

Sharing the Feast and Hearing Complex  
Calling:

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A Study of Racialized Ordained Women  
Ministers of The United Church of  
Canada

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**HyeRan Kim-Cragg**



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the United Church of Canada**

**McGeachy Senior Scholarship Final Report (2013)**

Submitted to the McGeachy Senior Scholarship Committee  
Submitted by HyeRan Kim-Cragg (2011 recipient)

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A Study of Racialized Ordained Women Ministers of  
the United Church of Canada**

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## **Sharing the Feast and Hearing Complex Calling:**

### **A Study of Racialized<sup>1</sup> Ordained Women Ministers of the United Church of Canada**

#### **PART I Setting the Table for the Feast**

##### **Background**

In 2007 a group of Asian North American women theologians wrote an anthology called, *Off the Menu*.<sup>2</sup> The metaphor they used for this collaborative work was food because it is such an important part of the inter-Asian culture and it binds them together in a common experience. I think this metaphor can easily be applied to my McGeachy group of interviewees. This is true even though this group goes beyond inter-Asian experience. There are 19 interviewees who were contributed to this study. Their contributions are a metaphorical feast of wisdom and firsthand experience in some areas that are critical to the health of the United Church of Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am using the metaphor of feast to describe “a study of racialized ordained women ministers of the United Church of Canada.” But why feast? Because I hope that this report will contribute to nourishing the church and sharing the gift for abundance and full life.

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘racialized’ is a more inclusive alternative to ‘racial minority.’ It is a conscious and contesting term to point to the fact that those who are non-White are “racialized” by those in the dominant culture (White European descents in Canada) and find racial labels thrust upon them. The United Church of Canada has begun using the term ‘racialized’ to include people who identify as racial minority, bi-racial, Aboriginal, or Métis.

<sup>2</sup> *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology*. Edited by Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-lan, Seung Ai Yang (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007), xvii.

Of course the metaphor of a feast in another way that Jesus used to describe “the Kingdom of God” or “Kin-dom of God” The group of remarkable women in this study is making a difference, showing a tangible sign of a new world of hope and courage. Upon his baptism, Jesus proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has come near!” This new and near world is portrayed often in Scripture as a feast.<sup>3</sup> One of the most visionary and imaginative prophets, Isaiah, envisions a feast that God put out for all people (Isaiah 25:6). The women in this report follow in the footsteps of Isaiah. They are prophets inviting us to this feast.

In all great festive celebrations there is a little, or sometime more than a little, improvisation that must take place. In my original proposal, I stated the following: *“I plan to carry out this project in three ways: First, the data of the racialized ordained women ministers will be gathered. Second, interviews with some racialized women ministers will be arranged during two planned national gatherings in 2011 and 2012 (Next Generation Ministry Leadership and More Franchises). Third, of those interviewed three will be selected for in-depth ethnographic study during this suggested period of the project.”* Some changes have been made in the process.

The first major change is with the first quantitative survey in the task of data collecting. While the General council executive made a decision to collect the data of ministry personnel’s multiple identities (ethnicity, language, race, sexual orientation, etc.) in November 2011, there was no data ready for me to work with. It was not possible for me to conduct a comprehensive and nationwide survey in the time reframe I was given to carry out and complete this research. The professional company that was asked to do this survey had to back out due to this difficulty.

I did, however, manage to conduct one (much smaller-scale) survey with the help of the staff in the then Communities in Ministry Unit. (It is now the Communities in Mission unit.) The lists for this particular survey could not be narrowed down to “racialized ordained women ministers.” The lists (prepared by the Communities in Ministry Unit) had to be broad and random since the church did not yet have this specific lists. 19 people responded to general email to participate in this survey. The reality is that we still do not know how many racialized ordained women ministers (who are active in ministry) in the United Church. It is, therefore, impossible to figure out what percentage of the entire number of such minister the survey of these 19 people would be. While I am grateful to the participants who responded to this survey, I concluded that the survey results cannot be seen as sufficient to make any meaningful analysis, therefore, the final report does not include the findings of the survey but only deals with the qualitative interview

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<sup>3</sup> Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* second edition (Arkon, Ohio: OSL Publications, 1996), 86-87.

contents. This report, therefore, is solely based upon the qualitative research. This should be noted by the reader as it is a departure from the original plan.

The last major change from the original proposal is the number of the interviewees for this qualitative research. Instead of 3 interviewees in the proposal, I was able to interview 19 people. This large increase was done in order to compensate for the lack of quantitative survey results. This change is deemed positive because it allowed a much thicker reading of the research, a more expansive description of the participants, their thoughts and contexts. It turned out to be a fruitful change in terms of the quality of the research. I performed 8 interviews by myself and I hired a research assistant who did 11 interviews. I am happy to report that these 19 qualitative interviews helped to better achieve the goal of this project, namely to lift up the voices and roles of racialized women ministers by *“hearing their stories and the stories of their congregations[... and offering] a way to listen to their experiences, and honour their gifts and, thus, enable us to shape and imagine our church,”* as articulated in the proposal.

### **Method, Sample, and Ethical Protocol**

The list for the interview was gathered through the various networks including the Communities in Ministry General Council staff members, who are supporting ethnic minority ministries, and a racialized faculty member who connected me with a few participants who fit under the criterion of “racialized ordained women ministers of the UCC.” While we cannot know how many in total there are who identify themselves as “racialized ordained women ministers,” across the United Church of Canada we can say that this number is not insignificant. Fortunately my work with the 19 participants I had yielded a good amount of the data, interview transcriptions totalling approximately 1000 pages. Furthermore, the goal of this research was not to simply to accumulate the experiences of all those who are under the category of “racialized ordained women ministers of the United Church of Canada” but to critically reveal the rich complexity of this group’s lives by identifying their particularity and recognizing their unique gifts and contributions to the church and the world.

Speaking of participants’ complexity, it is perhaps a good place here as any to briefly introduce who these 19 people are and what my role has been. This brief introduction of the group as a whole is based upon the identities form that each filled out at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix 1 “Identities Form”). Each interviewee was given the form and asked to take time to fill it out before the interview began.

My McGeachy group as a sample and representatives of the racialized ordained women ministers of the United church of Canada is diverse in ethnicity, language, sexual orientation,

immigration history, age, marital/family status, education and ministry make up. These are but a few among many factors that form their multiple identities. Among the 19 individuals, 5 are Aboriginal descents, 6 are African or Caribbean descents, 7 are Asian descents, and 1 identified as Latino. Some of the Caribbean interviewees claim multiple racial identities. Of the 19 people 8 are bilingual, 4 are trilingual, and 15 named English as the language of comfort. The languages other than English they speak fluently include Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, French, Spanish, German, North American Aboriginal and African languages. 4 identified as queer and 3 were in same-sex relationships. Among the 19 participants 9 were born somewhere other than Canada and immigrated to Canada at various ages, from infant and to adult. Their ages range from women in their 20s to women in their 70s. 12 live with a partner, while 7 are single (including one widowed). 6 participants as couple live with children, one is single but lives with children in the same household. One interviewee had a disability which is described as invisible and important yet often unnoticed. 14 participants hold more than one postsecondary degree (i. e., history, social work, English literature, music, business, religious studies, religious education, philosophy) in addition to an M. Div, among them 3 participants are pursuing a Ph. D. or a D. Min., while one already holds a Ph. D. A couple of them do not have a University degree. The schools they did their theological education in an alphabetic order are Atlantic School of Theology, Emmanuel College, Sandy-Sauteaux Centre, St. Andrew's College, United Theological School, Vancouver School of Theology and elsewhere in non-United Church theological schools. 12 interviewees are currently active in ministry (mostly congregational pastoral ministry), while 2 were retired from ministry, and 5 have yet to be ordained—3 going through seminary and internship, 2 had completed theological education were waiting for ordination at the time of interviews (2012). To some extent, my McGeachy group represents the past, the present, and the future of the racialized ordained women ministers in the United Church. I have tried to give a full voice to all those who were interviewed but two participants received a special hearing. They are the elders of the study. Both are of Asian descent. Their pioneering leadership not only to the racialized ordained women but also to other members of the church has had a special place in the development of this topic. Thus, this report will dedicate a section to their writings on the ministry and mission of the church as the last course in our metaphorical banquet.

It was worth noting that all who were contacted said, "yes" to the invitation except for only two who decided not to take that interview because they had very negative and painful (discriminatory) experiences with the United church during their discernment and candidacy process in the past. Both who declined the interview told me that they welcomed and supported this much needed research project but they did not want to remember the past because it was still too raw to touch. Sadly, I also learned that they had left the church completely due to this experience.

It is necessary to state the ethical protocol of how the data was collected as we are about to read the stories of the 19 participants. All the interviewees were asked to fill out the interview consent form (see Appendix 2 “Interview Consent Form”). This was also done before the interview was conducted. I am aware that this is a mandatory requirement of ethical review that I, as the researcher dealing with living human subject, must fulfill. As a faculty member of St. Andrew’s College, I had to go through the Ethics Protocol procedure. The Graduate Studies Council of Saskatoon Theological Union initiated the process and granted the approval that my research had met the ethical protocol. While more than half the participants gave me permission to identify them I decided to cite their work without identifying them at all (other than putting the numbers on their responses). I realize that their disclosure of their identities is unnecessary for the quality of this report in ways that affect the content. I have found that quoting participants anonymously were actually better, not only for honoring their privacy but also for helping readers who do not have to worry about any preconceived notions getting in the way of hearing the different and sometimes difficult stories. The participants’ names, therefore, were not used at all (other than the two elders at the last section) and some of their background information was altered to preserve confidentiality.

Who am I as a researcher? I am a practical theologian. I am self-invited to this feast. A working definition of practical theology would be helpful here to define my role: it is a theology that “describes the critical reflection that is done about the meaning of faith and action in the world.”<sup>4</sup> My job here as a practical theologian and a researcher has to do with the work of interpreting the praxis of this particular group’s lived faith and experience. This work is integral to the task of practical theology which is chiefly about a critical reflection of how the praxis of Christian faith bears meaning in the world. As an academic, I also bring my feminist and postcolonial approach to the research, which means that I value the subjective experiences of the participants and I am aware of power dynamics between the interviewee and myself. This is also a critical consideration in the interviews of my research assistant who is a young white male person. His employer and I had a discussion and he also had to go through the ethical protocol set out by his research firm. I followed up with every participant and got permission that they were fine with being interviewed by my research assistant. Before an interview began, he made sure, to the best of his abilities that each interviewee felt free to express her uneasiness or to refuse to answer a question or to pass if the question was uncomfortable for her. In short, we as researchers took seriously the power dynamics of gender, race, age, interviewer-interviewee in the interview process.

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<sup>4</sup> James N Poling and Donald Miller, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 33.



In this official report, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the participation of the interviewees. They were all eager and willing to engage in conversations and discussion on the topics that were raised by me. I was gratified to hear their affirmative and encouraging comments to the interview questions. In this section of setting the table for the feast, it would be fitting to include some of the responses from the interview that capture their enthusiasm and serious engagement.

Here are some responses to the question “Have you found this interview useful, affirming and positive to your ministry and work?” (Appendix 3 “Discussion Guide” # 9)

*15) I am so glad that I got to do it with you. It's been very helpful and it's always helpful to think through these sorts of thing because let's face it in the average day to day life of ministry we don't think about this.*

*17) interview questions were really good, and they bring out what we really want to convey to people about intercultural issues and invisible minorities issues.*

*16) I think that you asked really deep questions. A question that requires more than a yes or no is a good question. I think you also showed some sensitivity to answering these questions. I think that you've got a specific thesis that you've got to work around. So there's always going to be this area that you didn't touch upon. But that's the reality of doing what you're doing.*

*1) Yes, that is why I was elated to read about this project (when McGeachy scholarship was publicized) because someone wants to engage with the potential that future leaders for this mandate (intercultural) have to unfold this into something great.*

*8) Yes, yes, in many ways it's helped me to reconnect with the covenant that I made to be ordained. I've been living it out but it's not an onetime thing. It's an ongoing process and there is still more that I have to do that is part of living that out. So yes, it has been very good.*

*9) Yes, I have very much so it's been very thought provoking. You've given me some new things to think about and new ways of thinking about things. It's going to be able to put some of my experiences at work because I could try to explain it to some people here but they wouldn't fully understand. So this has been really good, I've enjoyed the interview. I hope that my answers have been helpful.*

*10) It's been truly challenging because you know I have to say that I haven't had an opportunity to talk about this so this is kind of a first conversation for me so it's really, I really kind of had to push myself and I'm still pushing myself and I know I'm not gonna forget about these questions for a time because I feel, I want to go back and I need to think about that some more.*

13) *Yeah, I find it helpful I mean you asked questions that I've never thought of before especially around like physical body and how I felt preaching or being in a pulpit and things, I never even thought about that before. One thing that just blew my mind is when that study came out in 2007 or whenever it was, saying like women ministers still only make 70% in terms of gender equity in the workplace and nobody did anything about it right? so I hope that's not what happens to your research.*

To me, personally, the last person's comment was pointy: a study is done yet nothing happens. It means that the good news never got shared and that nobody came to the banquet for nourishment. But the table for the feast is open to all who want to come and taste. After all, we are talking about the feast! How can the feast be the feast without people involved?

"Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!... Come; for everything is ready now... Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." (Luke 14:15; 21)

### **A Conceptual Framework for Studying this Group**

It is wise to clarify some methodological issues about quantitative and qualitative research, its differences and its strengths/weaknesses. At the outset, it should be noted that methodologies cannot be true or false, only more or less useful. However, it has become abundantly clear that qualitative methods are more useful for this particular research for the following reasons:

- In quantitative research, observation is not generally seen as reliable thus rarely used, while it is crucial and often noted in qualitative research. Scholars have argued that observation is fundamental to understanding another culture.<sup>5</sup> We are dealing with racialized people with distinctive cultural differences where observational method is fundamental to understand their responses. Therefore, the qualitative research method I conducted proves to be more useful and necessary for studying this group.
- We are concerned with exploring people's particular (and not general) life experiences. This study's aim is not to describe their objective reality or to report their choices (i. e., vote). It is difficult to measure their particular life experiences in quantitative ways, therefore, the qualitative approach is needed.
- Research shows that methods of quantitative research are appropriate when we have control groups and previously collected data.<sup>6</sup> Since this particular research has neither

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<sup>5</sup> David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* Third Edition (Los Angeles, Sage, 2006), 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

control groups nor earlier data, it is not appropriate to use quantitative research methods.

- Finally, we are dealing with the issues that have unmeasurable and unperceived values including the concepts of racial and gender discriminations. These concepts are only possible to understand when they are considered in relation to interactions with others in everyday situations. How can we quantify attitudes by presenting numbers?

Scholars contend that the main strength of qualitative research is its ability to study phenomena and how they are locally constituted. In our particular research, we describe the phenomena where these 19 individuals are locally situated in the larger contexts called the from the United Church of Canada, Canada, and to the global world. We also determine (with limitations) how they cope with the contexts (making meanings out of the situation) and what move they take (sequences of actions and practices) in regards to their social locations and multiple identities.

As already remarked at the beginning, there are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions or good or bad research methods. However, it may be naïve to ignore a dangerous tendency that is prevalent in scholarship—that is, quantitative research is superior because it is value-free. To put it alternatively, qualitative research is unscientific because it is entirely personal and full of bias.<sup>7</sup> This particular research serves both to contest this false notion and to argue that nonquantified data are as valid and reliable as quantified data.

However, one may also raise the issue that comes from the other direction: when one claims personal narratives and experiences as a valid research subject matter we may fall into the danger of not authentically representing what we have heard. We need to be careful and sensitive to this danger. While this particular research aims to describe realities that are true to my McGeachy group, thus, authentic and valid as far as speaking truth out of their own experiences, its purpose is not to overstate our findings as representative of and universal in regards to all racialized women ordained ministers in the UCC. The goal of this research in using qualitative methods is to recognize the presence of this particular group, otherwise overlooked or unavailable, as it describes their particular experiences in order to assess their place and roles in church and society for the sake of building up the equitable community of faith for the church and the world. With the tricky balancing act between authentic and representational, the following report focuses on thick descriptions of stories and voices of the women in my McGeachy group. The balance is maintained by attending to each individual's particular experience and recognizing their differences. I tried to present their voices

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<sup>7</sup> N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1994), 4.

(transcribed) in as raw and as real ways as possible. And for this reason, I decided not to edit some of the colloquial expressions (with grammatical oddness) in the transcribed texts. Also, I decided to provide a sufficient space for their voices to be heard. It is my hope that the readers not only hear their voices (through the medium of reading), but also feel their emotions and sense their passion for Jesus and their commitment to the life of the church in and of the world.

In sum, the conceptual perspective I employ in this study emerges from feminist approaches that emphasize the importance of difference and subjectivity. The emphasis on difference entails the complex relations between multiple locations and dimensions. As my McGeachy group identity designation reveals, each participant in this research is located in complex relations of race, gender, religion, sexuality, language, culture, and nationality. The importance of subjectivity underscores the in-depth interview, seeking productive ways of revealing their reality and navigating their own life stories without being impinged upon the traditionally understood norms and expectations. Jill M. Bystydzienski of French-Canadian origin and a scholar of women's gender and sexuality studies, supports this claim of the strength of feminist approaches in her own in-depth qualitative research study on intercultural couples. She argues, "this approach provides the opportunity for those whose voices historically have been suppressed (usually women and members of various minority groups) to tell their own stories, which the researcher then attempts fairly and accurately to present in her/his work."<sup>8</sup> I took her argument cited above very seriously in this report because my McGeachy group belongs to the same group that she identified (women and minority). Thus, as the researcher, I tried to fairly and accurately present the stories of this particular group. Bystydzienski's work was immensely helpful in organizing my research materials for this report in the ways she introduced the 35 intercultural couples that she interviewed, their criteria for samples, and delineating the themes out of the interviews, most of all, the sufficient use of the interview materials in her book.

### **Overview of the Report**

As the final part of the introduction, setting the table, it would be helpful to name how the report will be laid out in terms of contents, structures, and themes. First, as mentioned earlier, the thick descriptions from the interviews as the primary sources of the research will be presented as the main ingredient. As a researcher I will attempt to add my reading and interpretation of these descriptions as the side dishes. This should be clear: my own reflections and analysis are secondary to the interviewed participants' input. What these 19 people brought to the table comprise the main course for the feast. Throughout my analysis and its

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<sup>8</sup> Jill M. Bystydzienski, *Intercultural Couples: Crossing Boundaries, Negotiating Difference* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 8.

presentation in this report, I relied heavily on the words and firsthand perceptions and articulations of the participants. Their own perspectives were essential for what this study seeks to produce. Nevertheless, the analysis and interpretation of their viewpoints are equally important and ultimately mine. It is my hope that the readers can taste them without relying on my own and other scholarly seasonings that I put on. Rather I only intent that these critical reflections enhance the reader's taste when necessary. The main body text of the interview materials, will be presented as *italized* and my interpretation, reflection, and scholarly references will follow below or appear in between the transcribed *italicized* texts of their stories. From time to time, you will see a bracket in the *italicized* text, which is the part I added in order to make the story clear since the part that is included is not the entire story or the earlier part of the interview that was not included.

Secondly, the interview materials are organized under the themes integral and conducive to the goal of this research. The transcribed materials are so huge that it is impossible to taste (never mind digest) all that they offer. It is like an immense amount of food all over without being put into the proper dishes and bowls. I tried to capture some concurring themes that emerged from the interviews as much as the themes that speak to the heart of this research. Hopefully, readers can get "the full-bodied reality... one capable of displaying its ambiguity..." as Mary McClintock Fulkerson puts it, as I, the weaver of these threads of the themes, seek to envision "a theology that thematizes the complex and dense subject matter of contemporary situation,"<sup>9</sup> and that of my McGeachy group. I hope that these themes serve to provide the clarity and the depth to the research. I admit that it took a lot more work to arrange the raw materials of the interview than I expected. I had to read and re-read the transcripts in order to faithfully capture the essence of what each individual shared without diluting or distorting their struggles and truthfulness. Though it was difficult, I found this process creative and generative because it contributed to conjure up a new reality, a complex and organic web of insights and possibilities. It is my sincere hope that my own critical reading and creative process that is offered here finds the same level of meanings for the readers. My hunch is that it would not serve the readers well, if I simply presented the participants responses following the interview guide questions (see Appendix 3) because it would be too mechanical and linear, failing to synthesize the insights and connect them between and among the participants. It is like looking at the flower as a whole, appreciating and smelling its own beauty, rather than viewing each petal separately. A Korean-American preaching scholar's insight is helpful here. Proposing a non-Western way of preaching, Mary Eunjoo Kim takes an insight from Zen Buddhism hermeneutics: "If a flower is understood in an analytic way, the flower becomes a collection of

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<sup>9</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

pieces of petals, pollen, stamen, and stalk or is analyzed according to its components, such as hydrogen and oxygen. By contrast, intuitive understanding sees the flower as a whole that represents the universe itself.”<sup>10</sup> While each person’s input is distinctive, requiring analysis, it is better to integrate each input as a whole. In that way, we can identify what were the common experiences and what were different, and how we as readers take them from here.

Finally, after the main course is sampled and digested, the feast will end with the refreshing thought of what next. It is like a peppermint candy that is provided at the end of the meal, (or in the Korean context like a cool cup of sweat rice tea or a cinnamon drink.) This final section will suggest areas that call for more thought and further study.

## **PART II Digging into the Main Courses**

Here we are with 19 qualitative interviewees’ responses that are ready to be served as for a feast. This feast has 10 main courses under 10 themes: 1) Theological Education, 2) Power Dynamics, 3) (Im)migration, 4) Vocation/Ordination, 5) Limitations, 6) Symbols, 7) Leadership, 8) Proclaiming the Gospel, 9) Being at the Margin/ Becoming Allies, 10) Future of the church. While each course is equally important, some courses have contributed more substantially than others. Just as some dishes take more space than others, we will do justice to each course by serving it according to different sizes and portions.

While they are organized under the name of each theme, it is unavoidable and thus inevitable to claim that certain contents overlap. For example, the vocation/ordination dish is bound to be related to the meal dealing with the pulpit, while theme of proclaiming gospel cannot be separated from intercultural leadership. It is like ordering two different dishes under two different names and yet you end up with similar taste because they use the same ingredients. It also reflects the ambiguity of the qualitative research we choose to employ here in this study. It is difficult to measure precisely one category (one dish) that is totally unrelated to the other category (another dish). Perhaps, immeasurability is not where our main concern lies. Such ambiguity has its strength and may offer positive implications for the readers because it allows them to make helpful connections, revealing the inter-relatedness of the courses by crossing

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Eunjoo Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999), 83.

the boundaries from one theme to another. Again, the notion of Zen hermeneutics is helpful: viewing the flower as a whole, through the overlapping petals.

### **1. Theological Education**

I would argue that this is one of the most important dishes to be tasted and to some extent tested by the group. Of all the subjects discussed this one came up with the most material. I have organized it like a journey, as if a single individual was going from the discernment process, to candidacy, to internship, to ordained ministry to post graduate training. You may say that this dish is itself like running a full course. I would like to make it clear that theological education is not limited to the education required for ordination. Also theological education is not exclusively the business of theological colleges and congregations. However, this research, focusing on ordained ministers, narrows its scope of theological education as ordained stream training from the theological schools and the church's involvement in this.

My analysis offers two major reasons why theological education is important: one reason is that without theological education, the individual cannot begin her journey nor recognize her call as "ordained" ministers. Their very identity is at stake without (proper) theological education. This is where the course takes its shape, grows, and continues to mature to the full potential of who they are and what they are called to do. The second reason is about addressing the importance of "educated clergy." Without the leaders being well educated, they cannot educate their people, let alone lead and feed them. Jesus at the resurrection scene, appearing to Peter, asks him, "do you love me?" three times. Peter, puzzled and even annoyed with Jesus' persistent questions, answered to him, "of course, I love you." Jesus' responses to these repeated answers of Peter were also consistent: "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep," and "Feed my sheep." In order to equip the minister who is called to feed her sheep, we cannot afford not to stress the role of theological education that seeks to nurture and cultivate "educated clergy." My McGeachy group professes this issue very strongly and the readers will easily notice this.

