice in the night and assumes it is his teacher, Eli. He goes to his teacher, asking how he can help. Eli does not know what he's talking about and sends him back to bed (1 Sam 3). What if this is where the story ended? Surely a few stories have ended here. The individual being called to ministry doesn't understand what is happening, doesn't understand the push or pull to leadership that they are experiencing, and works to send that part of them back to sleep. Perhaps they even reach out to a minister who is tired, and who advises them to steer clear of ministry. Perhaps they speak to a congregant they trust who discourages them from considering ministry because they are uncertain of the future of the church. If Eli keeps sending Samuel back to bed, back to sleep, Samuel's story could very well end here.

Answering the call to ministry requires the whole body of Christ to acknowledge the call to being part of the body of Christ. Some are the arms, some are the legs, but we are not separate (1 Cor 12:12-27). Answering the call to ministry is about more than a select few answering a call to church leadership. It is about the whole people of God responding to God's grace in the world, acknowledging that God's world, where God has created and is creating (The New Creed), needs leaders.

Eli is crucial to Samuel's leadership because he helps Samuel recognize what is actually happening. Eli must teach Samuel how to respond to God's call, not simply by listening but also by sharing what he has heard (1 Sam 3). The task of hearing God's call in the world is not simply up to those who are experiencing a call to ministry. All Christians have vocations to various types of work. In Matthew 13:1-9, Jesus tells a parable in which seeds get scattered on various surfaces. The only seeds that are able to produce a crop are scattered on the good soil. If we want to have ministers in our communities of faith going forward, we have to till the soil, and that is a call for the whole people of God.

A church culture in which all disciples are encouraged to explore and answer their vocational call is a culture in which some of those disciples will respond to a call to become ministry personnel. The body of Christ benefits and fulfills its purpose well when a wide variety of people are recognized for their gifts and skills for leadership. As such, the United Church has a few pathways that lead to various forms of ministry. Designated Lay Ministry, Diaconal Ministry, and Ordained Ministry are just a few of the ways we distinguish among ministers. Within these streams, people are called to a variety of ministries: outreach, social justice, chaplaincy (military, hospital, campus, etc.), worship, administration, pastoral care, community building and music. There are

those that are called to preach from mountaintops and those that are called to quietly, diligently, work behind the scenes. Some are called to lay leadership, and all are called to discipleship. Especially in these times of change and uncertainty, a wide variety of gifts, skills, and ministries are needed, and must be encouraged and celebrated.

Candidacy Pathway

Candidacy Pathway is the process by which an individual becomes a commissioned, ordained, or recognized designated lay minister within the United Church. Depending on the ministry stream and the program they decide upon, they must complete theological education and field or supervised ministry education. They must complete various components that will provide Candidacy Boards with the information they will need to assess the person's gifts and potential for ministry, but also their readiness to take on the mantle of ministry.

Candidacy Boards

Candidacy Boards are commissions of the national Board of Vocation. They interview and assess applicants and candidates throughout the process. There are seven Candidacy Boards across the country whose membership is a balance of ministry personnel and lay members, and reflects the diversity of an intercultural church. The Indigenous Church has named a Candidacy Board for those considering ministry in the Indigenous Church. Members of the Candidacy Boards have been trained together denominationally to ensure consistency across the country. These Candidacy Boards allow the church to offer important resources for those considering ministry; for example, one can choose to be interviewed in French, through the Quebec and Eastern Ontario Candidacy Board. A candidate can request to meet with a Candidacy Board outside of an individual's region, for example, if moving to attend school in another region. The Candidacy Board members also have been able to specialize; for example, one person on each board has met with each of the theological schools to learn details about the programs and options available to those receiving education and training for ministry.

To learn more about the theological schools, please check out "Get Involved" on the website. Candidacy Board members expressed their interest through the United Church's nominations process and were appointed by the Board of Vocation. If you are interested in doing this work in the future, please look for Committee Vacancies posted on the website (united-church.ca/opportunities).

Phases of Candidacy Pathway

There are seven phases in Candidacy Pathway, phases not meant to be completed in a linear fashion, but rather to overlap and repeat at various stages as the candidate continues discernment. The phases are: *Call Forth*, *Identify*, *Accompany*, *Equip*, *Assess*, *Authorize*, and *Celebrate*.

Candidacy Pathway is ideally a flexible process by which people can enter the process where it makes sense for them, as well as helping the church fulfill its ministry needs. The phases are not undertaken individually, though it is up to the individual to engage with each phase. *Call Forth* and *Identify* are about recognizing and affirming those in our communities of faith who have gifts for ministry. *Accompany* and *Celebrate* are about supporting those in the process, and those in ministry. Even within *Equip* and *Assess* there are roles for all of us in supporting theological schools and programs, or more formally, by becoming ministry supervisors or being part of a community of faith that opens itself to being a learning site. If your community of faith is looking for a minister and preparing its profile, you will be asked about becoming available as a learning site, and this is something that should be explored and discerned properly.

Candidacy Pathway is a call to the whole church to be involved in the various phases of the training and discernment of ministry personnel. I believe these are things that, if embraced wholly, will encourage a culture of call. Shoulder-tapping, recruitment, leadership development, discipleship—there are many ways to phrase the call for all believers to recognize and encourage one another to respond to God's grace in our lives and those around us.