Please listen to the following responses to the questions under #2 (see Appendix 3), "what was good and what was bad about your theological studies?" "Was your school aware of, sensitive to the intercultural leadership and racialized, gendered, queer identities?" and "Did the school prepared you well for ministry?"

The Aboriginal interviewees who went to Aboriginal Schools found that their schools helped them well in terms of preparing for their ministry as well as for discovering their Aboriginal identities. Here are a couple of comments:

12) *Dr. Jessie Sauteaux centre let me explore who I was where I went for a sweat to help me with the pain. They taught me more of what I am and I believe a tree cannot grow unless it has its roots.*

10) (At) *The Francis Sandy Theological centre, of course, the focus was primarily aboriginal, an aboriginal context so in many ways no it didn't really kind of create space to look interculturally. It prepared me to, you know, the context and to connect aboriginal lands and biblical lands but in terms of reaching out beyond, you know, beyond out to other marginalized communities. I think that it wasn't a focus there. But I do know that the school did have capacity to bring awareness to the wider church about the United Church's commitment to living in relations you know, relations with aboriginal peoples so that in terms of kind of inter, that kind of dialogue inter-faith dialogue in terms of yeah I guess that is that is intercultural, we talk about it. In terms of relations so the school did have some capacity to do that you know in the area.*

The rest of the interviewees responded that their schools did not prepare them for intercultural leadership ministry and deepening their complex identities. Most responded between fair and poor on the scale of excellent, good, fair and poor. Going through their strongly negative responses, I came up with four reasons why this is the case for analysis and reflections: 1) the lack of faculty members who are racialized; 2) the faculty's unawareness and ignorance around the issues of queer and racial identities; 3) the (white) students' ignorance of the minority reality; 4) the tokenistic approach to curriculum around race and colonialism.

The first issue of the lack of faculty members is closely related to the need for mentorship. Many noted "mentorship" as an important asset, enhancing effective leadership and strengthening their ministry. And this mentorship is closely related to the future—health and vibrancy of the church, which we will find again in the later course.

In terms of lacking the racialized faculty presence in their respective schools, a few particular interviewees were blunt and I had to remove certain references because I think it would be too personal for a number of my colleagues in the UCC schools.

15) *I'm gonna be really clear and put this on tape, you can't keep hiring the colonizer, OK? I am really clear about that and I've been vocal about it. It doesn't work. I am heartbroken about what I see. (I hear the excuse) 'you don't need to live in the context to teach the context.' I disagree! which is why as an Aboriginal person who's never lived on reserve I'm off living on a reserve now because how can I work and lead the people I serve if you never lived in the context?*

13) *(regarding hiring US scholars) you cannot say it is all right because it is same to let Anglican and Presbyterian (American) scholars teach Canadian and United church theology. People lament the fact that all the UCC seminaries are filling up with these folks. And I would say, well*



*you cannot breed out a whole generation of scholars and then be surprised that you have nobody to teach theology. The church hasn't done a good job for nurturing people who feel called to teach theology. There is strong anti-intellectualism and anti-scholarship in the United church.*

*18) The era I studied, not only were there no courses or no professors, but there was no awareness that there needed to be anything outside of European. So everything theology meant European (white male centred) theology.*

*9) While I did not have any non-European racialized professors while studying for my MDiv, I found a faculty who came from the different geographical location brought a new perspective. This got me thinking how important it is to have opportunities learning from and with the professor who had a different ethnic background or would have different experience than the majority.*

In terms of the second reason I named as the faculty's ignorance/inability to teach and provide leadership around intercultural, racialized, gendered, and queer identities, the following two responses capture the frustrations of this ignorance and inability:

*15) we had a pretty liberal faculty so there was no sort of stopping me from exploring but there was no ability to guide the process. Exactly and in fact at one point one of the instructors in field education actually asked me to teach my classmates about what it was like to be a queer person in ministry to which I sort of said, "you are the teacher, you need to step up."*

*8) I spent hours and hours talking to the profs and having to say so what's the issue and I'm thinking you're supposed to be the one teaching the course, you're supposed to be the one helping us know what the issue is....not letting me have my voice as a racialized person in the conversation and I realized that if my future colleagues in ministry were not prepared to be part of the dialogue that I needed to develop skills to be able to be a leader in that dialogue in whatever ministry context I went to, I knew I had to do that (that led to the alternative internship to deepen my sense of racial identity and to find and claim my voice, as a black woman in Canada and in the UCC).*

This does not mean that they prefer one-way, top-down teaching styles where the teacher knows or controls everything. What they point to is the lack of commitment to teaching issues around racial, ethnic minority, and queer identities. Rather teachers are perceived to be shuffling off their responsibilities by putting racialized and queer students on the spot, placing them "in the fish bowl," while at the same time letting the rest of the students off the hook for their own ownership (or avoidance) of the issues. What is desired is to see teachers taking the issues seriously and actively involving themselves in creating spaces of learning. Lev Vygotsky

(1896-1934), a renowned scholar on education and human development, calls this space of learning as “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD). This theory is based on the notion of knowledge which is constructed through the interactions among group members who are involved in the process. His theory also argues that “what children can accomplish with assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone.”<sup>11</sup> What his almost century old theory relevant today is that it demonstrates the importance of interdependent learning where teacher and learner are active participants. Since this participatory process is so fluid and dynamic that the notion of knowledge as static and linear entity that can be transmitted from the expert to the ignorant is contested. To some extent in my opinion, children he refers to can be identified as teachers (White) who can accomplish teaching with assistance of others (racialized students) and the vice versa. Religious education scholar Debora B. Agra Junker affirms my view when she contends “the concept of ZPD can be applied not only to the learning and cognitive development of children but to adult development as well, taking into account that, as human beings, we engage in a lifelong process of learning and development.”<sup>12</sup> Most interviewees would like to see serious commitments by the faculty to intercultural issues, while at the same time demonstrating an openness to listen to racialized and marginalized students, leaders, activists, and scholars to class in a regular basis. Here is an example that speaks to this matter:

*9) It would have been helpful to have more intentional time, maybe inviting guest lecturers, well not just talk but maybe to do something where we can have a transformative experience and of course the best way is to actually understand and then to go out and do it... I feel like the conversation stops at the door. It feels like my classmates might have just forgotten what we had just talked about you know... to be able to bring that from the classroom and live it out in ministry.*

It did not escape the notice of some interviewees that schools were quite proactive about gender-equality, providing support for women, while still lacking intentionality around issues of race and cultural minorities. One made the case as follows:

*6) There was a very caring environment and I was encouraged as a woman. In terms of the issue of racialization or minority (meaning non-European) culture they (the school and professors) don't have much confidence in themselves. There were no non-white professors. I don't think they have confidence. They want to encourage non-white racialized students and help them, but they felt that they could not help much.*

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<sup>11</sup> Lev Semionovich Vygotsky, *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 85.

<sup>12</sup> Debora B. Agra Junker, “Zone of Proximal Development, Liminality, and Communitas: implications for religious education” *Religious Education* 108:2 (March-April): 167.

The third issue, namely other (white) students' ignorance/obliviousness of the reality of race, is summed up with these comments:

*9) I didn't always enjoy being the minority. There were a few occasions where people looked to me to be the voice to represent the minority. I didn't enjoy that at all. I felt like I was put on the spot and it wasn't very fair because I'm not a voice for everyone else.*

*9) One class that we took in church in ministry was very good but it was very eye opening as well because my classmates weren't at the same level of understanding what racial justice was about as I was and of course the majority of my classmates were white. I had a classmate in my small group who said you know that there isn't racism in Canada anymore and or there isn't racism in the church and I was thinking well maybe from your perspective. That showed me just how much dialogue and conversation we actually need to have and that opened up my eyes because I didn't expect that.*

*17) When I graduated my class organized a last service at the chapel and they didn't include me. The people who graduate that year were supposed to do the chapel and they were supposed to call me and ask what I wanted to do, but they did not include me. So I felt a little bad. So I just sat in the library and then I went home because I didn't want to participate in the chapel service in which I wasn't included.*

Finally, my critical analysis of why most of the interviewees responded that their school did not prepare for their ministry leadership has to do with the tokenistic approach in the educational curriculum to race and colonialism. The following responses argue for a need to go deeper:

*19) I was doing Intro Ethics and I really studied hard. And we had small group discussions every week. And I noticed my perspectives were not important to the group. They were dismissed. So I went to see the professor and she made sure that the rest of the class sat and listened to me. When I talked I felt patronized or "let's listen to you" but I was not part of the group anymore. I was listened to but in fact, not being heard or seen. Then I realized what is in the air that we don't see. So when a scholar from another culture was mentioned, it was to be a compliment, not as part of the main view or the same weight.*

*16) Occasionally there would be references to intercultural contexts within the courses such as missiology but it is imperial. So you have a top down understanding of what mission is. I would have to say too that in some of the theology classes there was an attempt to introduce us to theologies other than UCC theology, whatever that might be. So we did have exposure to Asian theology, womanist theology and black theology. But, there was never a conversation that showed how we work all of that together... I think one of the things that the church (including theological schools) needs to consider is that as a society we are becoming more racially diverse*

*in this country, but how can we integrate with one another, because that's where relationship happens; where day to day theology happens. Because of my biracial background, I see a need and a fuller conversations about integrative intercultural dynamics.*

While it was pretty obvious that our UCC theological schools have still got a long way to go in order to equip their respective students to become effective intercultural leaders and theologians, one should not jump to conclusion that UCC schools or UCC's theological education get an unqualified failing grade. There are some positive things that were and are happening to improve the curriculum in UCC schools. Furthermore, it is not just theological schools that need to be the agents of education but extra-curricular activities and other church bodies are also instrumental. Here are some of the convincing testimonies:

*9) In my graduating year, I took a course where we actually started talking about interculturalism on a level that actually (goes beyond superficial ways) you know, we started to address some of the issues about it and maybe the leadership piece sort of came in.*

*6) I helped to initiate an intercultural dialogue outside the classroom where racialized students/international students can lead and both students and faculty can participate. The dean was so supportive that we got a TA for this and the dialogue happened regularly.*

*9) In my personal experience I was very active in the wider church from early on so that experience helped supplement what I didn't get from my school. (for example) I attended general council in 2006 and I was part of the conversations around becoming an intercultural church and being at general council really was an amazing experience. I attended a conference in the states call "spirit of wellness." It was a joint effort done by the evangelical Lutheran and PC USA and the reformed church of America. It helped me to further define my own understanding of intercultural and racial justice.*

It should be noted that theological ministry formation in the sense of modelling a Christian life and of finding mentors as a part of the seminary education was difficult for many of our interviewees. When the structure for forming a candidate for ministry is oppressive and weighted with white power, it becomes unhelpful, even dangerous for racialized students. Here are some voices of resistance:

*11) I always had a difficulty with regards to formation. In terms of becoming mentors and being mentored, I have uneasy feelings about this. Those of whom who are already in more powerful position think that they can mentor me, mould me like them... when especially there are issues with age, race, and gender. I often think that we should know who they are before asking for mentoring. Otherwise, it is a pretty dangerous assimilation or erasure of our own identity.*

*9) In my presbytery they call it mentor, meaning someone to help integrate and help you navigate what it's like to be in this new presbytery and I was assigned a mentor who was not helpful. That's part of the reason why I feel like having companion over mentor because to me that's more what the role is about and with the intercultural piece.*

*4) education (like racial justice training) cannot be co-opted by dominant culture people because they cannot speak for me. That is not a good modeling. We need to be much more intentional than that and it (education) needs to be given by people that are racialized.*

However, when students who are racialized see the teachers and leaders as their mentors, someone they can relate to and trust, it can be powerful. You become a leader as you are molded and formed in that way through role-modeling and teaching by example. When the system (whether it is an academic institution or a church governing court) provides resources that include both faculty's presence with real faces and relevant educational materials, it can be transformative for racialized women, helping them to find their own voice, answer their call, and affirm their multiple identities. Here is one voice that lifts up a positive influence in their ministry formation. It is unfortunate that the research shows that we have far few members of the faculty who are racialized in our UCC schools:

*4) Before she (the faculty) came, I never really thought of defining myself as a racialized person. I didn't have any sense of my hybrid identity. Although I knew that I was different, but I did not know how to articulate and name this difference. This faculty really helped me find my identity and know who I am.*

*9) I had a professor emeritus. She was great. But when I was actually taking classes she wasn't offering any class so I never had the experience in having her as my professor.*

If we believe in formation, fostering mentorship is a key to leadership. If it is intercultural leadership we are talking about, then, investing in mentorship in our theological education is critical. Mentorship is about learning by example and teaching by example, investing and looking ahead for many generations to come. The following comments including one about Aboriginal teachings are relevant:

*15) Mentorship was also to be able to see the generations to come. Learning from the Aboriginal teachings we should be able to behold the seven generations ahead of us and before us. That is where the importance of the realm of saints watching over us comes in and we becoming the ones witnessing the vision of the God for our next generations.*

The book that features five Aboriginal women elders and leaders published with the collaboration of the UCC and Anglican church of Canada is a good example as a role model that

encourages the mentorship. “The women in this book are creative leaders who bring hope to our lives... These are the ones who carry us until birth and nurture us on the journey of life,” as Stan McKay puts it.<sup>13</sup> In order to receive their mentorship, we as younger generations need to learn how to honor them. The book shows such a way of honouring them, their wisdom and their life.

*14) enhancing leadership and enhancing mentorship go hand in hand. Education is an important tool that does exactly that.*

*1) Efficacious leadership in theological education is critical. Mentorship is having a sensitive, supportive, conscious, and confident racialized teacher. And we have so few only two Wenh-In Ng, HyeRan Kim-Cragg in the UCC non-Aboriginal schools in history. That is appalling.*

*7) (Education helped me) find my way. When I did, I was like a butterfly.*

*3) Representativeness in faculties is really important. In my first school there were no women. In my next school there was no racial diversity. Without a real presence of racialized, woman, and queer faculty members, I don't think we can say that we are doing effective just and inclusive theological education.*

*3) Reading materials (in curriculum) should have diverse authorship. Feminism, racial analysis, cultural lens should be integrated in all of theological education's resources and methodology.*

*7) There was an exposure trip somewhere south one time. It is great, but it's not sufficient. There should be an ongoing course that raises awareness about interculturalism and raising awareness about people live in difference. It's not just us that go south and learn something. There are some people (colleagues) that already have an awareness of interculturalism, differences, and what brings us together, but there are others that don't. Thus, sustainability of providing a regular course that challenges the dominant status quo and offers different wisdom is critical.*

Note: a couple of interviewees went to the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) and then later got a M. Div. degree and were ordained. One interviewee's reason for the switch in streams was that she found the role of diaconal minister in the church, especially pastoral ministry contexts, was limiting since certain roles they play require more of priestly skills and liturgical knowledge

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<sup>13</sup> Joyce Carlson and Alf Dumont, *Bridges in Spirituality: First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House and Anglican Book Centre, 1997), v.

beyond the scopes of education, service, and pastoral care on which diaconal ministry training focused.

As a conclusion to this section, we will identify some “growing edges” and “limitations” as well as “tips” for current theological education. These responses, though contextual and specific, can be shared and felt similarly between non-Aboriginal theological education and Aboriginal theological education.

*10) strengthening pastoral care, developing rites of passages components are much needed in theological education. There are growing numbers of depression, tragedy, and suicides as society. It requires leadership that has the capacity to build the community of life, equipped with the theology of hope. I was reading in the Toronto Star in January where community in Northern Ontario, close to Manitoba border where a number of young people having committed suicide but the pastors (Anglican, I believe) are quite hesitant to take on these funerals (because those who suicide will go to hell, therefore the church cannot bless them). What and how can our UCC theological schools prepare for the church leaders, tackling on and carrying out priestly roles in this context?*

*3) How can we do the theological education for Native people, who are formed in oral traditions who don't need to cite individual authorship, when the knowledge is owned by the community or its authorship is anonymous?*

*5) The whole seminar structure that's geared towards white western learning styles; the seminar structure itself and then the contents must be challenged and contested. There are many theologies in the world that aren't stated or written down. Why don't we use (them?) And the response I got was "oh somebody else reads that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year course somewhere down the road."*

The issue of academic disciplines that have reflected a mainly Euro-American, middle class, male perspectives is still very relevant in our theological education and Christian practice. In the matter of hymnody, for example, I have argued elsewhere, that it does not matter how eloquently a theological perspective is presented, the central problem remains: if hymns come only from European and white contexts they are neither fully representative of today's church nor rightly directed toward the future. It is important that we develop an approach that would embrace the needs of those who are ignored in the academia by naming and identifying their contexts that include oral traditions.<sup>14</sup> One of the most recent graduates from St. Andrew's College raises the issue of our theological education being Eurocentric. Listening to her

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<sup>14</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Story and Song: A Postcolonial Interplay between Christian Education and Worship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 6-7.

critique,<sup>15</sup> the faculty decided to initiate a conversation with the students who are self-identified as Aboriginal. They are planning to meet and address how their curriculum can reflect more fully non-Western ways of learning, incorporating Aboriginal knowledge. The faculty also decided to be proactive about involving a session for the whole faculty to bring educators from the University of Saskatchewan Gwenna Moss continuing education centre that does a lot of this kind of work. While it is still a minimal step, such efforts can be viewed as positive and constructive, coming from the students.

The suggestions below of emphasizing the pastoral wisdom embedding practical knowledge, stemming from daily people's living experiences and realities, are not far from the current trend and the direction of the theological education in North America.

*5) I disagree and contest the claim that actually we are not a seminary but a theological school (Emmanuel College). What it does is to devalue the education of preparing for ministry, while weighing on the producing and transmitting academic knowledge. I am not a paid accountable theologian in the UCC; I am a paid accountable minister in the UCC.*

*14) Theological education preparing for ministry is more than academic matters. You need to immerge, engage in the real life situations in practice. The work of CPE and group therapy must be a part of the theological education. M. Div. without those aspects of integrating knowledge with realities is not helpful.*

Dan Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada, in his keynote address of the ATS meeting, 2010, supports the critiques from my McGeachy group. Recognizing the change that is occurring in theological education in a changing world, he suggests that seminaries and theological schools need to pay more attention to "the sources of wisdom that pastors and church professionals can bring to theological education." The need to tap these sources has become increasingly important because "the practice of Christian congregations is changing rapidly... Pastors are on the front lines of change; they and their congregations are inventing new paradigms of congregational ministry that reflect new learning.... Fifty years ago, advanced scholarship was underrepresented—too many pastors and not enough academics. Now, ATS schools have significant academic talent and it is pastoral talent that might be underrepresented."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> She wrote a comment on her evaluation on the final course the following: "I would like to see more postcolonial theology integrated into all of our courses (e. g., less German theologians). I would like us to better equip ministers to work with Indigenous people and to educate others about relevant issues." Used with permission.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Future has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World," *Theological Education* 46:2 (2011):74-75.



As mentioned earlier, this course on theological education is like running its own course. There will be sub-courses on the ministry preparation, from membership to internship.

### **Ministry Preparation/Process**

Theological Education does not begin or end in schools, however crucial it is. When we talk about theological education for ministry, the ministry preparation outside schools becomes necessary and important. The following section, therefore, is an attempt to trace the thoughts, views, and insights arising from the interviewees' journey toward ordination. We will order the remarks according to the steps towards becoming an ordained minister, that is, from becoming a member of a United Church congregation to discernment to candidacy through internship and the final interview in the conference ending in ordination and settlement (note: the step of seeking a call was added to the process in 2011 but none of the interviewees had that option).

Since not everyone mentioned every step of the way, different voices in different stages will speak, as if the group was a team running a relay race, passing the baton from one to the next. Most of the comments focus on the internship stage.

### **Membership**

*6) I was not happy because I had to wait for two years to be an eligible person to begin this process. So I talked to my (UCC formation) director, "I am a member of the Young Ministries group and I am now contributing to the church but why do I have to wait for two years?" As a person who came from another country (as an international student), waiting for two years frustrated me. So maybe for a Canadian inquirer two-year waiting doesn't mean too much, but for me it was like I had to experience Canada and the UCC before I could understand what the UCC was.*

This is the only participant among 19 of my McGeachy group who is not a permanent resident or a citizen. She came to Canada as a visa student and retained that status at the time of interview. This means that the church needs to be aware of and proactive about how to support these possible candidates who come from other countries without permanent legal status. Certain accommodations will have to be made in order to meet the specific needs that these students, going through ordination process, may have. Similar issues appear in the admission process, for those who are ordained elsewhere, seeking to work in the United church as clergy. The readers will notice this issue raised in the interviews.

### **Discernment**

11) *The people (in the discernment process) individually were all wonderful but the process itself was a question for me because I had to advocate for myself at the time I did not know what I was doing and couldn't do it really successfully. I couldn't be strategic. I was going through all the politics (between my home church and the presbytery) during my discernment process.*

9) *When I did my discernment there are two members of my home church and two members from presbytery and I was the only racialized minority again so it would have been nice to have somebody who could understand my experience in terms of racial difference. I'm now part of the discernment committee member as a presbytery representative and I can see so easily that there could be some misunderstanding when you are really only meeting for a couple of hours 6 times over the year. Especially when there are cultural differences to be understood, or if you (as a committee member) don't have a lot of experience around cultural diversity, it would be helpful to have more people with diverse experiences and diverse backgrounds each step of the way. I've been part of a conference admission interview board because it's those admission candidates that come from another denomination and another country that also come with being racialized. I feel that my role there is to see from that call, with a culturally aware perspective to help others constantly to remind them of that perspective you know that they may have a different way of understanding. For example, silence may mean something different to them (than what we in the West mean by silence).*

10) *I did have a really good discernment process because it was very grass roots (out of a Aboriginal community) but I do want to say that there was something that was bad and this is very important to note. The local presbytery found its way to support me (eventually) but it was through a lot of effort on my part because they didn't understand the model. They didn't understand that it was a different process than main stream like going to (any non-Aboriginal) theological school. We are talking about the presbytery like E & S committee and conference level (CIES) committee members here so they didn't understand the nuances of aboriginal ministry and how unique and rich it's within the UC so I mean to the point where they didn't know how to categorize me. It was a lot of, I mean, the lack of protocol/understanding that had an impact on the pastoral charge. You know the pastoral charge is supporting me as a student but what they had to go through the kind of the paper work and the process that was confusing for everyone. I seemed to be the educator (rather than being guided, educated, and supported) so I remember my first E & S, I thought I was going to talk about my call or about my program but instead I was asked about the residential school issue and they asked me like, "Do you feel that UC is doing enough in terms of addressing the Indian residential school issues?" And of course, there was some fear because I was still in court process and stuff so there I was as a first year education, a first year student, addressing larger/ wider church issues at my first E & S meeting. I mean you take on that responsibility of that leadership to be educators. It does take*

*that (extra) energy you're immersed in an education program (because I am an Aboriginal student).*

It is fair to say that people who serve the committees have good intentions but they do not necessarily have knowledge or understanding that can help racialized candidates who have different ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and denominational backgrounds. The process is still structured in ways that function to benefit those candidates from the dominant culture rather than providing the services that accommodate the different needs of those pastoral charges and candidates.

### **Internship**

Internship experiences are as complex as the process itself. The findings below demonstrate that the internship experiences were the most challenging to go through for ordination process. It is important to see, however, that it is not the internship experience in the pastoral charges itself that creates difficulties for candidate. In fact, the experiences in the internship site were mostly positive and supportive. The most difficult part that some interviewees identified was the process, in particular working with presbytery Education & Student committee (E & S) and Conference Committee on Internship Educational Supervision (CIES). There are six cases that draw our attention that I am going to highlight. The first case below is about the question of alternative internship opposed by the CIES.

*8) As a racialized person, my learning needs are different; I needed to learn to deal with racism in a way that a white person doesn't even have to. And yet there is no recognition that I have different needs. That is why I asked for the alternative internship in the US. The alternative internship in the US was not well received (by the CIES) so I had to do another one in Canada. They didn't see the race, colour issues that are critical to my learning. Instead they set other goals for me and imposed them. It is almost they are making me do the internship until I become white. CIES, the whole committee was against my decision (to go to seek another internship), and decided that my learning out of that internship was not sufficient. I felt so intimidated by them. I am just one person, the whole committee was holding the power of determining my ordination. I was at the point that I could not say anything. I could appeal the process, but I just felt that it was too toxic...I was talking to general council office person to discuss whether I should do my another internship in that same conference, meaning my internship been overseen by the same conference, this person said that it would not be safe for me to be supervised by that conference. That person also said something like that, "you know*

*this is a cross you're willing to die on if you want to really speak out about racial justice issues right now, I will support you in it but if you do so, don't be surprised if we get to this same time next year and you're still not ordained." And so I walked away from that meeting, thinking ok here I am in this church inclusive, you know, that challenges discrimination as a social justice focus church and I'm being told that I have to keep my mouth shut about racism that I'm experiencing in the system to be able to get ordained... what does ordination mean, and what does it mean to keep your mouth shut until you're ordained and then you can speak? So what I am getting is the church giving the power to the ordination and yet we say that we don't have hierarchy. I think the church is in denial about its power structures and power dynamics because we want to think that we use power very effectively... Though it was a frustrating experience, my alternative internship not being able to be recognized as a legitimate one, I am glad that I did the second internship which involved working with aboriginal communities to learn more deeply about honouring the difference.*

This interviewee's experience is self-revealing, in terms of the challenges that she went through regarding alternative internship struggles. It involves a racial minority issue in the white dominant committee structure. It also highlighted the difficulty of getting different kinds of internships in the system that is not used to accommodate "unusual" "irregular" "abnormal," internships. This is the case even though the Manual clearly supports alternative internships.

Ever since the 1990s one important buzzword in feminist and theological thought has been "difference." Chandra Mohanty, a racialized woman scholar who is part of a South Indian diaspora living in the USA, develops the idea of "common difference"<sup>17</sup> as a new paradigm for a world where different ethnic, gender, racial groups must work together. These ideas can give some depth to the interviewees' comments above when she valued the learning with and from the Aboriginal people, recognizing "common difference" from her second internship experience.

The following story is about the challenge posed upon between E&S and the candidate, regarding the legitimacy of the place of theological education and the place of the internship site.

*I did my M. Div. in the State. As a young person growing up from a humble immigrant home, getting a full scholarship to get a master's degree in one of the Ivy league schools, traveling on my own for the first time, I grew up. There I was in a space where the forefront thinkers were in Jewish, Christian, Islamic relation. When I came back, they told me that I needed to do a full year and take 10 required courses in a UCC school. My M. Div. obtained elsewhere was*

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<sup>17</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 2003), 244.

*discredited as insufficient. It's like they wanted to make it difficult; they wanted to put you through hoops. I had internshipped with the PCUSA and the UCC-USA and both denominations said that we've got room for you and we'll invest in you, right? (but) I wanted to serve in a Canadian context. I fought and pushed back, finally lost. (meaning she had to take 10 courses) Then I got employment in an urban church, as staff associate. Ministry was going well. Then, the E&S committee pulled me out of a joy in order to internship me (somewhere rural they think that I need). I had a serious conversation with them. "Let's get outside the book (meaning the Manual) and figure out how I can best serve. Given all that, there are aspects of the process that have deep wisdom. You walk with a sense of purpose, but also a sense of humility that you don't know everything yet. I find the E & S process is bureaucratic, rigid, unaccommodating, and it ultimately discriminated against those who are different.*

While this is a case of how the committee can be inflexible, unable to recognize the gifts of other schools, it is also the case of how precarious the concept of 'home' may be in the world of migration. This interviewee left her (Canadian) home and came back with the understanding that she would be welcomed back to that the home that she yearned to return to. That is not what happened to her and it is an experience mirrored in the lives of other immigrants and emigrants. In a world where transnational migrant histories are so prominent, we can no longer afford to assume that home is a place a person can easily return to, or be totally welcomed.<sup>18</sup> A prominent postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha illumines an "unhomely" postcolonial reality by asking "Whose house (church) is this?"<sup>19</sup>

The following case again reflects conflict between the E & S and the candidate around the choice of the internship site.

*13) I requested to stay in a large urban congregation for my internship because I thought my biggest growing edge would be learning to stay put where I was at (rather than constantly moving)... the response was "no, just because you were born in a rural setting it doesn't mean that you actually have experience of being an adult in a rural setting." At the end, it (rural internship experience) was actually fairly gentle and nice and really easy for me but in terms of what I learned and grew, as my supervisor put it, "I don't know what you are supposed to learn from being here." Sorry to say this, but I think the church did not trust me, or know where I was at. Instead they put an biased glasses on that every student wants to go to urban... I even want to bluntly name that that is a kind of the colonial practice in our church because they seemed to have to get ripped out of your roots and get planted somewhere else to become real. The*

<sup>18</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, "Postcolonial Suggestions for Intercultural Ministries" *The Ecumenist*, Vol. 49, No. 2 Spring 2012: 8.

<sup>19</sup> Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, & Postcolonial Perspectives*, Anne McClintock, AamirMufti, & Ella Shohat, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 445.

*process has always been kind of struggling about where to fit in the structure of the church, not really listening to me (and other candidates) about the gifts that I can offer. We don't do a good job of nurturing a type of desire or commitment to support the church and its leaders. Sometimes, there is a kind of punishment..for those going through the process for ministry.*

The additional responses below sound almost same as the two ones above and echo concerns that the church structure regarding the internship process is colonial and rigid:

*5) the inflexibility of the bureaucratic structure which is extremely unaccommodating and inhibits participation and change for the better. This sort of needless red tape is intolerable because it serves to broaden the gap between the national church/dominant culture and its racialized/First Nations churches.*

*4) I can't speak to everyone's experiences in all the conferences but three of us who are racialized (that I know) have had (similar) problems with the candidacy process. Is this process serving you, or the people going through the process as hoops?*

*11) The process is like a gate keeper, and the gate is like some exclusive club, like we're not letting you in or now you're in (after ordination) you can be a cool mean gate keeper to see and test how other people do... (suffer). You know they mix up (misunderstand) the terms between "support" and "supervision."*

Let us pause here. It is a time to digest a bit. Indeed what we have heard may be a little hard to swallow, however nutritious it may be. This time, Michael Blair offers a thought that may shed light on the issue of the practice of hospitality and accommodation as the church, supporting and serving candidates. In "Room for All-Myth or Reality?" he writes, "People who are different from the majority are asked to make accommodations to fit in ... The notion of hospitality undergirds this process of accommodation. As the 'other,' the minority person is invited into the space of the majority. Hospitality assumes a host and guest; it carries an implicit notion of what is 'normal.' In a relationship based solely on hospitality, the 'guest' is never really at home; rather, they are always being accommodated in someone else's home."<sup>20</sup> While he speaks of the church wanting to be hospitable, his analogy of being a guest is useful in that a candidate who is different from the majority seems to be asked to fit in to the process. To make a case clear, the process is made for the space of the majority which functions as "norm" thus the candidate and her case is perceived as "abnormal" and what she can bring as a gift becomes unnoticed and dismissed. To put my feast metaphor at work, the candidate is invited to the feast but she must only use the utensils there to eat even though the utensils provided are not

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<sup>20</sup> This can be found at <http://www.united-church.ca/files/intercultural/room-for-all.pdf>, accessed on August 29, 2013.

workable or usable. It is like a person who never used the chopsticks must learn/try to use in order to be a part of the feast. You can enjoy the party (feast) as long as you follow the rule.

Unfortunately, I have no other choices but to present another set of experiences that are painful to hear. These stories are rather long but I decided to present them this way in part because the cases are too complex to cut short and because the long narrative as it is seems to be able to communicate the visceral feelings and key issues touching on the candidacy process.

The following two cases are about the problem created between the supervisor and the intern. It is not the purpose of this study to assess what went wrong or what should have happened in order to avoid this conflict. In fact it is not possible even to fully understand the issues other than recognizing that the candidate's ordination is at. It is my hope that the following stories capture the complex reality of power dynamics, boundary issues, and pastoral awareness and accountability around ministry supervision and candidacy process. I also hope that they help to raise the question of the supervisor's role in relation to the intern, as well as that of the other committees including Lay Supervision Team (LST) , Ministry & Personnel (M & P), Education & Student (E & S), Conference Committee on Internship Educational Supervision (CIES), all of whom were involved in internship process.

*19) When I applied for internship, I went to the person in charge of internship, I said to him, that "I am not sure that the church you're going to place me will accept me." He did not get it at all. So I got into a congregation and at my first visit, the minister (who is my supervisor) said, "I just was told that you have won so many awards and I am a minister and I am intimidated because I haven't studied too much." So I told her not to worry, I am here for the learning experience. But since that moment, I was forced to be less intimidating and not able to be who I was and (more concerned about) not to upset my supervisor. A few months later, the minister made some decision to put me in a house with someone from the congregation, which in my opinion was inappropriate (to begin with). Also that was a huge cultural conflict because I came here as a refugee having an experience of my ex-husband and my family being kidnapped. So this lady had a huge house and her doors were always open. But for me I was very afraid of sleeping with the doors open. My supervisor never understood that. For her I was problematic and picky. The situation got worse between my supervisor and myself to the point that the presbytery decided to send a mediator. The final decision came from the E&S that I had to do the internship again from the beginning. I refused and appealed the decision but the only advice I got was to ignore what happened and to move on, meaning starting all over again, which I could not do at that time. I was devastated and left the country for a few years. When I came back, a person in the General Council office made some inquiries about my case. As a result, I got a letter of apology*

*and E&S decided that they would grant me the four months (from the previous internship) and so I only needed another four months.*

*11) I became a candidate and then I decided to go to the ministry based ordination program and the big problem began to rise when the church I was hired full time to be a learning site. (I had to go through M & P, my colleague-the team minister, my school, back and forth). They finally made this church as a learning site but they made me wait a year before I could start my internship there. We made through one year and then the second year of my internship, our ministry team was breaking loose (my colleague is gone on a medical leave) and my E & S suggested that I should resign because the environment I am in is not healthy. They even brought a racialized person as my support, to basically tell me that we racialized people suffer so you should, too. I was arguing for some of the reasons why I chose the ministry based ordination program and I didn't want to go afar, is because my supports are built here, and if I'm having a difficulty in Toronto with all my supports here, why am I go to PEI (as an example)?*

*The bottom line of the process/dispute was power imbalance. The team minister as my supervisor did not see me as an equal team member but only saw me as a young student in training. This was frustrating because I was not hired as a student but as a full time ministry personnel (first before the church became a learning site) because I have skills and qualifications in youth and young adult ministry. I had competencies for that position and she didn't want to work with me as an equal.. I was explaining that it is not equality, I can't be equal to you of an upper middle class white woman twice older than me, but it is about equity. And this is about race as well. I am convinced even if I had a Ph. D. in ministry I would have had the same problem (she wanted to use the race card but wasn't working there so she put the student card to get me).*

*In short, this is about representation of the minority from the gaze of the dominant. People (wanted to believe) thought that I must be gay, (then I would become) perfect, meaning, the perfect minority, a gay black female young minister, how cool is that? And yet, when I really addressed racism, or minority culture (from my point of view, real issues of racism), they did not like it because I in their eyes should be well assimilated and Canadianized.*

*The funny thing is that they (E & S) did not say that the work I did at my internship site was invalid. They just wanted me to do another one, but for what basis? They did not provide anything specific learning goals (that I need to learn, things that I did not learn from the former site). The only reasons (excuses) would be that I am too antagonistic, defensive, and burning bridges.*



As a researcher, given so much was at stake in this case, I decided to pursue to find out more about this beyond the candidate. I thought it would be helpful to hear from others who were involved in the process of this ministry preparation other than the candidate herself. I was grateful to get the written response from one LST member of this particular interviewee. Here is what this person had to say about the process:

*I served on her LST team for two years. We were somewhat hampered in the first year because of some incorrect and missing information (on the part of various church bodies about her ministry here as an internship site). It is to our candidate's credit that we managed to carry on with some success. The challenge on our second year was caused by external forces related to the other ministerial staff member (her colleague). Although difficult to nail down, there was the sense that she possibly wasn't being given fair treatment.*

Both cases shared above call a couple of critical issues into our attention: power differential in accountability and equity. When a candidate runs into a conflict due to the lack of support and understanding the candidate is in danger of being targeted as a 'trouble maker.' In terms of holding someone or even a group to account, there are plenty of processes for a candidate to be held accountable but perhaps there are few for others who are involved in the committees. One interviewee's question in this sense is poignant: 11) *what happens when those in power (structurally) are messed up, where is accountability?* The following response speaks to accountability or the lack thereof within our church:

*13) My professor from another denomination has said to me that the united churches are terrified of dictatorship and therefore it puts people (meaning many people in the form of committees) in positions of great power where they are accountable to no one. At least, with a bishop they have the next person up that you can appeal to.*

The other critical issue to be named is equity which is not same as equality. Equality assumes the sameness (meaning we are not innately different) and it operates under the modern liberal individualistic philosophy that everyone has equal rights to life, to food, and to basic education. While such a concept of equality is noble it misses the important insights about our innate and very real differences. Historically, for example, conflict, war and, colonialization over many centuries has led very real differences in power and wealth between countries, and between people. These human-made realities, though not generic, divided people along racial, linguistic and gender lines. That is what the interviewee above is trying to address: *"I can't be equal to you of as an upper middle class white woman who is twice my age."* We have to begin with that reality of the unequal world and not with the idealized world that we want to believe in. That is where the difference between equality and equity comes in. Say two people run a race, for example. Starting at the same line does not mean it is fair and equal when one contestant

cannot run as fast as the other by virtue of being young or old or physically challenged. By the different physical conditions at the outset one may well have an innate capacity to surpass the other. In this case what we need for a fair race is equity, which includes accommodation for the one with different needs not out of pity but because that is what takes to have a fair game. In short, equity works in recognizing differences, while equality operates with sameness. When we recognize differences, we also recognize vulnerability. Equity seeks to respect differences toward integrity and wholeness of each person, while equality drives homogenization. Another interviewee's reflection on equity, or the lack thereof, is worth quoting: *"As a candidate, I wonder if I was a man, and not a racialized, student, immigrant, and woman, things could have gone differently for me."* The lack of our church's equity drives the white, male, citizen (non-Aboriginal) candidate to be the norm, the beneficiary of the system. This norm becomes an unearned privilege.

Here scholarly clarification and nuanced discussion around the difference between equity vs. equality may be fruitful. Justice Rosalie Abella in the final report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment uncovers systematic discrimination against women, non-whites, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities. It states, "the obstacles in their [the designated group's] way are so formidable and self-perpetuating that they cannot be overcome without intervention....Equality in employment will not happen unless we make it happen."<sup>21</sup> The intention to "make it happen" addresses the need for 'equity.' It requires "proactive policies and strategies to promote fair opportunities and outcomes for the designated groups," according to Malinda Smith.<sup>22</sup> The following interviewee expresses this well:

*When we vote for commissioners to go to general council there is the minimum we've got to send two racialized people from the conference. It (the quota system) is unfortunate but it's necessary because if we don't have that then, the reality is that we're not going to get these voices at all. An additional support, an invitation to be given to racialized people is needed.*

Furthermore, certain cultural norms different from the dominant Western culture, are a barrier to racialized folks' full participation in important decision making processes such as General Council. The following interviewee makes this point:

*This is a cultural difference that I've perceived is that it's easier for people with a white majority to self-select themselves to put their names forward for different things. In my East Asian*

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<sup>21</sup> Rosalie Silberman Abella, *Equality in Employment: The Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1984), 254.

<sup>22</sup> Malinda Smith, "Gender, whiteness, and 'other Others,' in the academy," in *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani, eds. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010), 40.

*culture, they don't do that, you are not supposed to do that because that would be arrogant, and less virtuous. Somebody is supposed to put your name forward for you and you are supposed to decline say 3 times. Even though I was born and raised in Canada, I still grew up with some of these cultural values and therefore I just don't feel comfortable doing that.*

The following comments are directly related to one cultural difference that has particularly severe impact on ethno-minority ministers and their congregations, namely the difference of language:

*2) I (as a non-Korean) am helping this Korean person who 'is going through all the forms now for admissions and there's a lot of questions that he has to answer; records from his country to show he's a minister in good standing.. I have to keep encouraging him to do it, but it can be discouraging because it's such a tedious process. And having to do it in English is additional huge barrier.*

*2) it is hard for new people to speak up (in Presbytery and Conference) because you're given so much time to speak, and you have to know Robert's Rules of Order. So it's not just racialized, but anyone new, it is difficult (to engage in our church structure and governance).*

*9) Here is the thing, the system itself is set up so that it works if your first language is English and you're fluent in it, if you have a good understanding of Canadian culture and UCC culture, everything works, you know.*

*14) However, in terms of the role of the presbytery over-powering, the presbytery needs to listen to the voices of the congregations, the people and their ministers. There have been issues with regards to ethnic-minority congregations being silenced and divided due to the lack of the presbytery's intercultural awareness. Instead, they went with the book (manual and rules) and the result was the closing of the Korean congregation.*

My analysis on equity vs. equality, as a major issue in the internship experience, has led to cultural, especially linguistic, differences. Having a less dominant language, or put it negatively, not being fluent in a dominant language, some candidates (and those in the admission process) have real difficulties. While it is inevitable to function as an institutionalized church using a dominant language, the church must heed the need of and the care for linguistic minority members of the church, so as to fulfill its mandate to become an intercultural church. Otherwise, it is bound to assist the situation that ends up generating discrimination. Such complacency may also by default breed ignorant and insensitive discriminatory acts such as the one below. While the following case reveals the power differential between the supervisor and the candidate where the race card was put out as an issue:

*16) I have to say this: in my internship there was one thing stood out to me that was so profoundly racist. My supervisor (who actually serves a multi-ethnic church) saw that I'm a natural exuberant person, and a little charismatic and that sort of thing. During a reflection session, one day, she said, 'have you ever thought why you are like that?' And I said, 'well, God made me like this.' And she said, 'well, I'm wondering if you need to do some looking into your cultural history because I think it's a black thing.' You have to understand in the old system of internship there is a power dynamic that happens. So I had this white, educated supervisor who is holding my call in her hands, and not only that, but she happened to be the chair of CIES that I was serving in. So she's got all of this power and she shoots this back at me and I know I can't say anything because all conflicts are reported within the system and then they can squish your career and your call. So I sat there and bit my tongue and said, "that's very interesting. I will have to think about that." That was nasty.*

*9) I don't know if training is the right word but around intercultural issues like there has to be something like I don't know if worship is the right way but some sort of way of educating and providing information necessary to make it helpful to go out to travel along with this person in that process. For example, if somebody was coming from south Africa, if you don't have an understanding of the history of apartheid, you're not picking up on or that you're attributing to something else when really it's because of the culture and history that this person has, right?.*

This particular response so clearly speaks to the need for intercultural competency in the ministry preparation process. The insight shared resonates with that of the interviewee who, as a refugee with a traumatic past, had a difficulty sleeping with the door unlocked. Without understanding that particular, painful, and real experience which is however unknown to the majority in Canada, it is difficult (if not impossible) as a supervisor or a committee to guide, support, and help the candidate preparing for ministry.

It is hard to put general comments on candidacy and internship process. However, going through the comments from the interviews, the process is not positive for them. It is unclear whether their race and gender directly contributed to such negative experience. It is, however, evident that their minority identities definitely engendered the difficulty. It is also pretty obvious that the church operates in a hegemonic normative way, by I mean, functioning to benefit the dominant groups. In short, the church, as far as the internship and candidacy process is concerned, is "bureaucratic, rigid, and unaccommodating" for my McGeachy group's one interviewee summed up. The sharing of their negative experiences about the internship process was intended neither to dismiss the need for the committees nor to downplay the role of the internship experience as a critical part of learning and preparing for ministry. Internships are an important part of ministry formation, integral to theological education. But where racial

or cultural differences are involved particular skills and experiences are essential. These particular skills are not certainly about finding the one right answer to solve the problems. This kind of totalizing approach is one of the most serious barriers that prevents the church from finding solutions. The following comments speak of these issues. They reveal the sad fact that church still functions as if there is one right way, reinforcing one privileged solution on ministry formation:

*9) I think what would be helpful is actually some more room within the governance to allow for possibilities of doing things differently when there is someone with a different culture coming in. Because in the governance there are certain things that are set in and need to be done, but a lot of what we do is by guidelines, right? Each of the committees, presbytery and conference, they are not same across all in the UCC. Each one operates a little bit differently because we create our own ways of working within each. It's like if we're talking about the desire to be intercultural as a justice issue but then having everyone go through one model and asserts that this is the right way, right? What if we break that open and doing things in ways that can accommodate those with cultural differences that we find in people that are trying to make their way into the UCC or through the UCC.*

*5) how few ways the ministers that are being prepared here (in my school) could actually serve anybody but middle class Toronto. And that to me is very discouraging because there is such an enormous need.*

The structure and the process are experienced by this group of interviewees as more or less homogenous and inflexible. They are geared towards serving the majority, the already privileged dominant group. Sadly they may end up serving nobody and lead eventually to the death of the church.

The 'lesbian ruler' is an instructive metaphor for how we might change our approach to ministry leadership from being inflexible, one-size-fits-all approach to the ones allowing flexible and creative pools of wisdom, enhancing leadership. On the Island of Lesbos – which is the Greek Island on which the poet named Sappho is said to have lived, and the island from which the word Lesbian finds its origin – the people had developed a rather novel tool for building. Instead of a rigid square or metre stick, builders used a 'flexible leaden rule' in the process of constructing large stone buildings such as temples. They would start by placing one large stone and then would take a flexible strip of lead metal, bend it to follow the irregular shape of that particular stone, and then measure other potential stones to find a best fit.<sup>23</sup> Another ancient

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<sup>23</sup>My source for this history is a powerpoint presentation on Moral Norms, available online at: [academic.regis.edu/tleining/pdfs/Moral%20Norms.pdf](http://academic.regis.edu/tleining/pdfs/Moral%20Norms.pdf) (the creator of the powerpoint isn't named). There are other sources of Aristotle's account of this flexible leaden rule, and other sources that describe this form of

Greek thinker named Aristotle drew attention to this flexible leaden rule, or 'lesbian ruler' as an image to encourage less rigidity in thinking about how to measure rightness or goodness in human life. Aristotle called for rules for behaviour to be like the leaden rules used in making the lesbian moulding, and to adapt themselves to shapes without being rigid.

Is our church rule and structure too inflexible and too rigid? Not only the philosopher Aristotle but the biblical prophet Isaiah also point to the relativity of human thoughts: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his [*sic*] hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" (Isa. 40: 12) Compared to those God uses, our measures of fairness, generosity, and love are very poor indeed and should be used with the utmost humility.

What racialized women in ministry in the UCC need is not a radically new system or process. Rather they speak of the need for more flexibility and humility on the part of the dominant group in positions of power and privilege within the church. For those who are 'the norm' in the church this is a call to disengage the practice of normativity that can be uncomfortable. But this discomfort is nothing to the experience of those who are forced to try to fit within a rigid system that is not suited to them. Sarah Ahmed's reflection on heteronormativity is helpful: it "functions as a form of public comfort by allowing some bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape. One does not notice this *as a world* when one has been shaped by that world, and even acquired its shape."<sup>24</sup> When the norm (i. e., gender identity, race, candidacy, ability,) is assumed or legislated, when buildings and liturgies and classroom conversations construct or rely on this idea of norm, that is when people who don't quite fit can find themselves squeezed or even endangered. For those who come up against the norm in this way it creates a kind of "repetitive strain of injury."<sup>25</sup> It is like sitting on a chair that does not fit your body. Of course this body can be physical, social, cultural, linguistic, economic, ecclesial, theological and much more.