Entering Ministry

Those wanting to become ministers in The United Church of Canada should go to the Leadership section of the Church website (www.united-church.ca/leadership). In "Entering Ministry" there is information about discerning, Candidacy Pathway, educational and program requirements, links to schools and their programs, a video about the Streams of Ministry, and, most importantly, there is the Candidacy Pathway Roadmap which will help make sense of all of these resources. Once a person has become familiar with these resources, the best thing to do is call an Office of Vocation minister and have a conversation to clarify the process, especially as there might be a variety of opportunities for an individual to consider. When a person considering ministry is ready, an Office of Vocation minister will set the person up with a ChurchHub account (an online system that will help people log and track their

progress) and set up an interview with a Candidacy Board.

Interviews

Depending on the stage of their discernment, prospective candidates can request an interview for *Promise*, for *Promise and Suitability*, or for *Promise, Suitability, and Readiness for Supervised Ministry Education (SME)*. The Candidacy Board meets with an individual to discern together what will be the best path for the individual to pursue. This means that individuals who are discerning their call to ministry, but still struggling with which ministry stream or educational program to choose, can meet with a Candidacy Board to help address their questions. Others may feel they are certain of their ministry stream and educational path, and may be affirmed in their decisions. Others still, in meeting with a Candidacy Board, might realize that there is further discernment to do.

The complete list of requirements for the various types of interviews is provided in the Candidacy Pathway Roadmap (available online: www.united-church.ca/leadership), and should be completed in consultation with an Office of Vocation Minister. In the case of a *Promise* interview, the Candidacy Board will need various things from the discerning individual: a vulnerable sector police check, a letter from a mentor, letters of reference, work, and education history, and narrative responses to provided questions. For a *Suitability* interview, an individual will need to have been active in the United Church for twenty-four months, be a member, have completed the mandatory training required of all ministry personnel, and have completed a vocational assessment conducted by Six Oaks Consulting. Because there are various options for people to journey through the process, it is important to discuss with an Office of Vocation minister what will be required if an individual is hoping to achieve something specific in an interview, for instance, if wanting to begin serving in a community of faith.

Each stream of ministry has various requirements at various stages; it is important to examine the requirements of each program within each stream of ministry. For example, candidates for designated lay ministry and ordained ministry will complete Supervised Ministry Education (SME), while candidates for diaconal ministry will complete field placements as part of their educational program. Exploring these programs and various options will be part of an individual's discernment.

Commissioning, Ordaining, and Recognizing

When the Candidacy Board has affirmed that a candidate is ready to become a designated lay, diaconal, or ordained minister, the candidate

must have a call or appointment to a community of faith, to be celebrated at a new ministry service, held by the Regional Council. This means that those near the end of their process will need a provisional call or appointment to complete their journey to becoming ministry personnel. Again, it is important for communities of faith to consider these new ministers when searching and filling available positions.

Other Ways of Becoming a United Church of Canada Minister

Although it is not the focus of this article, it is important to note that there are other ways someone might become a minister in the United Church.

The United Church of Canada has two mutual recognition of ministries agreements, one with The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and one with The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). The United Church of Canada also has a full communion agreement, which includes mutual recognition of ministries, with the United Church of Christ (USA). This means that through an application process, ministers from these denominations can apply and work for communities of faith in The United Church of Canada.

Ministry personnel in other denominations may also apply through the admissions process to become ordered United Church of Canada ministers. Ministers in the admissions process need appointments to serve a community of faith; and when they have completed their process, they will need a call or appointment to be admitted to the order of ministry, to be celebrated at a new ministry service held by the Regional Council. Again, it is important for communities of faith to consider these ministers when searching for a new minister and filling available positions.

God's World Needs Leaders

Candidacy Pathway is designed to be flexible and allow individuals agility in their training and education towards ministry. It also continues in a tradition of setting standards and expectations of its ministry personnel. With the many changes that The United Church of Canada has undergone, some have expressed concern and confusion. Candidacy Pathway is a tested method of developing ministry personnel within our communities of faith. Eli guided Samuel into leadership by paying attention, sharing his wisdom, and pursuing Samuel's vision. It is important for the whole church to understand the process, at least in broad strokes, so that the whole people of God is able to participate in the work of calling, nurturing, and celebrating faithful ministry personnel.

PROFILE

THE REV. HARVEY G. FORSTER AND THE *ALL PEOPLES'* *MISSION* IN WELLAND, ONTARIO

by Betsy Anderson



In the 10 June 1925 issue of *The New Outlook*, published to coincide with the inauguration of the United Church of Canada at the Mutual St. Arena in Toronto, D.M. Ramsay writes about the “Home Mission Enterprise of the United Church of Canada.” Speaking of the Church’s work among New Canadians, he reports that there are 90 Mission centres serving nearly 70 nationalities and a large variety of religions. “In several cities we possess ‘All Peoples’ Missions’.” Rev. Harvey G. Forster served as superintendent of one of these, the All Peoples’ Mission in Welland, Ontario, from 1923 to 1961.

Biography

Harvey Forster was born in Caledonia, Ontario, on October 8, 1892. He studied philosophy at University College, University of Toronto, and graduated in 1913.¹ He was received on probation in the Hamilton Conference of the Methodist Church in 1912, and itinerated on the Stromness Circuit in 1913. In 1914-15 he attended Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University in New York, but sought leave from Hamilton Conference to join the Canadian Artillery in 1915. He was wounded in Belgium in 1916 and discharged as a sergeant in April 1919. After the war Forster returned to New York to complete his MA from Columbia and BD from Union, graduating in 1920.² His undated MA

¹ His classmates included Arthur Phelps, Frederick Kingston, John Line, Lloyd Smith, and Jim Mutchmor, with whom he ventured off to Union Seminary in New York.

² Union Theological Seminary, *Alumni catalogue of the Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 1836-1936* (New York, 1937). Electronic reproduction (New York, N.Y.; Columbia University Libraries, 2007). JPEG use copy available via the World Wide Web. Master copy stored locally on 5 DVDs#ldpd_5998059_000 01 to 05. Columbia University Libraries Electronic Books. 2006.

Thesis for Columbia University was entitled: “Statistics of the Negro Population in Manhattan: A statistical analysis of the 1915 State Census.” James Mutchmor, Secretary of the United Church’s Board of Evangelism and Social Service from 1938 to 1963, was one of his Canadian classmates.

Following graduation, Forster worked with young men and boys at West Park Presbyterian Church in New York. A 14 January 1920 letter from Salem Bland no doubt encouraged his return to Canada:

The churches are the key to the situation in America. And they can be won . . . Don’t in short lose faith in the churches and don’t let them think you have . . . I think myself we are on the eve of a great religious movement. Somewhere, somehow a new organization is going to emerge—a simple, practical, brotherly, democratic, truly Catholic form of Christianity.³

Or perhaps it was the prospect of marriage to Olive Dickinson from Port Hope, in 1921. This was also the year of his re-admittance into candidacy for ministry in the Methodist Church and of his ordination in Hamilton Conference where he served the Stevensville Congregation. In 1923 he was appointed Superintendent at the All Peoples’ Mission of Welland, Ontario.

The Early Years

Forster approached his development of the ministries of the All Peoples’ Mission with a remarkable sensitivity and respect for the lived experiences of those he served. Rev. Robert Wright, who joined the mission staff in 1959, remembered Dr. Forster observing that “the language of religion is the language of our youth.” Consequently, Forster supported the ministries of language-specific colleagues serving the Waldensian Italian community, the Reformed Hungarian community, and the Ukrainian Orthodox community. Some of the knowledge gained from his exposure to the liturgies and spiritual practices of other denominations was shared in his 1941 book, *Holy Days: A Lectionary of the Christian Year*. His interest in understanding the context of the immigrants he served is reflected in his 1929 ThD thesis at United Theological College, McGill, on the Reformed Church and nationalism in Hungary.

Rev. Fern Sayles came to join Harvey Forster at the All Peoples’

³ 14 January 1920 Letter from Salem Bland to Harvey G. Forster. United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto: 86.103, Box 1, File 1.

Mission in Welland in the spring of 1926.⁴ Ordained by the Hamilton Conference of the Methodist Church, he had served on the Six Nations Indian Reserve near Brantford and then the Port Robinson-Cook's Mills-Lion's Creek circuit. His focus was to be boys and girls work, and sports served as one of his tools. The Maple Leaf Mission had just been equipped with a new hall and gymnasium, and Maple Leaf became the centre of church basketball in the city of Welland.⁵ Sayles served the congregations of both Welland and Maple Leaf. Other staff of the Mission included Miss Tait, Rev. Babiuk, Rev. Farkas, and Rev. Sauro.

The Depression Years

As superintendent, Forster used his networking and church-political skills to grow and expand the Mission in these early years. However, the Mission communities were hard hit by the Depression, and both Forster and Sayles were active in the underfunded local relief efforts, and then in supporting the unemployed in their Relief Strike of 1935. This strike erupted when unemployed workers protested the inadequate levels and form of support they were receiving, and the fact that single workers received no support. The "work for relief" requirements were punitive, impinging on the hours available to pick up other odd-jobs for pay. The sewer workers downed tools on April 2, 1935. When the effort to bring their concerns and demands to the attention of Council was met with tear gas, the conflict escalated over the course of the month. Premier Hepburn intervened finally and broke the strike. Leaders were charged and imprisoned, but in the end the food allowances were increased, working hours adjusted, and single men given relief.

In a recent interview, Robert Wright reported Forster saying words to this effect:

When Mr. Sayles and I were thought of as kind missionaries "to those people down at the old Crowland end of town," we were saints and heroes, giving them help in difficult times. But when we began helping them to help themselves—organizing the relief strike or helping them build their unions—we were no longer saintly missionaries. We became dangerous radicals.⁶

Forster and Sayles visited people in prison, attended juvenile court, visited the sick, and on five occasions Forster accompanied

⁴ F.A. Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History* (Welland: Winnifred Sayles, 1963), 12.

⁵ Sayles, *Welland Workers*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

members of the community to the gallows. In the case of Mr. and Mrs. Popovich, in his view wrongfully convicted of the murder of Louis Nato, Forster did all in his power to protest and prevent their hanging, and did not shrink from accompanying them and their family through the ordeal.

The All Peoples' Mission records at the United Church Archives in Toronto includes documents and much correspondence between Forster and "the powers that be," whether the Department of Immigration, Workers' Compensation, Old Age Pension, or the Department of Soldier's Dependents. One case, in which he was assisting the efforts of a Polish couple to bring their daughter to Canada, involves correspondence from Forster stretching from 1937 to 1948. Reading through the files, there are many examples in which the bureaucracy's dismissal of his request or argument eventually became acquiescence, and Forster achieved the justice he sought on behalf of many. The parable of the persistent widow comes to mind (Lk 18:1-8). The breadth of this community-ministry approach meant the church was of service to all in need. Yet the annual reports of the All Peoples' Mission also record regular congregational information such as the number of baptisms, funerals, weddings, and new members.