If we study our history we see that the UCC has been flexible in the past. The document called *In God's Image Male and Female*, received by General Council 1980, shifted the focus in marital relationships to the quality of relationship from a rigid ideal norm of a nuclear family and bent the rules of marital sexual exclusivity.<sup>26</sup> This 'lesbian ruler approach' unsettled the social norm on marriage and sexuality and caused great discomfort in some, arousing strong emotional

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construction in Lesbos. I am indebted to Prof. Lynn Caldwell, who provided this information in her sermon for the college's affirming ministry service in 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 148.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmed, 148.

<sup>26</sup> *In God's Image...Male and Female* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1980), 66, 67.

reactions from the media and members of the UCC and other churches. But the decision in 1980 laid an important cornerstone for the decision on sexual orientation and ministry in 1988.

With that hopeful promise already found in our own history, let us hear the following comments that envision an improved candidacy process:

*1)The people who have a conversation with each candidate need to be themselves trained up on what they're listening for. They need to be equipped with an understanding of what the church in the next 10 to 20 years needs to look like.*

The theme of our UCC magazine *Observer*, September, 2013, captures the interviewee's insight above: "Imagine 2025." The surveys conducted by *Observer*, thinking of the next 12 years ahead, overwhelmingly demonstrate the need for "flexibility" from the way we worship, we do Bible study, to the way we use (or not to use) our church building. Such need cannot be met without qualified and well educated leaders, both lay and clergy, as the survey responded. Equipped with flexible and informed leadership, the church will be able to do more collaboration with others beyond denominational boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

*8)a stated intention that when there's a racialized person in the process then at least one racialized person in the committee, racialized person who understands who has awareness, and one white person who also understands and has awareness... you know when my CIES put together the consultant and the supervisor, they apologized to me that both were female and I sat there on the other end of the phone thinking , it's not a big issue (that I have all female members); the bigger issue is that they're all white and that it wasn't even noticed.*

The response above can be read and interpreted as a positive development of the work of the 70s-80s' gender justice work that the United church undertook. It has born a fruit, showing the sign of implementation now and many places in congregations and communities. In a similar vein, the work of the 80-90s around the sexual orientation seems to start to generate its fruits today. Let us visit the UCC history again. As Phyllis Airhart puts it, in the 1980s the church had "a greater appreciation of 'difference' which runs counter to the dominant cultural assumptions at the time of church union."<sup>28</sup> This difference called for "deeply rooted, systematic changes" around gender stereotypes that are restrictive beyond individual and personal levels. The claim on difference also made it clear that sexism and gender justice issues, are intricately connected

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<sup>27</sup> Samantha Rideout, "Imagine you church in 2025," *Observer* (September 2013): 26-34.

<sup>28</sup> Phyllis Airhart, "A 'Review' of the United Church of Canada's 75 Years," *Touchstone* 18, no. 3 (September 2000): 26.

with other systematic oppressions, particularly racism, classism, and heterosexism.<sup>29</sup> The work of grasping difference on one hand points to the work of debunking the stereotypical and traditional norms of women's roles but on the other hand aims to challenge the limitation of sexism when it is treated independently. While the counter cultural movements of the 1980s reaped some harvest of understanding and action in the area of gender justice and acceptance of sexual diversity the work of anti-racism and that of intercultural awareness have yet yielded its fruit. My McGeachy group's responses reveal that there is still a long way to go and much work needs to be done.

There are some promising signs that the UCC may be ready for this work combating racism. The UCC has shown pioneering leadership on the apology to the Aboriginal people. It has barely begun and is well overdue, but the journey is going in the right direction. Our ongoing commitment to right relationships is evidence that the work against racism can be done. The most recent General Council decision to change the UCC crest to reflect the Aboriginal presence in our church, is a gesture that indicates a willingness to live into transformation.

I think this is a good place to lift up the positive roles of the church playing for ministry preparation and to talk about God's grace. While quite a few shared negative experiences about candidacy and internship process, we would fail to do justice if we did not highlight some of the positive experiences that they had:

*7) The biggest thing in terms of ministry is that there are so few women ministers in my home country, but they have to just go through many hoops and they have to go through much scrutiny. And then coming to Canada I found it was also a complicated process. But the process should be like grace rather than acting like being perfect. God alone is perfect, and it is by grace that people become ministers.*

*17) I had a very good supervisor and it (internship) was a wonderful experience.*

*7) Positive. I was like a bird that got dumped in oil. I was terrified (when I began the process). But the people on the internship site picked me up and brushed off all the oil, and it turned out to be a very enriching experience.*

*18) my internship (mine was an unusual one) was fair. I worked in a congregation as a hired ministerial associate for education and outreach after my graduation. I had a very good partner minister who himself is a minority Canadian (though European).*

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<sup>29</sup> Tracy Trothen, "1980s: What Does It Mean to Be The United Church of Canada? Emergent Voices, Self-Critique, and Dissent," in *The United Church of Canada: A History*, Don Schweitzer, ed. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012), 145.



*15) I am pretty satisfied (with my church process). I actually like the conciliatory model, now there are days I really wish we had a bishop... but if that's the trade off for the kind of democracy we have I'll stay with the democracy.*

*14) the presbytery, once I was ordained, was helpful, advocating the rights of the ministers (regarding the salary scale).*

Before we move on to the next sub-course, here are a few comments affirming the role of this process which can really guide the discernment. They thought strong leadership is needed for some who must hear "NO" for this call:

*13) I think the church has to be strong enough to say no to some people... I have watched people who in my opinion no business leading a congregation and yet being vocal about the future of the church.*

*15) I think the church needs to be doing psychological testing for those who are mentally and spiritually unsuited for ministry. I think \$1000 spent up front on our candidates' discernment is better than a million bucks spent in the schools and before they do damage to church.*

One of the most interesting findings up to these sub-courses, tasting different dishes within the longest meal, including some hard ones, is that most interviewees were doing really well in their ministry settings once they were ordained. There was very few who shared the story of difficulty once they were settled (and later called) and most were satisfied with their current work in ministry other than the one interviewee: *7) When I got settled, I felt that people were very uncomfortable with their because of my race.* It is hard to know how this issue got resolved. However, she moved on and is now in a new place, enjoying her ministry.

The fact that my McGeachy group's ministry is going well is something to celebrate and recognize. The process may be a painful and negative process but the candidates survived and are far from dead.

It is a time to wrap up the course, the first and the longest meal. As we gather up the dishes from our theological education part of our banquet it needs be said that process for becoming a minister in the UCC is not easy for anyone. But the term "easy" needs to be nuanced. In many ways the process is 'not easy' but is also 'not fair' for those who are racialized women in a way that is different for those who are not. Although the church has not done the work to know how many exactly racialized women there are in ministry or in the candidate process, the majority of those who participated in this research did not find the process supportive or fair. As mentioned early, two women who were once candidates of our church and who have now

left the church decided not to participate in this research because their experience with the candidacy process was too painful to remember and revisit.

One of the recurring insights that was shared in this course meal was that issues that came up that had a racial dimension were often dismissed as personality issues, that the women were trouble-makers, feisty, or picky. When it comes to racism issues of a systematic and structural nature continue to plague the UCC. Race, culture, ethnicity, language, and intercultural issues are mis-designated as personal and emotional ones. One interviewee makes the point clearly:

*Many stories of racism in congregation or the church's institution get dismissed because they are personal. And I see the pattern of these people getting muffled and labelled as problematic or having personality issues. Many of the racialized people that have gone through the candidacy process, they have had problems. But they are taking it in isolation, and for me I was stubborn and didn't submit to what they wanted me to do, but that's my personality. But they don't see that there are commonalities in what is happening across Canada. So there are systematic ways that they blame the victim.*

How can our thinking of preparing for ministry process that moves beyond personal levels? How can we instead fully embrace the systematic issues that affect people differently without totalizing or generalizing them? The response to these questions lead to the next part of our feast, the food for wisdom that gets to the heart of our body, the Body of Christ.

## **2. Power Dynamics**

The discussion of theological education and formation for ministry for racialized ordained women ministers leads us now to address the power dynamics that affect these women as they minister in a pastoral charge. Our feast, a study of racialized ordained women ministers of the united church, must inevitably face issues of power. After all, food, as the most basic necessity of human life, is political. We cannot escape the questions of who gets to eat and who doesn't. The word for food in Korean is synonymous with the word for rice. A Christian activist poet, Kim Ji-Ha, who went to jail in Korea during the Park dictatorship in the 1970s wrote a poem called "Rice (food) is heaven." In this simple poem that reads, "rice is heaven. As we cannot possess the heaven alone rice must be shared," he poetically and powerfully points to the need to share food. Issues of power, who gets to decide who eats and when, manifests themselves in many forms and with great complexity. The following stories, for example, deal with issues of race, sexual orientation, physical ability, gender, economic privilege, and marital status. No one of these ingredients in the power question come as isolated and easily distinguishable from another. They mix together in complex ways. These issues, though different, affecting each

person in the group differently, challenge the individual identities of each women in the interview group and their roles in church. These issues are ones that the interviewees wrestle with as racialized women but they are not their issues alone. Rather they are issues all must wrestle with. Again, parts of this section might be too heavy to be digested easily. Some of the insights will need to be carefully chewed. Like some wise people, including Italians, who know the importance of not rushing but taking time over food, we need to dedicate our time. Time will need to be given to properly appreciate them. But it is good food that will offer much needed nourishment to those whose diet rarely or never includes these questions. Similar to the first course, this course on power dynamics has several layers, which we will organize into a few manageable sizes. It is the same food, but like putting it in smaller dishes for the people to take and taste easily.

### **Race Erased over GLBTTQ Issue?**

*(1) Dominant culture members of the LGBTQ community (in the church) are not marginalized in economic senses. And yet there's financial resourcing. I am giving large categories but I am sensitive that there are smaller subcultures. Yet we resource them financially, and they are able to lift their voice. I think that I have the permission to say this, as someone who has done a fair bit of General Council work. I am risking here, because you don't want to make generalizations, but members of that particular community have ready access to the real pyramid of power in the UCC. They have access to Nora (the UCC General Secretary) and the GC Exec, let's just put it out there because it's true, and get the more wealthy retreat and educational facilities. They can speak at the place in the pyramid. There was a workshop held in my church, the antiracism mandated workshop, I was sitting in my narthex with members of Presbytery from the region and there were questions around prejudicial comments regarding "black" and "fresh off the boat", and people were risking it. And someone got up and made the comment: why are we focusing on race/culture etc, there are also the gay/lesbian people blah blah. And I stood up, I was angry, and said "can we give some focused attention, please?"*

*17) It is easier to be a gay or lesbian person in ministry in the UC right now. You will get all types of support, as opposed to being a person of ethnic minority background and a woman. Why do you think that is? I have experienced that. Some of my colleagues who are openly gay who get amazing support. People are sensitive to that and go out of their way to support and help them, as opposed to someone like me.*

This is one of the most surprising responses I found through this study. I would not expect this to be a critical issue when I set out to do this research. Some scholars and activists have been

reflecting on competing identities and the challenge of identity politics. In 1990, the independent scholar, creative writer, and internationally acclaimed cultural theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa, who played a vital role in shaping the discussion of racialized, indigenous and queer identities in South and North Americas, shared a poignant experience:

A few days ago in Montreal at the Third International Feminist Book Fair (June 1988),... I felt very close to some white lesbian separatist friends. Then they would make exclusionary or racist remarks and I would feel my body heating up...what really hurts is to be with people that I love,...and to still feel, after all our dialogues and struggles, that my cultural identity is still being pushed off to the side, being minimized by some of my so-called allies...Women-of-color feel especially frustrated and depressed when these “allies” participate in alliances dealing with issues of racism or when the theme of the conference we are attending is racism. It is then that white feminists feel they have “dealt” with the issue and can go on to other “more important” matters.<sup>30</sup>

This issue is also well articulated in recent critical studies of Canada by Shrene Razack who poses the “problem of competing marginalities” in the work of feminist solidarity work. “When each woman claimed her own marginality as the worst one, she raced to innocence,” she writes. To self-critically note and challenge our tendency to the race to innocence is not to “view our places on the margins as unconnected to each other” but to name our own positions that seek to “cut through dominant representations” of “the systems of domination that position white, middle-class, heterosexual, nondisabled men at the center.”<sup>31</sup>

While race and LGBTTQ issues can seem to be in conflict with each other as competing marginalities, it is important that we do not fall into “the race to innocence,” by claiming that one oppression is the most important one or more important than others. One practice that may be constructive is to create a space where it is allowed and safe to expose our true feelings and our own bias.

The comments by the McGeachy interviewees above put up a red flag. Are we privileging dominant (white and wealthy) GLBT groups and glossing over the challenges faced by groups who are racialized, ethno-minority, and poor?

Race is not the only issue that interviewees felt was given less attention than it deserved. Invisible disability was another:

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<sup>30</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, “Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island,” in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, AnaLouise Keating, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 142-143.

<sup>31</sup> Sherene Razack, “Aferword: Unmapping Canada” Starting with Bodies and Repressed Truths,” in *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*, Lynn Caldwell, Carrienne Leung and Darryl Leroux, eds. (Halifax/Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2013), 206-207.

*17) Although I am hired to do the ministry of word and sacrament, people would like my team partner (pastoral care and education) who is white to do baptism because of my racialized and invisible disability. Because of my arthritis, I usually don't carry the baby. I let the parents hold the baby when I baptize the baby. Some people (who do not like this, or don't want to accommodate this need) wait for me to take that Sunday off so they book the baptism during my absence. I try not to think about it too much. I am a very positive person but sometimes these things do affect me. We need to educate people about intercultural awareness, including invisible disabilities. But still people have their preconceived ideas about who the minister should be, as the one who is a white abled strong figure.*

Here we can see the interlocking issues of race and disability in the place of clergy identity and expectation. A designated role of the minister of Word, Sacrament, and Pastoral Care, is undercut by the physical condition of this particular minister. The external notion of being racialized (having non-White skin) and the internal notion of having an invisible disabilities are inextricably tangled.

### **Race, Gender, Age, and Economic Privilege**

Interviewees also reflected on the issue of the unearned privileges that they experienced in ministry in the United church.

*1) Men are still being given the Cathedral pulpits (there are only about 10 across Canada) and they all have men who are 50 and up. In that context someone like me wonders what will happen in 10 years when they retire. What do we need to do to train up those congregations in terms of how they understand themselves and their mission, but how they reformulate their understanding of what leadership can look like that shape the future of our church? Strategically speaking, how does someone like me, a non-white young woman, get there?*

*16) I hang out with my clergy sisters and we've all resigned ourselves to the fact that none of us are going to get the Cathedral door church. It doesn't matter how many awards we win for our preaching or what we did in school, none of that matters. It doesn't matter if we've carved out a great relationship with every level of church in the denomination. White men hold the cathedral doors. Always have, always will. I'd like to change that, but I don't know how. How do you change the seats of power that are also the wealthiest churches in the denomination? Sometimes I am pessimistic enough to think that the most wealthy churches, you name it, like Metropolitan, Timothy Eaton, won't change because they've got such deep pockets that they can keep buying who they want, who are like them, into the pulpit and playing the system and getting what they want.*

*11) The people in youth ministry know this. Often times my male colleagues are more super stars; they rise quicker to status and higher pay, and get cushier positions and are expected to do less. It drives me nuts when female youth leaders are running and doing everything. [They] cooked, cleaned, vacuumed, becoming Martha, while some of my male colleagues get different treatment. They are “loved minorities” those white males under 45, they are like candy...so sweet and so precious, you know.*

The other issue named in this research is the barrier of full participation of preparing for ministry and exercising leadership due to lack of financial resources for education. This barrier impacts a person from the beginning point of seeking education for ministry to the end point of serving a leadership role in various church courts. The following interviewee raises this issue reflecting black communities but the issue can resonate with any ethnic minority or newer immigrant church community. For example, as a lay person who wants to serve the presbytery committee yet cannot take time off for the meetings or church events (because they are running a corner store or a laundry or a gas station, or a restaurant, or a motel, typical of immigrant work places. These works do not stop on weekends, or operates 9-5 in humane and luxurious ways.)

*16) The barriers of economic and education issues in some ways haven’t changed over the years. So there is the question of how come we do not have enough black clergy in our denomination. The answer derives from the challenge of economic injustice because they’re not able to get educational opportunities others are. So I’m kind of left with this sense of what are the root cause of some of these things, instead of saying, “they’re not represented.” I want to look a little deeper and say what that is underneath the surface.*

*2) it is not hard to find the evidence that a male minister gets a higher housing allowance than myself in the same location (Toronto).*

*6) more male ministers have churches in big cities.*

*13) women ministers are majority and yet still white men get lead minister positions in large urban congregations.*

In fact more than 50% of UCC ministers are women but the average salary of a woman minister is only 70% of her male counterpart and more women are often located in the isolated areas than male ministers. One third of the ministry personnel responded to the survey that they are worried about the future of their financial situations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> [www.gc41.ca/sites/default/files/leadership\\_isolation.pdf](http://www.gc41.ca/sites/default/files/leadership_isolation.pdf), accessed on August 30, 2013.

16) *The reality is that the churches still like the sound of a male voice. And men in our denomination who pursue clergy work are becoming scarce. Thus they are becoming more desirable and precious. I actually did a reference for a friend of mine. I told him outright that he will have his pick of churches. He wanted to jump the queue for settlement and he wasn't sure if he could or not, and I said, "yes you can, do not be naïve. Not only are you a white male, but you're married, young and you're talking about having babies. And you're blonde and you have military experience." And that's exactly what happened. And he is being paid 3 grand more than me and he started 3 years after me. Go figure.*

15) *I am appalled at the number of our female ministers who when they retire can barely survive. I will follow them except that I am lucky. I have a wealthy cousin who made me her heir because she is a single woman. So I can go and serve a place like this Aboriginal pastoral charge. We serving aboriginal communities receive less payment. The national church knows that.... The other issue is that women don't negotiate, we just accept where people are at... I assisted in JNAC process for a neighbouring pastoral charge, they brought out a guy from the same school I graduated a year behind me who didn't even have a degree, so they couldn't bump his salary, so what they did is they bumped up his traveling allowance. So he gets paid more than me. Do you know the reason behind that? Because you know he's a man, assuming that he has to support his family, excuse me, he is a gay man and he has a partner who works. The issue is crystal clear, it is a gender inequity issue and stereotypical sexism at work. They expect women to go places where a man wouldn't go.... we were at a huge disadvantage as a female couple in finding employment.*

19) *Even though there are more women ministers than male, their value is categorized differently and they are still minoritized sometimes in very subtle ways.*

The responses above successfully demonstrate the intersectionality between gender, race and class with education and economic status. The interlocked and interlinked issues require the integrated theological approach. More specifically, it discloses how the issue of classism has been neglected in the church and in doing theology. Our United church as a predominantly middle educated class church should be alert to the following critique: "No [theological] reflection on relationship is complete without the notion of class. The key issue in terms of class,...is not income level or social stratification but the matter of relationship between the classes.... Apparently the God who seeks to restore relationships does so not by covering up the tensions that are deepening along the lines of class...Rather, the God who seeks to restore relationships does so by taking the side of Lazarus against the rich man and the side of the poor against Zacchaeus."<sup>33</sup> The insight from this critique is that not only do we address the notion of

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<sup>33</sup> Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (2013), 100-101.

class, power differentials, but also we need to create a space of dialogue among different class groups, where repentance and reconciliation can happen.

The next responses reflect how racialized (visible) identities are challenged and discriminated against in the normative white culture of churches, hospitals and society at large. Please also note that most of the participants said that education helped them to compensate for their marginalized identities.

*4) What really happened was when I had a trachea [operation] and I am a very well educated person and I communicate well. When you get a trachea, something about the physiology of putting that tube it means that you can't speak for a few days. Boy did people make assumptions about me!! I think that was based on my racialized and gendered status. They would talk down to me and assumptions about my level of education. That was when I profoundly experienced what if I didn't have that education. That is internalized racism, that I use [my education] to say, 'screw you, I'm just as good as you.' But the very fact that I do that is internalized racism. That's not good. Why should anybody care, why should I care? It was a wakeup call. My status (as an educated person) has always gotten me special treatment, but what if I didn't have all that.*

*4) They (the congregation) did not even think about me as bi-racial because I've got the other stuff. If I were immigrant (meaning recent immigration) it would be different. But once again, it's my education and those other things (English as my first language, born in Canada) that provide me a cushion.*

The above comments demonstrate two things: marginal identities are negotiated and power is multilayered. Even if you are marginalized, it does not mean that you are completely powerless. "The Power Flower" exercise, created by a group of Canadian educators and scholars for social change, is helpful to further explain this issue.<sup>34</sup> This Flower is designed to signify who we are as individuals in relation to the group who generate power in our society. The centre of the flower has 16 categories: sex, race, ethnic group, language, religion, family (married/single), social class, age, denomination, education, ability/disability, clergy/lay, geographical region (origin), geographical region (current), sexual orientation with an empty spot. It is surrounded by inner petals and outer petals. The exercise asks participants to name the outer petals and then compare their own individual identities with them. The more we match with the outer petal, the more power we have in society. Take the comment of the participant right above. She does

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<sup>34</sup> Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas, *Educating for a Change* (Toronto: Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action and Between the Lines Press, 1991). You can also find the reference in the UCC's anti-racism work book, *That All May Be One: A Resource for Educating toward Racial Justice*, Wenh-In Ng, ed. (Toronto: UCCP, 2004), 53-55.



not match with the outer petals of “male, White, Anglo-Saxon,” as a bi-racial woman, but as a person with “English, Christianity, clergy, high in education, and born and raised in Canada” holds power in society. This is a good illustration of how power is negotiated and multi-layered.

The following interview responds directly to the issue of skin colour and race.

*14) one time, when I was serving a White congregation, I was rejected to preside a wedding because I was racialized. I finished all the prep for the wedding with the couple, going through the counselling and procedure and all that. Then one of the parents of the couple opposed having me as their minister because I was Asian. So I asked my colleague (retired and White male) to do the wedding for me, and this minister told them that he would refuse to preside the wedding because they refused their own minister and discriminated her. I think such solidarity act was very comforting to me and hopeful for the church. I am sure that they learned the lesson.*

*17) They did not want me to touch the bread. They brought me tongs and I didn't feel comfortable doing that. So now I bring the hand sanitizer to the front and try to wash my hands at the start of the communion. But still there are some people who don't want to take it from my hand.*

*17) I am in a team ministry. Although I am hired to be the full time minister, I was forced not to do any pastoral care work, which is in my job description because it is supposed to be my team partner's work. They discriminated in that they gave more preference to her (a white colleague). She will not incorporate me at all but they always wanted me to incorporate her in things that I do. I am sure it does happen to people who are visible minorities. Even in my corporate field (before I came to ministry), I never felt discriminated against like that. But I felt discrimination in the church, which was hurtful.*

### **Gender Stereotypes and Marriage Privilege**

The section below reveals the issues around being a woman and being married. It raises issues of same gender conflict when a gender role is assigned to women. It also manifests the difficulty of the roles as minister which are laden with gender stereotypes and nuclear, heterosexual family stereotypes. The normativity of heterosexual marriage and nuclear family appears to have a real grip on our UCC congregations. Married individuals are preferred over single. Having kids is preferred over not having them. Same sex marriages and families are still not easily accepted.