The Labour Work

Like other industrial communities, Welland workers benefitted from World War Two in terms of improved working conditions and wages. The United Electrical Union successfully organized in Welland in the early forties, but not all employers, including Atlas Steel, were willing to bargain with the Union. Harvey Forster accompanied a delegation from Welland in March 1943 to Queen's Park, demanding legislation to guarantee labour's right to organize, make collective bargaining compulsory, and outlaw company unions. This legislation was indeed passed by the federal government in 1944.⁷ Forster and Sayles were convinced that trade unions could contribute to the economic security of workers, so sorely absent during the Depression. According to Fern Sayles in his posthumously published 1963 book, *Welland Workers Make History*, the 1946 thirteen-week Electrometals strike resulted in lifting the

⁷ Privy Council Order 1003, known as P.C. 1003, proclaimed in February 1944, finally created the machinery necessary to enforce a worker's right to choose a union, to impose collective bargaining and a grievance procedure, and to curb unfair practices by unions and management. Canadian Labour History, Canadian Labour Congress, action.web.ca/home/clcedu/attach/labourhistory.pdf.

wage-pattern in the whole region.

The banning of the Communist Party in 1940 and imprisonment of its leaders, and the banning of the Ukrainian Labour Farm Temple Association (ULFTA), and seizing of their Temple in Thorold, along with such repressive actions across the country, created another opportunity for the All Peoples' Mission to express its solidarity with organizations in the community. The ULFTA with its 167 branches across Canada was associated with the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada which, unlike the Ukrainian nationalists, supported the Soviet Union and their non-aggression pact with the Nazis in the early years of the war. When the Hall was confiscated, the All Peoples' Mission invited the ULFTA to meet in its Hall. When the Mission's attempts to buy the Ukrainian Hall from the government were denied, they rented it for \$15 a month from the Department of the Secretary of State, Custodian of Enemy Property, and Sayles opened it up for Ukrainian cultural activities with the children and youth. In January 1944 the All Peoples' Mission received a letter from the government reporting that an October 14, 1943 Order in Council deleted the ULFTA from the list of illegal organizations. The Ukrainian Labour Temple still stands, now under the auspices of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians.

The work of Forster and Sayles with the trade unions and workers of their community produced notoriety outside the Church, but loyalty from within the community. Despite criticism and efforts to remove them, reflected in correspondence in 1948, 1949, and 1961, Forster always seemed to prevail in his reasoned explanations to his judicatory superiors. Robert Wright believed he was the bulwark for Sayles, who was able to work more closely with the radical members of the community and unions under Forster's protection. In the end, after each investigation or inquiry, Forster and the All Peoples' Mission had the support of the key church leaders and structures, specifically the Board of Home Missions and the Niagara Presbytery.

Forster was an astute communicator. He distributed the annual reports of the All Peoples' Mission widely among businesspeople, local community people, and the church near and far. He had a large and wide-ranging correspondence and did not hesitate to challenge, but also thank, folk in all walks of life from management to labour, local civic leaders, and his church colleagues. He wrote regularly for *The Observer*, and was in high demand as an anniversary preacher, and as a speaker to labour and community groups. He was the 1943 James Robertson Memorial Lecturer and spoke at theological schools across the country. After the unions were established, he served often as a union representative on

Conciliation and Arbitration Boards. A letter from the Joseph Stokes Rubber Co. during the war includes a copy of the collective agreement, and thanks Forster for “his splendid services as a member of the Conciliation Board in this connection.”⁸ Similar thanks were conveyed in a letter from the Ontario Minister of Labour, Charles Daley, and the UE President, A. Hamilton, in 1950.⁹

Forster served the wider church as well during his thirty-eight years as Superintendent of the All Peoples’ Mission in Welland. He was elected as Chair of Niagara Presbytery in 1929 and President of Hamilton Conference in 1943. Jesse Arnup, of the Board of Foreign Missions, observes in a congratulatory letter that it is “a tribute to your personality and service that a man in charge of our non-English work in the Conference should be elected as head of the whole.”¹⁰ *The United Church Observer* remarked: “His sympathies are undoubtedly with the common people, their economic and moral rights. The common labourer and Canadian born and foreign born workers, find in him a friend.”¹¹ Additional recognition was afforded Forster in May 1950 when he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity by Victoria University.

Forster was a member of the Board of Publications for the United Church for over twenty years and contributed to a number of publications, including *The Church in the City Streets*, published by the Committee on Missionary Education and the Women’s Missionary Society. He solicited information and reports from people engaged in urban ministry from across the country in compiling this book. In 1948 an excerpt from his 1934 book, *Calling All Canada*, was included in the Public Schools’ Grade Six Reader, *My World and I*.¹² He also served on the Board of Evangelism and Social Service for many years, bringing reports on the situation of labour.

While Wright credits Forster with knowing how to work through church politics, his colleagues and supervisors in the Board of Home Missions and elsewhere found him at times a trying colleague. Judging from the correspondence, he could be challenging and unrepentant in overlooking processes and in shrewdly working the system. Transparent

⁸ UCC Archives 86.103, Box 1, File 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, File 25.

¹⁰ 12 June 1943 letter from Arnup to Forster. UCC Archives, 86.103, Box 1, File 12.

¹¹ *United Church Observer*, 1 July 1943.

¹² February 21, 1948 letter from George Tait, Inspector of Welland Public Schools, to HG Forster. UCC Archives 86.103, Box 1, File 19.

accountability regarding the finances of the Mission was also a point of tension. While he is periodically chided by succeeding Secretaries of the Home Mission Board, the quality of respect, open debate, and honest communication is evident on both sides.

Transition Years

As Forster approached his retirement, and especially with the death of long-time colleague Fern Sayles in March 1959, Robert Wright reports that Forster was discouraged, anticipating that the Mission might be closed. Most of his “ethnic ministry” colleagues, Rev. A. Babiuk, Rev. C. Farkas, and Rev. D. Gualtieri were also ready to retire. Harvey Forster’s search for a successor for Sayles and Robert Wright’s search for a place to begin ministry happily converged when, at Al Forrest’s suggestion, Wright wrote a February 10, 1959 letter to Forster, introducing himself and described his hopes for ministry:

My special interests lie in the area of Church and Industrialized society . . . but my interest is specially focused in the various movements of renewal within the church which place great stress upon the revitalized congregation; the essential role of the laity; evangelical methods appropriate to the 20th century “industrial” man’s hearing of the Gospel; the depressed areas of our cities, the out-casts of society, etc. etc.¹³

Robert Wright was also a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, an Albertan, and active in the SCM. He had attended SCM industrial work camps and lived at Howland House, the SCM’s Co-op in Toronto, whose residents were engaged in industrial mission, before being accepted to Union Theological Seminary. His thesis for Drs. Lee and Bennett was on “Automation and the Christian Doctrine of Work and Vocation.”

Forster was planning to be in New York for meetings at Union a few weeks after receiving Wright’s letter, and they agreed to meet. The encounter was positive on both sides and with his typical speed and determination, Forster got all the approvals lined up so that Wright could begin work at the mission on July 1. In 1960, another SCMer, Rev. Keith Dixon, an Emmanuel College-educated ordinand from Saskatchewan Conference, was appointed to replace Fern Sayles and took up responsibilities for the church in South Thorold and other surrounding communities. In his final, 1960 Report to the Home Mission Board,

¹³ February 10, 1959 letter from Robert Wright to Harvey Forster. UCC Archives 86.103, Box 2, File 37.

Forster states: "The year 1960 has been probably the most rewarding year in the history of the All Peoples Missions since their inauguration in 1923."¹⁴

Dr. H. G. Forster retired in June 1961, and the more than two hundred gathered to honour him at a Testimonial Dinner in St. Stephen's Hall included "representatives of the church, his congregations, civic leaders, labour and other groups with whom he had been associated during his forty years in the ministry."¹⁵ In presenting Dr. Forster with an honorary membership, Earle Harris, President of Local 523 of the United Electrical Workers, stated that if it were not for Dr. Forster and the late F. A. Sayles, they would not have the union they had, and that Dr. Forster had served the union well in arbitration and conciliation boards.¹⁶

Greetings were brought from the Board of Education on which he served for seventeen years, including three terms as chair, as well as the Welland Basketball Association, begun by Forster and Sayles. Very Rev. Dr. George Dorey, a former Moderator of the United Church, and for many years Secretary of the Home Mission Board, and Dr. M. C. MacDonald, current Secretary of the Home Mission Board, were among those representing the church. MPP Ellis Morningstar and Mayor Michael Perenack recalled that Dr. Forster had begun his ministry in Welland when they were boys. Warden Melvin Swart, Reeve of Thorold Township said, "Dr. Forster had aligned himself with the forces of progress and spent his life fighting for the underman to give him a better life."¹⁷ In retirement, Forster continued to be active in the wider courts and boards of the Church, and wrote *The Industrial Worker: His Quest for Meaning*.

In closing the eulogy at Dr. Forster's 1974 funeral, Robert Wright quoted from Dr. Forster's unpublished autobiography, *Brothers and Comrades*:

Out of my twenty-five years of experience, I have found little error or fault in the aspirations of the common people. They have the knowledge, which comes through suffering, through poverty and disease, through being the dispossessed ones of the earth, knowledge which is infinitely wiser than all the writings

¹⁴ Harvey G. Forster, All Peoples' Missions Report, Niagara, 1960. UCC Archives, 86.103, Box 3, File 57.

¹⁵ Source not given; likely *Welland Tribune*, UCC Archives, biographical file for H.G. Forster.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

of wise men in the ages o'er; and with a sense of my own unworthiness, I cast my lot with them, not in any quixotic adventure in personal renunciation but in a joyful appreciation that I am allowed to help in some small way to make true the dreams which inspire their struggles and the hopes which sustain their weary days. God is in that struggle, for he has made this earth to be his table and desires that all his children shall partake thereof.¹⁸

As Salem Bland advised, Forster stayed in the church. He created space in the church for people like Fern Sayles and himself to work on the margins, and push the boundaries during the highly formative period following church union and into the height of the United Church's growth and establishment in the 1960s. He encouraged others doing similar work in urban, industrial, and resource towns across the country. He modelled and mentored for a radicalized post-war generation of ministers and lay people the ways in which the United Church could be, to quote Salem Bland, "a simple, practical, brotherly, democratic, truly Catholic form of Christianity."¹⁹

¹⁸ Rev. Robert Wright "Eulogy in Tribute to the late Rev. Dr. H.G. Forster," Central United Church Archives, Welland.