*(9)Traditional gender stereotypical roles for women are still strong in many areas including my own pastoral charge. There is a resentment that I do not conform to their mold of that role.*

*Part of the resentment has to do with the fact that I don't engage in traditional women's roles but I go and talk to the people in the community which is what their husbands normally do. When I go curling which is more a masculine role than a feminine role in society, I wonder if they (my church women) are resentful for that and I'm not fitting into that expectation. I never thought that this would be an issue but I am educated and that also creates some jealousy because some of the women were not educated. I am sharing this issue because hopefully my insights help others become more aware of what is going on, some of the underlying issues.*

*2) Marital and family status: I haven't seen it personally because ever since I started ministry I've had kids, so I was fitting into the status quo. But I have heard from a woman minister who is single who told me that if you're married you have a status, and if you have children you have more status. That was an eye-opener for me.*

*3) When I got a job in a church they were happy to have me with a family as a set!*

*5) As a queer couple, being together is more threatening. It is more real, in their face than theoretically welcoming in their heads.*

*5) In Aboriginal community, an unmarried person is almost by definition not an adult. So I will not necessarily be seen as a full adult [even though she has a partner in a common-law relationship].*

*6) To bring a husband to the church has been the case and the pressure for me.*

*4) The questions of why someone [the minister] is single. The suspicion of maybe she's a lesbian or there's got to be some reason if you make the choice to be single, as I have done. But people don't know what to do with that.*

*8) People say that they are open to a gay or a lesbian minister. Apparently my previous minister was gay but he was not in a relationship. So they know who he is [cognitively] but don't have to see who he really is [emotionally and physically]. It's my being in a relationship, which is challenging to my people because that makes it more obvious, right?*

To the Power Flower analysis, we can add the following: that an person who is a sexual minority is more privileged (less unprivileged, safer) when she is single (not in a relationship) whereas for a heterosexual woman being single is harder (less safe, less privileged). The following responses help to show how this is the case.

*11) If I was married I think it makes me more autonomous. I remember one time I was going into the kitchen and the group of women were talking about me because they were plotting for*

*me, there was a refugee who was in our congregation, they were like, wouldn't it be perfect if ABC [naming her] just married him so he could stay in the country.*

*13) When I was single in parish ministry, people take much more liberty to comment on your love life than they would to their married minister, they would never ask how your marriage is... but they would comment on who you should or shouldn't be dating.*

*3) as a single woman, it is difficult to have boundaries with the congregation.*

*16) this whole church wants me married to my guy. We've been together six years because of my context I have huge issues with marriage. But they want us married, they want us having children (I can't have children but that's not something that I've told them). The other ghost that I am having around that issue is that my predecessor was an interim minister, phenomenally gifted woman in the area of youth and children's ministry. She was also married with kids. So even before I got to the church (this former minister and I were friends) I saw on her facebook page, from a member of the congregation, "I hope the minister that is coming has some kids." (they know now that I don't have kids) but there's still that desire and the hearts of the people here for me to have kids so that I'll focus on family ministry. Back when I was growing up, my mom was a single mom. And she was white. And she didn't get married. (even though they loved and accepted us and allowed me to be baptized) there was this sense that we weren't as good because we didn't have the status of a nuclear family.*

### **The Difficulty of Women Ministers in Ethnic Specific Congregations**

Among all the 19 interviewees only two women had served ethnic specific congregations. Currently, almost all non-aboriginal ethnic specific congregations are served by male ministers. At the time of the research, I could not identify any ordained racialized women who were called to serve their ethnic congregations. While the feminization of the UCC is a reality today and an inevitable phenomenon ahead, the dominance of male clergy among the ethnic minority congregations is still prevalent. And this kind of sexist practice and discrimination is strongly rooted in biblical-theological foundations. When the issue of the woman being the lead minister arises, the question of salvation and of original sin from Genesis is raised. At a meeting to determine if the church wants to call a woman minister one of our interviewees shared that a person from the floor bluntly asked, "Can a woman bring salvation?" The other answered, "No, because women are sinners because of Eve." Our interviewee got the call, despite the patriarchal challenge and blunt sexist remark, and when she finished her ministry there, a male minister was hired in her place. To my limited knowledge, she is one of the very few ordained woman ministers who served an ethnic minority congregation in the history of the United Church.

The famous soteriological question which Rosemary Radford Ruether once asked, “Can a man save women?” seems to operate in reverse in many congregations, questioning the ability and the right of women to be the leaders in church. This is an ongoing patriarchal legacy which still needs to be addressed. And another of Ruether’s poignant questions brings this into focus, “Can Christology be liberated from patriarchy?”<sup>35</sup>

It is gratifying to find some brilliant answers from the interviewees as if they are in solidarity with one another’s struggle. The interviewee who suffered the overt sexism shared above is joined with and comforted by the following poignant and unapologetic response:

*16) God made me a woman and I have no problem with saying that this is me and this is part of who I am and if you’ve got a problem with that; if you can’t hear God’s voice through my voice then you’ve got a problem, not me. God spoke through women in the Bible. There are women of power, strength, and integrity in the Bible. A woman’s image is something that should be maintained, upheld, and celebrated, and not put in a male box. I do understand that thinking. But I will not put myself in that box.*

### **Colonial and Mission Legacies**

The same participant who suffered from sexism from within her own ethnic group made it very clear that sexist and patriarchal issues should NOT be painted only as a so-called “ethnic” issue. I think this is an important insight to illuminate further. In other words, sexism and other church problems are not limited to ethnic minority congregations but should be considered as a part of colonial mission legacies. Listen to her voice:

*It is nothing new that most ethno-minority Asian congregations, whether they are Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, have experienced their church being split. And these churches are the ones who most strongly oppose calling women ministers. While it happens more often in these Asian immigration congregations, mainstream European congregations have also the issues of such conflicts. Church conflicts are often related to and resulted from “theological differences” rather than “cultural-ethnic” differences. So it should NOT be targeted as “ethnic” issues. Furthermore, where does this theology (conservative and patriarchal) come from? It is from the Western missionaries, transplanting it to these Christians in their Asian home countries who then brought it to Canada with them.*

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<sup>35</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a feminist theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1985); *Women and Redemption: A theological inquiry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

Therefore, both the issue of church divisions and conflicts prevalent in Asian immigrant congregations and the issue of resisting women ministers should be taken in light of colonial mission and its western colonial legacies that are still hung over to the present time.

The following is related to structural and systematic issues of western colonialism, which affect Aboriginal members of our church through the residential schools.

*15) It is a struggle to balance my Christian faith with my aboriginal teachings. For example, Christian teaching says that we inherit the earth, while hearing the echo of my aboriginal elders who said, no, we don't inherit the earth. We are of the earth, and not on earth.... You don't bring a white Christ into another environment, well I mean it's kind of like the Australian cut flower. Christianity is a flower in a vase, well it never becomes a part of the culture because it never grows roots. But if we believe in Christ as relationships then Christian faith is about brokenness and wholeness, pain and healing. Sometimes we have to be able to say the empire has no clothes. We have to name that that is racist and that is colonialist. You know where I was in the past pastoral charge, KKK had only dissolved in the 1970s. Our church is a still empire, who says, I am innocent, I don't have clothes.*

*5) Part of the difficulty is the nature of the circle. For the First Nation's people, the inherited wisdoms don't change (whereas GC changes every 3 years). So part of the difficulty is not having the long term relationship. People don't spend a lot of time sitting in our circle so non-native people don't spend that time becoming comfortable with the process and seeing how it works and how God can work in that situation and seeing how wisdom can move and change. And then there's all sorts of human behaviors, we are just as fallible as anybody else and we can screw up a circle as badly as anybody. But there isn't much time spent in our church structures.*

*5) I know in All Native Circle Conference and Mission & Service support getting cut. So what does that mean for the most vulnerable churches that receive less money than they did before and they were underfunded in the first place? When M & S is getting smaller as our whole churches are smaller, the impact becomes bigger and more painful to the vulnerable ministries than the rest.*

The following response is similar in content to the one right above in terms of the national church, being the hands of holding money, exercising colonial control over the Aboriginal congregation's business:

*5) There's the example that they had to tear down a condemned building and they thought they could just do it. They thought they could just do it. Well a year and a half later they were finally able to do it because it had to go through Presbytery, conference, and get things approved. All those layers of bureaucracy grinding soul-crushing work, and part of the reason its soul-crushing*

*is because that's also the pervasive oppressive structure under which we live as First Nations people when we have to deal with department of Indian Affairs or the province, it's that same thing, it takes years and if you ask a question and it relates to something else they cannot tell you the answer to that question or who you should speak to. So it's that kind of bureaucracy that's crushing the access to that. When I was at GC, where they're supposed to be making decisions based on knowledge of the manual, people could have a great request but we don't even get to discuss the merit of the request itself. What we discuss is whether it fits in the guidelines in the manual. That kind of structure is ridiculous for us.*

The final taste in this course of power dynamics is bitter. It wrestles with the visceral experiences of feeling unsafe, lonely, and exhausted because of marginal and multiply located identities. The sense of being minoritized, not fitting into the dominant culture, yet being able to dwell in many different cultures, is real and alarming. Their stories, though difficult and discouraging, sparkle with hope, offering glimpses of connection and support. There is a Korean saying, "if the taste of the food is bitter, it is a medicine; if it is sweet, it is a poison." I hope that the readers will take this bitterness as a medicine, a healthy sign, sensing the determination and commitment on the part of these racialized women ministers to make it work, bridge different cultures, open up conversations that are reciprocal, level the power down to equity, and nurture intercultural competency as a church:

*5) I feel like I'm the only one in the room because there aren't that many queer, First Nations ministers in the United Church. So I feel just generally looking out... I mean I've preached here and other places... and looking out and not seeing myself is definitely an alienating experience. And it does add a certain pressure to what I'm doing. There's always that sort of built-in sense that you have to work twice as hard to get half as far. [For example] I have to be very clear because this might be my only chance to talk to this particular group of non-Native people, so I have to really make it count.*

*16) One of the hardest, most painful things, coming into a predominantly dominant culture congregation, is looking out and not seeing anybody that looks like you. There's this sense of "am I really a part of this community?" I like the fact that I am fully differentiated from these people, but there's a part of me that says, "where do I see myself here? If I ever had children, would I bring them into this community?" It's hard. And sometimes when I am having moments of self doubt there's that sense of "are they tolerating me? Are they enduring me?" I know in my case this was a black listed pastoral charge.*

*2) I went to the church in the 70s and it was already starting to decline. There were hardly any children/youth, so I was one of the few youth. But it was definitely not intercultural. And they didn't really use our gifts. My sister and I were in the choir for the longest time, but I was never*

*asked to sing a solo and the music was always the same church classical music. But they never asked if we would like to contribute something different. And my sister could play the guitar, but no one ever asked her to play. We kind of had to fit in. The community was nice. They helped us settle. But our presence there did not change anything about the church.*

*5) It's incredibly tiring being me. When I'm here and even when I go back home I'm constantly translating between cultures or experience or what it means to be queer in this predominantly heterosexual environment. What does it mean to be Native in this predominantly white environment? I keep asking. So I'm constantly having these conversations, I'm trying to make myself understood. In my classes I'm constantly saying "does that make sense to you? What did you hear when I said that?" and similarly when I go back home I say "what did you hear when I said redemption, salvation, all those things?" So for me it's just exhausting trying to maneuver between those cultures.*

*7) There are times that I feel like a beggar that can't even beg. I've got all these layers between me, a woman, black woman, from outside Canada, immigrant, new to the UCC, so sometimes I feel like when I'm in a meeting they think "you and your ancestors haven't been here long enough to have a right to the things that you need within the church."*

*8) I must say that grass roots level of connection, getting on board on the change, is happening (the interviewee had named Rendezvous, youth national conference as racially diverse and positive experiences). I should not lose sight of that glimpse of hope.*

*1) I was feeling alone, asking whether the intercultural ministries will ever take seed here. I can be impatient (I want to get going with it). I believe in the content and the vision. My energy wanes when I think about whether I have optimism in the people. I know it's so sad. So I work hard (being on the intercultural task group) its sweet nectar to be around people who want to engage. And we all see it differently and that's part of the beauty of it. But we want to readily engage in it. And there is a deep love for the mission. But we have been sought out. It's not like people are clamoring to get into this conversation space to do this work. So there's my sadness. So that's why I was glad to join this McGeachy research project because someone wants to engage with the potential that future leaders for this mandate have to unfold this into something great.*

*5) it is the whiteness of the institution and how difficult it is to communicate one's reality and to have someone empathize with one's reality is... we only have words to make connection and they're not making the connection. So what on earth are we supposed to do? Interculturality in terms of my relationship with the wider church (the wider white church I guess) has been incredibly painful. Here we are in this little room less than 1% of the population and there's all*

*the white folks in the big room talking about Robert's Rules of Order. And they miss the best part about GC. So that part has been amazing.*

*7) Up until very recently there was one type of person that belonged to the UCC. And I have a lot of respect for them because they have left us a great heritage. Canada's makeup is changing and the church needs to be sensitive to that reality so that people will feel comfortable coming and knocking on the door and feeling comfortable within it.*

### **3. (Im)Migration**

We have tucked into the two main courses of our feast so far. The issues of theological education and power dynamics have presented a varied and rich meal full of different textures and tastes. These two courses also enabled us to demonstrate the seriousness and complexity of the study. This next serving used the issue of (im)migration as its main ingredient as is guided by the following questions: If you immigrated at some point to Canada, what was the whole experience like? How has your experience of migration affected your view of the world and specifically your ministry? For those who were born in Canada, what does immigration mean to you as a racialized-Canadian? (see question #4 in Appendix 3)

It has been made clear that migration and immigration is a critical issue for all of the interviewees. It shapes their understanding of ministry as much as it influences their pastoral identities, their roles and places in church and the world. However, it was differently perceived by those who were born and raised in Canada as opposed to those who grew up outside of Canada. For those who had experience of migration, crossing the border, the experience was sometimes summed up as a trauma. Let's hear them first:

*1) I was ripped from one context and had to navigate another. Migration had to do with everything. That's where it all started.*

*19) I came as a refugee without knowing if I could go back ever. Within a week, I realized (because in my home, I was teaching at university, middle class, having a normative race, I didn't see I was colour blind) without speaking English, I felt disabled. Going through the refugee system, you are made to feel like your life doesn't belong here. Every day you are confronted with "you don't belong, you don't fit." When I came to Canada, my identity, race, language, and culture became subordinate and suspicious, while back home it wasn't even an issue.*



*2) It was a difficult experience. I came with my parents, an older sister, and a younger brother. My parents had a hard time settling in. My father had a hard time finding a job. My mother really missed her family back home. They were without a support system in Canada... All of a sudden they found themselves in a nuclear family, not the extended family.*

*14) When I came to North America (as an international student), the person who was supposed to pick me up at the airport did not show up. I had to find my way with the piece of paper that had the address of this person in my hand. Later I found out that she did not come because she had to put her kid down for a nap. I could not believe that would be the reason not to welcome someone who came from the other side of the world. I was shocked to see the cultural difference. In my home country culture, when a guest is supposed to come to my house, the whole family are busy preparing for this guest's arrival. When I met this woman at her home, I was given a cold sandwich (which I have never seen in my entire life) for a meal. That was another cultural shock. In my culture, you are not supposed to serve a cold meal to a guest. That is deemed rude. You must serve the meal hot and warm. Anyways, that was my first day in North America more than four decades ago.*

*3) As an interracial couple, I faced the difficulty of making myself understood by my in-laws, Canadian born citizens, who could not understand what it means not to have a permanent or citizenship status. When I registered my daughter for a school, the school required identification (of the parent) which I did not have, so I always had to ask my husband. So that's not an equal situation in marriage.*

The experiences of migration shared above are pretty negative and harsh. Whether you were forced to leave your home country or chose to leave, migration experiences of a new culture are not always easy. However, it is false to assume that the experience of migration has been all negative for our group. Something difficult is not always negative. Being easy does not necessarily mean positive, either. Painful experiences often lead to growth, maturity, and new wisdom. Growth without pain may not necessary lead to life giving learning. For example, one interviewee who had many cross border experiences called migration "a story of privilege" because leaving one place for another place often opens up new possibilities. The following stories affirm migration experiences as experiences that deepen one's understanding of others with compassion and mercy. The experience of migration may indeed equip individuals to become more effective Christian leaders. Despite its difficulties and challenges, migration experiences helped members of my McGeachy group in their pastoral role and deepened their Christian faith and life.

*2) Due to my migration experience, I am certainly more empathetic to people coming from other countries and maybe more sensitive to people who are maybe on the margins.*

*9) Just on a personal level, I am actually quite grateful (for being falsely assumed of being born somewhere) that I am part of the conference interview board because I have been able to be the person between an immigrant from a different country and the people in my interview team understand a bit better.*

Before we move to the responses of the group who were born here, it would be important to highlight the meaning of migration for the group whose ancestors were first people and who identified themselves as Aboriginal. For them immigration had to do with proper teaching of the history to immigrants about First Nations people. The relationship between the First Nations people and the recent non-European racialized immigrants is tricky in that both can fall victim to racial stereotyping and ignorance and have largely been shaped by Eurocentric policy and practice. One interviewee remarks on this:

*11) White government's propaganda has really damaged the image of the First Nations persons so when (racialized) immigrants come over to this land, they are fearful of us as dangerous, lazy and drunken people... (instead we need to teach new immigrants) how genocide happened..how the Europeans conquered the land. It is interesting to see the difference here; how and when they won it was a victory and how the Indians won, it was a massacre. We need to change this interpretation. We need to lift up and offer a positive and resilient history of the First Nations people in Canada.*

Skin colour and marginalized racial identities, the question of origin based upon migration, the question of 'where are you from?', was particularly important for those who were born here by parents who had emigrated. The question of the root (origin) is one of the most unrooting questions. What can be more damaging to a tree than to be constantly unrooted? Indeed the issue of migration for second generation immigrants was often very painful. Here are some of the responses:

*11) To Jamaicans I am too Canadian, to Canadians I am always Jamaican, though I don't even have the faintest trace of an accent or any memory of Jamaica. The question of 'where are you from?' people often stop at Jamaica. That is to do with name as well. People just have a hard time pronouncing my name and my name is biblical, it's a biblical name... and it's in the church that people mess up the most because they're expecting my name to be something not biblical, not-common, not-English, not-well-known but different, something exotic.*

*9) Although I did not come from anywhere but Canada, I've had that experience (of being asked, where are you from?) my whole life. I was around 6 or 7 years old and I was very confused because this woman at the community centre asked me where I was from and I said Toronto then she said, "No, where are you really from?" I did not have a language to really understand*

*what she meant at that time. Growing up a bit older, the question is differently asked but basically same in nature. “when are you planning to go back to Korea?” or hearing a comment like, “your English is very good, how long have you lived here?” Because of my appearance people attribute certain things about the immigrant experience to me which is not fair.*

*8) I was about 14 years old. I had a conversation with somebody at the bus stop. The guy is saying ‘oh Jamaica is a really nice place....’ ‘I’ve never been to Jamaica.’ (my ancestors are not even from there) I was offended by it. Just coming and assuming this and this guy asking, ‘where are you from?’ ‘Saskatchewan,’ I answered, ‘no no I mean, where were you born?’ and I’m sure by this time I was glaring at him, ‘Saskatchewan!’, and he just walked away.*

My McGeachy group’s experience resonates with many other racialized immigrants. There are several media references that capture this issue of the question of origin.<sup>36</sup> Even for Aboriginal people, whose existence goes back farther than the genesis of Canada as a nation, the experience of being assumed to be from another place is quite pervasive. The assumptions that they are so often confronted with, in the minds of those who harbour the assumptions, make Canada seem like a whiter place than it actually is. Such assumptions threaten to erase a long standing history of some black and Asian (and other racialized) folks who came long before most European settlers.

Tim Wise, a white privilege critic from the USA, writes about this deletion of history in the process of the nation-building of the United States. “From nearly the second that Europeans first stepped onto the shores of this continent, our identity mattered....Within a few decades, classification as a white person would become the key to avoiding enslavement.... By the time the republic was founded, being considered white would become the key to citizenship itself. The Naturalization Act of 1790... made clear that all white persons and *only* white persons could be considered citizens of the United States... Of course, even after the legal right to buy, sell, breed, and enslave people of color officially ended, our whiteness continued to matter.... I know we aren’t to blame for history... But we are responsible for how we bear that legacy, and what we make of it in the present.... It is not intended to produce guilt... But their legacy persists in many of today’s institutions for which we are responsible.”<sup>37</sup> How about Canada? In Alberta, especially around Edmonton, there was so much concern about tide of African American immigration that various groups organized petitions, with the result that on August 12, 1911, the Wilfred Laurier government drafted and approved the following: ... *“the landing in Canada ... is prohibited of any immigrants belonging to the Negro race, which race is deemed*

<sup>36</sup>One is found in the Canadian document called, “Between: Living in the hyphen,” by Anne Marie Nakagawa. [www.nfb.ca/film/between\\_living\\_in\\_the\\_hyphen](http://www.nfb.ca/film/between_living_in_the_hyphen); the other is found in the you-tube, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/24/what-kind-of-asian-are-you-video\\_n\\_3334200.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/24/what-kind-of-asian-are-you-video_n_3334200.html). Both accessed on June 18, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Wise, *Dear White America: Letter to a New Minority* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012), 21-24.

*unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada.*"<sup>38</sup> The Laurier Govt. was shortly thrown out so it never became law. Nevertheless, along with various other government initiatives, which were implemented to deter African Americans from migrating north, this document helped stem the tide of black immigration. In fact, the Canadian government did not open up immigration to non-European folks until 1960s. Chinese immigrants came as early as the 1860s, even before a confederated Canada was formed. They came to work in the building of the Canadian railroad. Many were killed in the construction of that railroad. And though they worked hard and sacrificed a great deal they still were inhibited from bringing their own families over to join them. The most famous example is the "Chinese head tax," charged to each Chinese person entering Canada who came after the completion of Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885.<sup>39</sup> The reason for charging such a tax was to discourage Chinese people from migrating to Canada.

The building of Canada (as a white nation) could have only been possible at the high price of the lives of many First Nations people. While it is impossible to know exact numbers, it is estimated that 80 % of the Aboriginal people living in the east seaboard from the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century disappeared, according to Thomas King, a professor of English literature and an educator of Indigenous knowledge and history.<sup>40</sup> Not only did they experience the tremendous loss of its populations, but they also suffered the loss of their cultures and their ways of life which are inseparably connected to their land. When the land was taken away, their identity was torn apart. One of the most horrific histories of Canada that is related to the Aboriginal people and education is the Indian Residential schools. Active in the 1920s throughout 1960s, though the last school did not close until 1996, the Canadian government ran the "residential schools" administrated by the Christian churches. It was regarded as education aimed (though unintentional) at cultural genocide, namely, "kill the Indian in the child" as they called it. This colonial legacy and its past haunt the present Canadian society.