¹⁹ 14 January 1920 letter from Salem Bland to H.G. Forster.

BOOK REVIEWS

Militant Grace: The Apocalyptic Turn and the Future of Christian Theology.

Philip G. Ziegler. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp.238 + viii.

Philip Ziegler holds the chair in dogmatics at King's College, University of Aberdeen, and is an MDiv and ThD graduate of Victoria University in the University of Toronto. His thoughtful influence, moving prose, and razor-sharp analytical abilities have made a significant contribution to theology on both sides of the Atlantic. His book, *Militant Grace*, has produced more conversation along theological lines, and generated more reviews and interviews, than any book in recent memory. It is a brief monograph with short chapters inspired in no small part by a symposium on "Explorations in Theology and Apocalyptic" in Montreal in 2009. He nevertheless provides a densely-packed account that seeks to illumine "at one and the same time both the drastic and virulent reality of human captivity and complicity in sin, and the extraordinary power of saving divine grace that outbids it ..." (xvii). To achieve this, Professor Ziegler carefully crafts a journey of thought that describes first the shape and sources of an apocalyptic theology; followed by an exposition of Christ, Spirit, and salvation as an hermeneutical lens to seeing and understanding such a theology; and finally, a prescriptive section that is concerned with the faith imperative inherent in living at the "turn of the ages."

So much has been written about this book already that, in a bid to say something new, I go out on a limb to suggest that what is at stake here is a distinction and choice between a high anthropology in which grace and salvation are part of the unaided potential of the human creature, versus the helplessness and sinfulness of human existence that can only be saved by the unrelenting militancy (struggle) of God to save us from ourselves. The unveiling (*apokalypsis*) of God's struggle for us is the basis and path for the development of this book. The resultant transformation into the *ecclesia militans* (the church of struggle) also leads us to paths of fresh exegesis and of a Christian ethics based on the imperative of Christ for us (Chapter 4).

Prof. Ziegler has no qualms about using language that has fallen from favour, starting with the word "militant," and continuing with the theme of "apocalyptic." He does not shy away from the need to reclaim the term "militant" as meaning "to struggle and strive," for that is what God does in revealing (*apokalypsis*) the very divine nature. In symposia following the publication of the book, he likewise refers to God's grace

as “catastrophic.” It is catastrophic, as God’s militant grace for our sake insists upon the “death” of who we are for the sake of who we are becoming for God.

Starting with the work of the Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde, Ziegler likewise takes us through a staggering array of great thinkers, mostly Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. But he does not cite so many great scholars to shore up what is clearly a radical call to a primary theological path; he does so as a teacher, to point us to broader and deeper discussions in order to strengthen our understanding. In doing so, every turning point in the book’s development is lavishly and delightfully referenced in Scripture with exegetical *bon mots* that will (or should) provoke the preacher. For in the end, in practically the last sentence of this book, we find the true grasp of God’s hand upon us: “Following Jesus is the result, not the means, of our fellowship with Christ . . . It is the shape of the human life of faith now militant in love during the time that remains.”

During the war-torn period of 1915-1919, Karl Barth wrote and revised *Der Romerbrief*. For the next sixty years, Christian theology struggled against the pull of his assertion that God is revealed only in the cross of Christ. Barth himself described the experience of writing *Romans* as being like a man climbing a tower who tries to steady himself on the banister, but grasps the bell rope instead. The bell, he said, did not ring over him alone. As the pull of Barth’s book has faded, some may have wondered if there would be anything like it in the twenty-first century. History is clear only in hindsight, but Philip Ziegler may have written something that is moving in that direction: a hopeful corrective to “living in apocalyptic times without an apocalyptic faith and theology” (Carl Braaten quoted, 17).

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Towards Unity: Ecumenical Dialogue 500 Years after the Reformation.

Edited by Donald Bolen, Nicholas Jesson, and Donna Geernaert. Introduction by Cardinal Walter Kasper. Toronto: Novalis, 2017. Pp. 400.

Towards Unity, a *festschrift* honouring Monsignor John Radano, contains a remarkable collection of essays from a wide spectrum of ecumenical scholars and dialogue participants. Actively participating in countless

dialogues on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Radano has touched countless theologians from a wide range of denominational traditions. This book is a fitting tribute to his contributions from many of these theologians. In its pages, one catches a glimpse of the richness of the ecumenical dialogues that have occurred since the Second Vatican Council. At the same time, it does not overlook some of the very difficult challenges that continue to face the ecumenical movement. This volume also reflects the ecumenical commitment and considerable scholarship of the editors involved in this project.

There are many strengths to this book. First, the contributors all provide very helpful, and often personal, insights into some of the bilateral and multilateral dialogues and agreements that have furthered the ecumenical task. The reader is often given an “insider’s” view by the authors as they explore the most significant points or stumbling blocks of this particular dialogue or that consensus document.

Second, the articles also highlight the particular doctrinal or practical issues that are crucial to the self-identity of each of the traditions involved in particular dialogues. For example, contributions by two ecumenists who have died since this project began set the tone: Jeffrey Gros noted the importance of ecclesiology in the recent Reformed-Catholic dialogues, while Margaret O’Gara commented on the role that teaching authority played in dialogues among Catholics, Disciples of Christ, and Lutherans. Other chapters also stand out, including Donna Geernaert’s reflection on the importance of *koinonia* in the ecumenical landscape, along with Thomas Best’s insightful call for dialogue to move from mutual recognition to mutual accountability.