One may anticipate that our interviewees must have experienced similar experiences of being made to feel "out of place." Even though this place called Canada is their place, where they are born, even if they call it their home, because of their racial identity resulted from the difference of their non-White physical appearance and skin-colour, they are treated, as if they do not belong here. The stories of those who are born and raised in Canada above reveal two contrasting and yet closely connected issues around the place of belonging. Our group of interviewees has faced personal and systematic discrimination which made life and ministry

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<sup>38</sup> "Deemed Unsuitable: Black Pioneers in Western Canada" found at:

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/featured/deemed-unsuitable-black-pioneers-in-western-canada> accessed, June 18, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Found at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/immigration/headtax.html>. Accessed on June 18, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012), 60.

feel like swimming against the stream that reinscribes and reinforces the central and predominant place of and for white people from Europe. Lynn Caldwell, a scholar who focuses on critical Canadian studies provides poignant insights on this issue of the racialized experience of “out of place.” In one example she looks at what happened at a Gala event celebrating the Saskatchewan centennial in 2005. At this event she noticed the way Dione Taylor, a black jazz singer was introduced by the Gala host: “Our next singer began her career touring jazz circuit in Regina... And after that day and a half she moved to Toronto. Back in Tisdale, we didn’t really have a jazz quarter, per se.” The introduction seemed to want to emphasise to the audience is that Dione Taylor was not really “of Saskatchewan” although she had been born here. Caldwell writes that the introduction “implicitly places Black culture (jazz) and Black persons (Taylor) as somehow not in synch with the geography of Saskatchewan.”<sup>41</sup>

The ‘out of place’ notion must be contested as it privileges white European Canadians. Where others have been displaced we must reclaim marginal locations and identities by bridging and connecting different world of experience. To positively identify marginal locations requires an ability to navigate and negotiate stretched yet fragmented identities. However, this marginal position is not always identical to being marginalized or victimized. In fact, the interviewee below did not identify herself as marginalized, though people in the dominant side wanted to make her out as such by taking pity on her. This shows how socially and culturally sanctioned stereotypes for racialized individuals and for women run against one’s own self-identified reality. Here is how she puts it:

*I don’t feel marginalized. I’m a well-educated, articulate, strong woman....I didn’t feel like the church was actively invested in getting the most out of me....To do so I had to work the system, I had to tell them what is best for me. I had to tell them what I could offer and this is how you might benefit from helping me get there. I wasn’t going to let myself be a victim. I see myself as a person of privilege and a person with a lot of power. I remember filling out one of Eric Law’s power schematics two years ago and I have lots of power.*

The interviewee above refers to Eric Law’s power analysis tool which is similar to “the Power Flower” that we explored previously. Other than this particular interviewee, most identified themselves and their identities as marginalized. Holding marginal identities means holding marginal positions can ironically mean very visibly standing out from the rest and being the first person with your particular set of identities to hold a position of power. Most interviewees identified themselves as being the only visible minority in their congregation or community. They also shared experiences of being the first woman minister, the first racialized minister, or

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<sup>41</sup> Lynn Caldwell, “Unsettling the Middle Ground: Could the World Use a More Questionable Saskatchewan?,” in *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*, Lynn Caldwell, Carrienne Leung, and Darryl Leroux, eds. (Halifax/Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2013), 117.

the first queer minister in their pastoral charge, sometime being the first more than one at the same time. And the list of being first goes on. The visibility issue along with their being first makes the group more conscious of their physical difference, whether it be their hair or skin or accent or body shape or choice of partner that stands out most. Let us hear them in this regard:

*1) (for that church) it was the first time having a female in the pulpit, under the age of 50, and she doesn't look like us.*

*9) My pastoral charge is over 150 years. And they have never had a female minister. So I definitely stand out as their first woman minister and as their first non-White minister.*

*9) At the beginning of my ministry here when I walked down the street to the post office people I saw heads turned and follow me as they walk down the street because everybody wanted to see me. I saw heads in the restaurant window turn and watch me walking down the street.*

*6) There were two retired male ministers at my placement (a field placement congregation in the context of theological education)...When I was affirmed as a candidate, every congregation member celebrated it but one person stood up and gave the message of celebration and one of the retired male ministers turned back to me and said, "DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT YOU CAN BE A MINISTER IN THE UNITED CHURCH?" And the other members of the church said, "of course she can!" I think those two male ministers showed overtly discomfort with my marginal identities. Because I was Asian and a woman.*

*1) I am more conscious of hair (curly) than body.*

*4) My sense of being different reinforced what was my reality. I grew up in a rural town in Alberta where everybody has straight hair. I have memories of having my hair straightened.*

*9) I came here (a new pastoral charge) with a full awareness that I was probably the only visible minority in the whole community. In terms of hair colour I definitely stand out too because there are not too many black hair people either. Actually this community there's a lot of blonde hair people.*

The response below points to racialized individuals, too, can become desensitized to their racialized identity.

*2) although I carry my racialized body, I am so Canadianized (whitened) I sometimes forget that I am racialized because I've lived here so long.*

However, once claimed by voluntarily, a racialized identity can contribute to finding a vocation, and a pastoral identity as someone who can be safe and supportive to those who are also

marginalized. There is wisdom in this journey of navigating marginal positions in church and society to a position oneself as advocate and mentor to those who walk on a similar road:

*4) the fact that I did not fit in, served to heighten my sense of Other and difference. But my presence made them (other racialized people) feel safe.*

*2) my being racialized is reaching to new (racialized) people that they see me as sympathetic, sensitive.*

*16) I think one of the coolest things about being a racialized minister is that I can walk into a rural community like this and they get to have an encounter with a person of my kind of diversity that they've never had an encounter with before. When I first came here, one of the fathers of two of the kids were there. Their kids had never had contact with a black person, let alone a bi-racial person. They find out that I am normal. They have the opportunity to build a relationship with me as a person as a pastor and they get to hear about Jesus from me. So I think that's an asset. My presence, even in a muted way, create opportunities for other people to come in.*

The final point to make before we move on to the next course is about the ability of our interviewees to have a “double consciousness.” W. E. B. Du Bois long time ago coined the concept of “double-consciousness” that captures a reality of “people living in the interstitial space between two cultures” who “have had to learn to think beyond [one] language and to develop an epistemology that is emancipatory rather than complicit with the ‘ideology of monolingualism.’”<sup>42</sup> We will also find out in this story the capacity of racialized women ministers for “both-and thinking” “diversion-seeing both inside and outside.” In terms of seeing, proffering a critical, postcolonial Asian/American biblical hermeneutic, New Testament scholar Benny Liew invokes the Chinese folk notion of “yin yang eyes” — “eyes that witness both the living and the dead,” that “prefigure” ghostly apparitions beneath/behind/beyond material visibility.<sup>43</sup> This bi-focal vision, seeing both, seems *a propos* to practical theology’s desire to look both closely and panoramically, at both the micro and macro forces that contour inside of the personal lives to the outside of the systematic levels of social realities. What we have witnessed with “yin yang eyes” affirms just that, looking closely inside of the lives of my McGeachy group without losing sight of but connecting it to the outside of the sociological realities in this course case, migration.

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<sup>42</sup> Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006), xviii-xix.

<sup>43</sup> Tat-Siong Benny Liew, *What Is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics: Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 2, 19.

*19) personally, my marginal experience has gifted me with the ability of understanding systematic injustice and how it works. As a racialized person I can see what other people in the dominant culture cannot see. So my gift is that I can empathize with others in the margins. So in my own experience of internalization of marginalization has continued to be a challenge to see how much whiteness I have in my life, how much oppression I have internalized. And how I can use this in the church I care about and am serious about.*

*3) a diversion thinking. That's my contribution to UCC, seeing things from both inside and outside the box at the same time.*

*17) coming from my mouth, from the pulpit when we talk about how to reach out to those at the margin. Coming from me, I think it has more impact on people. I definitely see that.*

*14) I think my own existence as a racialized ordained minister is both a blessing and a contribution to church and society. My presence, occupying the marginal space, is a ministry itself.*

Migration is one of the most critical factors driving the world today, the world of migration shaped by modern colonialism. Yet, we in the church and in the academia of theological education are not fully on board in terms of recognizing its significance and its implication. I hope the stories of this McGeachy study will help to stir up a theological conversation. Below is something I wrote for a lecture on the subject to initiate this conversation and as a way of wrapping up this meal on migration.<sup>44</sup>

Migration is nothing new, in fact, migration is an ancient human phenomenon. It is a necessity of life. In order to survive and live, any human community, and to some extent, most living creatures must travel and move. Our earth, the very planet that provides us with a home also moves constantly, though we would not describe that as migration. When the earth stops moving, that would be the end of the world. While migration is a necessity of life and has never not existed, it has not always been easy or ended well. Let us take the case of Canada for a moment. Our very own national identity, its origin, its own worldview has been determined and shaped by migration. Nobody would argue that Canada is not an immigrant country. We enjoy a reputation throughout the world for being most multicultural and most welcoming to immigrants and refugees. Yes, it is true that Canada is the first country to create an inclusive immigration and citizenship act, stating multiculturalism as its official government

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<sup>44</sup> I gave the lecture, "What Happens to Practical Theology When We Take Migration Seriously," at Emmanuel College, Toronto, April 10, 2013. Please find more of this lecture at: <http://www.emmanuel.utoronto.ca/coned/lectures/201213lectureeventsemmanuel/takemigrationseriouslypracticaltheology.htm>



policy in 1971. But are we most welcoming? Are we most inclusive? Where are the stories of the First nations, aboriginal people of Canada? Who are welcoming? Who belongs to this land, and who are the gatekeepers of the Canadian borders?

Edward Said, one of the most important postcolonial scholars and a great mind of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century suffered from leukemia but kept writing until the end of his life in 2003. The last piece he worked on was his memoir, called, *Out of Place*. In this writing he spoke about his “unsettled sense of many identities.”<sup>45</sup> This book is the story of his journey of migration, his experience of finding home away from home, as well as his feeling of homelessness in his most familiar places, resonate with so many of us today.

Migration can be a “theologizing experience” an experience of rupture that forces or enables people to re-imagine not just their national but also their religious identities.<sup>46</sup> A theology of migration makes the commitment to learn about and unveil hidden histories, the past that continues to haunt our present life. But such commitment is not to point the finger of blame or to create a category of guilty people. Instead it should aim to nurture the current and next generation with a direction to transformation, a lived vision, a glimpse of the world in which we would like to live, the world God created and the world God desires to restore. With attention to migration, practical theology will serve to nurture Christians to be better followers of Jesus Christ who himself travel on the margins and experienced many migrant journeys. The Spirit that was with Jesus and his family in their migrations calls us to become a “strange guardian in the margin” as Mayra Rivera calls it, to accompany our neighbours on the road.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4. Limitations: Language and Racialization

The issues that were identified earlier are picked up here again in this particular course. It may not serve as a full meal, but we will delve further into the question of identity as significant portion of the course. In this stage of our banquet our interviewees will share some of the integral parts of who they are as persons, substantial aspects of their identity connected to language and where the experience of “racialization” really affects them. These aspects of who they are seem to put limits around them and their ability to minister. But these limits are also

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<sup>45</sup> Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999), 6.

<sup>46</sup> Timothy Smith, “Religion and Ethnicity in America” *The American Historical Review* 83/5: 1175.

<sup>47</sup> Mayra Rivera, “God at the Crossroads: A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, ed. (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), 202.

things that define them as people even though the definition is not the same as that which others would impose.

### Language

The issue of language is connected to migration; if you are born here, fully capable of speaking the dominant language of English, the language issue is in tension with your non-White racial identity. Also the dominant language is a powerful tool that helps compensate for a racialized identity, providing a buffer protecting them from racism. Let us hear the responses to question #5 (see Appendix 3), “When you are leading worship, how conscious are you of your identities that make you different from some people in your congregation, for example, skin colour, your accent, and your female body?”

*8) as a person having no accent, yet, due to my skin colour, people comment on it, “how come you don’t have an accent, oh right, you were born here.” When I went to Trinidad, I made a point of not picking up the accent cause I wanted to be Canadian, right, people kept telling me that I was Trinidadian, your home is here, what do you mean? I never lived there, but yet for me there is a sense in which it’s home but it’s a different level so I actually do let a little more Trinidadian accent come in, I am conscious of it.*

*5) Certain language has negative connotation, like ‘study or school’ in my aboriginal context. “Let’s sit and study the Bible.” It’s not going to work to my congregation (I’m not sure it’s going to work for middle class white people either).*

*11) Though my first and only language is English, I would have people coach me on my accent... they’d tell me how to project my voice... I have a music degree.*

*9) There was one woman, now this is her own particular way she likes to stir the pot very much when she can. One Sunday, the sound system didn’t work, some people with hearing aids weren’t able to hear me very well. She said to people because of my accent that people could not hear me. She wasn’t at the church and she does not know what actually happened but she presumed that they couldn’t hear me because of my accent though I don’t have one, or you want to say I have a dominant accent. I was born here in Canada.*

*8) You know, when I was in Nashville, African American people think that I am speaking like a white person. When visiting a hospital as a student minister, Joe in a hospital, looks at me and says, gotta teach you how to talk black. You are not a Canadian woman, you are a black woman. The responses below reflect the experiences of those who, conversely, do not speak English, let*

alone Canadian English, as a first language. All of them are conscious of having an accent which is not same as the dominant accent.

*17) I can't say everyone who are comfortable with me because some people do complain about my accent. I remember in the first year when I joined at the seminary I was the only racialized girl in the college and people weren't saying hello. They just passed by me. So I always tried to say "hello" I'm not invisible. And some girl said, "your accent is really different" and I had a white Canadian friend that said, "We all have accents no matter who we are."*

*(13) I am definitely conscious of my language, having a less dominant accent.*

*6) the hardest thing is feeling lonely because of the language barrier. I can make them understood but I don't think I can make them understand what I feel which is beyond the language skills. I find that my accent is more of an issue than the skin colour. I have been always concerned if my delivery of preaching is well received because of my accent.*

*19) the accent just shuts people off when I have gone to preach. Not always a bad intention but a lack of awareness.*

It may be helpful to clarify this issue of accent. There is an assumption that people who are fluent in English have no accent. This is a false assumption. Everyone has an accent. Any spoken language is born out of a particular cultural and geographical context, even if you speak the same language, you may sound different. That is why there are so many various accents coming from different regions, provinces, and nations. Sometimes the accent is so distinctively different from one region to the other that you cannot communicate with each other. Certain expressions, idioms, and ways of saying are only understood by those who know the particular context from which they evolved and were established. Language, as a communal thing, is one of the prime examples how we as a community absorb, develop, and alter our particular meanings. It is obvious why languages vary and move across fixed boundaries. The varying difference becomes critical when a particular way of saying things (including accent) becomes dominant over others. There are power differences in language whether you compare completely different languages such as English and Cree or different ways of speaking the same language such as Caribbean and Queen of England's English.

Two points can be made regarding visible racial minority identities in relation to language. For those who are recent first generation immigrants, whose first language is not English, language seems to be a bigger limitation than skin colour. For those who are born and raised in Canada the issue is the opposite. To them, their status as a visible minority, having a curly black hair, or a chocolate skin colour, for example, seems to be a greater limitation to them.

## Racialization

An introduction to “race” (as a bogus distinction based on false science and a colonialist agenda), “racism” (as racial prejudice + power), and “racialized” (as a description of an experience of racist assumptions applied to an individual or group) would be good context. A brief glossary on these terms may be useful here, taken from the work of the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network:

Race is a contested term referring to a socially defined group seen by others (or seeing itself) as being distinct by sharing external features such as skin colour, facial or bodily characteristics, hair texture and/or common descent. There is no proven scientific basis for such categorization. Historically, race is an arbitrary sociobiological category created by European [male] colonists in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and used to assign human worth and social status with themselves at the top.

Racism is an institutionalized system of economic, political, social and cultural relations that ensures that one group has and maintains power and privilege over all others in all aspects of life, based on skin colour and racial heritage. A set of implicit beliefs, erroneous assumptions and action based upon an ideology which accords inherent superiority of one group over another or others. In North America, Whites are automatically considered members of the dominant group. Racism can be overt or covert, individual or systematic, intentional or unintentional.

Racialized is the process by which a person is assigned into a specific racial category based on arbitrary phenotypes such as (but not limited to) skin colour, religion, face shape or hair texture. Such categories are socially constructed and have certain essential characteristics about them. Because Whiteness is the dominant group (in terms of political power, not populations), it is often seen as “invisible” (therefore not a “race”) and is the centre from which all other categories are defined.<sup>48</sup>

With these terms intact, the following responses clearly demonstrate how these terms are operative in their lived experience. Race is a concept that society (through media and our means of communication and information) creates in order to categorize certain groups as distinct from the others. Of course, society is shaped and affected by certain norms that dominate, regularize, and standardize, ways of being, human behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, customs, and so on. The problem or the difficulty arises when these norms do not fit a particular group or particular ways of being. This fitting is dictated by the power from the

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<sup>48</sup> *Cracking open White identity towards transformation: Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network Examines White Identity, Power and Privilege* (Toronto: The Canadian Council of Churches, 2012), 100.

dominant and majority. Racialization or heterosexual normativity is at work where categories of people are arbitrarily made by those who wield and hold power, occupying a dominant and majority place in society.

*15) It was a first week when we moved (to a new pastoral charge). The head of the Ministry & Personnel committee came to our manse, telling me all the terrible things my predecessor did... then she proceeded to tell me that my predecessor spoke way too much about gay people and Indians and that they didn't have either in this town so that was unnecessary (to talk about as my ministry). And I remember thinking... this is one of those moments right where you're gonna set the tone for your ministry right, so I said, "well you know the holy spirit has a wicked sense of humour... so she sent you a half Mohawk lesbian to stand in your pulpit." I remember going back into the house and saying my partner, "I don't know whether we should unpack or not."*

*9) Just at the beginning (of my settlement), only one committee member had met me. So when they were presenting it to the congregation and they described a little about myself they were concerned that I had an accent and whether they could understand me. But another story I have: I think I started in September, but in August I was on vacation but they wanted me to come in to help select a music director. The people on that committee did not know what I looked like. So when I arrived at the door, one woman saw me and thought I belonged to the Korean congregation and pointed me in the direction of the other room where the Koreans were having a Bible study.... She must have been thinking that I was a white person.*

*9) We were interviewing someone by skype, this person (being interviewed) could see all of us so it's very easy to pick that I am the only one with black hair and non-white features. She had trouble hearing higher registered pitches so she had no problem hearing the men in the group but she couldn't hear the women very well and twice in the interview I was asking a question for her she said, 'I can't understand your accent.' And it wasn't that I wasn't speaking clearly but because she couldn't hear the pitch of my voice. To another woman she said, 'I could not hear you.' You see the difference [between accent and simply not hearing]? She assumed that it was because of my accent because I am visible minority and I found that to be rather off putting. I was off putting for two reasons, one no one else blinked like no one else said anything and two well the very fact that she assumed that I must have an accent because I look different and I am not white. After the interview we were debriefing the interview, I had to say something. "you know nothing against the content of her interview itself but did you notice that twice she commented that she couldn't understand me because of my accent?" And one person laughed it off so I was like ok let me explain this a little further..I think they got it in the end. But you know you've had a racial justice training too, you ought to know, you could have picked up the issue as we've been together.*

11) *During my hospital visit, people assumed that I am a Baptist because I am black. And the fact that there was a Baptist chaplain who is old and male, I was assumed as his assistant as a woman and a young person. They started calling me “the assistant Baptist.”*

6) *My home church minister is very well aware of the issue of interculturalism so she always decides on worship with the colour of interculturalism. When there was a Chinese New Year she wore a Chinese symbol for Sunday worship. But in the congregation, there are not only Chinese, but Koreans and Japanese, etc. So Asians are not monolithic yet she wanted me to compliment her effort. I felt that she misunderstood my identity. (as if I am Chinese, and assuming Asians all together same). And I could not say much but I felt that just wearing a Chinese clothing on a Chinese New Year in worship is not very intercultural or intercultural enough.*

4) *Resistance to naming racism is a barrier because it’s just easier to let it be something else. Or polite racism is more difficult than overt racism. I’d rather have the KKK living next door to me than the Christian smiley face because then I know what I’m looking for.*

8) *Blatant racism is easier... I find the more well meaning the person is the greater the barrier is because, they, you know, I’m a nice person I’m a caring person I don’t discriminate. It makes it even harder to acknowledge ways in which racism is embedded in this system and ways in which the well meaning people have benefitted from white privilege. I mean, it’s the real soul searching pain engaging the process of unpacking that backpack.*

As the two last interviewees above pointed out, it is important to name the reality of white privilege. “The invisible knapsack” is a metaphor created by Peggy McIntosh in 1988, which is still widely used and quite relevant. This knapsack is the thing that White folks carry all the time, except that they do not realize it because it is invisible. According to McIntosh white privilege is “an invisible asset that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.... I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will...Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us.’... For me white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy.”<sup>49</sup> McIntosh’s idea of “the myth of meritocracy” also resonates with the interviewee’s frustration towards people who believe that they are “nice and caring, thus, don’t discriminate them, thus they can’t be racist.” Work needs to be done to help non-racialized people to face this invisible, yet strongly operative and potentially oppressive power that they

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<sup>49</sup> Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies” in *Working Paper 189*. Wellesley, Mass.: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1988.

have. It is encouraging, then, to see the efforts being made by the Canadian Council of Churches, zeroing in on white privilege as “an essential aspect of anti-racism work.” This group understands Christian life as a “journey of uncovering, unmasking, naming and dismantling unearned White privilege.”<sup>50</sup>

The following comments present complicated and untidy issues around false assumptions on whiteness and internal non-white identities. The external non-racialization (passing as white) is help up against their internal racialized identities as a way of driving home the view that they do not fit into the box of normalized, homogeneous categories which society takes as the norm. Racialization emerges from the lack of grappling with harsh realities that racialized communities, especially Aboriginal communities, experience in Canada. The interviewee’s responses reveal the uncomfortable truth that dominant groups, whether they are white communities or educated and scholarly communities, seem to comprehend these realities only in their heads but fail to get involved in and integrate into their own ways of living.

*13) because I pass for white, white people say really racist things in front of you because they assume that you are part of the hegemonic, the dominant society that they feel free to say things that they would never say in front of someone who is visibly other. The other side of the coin is that people will not take me seriously if I talk about First Nations issues because my skin is white.*

*13) I am half British Canadian and half first nations, except that I chose to identify primarily as first nations now. But I pass for white, so I chose to challenge people’s perceptions of what Indian is. I am bisexual and I don’t often share that because I pass for straight. I just don’t ever talk about that unless it is to build trust with somebody from the LGBT community. I sort of come out there. Because I pass for white and I pass for straight I have very hybrid identities. Such identities help to destabilize norms and debunk the stereotypical assumptions.*

*8) I need to stop trying to be white, meaning I need to stop thinking that being Canadian means being white. That is my own battle to overcome the barrier of a false assumption.*

*4) Eroticized vs. whitesuperman complex I have gotten used to being the only racialized woman. Now it is not a big deal but in high school for example I got singled out. When I lived in Europe in the 1980s I had nothing but trouble, with this exoticism. When I would wait for the bus all these creepy Austrian businessmen in their Mercedes would always try to pick me up. It was just because what I represented to them, a young black singer, a sexual experience that will be different because I am with this woman of colour.*

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<sup>50</sup> *Cracking open White identity towards transformation, 1.*

5) *I find colour-blind as barrier. Because people are really like, I don't want to be racist but there's that sense of this topic, say First Nation's people, comes up and nobody will look at me, but then everyone will turn to me and ask what I think about it. And I'm like, 'well I don't speak for all First Nation's people. I mean what do you think of what's happening in Attawapiskat? It's as much your issue as it is mine. So why do you look to me? What do you think? It's kind of on the same level as being a woman in the church. There's such the liberal democratic, progressive, theological, where we like everybody and value everybody and then it becomes they have stopped looking at me, you're the lesbian and we respect your differences and your partner so then it becomes a dehumanizing experience. It's like 'that's nice... and?'*

5) *I haven't looked broadly at the church because I function within the silo of ANCC. There's a different dynamics that I'm worried about in our context. Well for example there's someone who's retiring in a First Nations community and she desperately wants me to go there. And I would love to in some ways. But I can't. And her biggest fear is that a retired white male minister with all the kinds of older trappings of ministers that go along with it like power and privilege and all those sorts of things. They love reserves. They want to be the great saviour. So for us it's the old white straight men that we're worried about getting into our communities. Not to say... I mean there's a woman in one community where the congregation came up to me and said 'can you talk to her because she's making a lot of mistakes. ' And I was like 'I don't want to...' So for us in our context it's a lot more about race and economic background than it is about gender.*

The two comments directly above point to two important issues which are related. One is “essentialism,” and the other is the burden of that essentialism to the essentialized group. Essentialism is what happens when a specific nature or way of being is assigned to a person within a group. The claim is made that one or more essential characteristics define the group and that no individual within the group is without these. To say that a woman is essentially different from a man is to say that she is born with a specific entity that is innate, permanent thus, not erasable or changeable.<sup>51</sup> To essentialize is to look to at someone, say an Aboriginal person, and think that because they are Aboriginal they therefore by nature must share the exact same experiences, thoughts and points of views as all other Aboriginal people. In Postcolonial and subaltern studies, these kinds of assumptions are contested as “ethnic essentialism.”<sup>52</sup> The burden of essentialism falls on those who are essentialized. To them falls

<sup>51</sup> Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books, See Ch. XII: Childhood, 1974.

<sup>52</sup> Touraj Atabaki, “*Beyond Essentialism: Who Writes Whose Past in the Middle East and Central Asia?*” Inaugural lecture, delivered at the University of Amsterdam, on 13 December 2002, found at <http://atabaki.nl/upload/Beyond%20Essentialism.pdf>, accessed on July 8, 2013.



the task of answering on behalf of an entire group or of trying to debunk the false assumptions. Sometimes the burden is one of loneliness as those who are doing the essentializing seem unwilling or unable to relate to the experiences of the essentialized person. There is also a keen sense of responsibility to educate others so that they can relate to the racialized contexts:

*5) People just generally don't even know what to do with different contexts. So it happened at my class on Wednesday. On Tuesday I had a phone call about a suicide of two young women and this is in the context of these other sorts of things going on. We had a 12 year old girl dying of brain cancer and there had been a suicide. So this is the context of my field placement, and that is my ministry context. So I had this week of "oh my God." And I shared this with the group in my seminary class and there was nothing. No questions, no response, nothing. They had no idea what to do with that information. Right?*

*5) The challenge, the barrier we need to overcome is this: How do we make the situation of suffering and struggle to dominant culture real? How can we make them own the reality rather than always putting it as if it is someone-else-out-there's story? We were just talking 20 minutes ago about Isaiah 40 which is "comfort, oh comfort my people." And it was people returning from exile; people who have just suffered enormous devastation and then had to come back and reconstitute themselves spiritually and as a nation. So for me that's my history as a first nation people. We've been devastated spiritually, economically, emotionally. And here's this God offering us this vision of hope and saying your God is still there. And to be sitting with all people who would self identify as white they're reading the words on the page and they're not connecting it to their own experience.*

*5) We had this guy in homiletics class, who started out very promising when he was talking about being in the academic environment writing papers for professors and then he said how do we dumb it down for the congregants. And I was so offended by his language. And it was so the authority figure who has all the wisdom and information to divinely impart to the empty vessels who had not thought about any of this in their own lives. That perspective or undercurrent is here in many places, which I really have trouble with. What is assumed here is that congregations are not well educated or don't deserve to receive the critical and complicated knowledge. It is about dividing us vs. them.*

Much faith is put in education to overcome false assumptions of essentialism. However, the education that occurs must move beyond "head stuff" to be grasped with the intellect. It must be learned by the heart and by the hands in such a way that it will inform action. Essentialized people, including those interviewed for this McGeachy project, can offer their experiences and wisdoms for this teaching and learning and often do. But they often do so in the knowledge that they could be taken the wrong way or indeed they may be subjected to attitudes of

paternalism or they may be tokenized as in response to what they share. The problem being of being patronized and of been made a token deserves attention. The story below reflects this problem. However, you will also notice a strategic move/resistance to subvert the notion of tokenism in ways that can change the power differentials:

*3) In Caucasian communities, where they assume Asians very patriarchal, meaning they assume Asian males very sexist. They, thus, lift me up more. They think I am on their side because she is like us. For that reason, I have been well treated, better than Caucasian women, maybe. On the other side, however, some people try to patronize me (because they think that I have been victimized by my Asian male counterpart). That kind of patronization I don't like. That is a false assumption. I can see why they approach me, and try to use me. So in that case I try to use a creative rejection. Stay away or distance myself from that lure of patronization... What they do not know is that I have more power than what they assume my ability.*

*1) If there is an opportunity to get in and enter the system (of power), where people have the ability to change things and voice my opinion, then I think I am subverting tokenism. I fit a token, then let me be an active voice on behalf of others.*

Thus far, we have tasted the four dishes, which encompass the context and background which are fundamental to the pastoral and personal identity of these racialized women ministers of our McGeachy group. We have sampled experiences from their theological education, the grounding work to advance their pastoral identity. We were also given a chance to savour power dynamics they live with, systematic issues that affect their life in ministry. And in the section above we tucked into a course of experiences related to (im)migration, realities that profoundly impact their pastoral identity and vocation and assist them to engage and encounter others who are in a similar journey. Now on to the dish we named Vocation/Ordination.

## **5. Vocation/Ordination**

It has been a great pleasure to share the first four courses together. We have done justice to the meal so far but may need to take some time to properly chew on and digest the tougher bits. The next four courses may not be quite as heavy and bitter. Indeed the next four parts of our banquet have been prepared with a great many different tastes, light and delicious, stimulating and satisfying. The secret ingredient is nothing less than the commitment and dedication of the women we have been interviewed to their roles as ordained preachers. The spice is the joy they feel in exercising their leadership, performing priestly roles, and proclaiming the Gospel. The following four courses, beginning with vocation/ordination, offer

us glimpses of their authenticity, their uniqueness, their ingenuity, and their gifts. We will surely savour their sense of vocation and contemplate the pallet of choices they have made around issues such as wearing albs or standing in the pulpit. We will get a taste of their leadership by hearing about the roles they have taken on in proclaiming the Gospel. This course, you may find, is the juicy part of the meal: appetizing, luscious, and energizing.

As remarked earlier, the complex and marginalized identities of the individuals we interviewed are inseparable and integral to their pastoral identity. Here we will find how they are able to navigate their identities and at times subvert them to both debunk stereotypes and diversify other norms as ordained ministers. The first two selections from the interviews reveal that their vocation as ordained minister can be challenged using their gender and age:

*9) In this church, women still follow traditional female roles cooking, cleaning and serving while the men set up the tables and stand around and talk, while the women do all that. So when I first came here I actually stood around and talked like men (do my pastoral care visit that way) and I didn't bring a pie. I had one of my congregation members said to me our previous minister used to help out in the kitchen and do the dishes and stuff. To me there is a big difference between a man and a woman breaking those gender stereotypes. If they view me as a woman and not as their minister, that is a problem for me. That is not my vocation. I've been called to do and that is to serve as an ordained minister and not as a woman. At the beginning and actually still I have to struggle with the whole food issue and making the photocopies and coffee.*

*9) When I first came, I had all these comments like you look so young you could be my granddaughter. Or I swear my child is older than you. Eventually such comments died away. But there are some people have this view of minister, being an older white male.*

Most interviewees highlighted the importance of education in light of ordination. That is, they see their vocation as teacher:

*1) I am called to teach, not only in a classroom but teach from the pulpit in conversations. My vocation as ordained minister is to be an evangelist of the intercultural church.*

The role of the teaching office as ordained minister, however, is not often understood well, let alone accepted and appreciated fully. Here are some other voices:

*13) many people challenge (question) my path, ordination for further study. "why can't you make a career teaching without being ordained?" I believe that the ministry of the word, sacrament and pastoral care can exist outside the parish and there is a community to be*

*pastured and there is a call to be the minister of the word and sacrament in theological education.*

*15) ordination means a lot to me. There are a set of promises I made to do things, so I don't want them to be devalued. It does not mean I want to create a hierarchy. Instead I want to emphasize the role of education in light of ordination.*

*13) Yet, there is anti-intellectualism that is prevalent in our church. At the M. Div. level, there is a sense in which people think that you don't have to have much theological education to be a pastor. I think that is partly because people haven't been forced to deal with their own issues and become strong leaders. Without such vigorous work people end up like projecting all kinds of other things, acting out of a wounded place instead of a place of leadership and strength. I think the church has to be strong enough to say no to some people and then support those people to be leaders all the way through, rather than setting up the loops to jump through. I have watched people who in my opinion no business leading a congregation and yet being vocal about the future of the church based on their wounded feelings of how they were treated therefore they demand others going through the same vicious cycle rather than, making sure that never happens to anybody again. That is the institutional abuse.*

The other points the interviewees have strong feelings about have to do with negotiating and affirming their multiple and marginalized identities. Their presence and what they bring, though complex and difficult to box in, is essential for the healthy growth of the church:

*16) I am an urbanized racialized woman who grew up poor. That is part of who I am and I claim it. It is part of my pastoral identity. My vocation as ordained minister comes out of and support my identity and those who have the similar identities. It means my vocation is, though not limited to this, to serve those who are urban, non-white, women, and poor.*

*18) what I can bring as a minister, whether it's from my culture or from my geographical region, or whatever, is to help people understand that the church is a global church. So those of us who are racialized we remind our larger community that Christ's church and God's mission is in the whole world. [to wake up that our larger white church is not the whole world.]*

*2) I claim that I am a role model due to my marginalized positions but still playing a card of power as ordained minister for those marginalized groups.*

*5) I am constantly almost literally once a week getting an invitation to do something somewhere with somebody else. And my spiritual mentor has said you will be called and tempted by many things to try and just to try and maintain what I consider to be my integrity of my path. So what*

*I've been talking about with one of my professors here is how to do that work and to have that impact on the larger church from my vocation at ABC United Church.*

*14) To me ordination is a call, an empathy that connects with the other, the other's suffering.*

Being at the margin requires living with more than one vocation. It requires a blending of gifts and commitments. This is often required on a practical level because ministry positions in the church are often limited to part time. A couple of interviewees reflect on this reality:

*5) "bi-vocation" is outside opinion to the structure and function of the church. However, I think there is a value and a tremendous need in this. Of course it is not bound by these rules (that apply to a those with a sing vocation) and I don't really care because they're not working..I've been a community worker my whole life, I've worked in secular not-for-profit community work. So I understand my role in the church as community work. I'm a community worker and my perspective is community development (not economic development, but development of things that help us survive and thrive) So that part of my job is to empower people or to stand with them in difficult situations. And that is ministry and that is the leadership. So the things I did in a secular situation translates into my ministry.*

*7) My social work background, this outside knowledge of theological education is an asset. I intend to keep both of my vocational identities intact. A model that I learned in social work that is action research where the suggestions come from the grassroots, where the people reflect and move up to make the change. It can't come from the top down because it won't be owned by the people on the ground. I think the church our UCC needs to learn from this. It may take some time but you have to listen to the needs of the people. That is what I believe to be true in pastoral and congregational ministry.*

The final part of this course ordination invites us to hold their vocation in tension with their marginal positions. On one hand, they celebrate and affirm who they are as marginalized clergy. On the other hand, they recognize identity factors that are in conflict with the normative point of view strongly operative in church and society. For example, being Christian and being queer, or being Aboriginal and being Christian, or wearing a collar in secular places, create interesting tensions, as they share below. Yet they are willing to embrace these tensions, instead of denying or avoiding them, or choosing one over the other:

*4) I am okay about essentializing. Sometimes when I do spirituals, they are part of who I am... dominant culture cant' sing spirituals because they don't come from the same place. I honestly think it comes from a genetic component. I never experienced slavery, but I know that when I sing spirituals, I know it comes from a different place. It is hard to explain other than I know it.*

Related to what the interviewee above was saying, Boyung Lee, a faculty member in the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) at Berkeley, shares an incident that happened on her campus. A group of students, most of whom are members of the Metropolitan Community church (LGBTQ), decided to create a service to promote a racially inclusive church. They chose spirituals as hymns. But some objected when the hymn texts were altered to gender inclusive language. Here is how Lee describes the event: "The inclusive-language hymn singing provoked heated debates about racism and cultural insensitivity. An association of African-American students raised serious concerns about inclusive language hymns, namely, that they are an outright misappropriation of African-American cultures by the dominant White society. Many hymns sung at the service were spirituals. According to the African-American students, the objections are as follows: first, African-Americans are keenly aware of problematic language in some spirituals, but the reason why they sing the hymns as written is because the age-old words are a reminder of the past and its legacy of oppression, so whether spirituals should be changed to inclusive language hymns arguably is a matter that African-American communities should decide. Second, the worship organizers should have discussed the language of the spirituals with African-American communities before editing the hymns. By not doing this, worship organizers treated African-Americans as though they are cultural misfits, and thus the organizers ironically breathed new life into the cultural chauvinism of yesteryear's masters."<sup>53</sup>

When our interviewee above states, "*I am ok about essentializing,*" it means that she prefers to be identified as Afro-American to claim and own her racialized black identity. Here it would be also helpful to clarify the concept, "strategic essentialism." "Essentialism," according to Wonhee Anne Joh, "is when certain traits are posited and understood to be an inherent part of that person or group's identity based, for example, on race or gender."<sup>54</sup> This concept often creates strong reactions from the group who have been ostracized and exoticized. However, as claimed by the interviewee and the group at GTU campus, there are certain experiences that group can feel exclusive ownership of. That is where the term "strategic essentialism" is helpful. A postcolonial feminist theorist, Gayatri Spivak argues for a posture to "be vigilant about our own practice and use it as much as we can rather than make the totally counter-productive gesture of repudiating it."<sup>55</sup> This posture of strategic essentialism is necessary when a group seeks justice and makes alliance in solidarity with those who can be embraced and identified as the same group for cultural affirmation and political empowerment. While Spivak speaks of

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<sup>53</sup> Boyung Lee, "Toward Liberating Interdependence: Exploring an Intercultural Pedagogy," *Religious Education* 105:3 (2010): 283-284.

<sup>54</sup> Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006), 2.

<sup>55</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in "Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution," in *Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11.

strategic essentialism in the case of women, the interviewee speaks of it in the case of the racial identity, being black, revealed in the cases of the interviewee above and the GTU event.

Examples of strategic essentialism not occur with issues of gender and race alone but also happens in situations related to sexual orientation:

*8)being in a same gender relationship limited the choices of internship sites or any other churches. In my case, I had only one option out of the two churches. It worked out nicely, so I am not saying that this kind of marginal position is always negative but certainly limiting. On the other side of the coin, however, having a relationship, almost show casing that same sex relationship is amazing and full of blessings for not only for my personal well-being but also for the church, which is positive, I guess. We are a package deal. She does a lot for my pastoral charge.*

*8) I wear a clergy collar when I'm marching in the pride parade. Because the umm (pause) the GLBT community has been marginalized by the Christian community and in reaction the GLBT community has in many ways umm characterized the Christian community as being anti-GLBT and so there's this place of being very much caught in the middle of that as a queer Christian and a queer Christian clergy. But that is my liminal, mixing-up boundaries positions.*

The response above resonates with many church leaders including Rev. Brent Hawkes who was interviewed by the United Church magazine Observer in 2011. Here is what he had to say about wearing the clergy collar in a public space and the importance of the church being visible in the world: "The United Church made a terrible mistake a few years ago in de-emphasizing the role of clergy. It was a huge mistake in terms of leadership in congregations, and in [the church's] presence in the world. I wear my collar and my rainbow cross wherever I go. When my partner and I walk around the city, we hold hands. When people see a collar and two men holding hands, we have created a presence in the community. People come up and talk, ask questions and so on. But where are the United Church clergy? They are invisible, and their role in the local congregation is no longer leadership. It's this thing called "enabling"! Church growth is all about leadership; when you study churches that are growing, regardless of denomination, the number-one factor is the visionary leadership of their senior pastor. That's where the United Church is failing."<sup>56</sup>

His critique of the United Church regarding its de-emphasis of the role of clergy is poignant and relevant to our research as far as the importance of well-educated clergy leadership is concerned. We will revisit this issue in the section we have dedicated to leadership.

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<sup>56</sup> [http://www.ucobserver.org/faith/2011/12/brent\\_hawkes/](http://www.ucobserver.org/faith/2011/12/brent_hawkes/), accessed on June 20, 2013.

*8) my Anglican colleague told me was she's been ordained for 30 years and in the Anglican church of course they tend to wear their collars much more than we do in the UCC, I mean she doesn't now but she used to all the time but she said that there in this 30 years there's just been a seed of change in the response to wearing to the collar and so where she used to get respect for it 30 years ago now people either people don't know what this crazy garb is that she's wearing or they regard her with disdain and so it's interesting that it used to be wearing a collar used to be something that garnered respect and now it is something that marginalizes and so it's interesting, I find it interesting that a lot of clergy still say I don't want to wear a collar because I'm going to be putting myself above people and it's like you know what, that's not what's gonna happen if you walk around wearing a collar.*

Wearing clergy collar has become a sign of marginalization in society as the position of Christian leaders has been downsized. The meaning of a vocation of ordained ministry is double-edged in this sense: on one hand, ordained ministers must learn to be bold and lift up their position and role in an increasingly secularized society nurturing and leading congregations to also be bold in their Christian identity. On the other hand, ordained ministers need to be aware of their marginal position in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Canada, a position that is likely to be countercultural and lead to some uncomfortable and unwanted places. The interviewees for this project know what it means to be at the margin. They know what it means to be questioned and criticized. They know what it means to resist. However, they also know how to navigate and guide people through these difficult and precarious tensions.

The following responses are reflections on the marginal bicultural position, the experience of residing in between two or more worlds. Equipped with the bicultural double-consciousness, or yin-yang eyes, as discussed earlier, one interviewee can embrace a wide spectrum of churches and theologies:

*13) as a person passing white yet claim as an aboriginal identity puts me into odd dynamic. People have a hard time accepting me as aboriginal, rather want to identify me as "bicultural." I love orthodox churches and this makes people (progressive UCC folks) crazy. I think in part I feel comfortable with them because there are minority within the WCC at a global scale. They understand a marginalization from their Eastern European geopolitical history, and had experiences of conflicts.*

In wrapping up this course, it can be claimed that the vocation of a racialized ordained woman minister in the United church is paradoxical. It can force one to dwell in conflicting places. The vocation includes the claim of multiple and marginal identities. It creates spaces of care and courage in unabashedly Christian ways. To put this paradoxical nature of ordination, the vocational identity, in the event of the feast, is like a person brings a food that does not quite fit



into the overall dishes that are placed on the banquet table. While this food is the key to her identity, inseparable to her being and well-being, it may not be well received by certain groups (wider hegemonic society). Being conscious of this reality is useful, even necessary, however. My McGeachy group certainly demonstrated that they are not ready to give their vocation up or surrender to the secular world, silencing their vocational call as ordained leaders. Such willingness to claim and share one's identity with the others should not be understood as the egoistic will, craving for power-coded food. On the contrary, it keeps the church and society from being totalitarian by serving the tastes of the powerful. The place of ordination is and should become a source and a tool to serve as a break for stopping the move, the drive of the assimilating forces in order for the society to pause and heed to the ones that are not so powerful. Ordination is about being in a place at the edge, tending to those at the margin, while affirming their own threshold position. Their call is, after all, feeding the hungry and finding the one who is lost.

## **6. Liturgical Symbols: Pulpit and Alb**

We having dug into the vocation of ordained minister is has become apparent that there are a few ingredients in the food in the form of issues surrounding ordained ministry that are worthy of further exploration. It is impossible to talk about the vocation of clergy without also discussing the liturgical symbols that represent and reflect that vocation. In many ways, both vocation and symbols are complimentary dishes. Or you could say symbols are the external and visible presentation of the internal taste. The better and more carefully designed food provides a better quality of the taste. By the look of it, we can get drawn to the food—our mouth can be running as we see the sumptuously presented food. Give the power of symbols, and given their contentiousness in the case of our interviewees due to their gender and race, this study serves them up separately. Little if any research has been done around pulpit and albs, how they function and what they mean, especially with respect to racialized and women ministers. There may be other symbols that represent and reflect ordained clergy. But this research has limited itself to these two symbols, the pulpit and the alb.

### **Pulpit**

Much literature in area of liturgy has discussed the importance of liturgical space and place since the liturgical developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Related to the use of the pulpit as a space within the greater liturgical space of a church are the participation of the people, the

rediscovery of the Bible, and the emphasis on proclamation.<sup>57</sup> In light of recent liturgical trends, worship is not a spectacle, not about looking up (figuratively and literally) to the presider or the preacher, but rather a communal engagement. The emphasis has changed from a deference to authority a more dynamic and mutual relationship between presider and congregation. Within the cohesive power of ritual where the layout of the pulpit within the worship space matters. It sets the tone for the relationship between the presider and the people, by, for example, influencing the angle of eye contact.

But the pulpit, a place of proclamation of the Word of God has not been explored as much as other components of liturgy (e. g., the Altar, the Font). Professors of liturgy and worship have taught seminarians how to preside and preach. Protestant liturgical tradition has been heavily tilted toward the Word, the Logos, the language but seems not to have appreciated or examined the physical space in which the Word is spoken. It has not sufficiently explored the symbolic power of this holy place, which can also be tainted by historic and theological biases. Most traditional symbols within the church have been contested from the perspective of gender in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question of what a symbol means is closely related to the question of “for whom does it mean?”<sup>58</sup>

The questions of the location and the use of the pulpit in the interview process (see #6 in Appendix 3) have generated some interesting points. It was almost unanimously held among the interviewees that the elevated and remote location of the pulpit from the congregational space was not a comfortable place for them to be. First let us hear a few examples of the voices that contend that the traditional position and location of the pulpit is not compatible with their identity as worship leaders:

*9) It is a big furniture that was meant for somebody taller than me. When I first came here they had to lower the pulpit. It covers most of me.*

*1) Pulpit is meaty. (it does not reflect the body shape of this interviewee who is tall and lean)*

*16) I can understand the perspective of women who say the pulpit was designed for the male voice.*

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<sup>57</sup> John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship In Transition: The Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995. Fenwick and Spinks lists the characteristics of liturgical movement as the struggle for community, participation, a rediscovery of the early Church as a model, a rediscovery of the Bible, a rediscovery of the eucharist, an emphasis on the vernacular, the rediscovery of other Christian traditions, an emphasis on proclamation and social involvement, summary (pp. 1-10).

<sup>58</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, “Introduction: The Complexity of Symbols,” in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman, eds. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p. 2.

The responses of the use of the pulpit were divided almost exactly in half: both positions for and against using the pulpit were weighted equally. Let us view the responses of those who like to preach from the pulpit. You will notice that the use of the pulpit is often strategically negotiated taking into account the marginalized positions of gender and racialized identity. It also reflects a certain view of the congregation.

*(1)-Pulpit is wherever the word is proclaimed. I use the pulpit when I am teaching my church how to listen to the sermons (the text, its interpretation and not me). If and when I chose to do the whole sermon behind it... I was encouraging them to enter the story. 90% of the interpretation is in the body. . Preaching is rhetoric so words are essential, but the embodiment is essential too.*

*13) I often preach from the full text I like having a space that's designed for that, I am not the type of preacher who likes to walk in and around the people. I word things so intentionally and because I am very extrovert I can tend to ramble so for me the pulpit provides both safety and structure.*

*4) I am a teacher when I preach. Everything is structured and I have very specific things that I want the congregation to come away with. So (preaching in the pulpit) just suits my style.*

*3) my case, I want to walk around (rather than remaining in the pulpit), but people want me to stay at the pulpit to keep my authority. That is a character of all of my former preachers in my congregations. In spite of the fact that I am a woman, they wanted me to be very high, probably BECAUSE I am a woman. Otherwise, they might not respect me.*

*3) older generation audiences prefer sound over eye-contact. They just want to hear my sermon from the pulpit.*

*19) Being in the pulpit helps if you don't have the authority as a given. Sometimes it helps because it helps to give some authority in the midst of resistance. At the same time it feels like you don't fill the standards. And in my case it doesn't reflect my style. The pulpit is a symbol of status/authority in the way we decide this chair because we have in mind a model of person sitting in that chair. But for me as a short sized woman it doesn't feel natural. I wish we didn't have to stand behind the pulpit. But I do, because it provides me a bumper.*

*3) The big and masculine pulpit actually confers some level of power for the racialized female ministers who are marginalized. I find that particularly true in my Asian home country. Getting trust from racialized men is very very hard. To prove that I am professional and called to be the ordained minister, I have to follow their rule first (meaning using the pulpit). When I get the respect then I can change the method. But it takes time. At first, to put it figuratively, for*

*example, this is your table, I have to learn how to set your table. But once I learn I can change, like table decorations (even change the table entirely). So in that way I follow that first in order to get respect.*

However, one interviewee contests this notion that the vulnerable woman minister needs a compensation of a strong looking pulpit. She even challenged the interview question, which was helpful for me as a researcher who framed the questions.