Third, one should commend the editors for not cutting out the criticisms of some of the contributors. For example, Odair Pedroso Mateus’ article on the problems that arise from a denomination’s focus on “confessionalism”—stressing their own confessional identity and distinctiveness—is a sharp reminder to the Lutheran and Reformed churches, among others, of how such a stance can be isolationist. It does not promote ecumenical conversations. Many of the other contributors also observed the struggle between preserving one’s confessional identity and commitment to becoming more ecumenically engaged, following the Lund principle. Fourth, the editors included a good assortment of Evangelical and Pentecostal contributions. With this group representing twenty-five percent of the Christians on earth, we need to hear these voices in an ecumenical context.

There are also some very challenging articles in this volume, especially for members of mainline churches. For example, the articles

by Cecil Robeck Jr. and Henri Blocher explore why the Pentecostals and Evangelicals have generally chosen not to be a part of the World Council of Churches. One of the major reasons is the lack of commitment of mainline churches to mission and evangelism, which is so central to the self-understanding of Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Blocher also bluntly notes that Evangelicals consider the mainline churches to have strayed from the truth in theological and moral matters, so there is not much interest in developing relationships with them. Both Robeck and Blocher note, however, the Pentecostal and Evangelical affinity to the Roman Catholic Church, appreciating its focus on truth and morality in the Christian life. At the same time, the Roman Catholics and the members of World Council of Churches, who are predominantly from the mainline churches and make up one quarter of the Christians in the world, are more engaged in doctrinally focussed dialogue. Thus, the Roman Catholics (who comprise half of the Christians in the world) play a mediating role between the mainline churches and the Evangelicals and Pentecostals. One hopes, for the sake of the body of Christ, that the Roman Catholics can indeed keep the avenues of dialogue open.

This book, published to honour a giant in the ecumenical field, is a valuable contribution to the ecumenical scene. Those teaching courses in this area may want to use this volume—or particular chapters—as a helpful companion text for their course, since it provides many insightful analyses of specific dialogues and identifies helpful ecumenical trends. It will also help students and dialogue participants find their way around the often-formal ecumenical agreements. The treasures contained in these pages are worth the journey through this book.

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The Rule of Faith and Biblical Interpretation: Reform, Resistance, and Renewal

Robert C. Fennell. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. Pp. ix+167.

The purpose of Fennell's book is to convince the reader that "faithful reading of the Bible is best accomplished in community, following the Rule of Faith" (ix). Fennell states that the Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*) is the most ancient of all approaches to biblical interpretation, and is a constellation of sources, norms, liturgies, creeds, confessions, hymns,

prayers, practices, faith commitments, and convictions. If communities of faith intentionally read Scripture in light of the norms of church texts and practices, Fennell argues that the church might better find its way through conflict fuelled by opposing biblical interpretations. This would allow an “informed and disciplined rediscovery of Scripture” through which faith renewal could occur.

To flesh out this premise, Fennell further defines the Rule of Faith as used in the early church when the biblical canon was being formed. He argues that all Christian communities actually interpret Scripture in light of their particular traditions, whether or not they intentionally do so, because it is impossible to step outside our circles of influence. Fennell acknowledges that various Christian communities will interpret Scripture differently, even when explicitly drawing on church tradition. However, he argues that the Rule of Faith will limit the number of plausible interpretations, which will draw the universal church closer towards unity.

Fennell then explains how Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley each drew upon the Rule of Faith (or “analogy of faith” as they would also describe it) to guide them in their biblical interpretation. Fennell notes that Martin Luther’s use of the Rule of Faith was “idiosyncratic.” Luther tended to disparage any church tradition that contradicted his own beliefs, and drew selectively upon church teachings that supported his doctrines of *sola scriptura*, christocentrism, justification, faith, the nature of God and human nature, the reality of Satan and his antagonism to God’s purposes, and pneumatology. John Calvin appealed to three sources for his work: humanism, the ancient Christian teachers, and the “analogy of faith.” By humanism, Fennell is referring to the dawn of the historical criticism that investigated the historical, cultural, contextual, rhetorical, grammatical, and etymological origins of the biblical text. Thus, Fennell demonstrates that Calvin used both ancient and modern approaches to biblical interpretation.

Unlike Luther, Calvin also drew upon the medieval practice of Quadriga—an understanding that there is a four-fold sense of Scripture: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. Like Luther, Calvin drew selectively upon the ancient Christian writers, wary of the abuses of church authority. All ancient writings were subject to the authority of Scripture. Likewise, the analogy of faith (practices and doctrines) was always to be subject to Scripture. Six doctrines central for Calvin were: christocentrism, pneumatology, faith as epistemology, the matrix of predestination-election, the dialectic of law and gospel, and an ecclesial horizon (serving Christ’s church).

John Wesley relied on a range of sources to help him interpret the Bible: his personal faith, the doctrinal norms of the Church of England, reason, and experience. This later became known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture given highest authority and informed by the tradition (patristic authors, councils, creeds and the Church of England's doctrinal standards), reason, and experience of the Holy Spirit. He was also influenced by Arminian theology that disputed predestination, and supported a more universal understanding of salvation. Wesley made use of historical critical methods and eschewed the use of allegorical methods. Wesley's doctrinal standards included christocentrism, the authority and unity of scripture, universal salvation by grace through faith, sanctification and perfection, empirical spiritual experience, pneumatology, and a disciplined ethical and moral life.

Fennell then moves to the present day, with its emphasis on the historical-critical method. He notes, however, that the Rule of Faith has not entirely disappeared—"like a dandelion sprouting through a crack in the sidewalk, the Rule continues to find a role in the work of interpretation." Fennell offers very brief descriptions of the hermeneutical methods of Giordano Bruno, Erasmus, Reimarus, Schleiermacher, Bultmann, the Jesus Seminar, C. S. Lewis, and Sandra Schneiders. In his concluding chapter, Fennell urges contemporary Christian groups to read communally and embrace the Rule of Faith as a reliable guide. This would include a consideration of that particular denomination's doctrinal teachings, the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, the guidance of the Spirit, and dialogue with the ancient church and its creeds.

Fennell has written a great introduction to the Rule of Faith that is accessible to the lay reader. He may not realize that some feminist postmodern—and specifically poststructural—approaches are similar to some of his assumptions of the Rule of Faith. Mary McClintock Fulkerson writes that Scripture is best read communally in light of the canon of authority of that particular tradition, and that interpretations are limited by this canon. I am not as convinced as Fennell that the Rule of Faith may help to heal divisions—it may in fact further entrench beliefs and actions that continue to marginalize minorities.

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The Essential Karl Barth: A Reader and Commentary

Keith L. Johnson. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.
Pp. 371.

Keith Johnson, Associate Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, introduces us here to Karl Barth's Christ-centred theology by reprinting selections from Barth's sprawling life work as well as offering editorial reflections on these selections.

The longest chapter in the book is composed of selections from the *Church Dogmatics*, beginning with Volume I, Part 1 in which Barth discusses the threefold form of the Word of God as revealed in Christ, Scripture, and the proclamation of the Church (I.1). The next selection finds Barth discussing Jesus as truly human and truly divine even as the Spirit truly illumines the mystery of Revelation (I.2). Next follows the theologian's discussion of the reality of God as the one who loves in freedom (II.1), and the predestining will of God as the one who elects Jesus Christ and in him the community and the individual while electing to take the rejection upon himself (II.2). Then follows a selection from Barth's presentation of the covenant as the internal meaning of the external work of creation (III.1); another selection concerning Barth's understanding of human beings as creatures living on the boundary between heaven and earth (III.2); and a selection from Barth's discussion of the power that is constantly trying to destroy our God-given humanity, namely, the power of nothingness (III.3). Finally, we arrive at what is arguably the high point of the *Dogmatics*: Karl Barth's doctrine of reconciliation as understood in the light of the God who humbles himself and becomes a servant in Christ while simultaneously raising that servant up and making him the provisional representative of the new humanity in our midst (IV.1, IV.2, IV.3.1 and IV.3.2.)

In addition to these selections from the *Dogmatics*, Johnson includes a number of incidental articles by Karl Barth. These include: an exposure of the fatal weakness of liberal theology in Barth's 1923 article, "Answer to Professor Adolf von Harnack"; the theologian's formal parting in 1931 with such Neo-Protestant, Hitler-embracing "friends" as Gogarten and Georg Merz; Barth's anti-fascist "Barmen Theological Declaration," published in the wake of Hitler's accession in 1932; and Barth's "Humanity of God" address in 1956 that finds him arguing against the divinization of our humanity in favor of the humanity of our God.

Amidst these riches one hesitates to carp. Yet why overlook, as

this book does, so many of the engaging exegetical passages from the fine print of the *Dogmatics*—Barth’s christological interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, for example (I.2), or his equally penetrating interpretation of the story of the Prodigal Son (IV.2)? Or why overlook all those endearing moments in Barth’s presentation of the gospel that bring out his refreshing humanity in the very act of articulating the deepest theological themes. There is a moment in *Dogmatics in Outline*, for example, when Barth almost forgets that he’s a theologian and simply speaks to the shell-shocked students in post-war Germany as one excited human being to another:

Tell me how it stands with your Christology, and I shall tell you who you are.” This is the point at which ways diverge, and the point at which is fixed the relation between theology and philosophy . . . revelation and reason . . . Gospel and Law . . . God’s truth and man’s truth . . . theology and politics Right here in this centre, in which as a Professor of Systematic Theology I must call to you, “Look! This is the point now! Either knowledge, or the greatest folly!—here I am in front of you like a teacher in Sunday school facing his kiddies, who has something to say which a mere four-year-old can really understand. ‘The world was lost, but Christ was born, rejoice, O Christendom.’”

Or the moment in Barth’s sermon, “Saved by Grace,” in which he speaks to prisoners in a Swiss jail as one redeemed sinner might speak to another:

Dear brothers and sisters, where do we stand now? One thing is certain: the bright day has dawned, the sun of God does shine into our dark lives, even though we may close our eyes to its radiance. His voice does call us from heaven, even though we may obstruct our ears. The bread of life is offered to us, even though we are inclined to clench our fists instead of opening our hands to take the bread and eat it.

Karl Barth was always offering us the bread of life in both mind-stretching and heart-warming ways. If this book doesn’t always catch his humanity as much as we might like, it certainly re-affirms the profundity of his grasp of the message.

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