*1) The pulpit is a tool. I have not been really vulnerable in my pulpit. I think this notion (interview question) is biased and framed with a shape of woman in mind, maybe even an ethnicity. I don't fit that picture, and my personality doesn't fit that picture.... It's not all about the architecture, but it's also about the preacher and what the preacher does with the architecture.*

I admit that this question may have been understood as framed and biased (not intentionally or maliciously) to someone like this interviewee above. It is true that her body shape and ethnicity are quite different (in fact, opposite) from mine. The question may more resonate with those who have the similar body shape and similar ethnic cultural background than those like her. This critique also reminds us of the danger of representational essentialism, as discussed earlier. A certain view cannot be assumed as universal. Furthermore, I as a researcher, discussed in introduction, bring my own subjective positions and perspective to the research of this project. I cannot be completely neutral and objective, even if I try and have tried. This is where a difficulty comes in, needing a careful balance, when we take qualitative and feminist approach seriously. What is required is, then, to leave a room for fluidity and ambivalence in perspectives, with recognition that no solution or view can fit all—any (even if convincing) opinion can be open to change (rendering in false).

Speaking of ambivalence, some of the responses were ambivalent, seeing both positive and negative aspects of preaching from the pulpit:

*19) Yes, let's say if I go to preach to a congregation that is not mine, and they think "this woman from somewhere, with this accent, and she's saying things that we haven't heard, and on top of that, she is breaking the rules and going to talk from the centre of the aisle and not from the pulpit, it doesn't help. However, my critique is that, like every system, it fulfills the function it was designed for. So it was designed for taller men, so to those of us it does not represent what we are.*

*2) pulpit is comfortable where I put and see my notes. But I would like to learn to prepare my sermon ahead of time so I can memorize it and speak. Being away from the pulpit I think I could be seen more. Also because I am short. From the pulpit just my top from the shoulders upwards*

*can be seen. If I was out of the pulpit I could be seen more and I could do more motion with my hands.*

*14) preaching from the pulpit is a cultural issue. Many Asian immigrant congregations feel more comfortable having the preacher from the pulpit. And it needs to be respected as a cultural awareness and sensitivity. But I agree to change this with the emphasis that the change needs to happen gradually.*

While the response immediately above makes a valid point of needing to take into account cultural sensitivities, one should never assume that a culture is neutral. What this researcher would contend, for example, is that the respect for the pulpit is not inherent to the essential nature of Asian congregations. We should not fall into the trap of essentializing by categorically saying that “Asian churches are like that.” This notion of essentialism has been discussed in detail in the ordination course above. What needs to be considered, I argue, is that Asian congregations feel more comfortable with the preachers using the pulpit because that is how they were missionized and taught to practice. You may also say that they carry a heavy bucket full of colonial and Western Christian traditions that many of the current Western churches have dumped out long ago. It is ironic to realize the most colonial and Eurocentric liturgical traditions are kept and practiced in non-European and non-Western churches today. Nevertheless the interviewee’s statement that “[m]any Asian immigrant congregations feel more comfortable having the preacher from the pulpit” stands as a valid point that she has chosen to address in a particular way.

The following are some of the responses against preaching behind the pulpit. As much as the discussion was strong for the use of the pulpit, the opposition to the use of the pulpit was equally strong. This simply reflects how important this piece of liturgical hardware is. As a symbol, it generates multiple meanings and provides much food for thought:

*17) The pulpit is up high and I don't like it. We are sharing God's word and learning together. Being up there I am excluded from the congregation. The pulpit is too high for my height so I have a stool where I stand. But I don't feel like I am small. I just feel charged up. I just concentrate on sharing what God wants me to share with the people. It is up to them to accept it or not.*

*8) I don't like to preach behind the pulpit. I like sermon to be conversational. the pulpit is too distant and removed, it doesn't seem to embody that invitation very well. I do move around a lot while preaching. I use my body, hands.*

*16) I can understand the perspective of women who say the pulpit was designed for the male voice. It is. My most profound experience in seeing that was when I was in Boston at the Old*

*North Church. In this church there have a raised pulpit (the kind you have to climb a staircase to get to). And above it is a sounding board. I said to the tour guide, 'have you ever had a woman preacher from up there?' 'yes, a couple of times.' And I said, 'well how does that work? and they said, 'well they have to be mic.added.' That blew my mind. For me the pulpit is an archaic symbol of a power structure that I no longer see myself a part of. I didn't grow up in the imperial church, so to speak. I am heavily influenced by African American preaching styles. Many of them claim the pulpit as a place of power but there are also the folks who wander. I walk and wander when I preach.*

Roxanne Mountford, a professor of English in the University of Kentucky, whose academic work focuses on rhetorical performance and gender study, did ethnographic qualitative research on mainline protestant American women preachers in 1990s. There is a similarity between her work and this McGeachy research in that both study women preachers and pay attention to the gender role, women's body in preaching, and the place of preaching including the pulpit. Mountford explores the importance of rhetorical performance (voice, gesture, posture, and stance) and examines the architecture, location, and distance of the pulpit has it impacts on women. In her book, *The Gendered Pulpit*, she compares two novels. One is *Moby-Dick* of Herman Melville where Father Mapple is portrayed as a soldier who used to be a harpooner, the lone sailor. In order to advance this male preacher's masculinity, the pulpit, the very space of his identity, is only accessible by a rope ladder as it is located so lofty and high above the congregation in a church that resembles a fortress. The interviewee immediately above who visited the church in Boston where she saw the highly elevated pulpit probably saw something close to the kind of pulpit illustrated in novel *Moby-Dick*. The other in contrast with *Moby-Dick* is by Alice Walker, *The Temple of My Familiar*, where a new community, is created beyond the institutionalized clerical authority. There is no lifted pulpit or any kind of distance between the congregation in this vision of the preacher. Instead, the space of the ordinary home's porch is envisioned as the ideal pulpit where the wedding happens under the unnamed woman's leadership and where ordinary wisdom of people and divine wisdom of spirit kiss with each other.<sup>59</sup> This vision of Alice Walker is echoed by some interviewees who oppose preaching from the pulpit and who seek to dismantle the distance between the preacher and the congregation. In fact, one interviewee shared her dream of the sanctuary, similar to Walker's temple:

*15) my ideal set up for a church would be to have the front sanctuary space open(—that has) the communion table in the centre, the preaching place so the pulpit or whatever stage on the right side and the baptismal fountain stays left all the time so up front public, open and visible so that you've got everything right there.*

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<sup>59</sup> Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 17-22.

9) *I enjoy movement in worship. For me by physically moving around and going to different places is a good thing. A part of the reason I do that is so that people can see me from a different angle and people can direct their gaze to a different part of their sanctuary and what I hope is that partly to get into the habit of seeing just a different perspective. That is why I did not want people to be so tied to the pulpit, the European pulpit that was up in the sky, that symbol.*

19) *Up in the sanctuary I find that more difficult to do part of it is you know with my gown and the steps I've had some near spills and so there's the whole issue of tripping and watching where I'm walking because I have to navigate those extra steps. So those extra steps really are a hindrance for me there have been times when I brought not the pulpit but just the music stand and I placed it up on the lower platform area which makes it easier for me to move around a little more.*

7) *I feel like an instrument. I am not there to teach something they don't know. I am there to transmit for my own transformation but also for theirs. I am in the pulpit and the people in front of me are my brothers and sisters. Where I feel uncomfortable is in a space where I am the teacher. I prefer to be on the same level, like in a circle so we can exchange as brothers and sisters. In the role of being a teacher I know that it is trying to give me another identity and that's not who I am. That is why I take some time during every sermon to say that I am speaking to myself as much as I am speaking to you all.*

2) *It's more that the pulpit keeping people separated from the minister and it has a cross on it and it puts you at a higher place. So that I don't like it and I'd like to be more in the middle speaking from a smaller stand or music stand. At the beginning I did that, but we don't seem to have that middle sized pulpit anymore so we went back to the pulpit because it was easier. I don't like the pulpit because I feel away from the people and on a higher place.*

15) *you know it was built for a man and I had to use a stool, yeah I hated that because I was afraid I was going to trip... It is not gonna be much longer we're renovating, we're making the front of the church accessible and we're dropping the pulpit down....The truth is that we don't need high pulpits anymore, high pulpits were designed for when we didn't have amplification system, Okay, and they were meant so you could throw your voice against the wood and you needed the open space underneath your feet because it acted as a projection amplifier...As far as sight (visibility is concerned), you don't need to be 3 feet in the air to be seen. 8-10 inches would be fine because everybody is sitting up at you who is standing. It's more egalitarian and it doesn't give that inflated sense of authority which I think is really problematic.*

*5) I hate the pulpit. Everything about it says priestly authority. no pews, no pulpit, but chairs and a circle. I am trying to decolonize it. I take issue with the language of ministers set apart and I would say continually that we are set amongst the people. We have different things to do, but we are not the only ones who do them.*

The response immediately above is perhaps the strongest opposition of the use of the pulpit. The seasoned homiletic scholar Thomas G. Long ponders the role of preaching as he draws from Moltmann's view of the preacher: *"One person or more get up in front of the congregation in order to preach the Gospel....These people come from the community but come forward in front of it and act in Christ's name."* I think Long would agree with the interviewee, *"we are set amongst the people,"* when he says, *"The preacher is in every way a part of the congregation, a member of the assembly who rises from the midst of the gathered people to perform the task of preaching."* But he continues, *"the preacher is still a member of the assembly, but now the preacher has moved to a different place, the preaching place, because the preacher is about to do something that... the others do not do."*<sup>60</sup> His insight on the preaching place seems to disagree with her response, *"we have different things to do but we are the only ones who do them."*

The following responses provided additional thoughts around the pulpit issue including visibility and practicality:

*7) For me it's not so much the size of the pulpit, it's the height of the pulpit. But in an event, it doesn't change the content of the message. The other thing is the attitude that changes the message. So you must approach the pulpit with an attitude of humility. For 700 people, the elevated pulpit is appropriate, but for 40 people, it may not. So we need to be flexible, trying not to fit into one model of preaching or pulpit. So that is simply being practical.*

*9) For me it depends on the lay out of the sanctuary and the worship space. Being short for people to see me from where they are sitting it is helpful to actually be raised up. In a small space, I would like to be lower level, only one step up from the people where we can be closer that would be my ideal scenario.*

As a way of summing up the responses above, we can illumine two major nurturing insights on the pulpit: The pulpit is a tool for education and proclamation thus it has to be located in the place where it can be used to enhance and maximize the role of teaching and proclaiming the Gospel. The other insight is that the pulpit is a symbol of authority, the priestly clergy's power, whether you use it or oppose it. While there are important and positive places for using the

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), 15, 16. *Italics original.*



pulpit for authority, most interviewees seem to view a pulpit as a more conversational and sharing space. In this regard, one particular interviewee's attempt to subvert the over-ridden authoritative function of the pulpit is interesting:

*9) When it's children who are reading the scripture on a pulpit, instead of using a lectern, it becomes very obvious that the pulpit is too high for their height because you can't see them. I'd love to be able to change that. So far when they come up and doing a reading, I have them stand to the side so people can see and I'll hold the Bible for them.*

This response right above is interesting in that the practice of switching the place of reading Scripture from the lectern to the pulpit so that the child can be assisted by the minister is gentle but radical. It subverts the perception of the pulpit as the place not only for the clergy but for a child, and other lay people, which then represents the whole people of God.

To conclude this section on the pulpit, one final point needs to be made. It is about approaching the pulpit as a space that racialized ordained women preachers can claim. My McGeachy group seems to argue that the preaching authority did not come to women for a long time. Thus, using the pulpit is like claiming that space as a woman's space, as a racialized woman's space because it has been a very white western male space for centuries. Despite most interviewees expressed uneasiness behind the pulpit because they don't believe in preaching as a position of authority over people, they still seem to believe that it is an important space to claim as their own.

### **Alb**

Let us move to another significant liturgical symbol of ordained ministry: the alb. As it turns out most interviewees wear the alb and find it useful. Unlike the pulpit which split interviewees down the middle, pros and cons, the alb had almost universal support. Though the reasons appear to be practical, they disclose a consciousness on the part of the interviewees of their complex identities and a conscientious choice about how to present or not present these identities in worship. Indeed it becomes a critical issue for those who carry the female body to disclose or not to disclose their body through how to dress or what to wear on Sundays. Teresa Fry Brown, a well-known scholar of homiletics who is an Afro-American woman, discusses the issue of clothing and appearance in preaching. The following exercise is suggested by her as a way of deepening the understanding of the preacher's presence:

1. What is your attire while proclaiming God's Word?
2. Is your attire based on tradition, personal preference, senior pastor dictates, other?
3. Is there attire that you think is inappropriate for the preaching moment? If so, why?
4. Is there one or more particular color that you think is inappropriate? Why?

5. Do you alter your hairstyle in any manner when proclaiming? Why or why not?
6. Is jewelry appropriate in the pulpit? If so, what style, amount, and placement?
7. What about head coverings and shoes?<sup>61</sup>

Interestingly enough, this exercise is done in the class on “Women and Preaching.” One has to wonder whether similar questions would be necessary to be asked in a preaching class for male students to consider. Brown’s teaching exercises for women suggest that the whole business of attire including head coverings, jewelry and shoes, matters to women preachers in the sense that their choices may even jeopardize their position as ministry if not made with great care. I can say firmly from this research that it matters a lot for most of our interviewees what to (or not to) wear. They strongly prefer wearing an alb because by clothing themselves with an alb, the danger of disclosing a female body is lessened. The alb is one of the most intimate and tactile liturgical symbols for a minister. It is closest to the minister’s own physical body and closest to her priestly identity as well. It serves like a skin, helping her to embody her sacramental roles:

*11) I always wear an alb otherwise people comment on my clothing. People don’t even recognize me during the passing of the peace, people did not know who I was. At one time, I was wearing a regular clothes and one person said, your outfit is very ethnic today. Alas... it wasn’t even African! Then they come and touch my outfit and say that’s nice. I have felt objectified in more than one occasion. They do not show boundaries. I felt that they totally invaded my private space.*

*9) When I was at another church when I didn’t wear an alb I got comments on the clothes that I wore to worship on Sunday morning. Most comments were compliments on my outfit; people wanting to know where I got my clothes and that kind of stuff. In those times I started to see the advantage of wearing an alb because it meant that they wouldn’t be staring at my clothes they would see the vestments which is a symbol of the clergy. Another time, when a man who only comes in these two occasions (Easter and Christmas) came to the church on Christmas and since he did not know me who I was because I came after Easter. And I was not wearing an alb during the service where people come up and light the candles and I was there and he came up and he whispered to me a comment that I found inappropriate given my role. But it was based on the misunderstanding that he thought that I was just another member.*

*14) I wear and appreciate alb because it helps me not to worry about what to wear, given the sexualized notion of women’s clothing every week. I also like alb that can strengthen the*

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<sup>61</sup> Teresa Fry Brown, “Voice and Diction,” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, eds. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006), 180.

*liturgical season and meaning. I think authority is needed, how can we teach God as transcendent, whom we worship to? That is an issue of authority and somehow we as the ministry needs to carry and symbolize that authority.*

*It was easy for me to make that shift (to wearing an alb) and then I came to where I am now they hadn't been, the previous minister, refused to wear an alb (laugh) we didn't do that but I, I had already established that and I mean so there are a few things. One of them is when I'm not, if I'm not wearing an alb I spend so much time worrying about what I'm wearing, what am I gonna wear and does it, how does it look and you know I have other things to worry about on Sunday than what I'm wearing, so what I'm wearing becomes a distraction to me and it's (pause) it's getting in the way it's competing my ability to focus on my ministry then I just need to remove that factor and so that's what the meaning of wearing the alb is for me, it's that piece of taking away my self-consciousness about what I'm wearing umm (pause) and letting me focus on doing the ministry that I'm called to do and having the conversation that I have.*

*3) I wear a black gown. I try to be more professional. I try to avoid those kind of perceptions (women's body and clothing) created by the congregation.*

*19) I feel more comfortable with the alb. I think it helps my vulnerability. (When asked to articulate a bit more of the vulnerability, she responded that it is about being a woman and disclosing the female body. )*

*8) I wear (an alb) pretty much all the time except for the summer when there is no air-conditioning because it is too hot. Why do we wear alb? After the Easter Sunday service (during my internship) and one of the members of the congregation made a comment, it was a female person that just made a comment about you know, how nice I looked and that I was so tall and the blue that I was wearing was so nice and I just thought, it's not a fashion contest, it needs to be not about my clothes and I went out and got an alb as quickly as I could, now in that site both the ministers both the called ministers there wear albs and so it was in keeping with their tradition for me to wear an alb as well umm . It is not about me (but about God), symbolic and priestly!*

*9) At the start of my ministry I was hearing enough comments about how young how cute how pretty like comments based on appearance that wouldn't come to a male minister. So even though I did not totally feel comfortable preaching behind the pulpit or wearing a clergy collar in a hospital visit or wearing an alb on Sunday, I needed these extra ministerial authority symbols. I never thought of my age and gender this way until I started my ministry.*

*9) I felt it necessary to wear an alb particularly as a new comer in the community and with all those barriers (being young, woman, and Asian) already in place I needed something that would*

*immediately identify me as the minister to dismiss whatever false perceptions (student, lay, etc.) they have. So I did wear every single week (even in hot summer days) in my first year.*

The second aspect of the alb is expressed by the interviewees as affirmation of the vocation and as carrier of tradition. It was revealed through our interviews that wearing an alb helps many of our interviewees to be self-aware of their pastoral and sacramental vocation. The alb is a reminder as much as a reinforcement of who they are and what they are called to do. The purpose of wearing a stole turned out to be closely related to the alb. It supports the taste (role) and adds to the essence of the authentic taste. The two items of priestly garb compliment each other and are usually worn both at the same time:

To make an analogy of the feast and the food to the albs and stoles as carrier of tradition is to think about a certain ceremonial event that follows with the meals. You wear certain attires for certain ceremonies. Sometimes, by the look of it, we know what the event is and what kind of food is expected to appear. By wearing the designated clothing culturally and religiously (i. e., baptismal clothing, or a Lunar New Year celebration), the meaning of a particular tradition is carried and passed down. In some ways, the albs also serve as the external decoration of the meal. The way the food is presented or which dish/bowl is used to contain the food, appeals to the eye of the beholders. While it does not directly affect or change the content of the meal, it strengthens or diminishes the optimal anticipated taste of the food. Unless we desire worship to be nothing but utilitarian, aesthetic and sensory functions played by the clergy may maximize the experience of the encounter the Holy Mystery.

You will also notice the sense of servanthood the women in our interviews felt to the people by respecting their sense of the familiar:

*4) Sometimes I do and in that way it is just to have people recognize my vocation as a minister. I don't always do it and neither does the other minister. It's all about attending to the need: does it (the alb) suit that setting? In weddings I do wear an alb because that is the expectation. It is not a statement. It's not a power tool.*

*17) because in our church we do not change the banners or anything at all so my stole is the only way they can see the changes in the season. So that is why I wear an alb and a stole together. I wear a black suit and a black shirt with the clerical colour on Good Friday because I don't have a black alb. Wearing this, I am a minister at that moment. My ethnicity becomes secondary. Sometimes I wear my ethnic traditional dress but then I wear an alb on top. It is another way of teaching them intercultural and my multiple identities. Although traditionally speaking an alb was made for a man, I wear it with great pride because God called me into*

*ministry. I can't change my face, colour, or my being a woman. This is who I am. God brought me into this vocation and now I am wearing it.*

*16) I wear during communion, baptism, anything that is sacramental. In the summer that does not get worn. It is polyester. I wear shorts, skirts and tank tops. And I do not care what they say, and they do the same. It is all relational. It needs to be about what God is calling me to be in that relationship. And that's where the alb comes in. I want people to be thinking about Jesus, unequivocally.*

*2) there is an expectation from the congregation that I wear an alb. Only in the summer will we not wear it, because it's too hot. And then for me it makes me feel more confident, gives me authority. Probably it's less distracting for people because they don't have to look at the different clothing that I am wearing week after week. It makes us more uniform so that you don't have to think about you being a woman as much.*

*4) The older people love when I wear my gown. And I recognize what that means. It doesn't change my personal opinion, but I do get that response [rolls eyes].*

*3) It is interesting because it is UCC but many people (existing members) are from Europe, and racialized people (newer members) are from Africa or Asia, many of whom have a Anglican or Presbyterian background. So that tradition is created by the congregation not the minister. I don't know why, but I have to wear it. It is a ritual for them. Many people joined the United Church who came from other churches like Catholic Church. So for many it is important for creating a sacred space that is familiar to them. So I am joining that ritual.*

*3) Robes are a symbol of the balance between "tradition and liberation." All religions have some kind of clothing, "a kind of uniform." My family is Buddhist and they have similar robes to show their power and their role as monks.*

*2) They like the stole. So right now I like it because it's different and it's significant.*

*Preaching is a three-way conversation, God (the Spirit), me, and the people. Wearing an alb helps this conversation and my role as preacher.*

The responses below show how women can appropriate the alb by altering and changing it in ways that fit for female body. I think it is a gentle subversion of tradition because albs and other clergy clothing are traditionally designed for male body.

*(1) I think you have options. It's about going and exercising them. There's a whole vestment store called women's spirit and they cut exclusively albs for women.*

8) *finding clergy apparel that fits for women is not easy but it is not impossible. I had asked a seamstress to make a kind of alb that fits my body. Even I know a friend who has a collar tab made for her blouse. I still think it is easier to work around the alb than going back to wearing regular clothes.*

9) *I do have a traditional alb and it's unisex they say but it's really made for men's body and if I wrap the centre around, it looks pretty bad. So I purchased a different modified one, it is not a cassock but it's like a cross between an alb and a cassock and it's got a belt so it's tailored so it is more like a woman's.*

5) *All those things are associated with the you know, male and very western I find. Alb is so western to me that I feel very, very uncomfortable. Alb made me out of place.*

8) *I am trying to develop a non-Eurocentric, or more afro-centric alb.*

There is another interesting finding from this research about the relationship between wearing an alb, economic situation and financial cost to ministers. The following responses from a couple of participants raise the issue of clothing as a social indication of the economic status quo and demonstrate how an alb (though it is not cheap to purchase) can veil that issue by reducing the financial burden of having multiple outfits for Sunday. It also introduces the questions of what it means that our United Church is a middle class church and of what are the implications of a church culture where people dress up for Sunday.

6) *As a student who came from another country I was financially very weak. So I did not have much money to get proper clothes. And I was very concerned about my skinny appearance because in my opinion a skinny appearance gives the impression that she is quite weak. Wearing an alb helps to veil both my financial weakness and physical weakness.*

13) *Clothing including shoes issue for me is more classism (than sexism). I've had a colleague in seminary who wore a shirt that he didn't iron to go to a bigger wealthier congregation. He got a cheque for \$400 by a member of the congregation after Sunday and was told to go out and buy an alb or a suit.*

In a DVD intercultural resource, *Our Common Vision: Becoming an Intercultural Church*, Susan Beaver makes the claim that most UCC congregations are middle-class churches. She challenges us to take the issue of poverty and classism seriously.<sup>62</sup> Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan had the following to say in light of class and clothing as the culture of the mainline churches: "Most of the mainline Protestant denominations in North America and Europe, therefore, largely inherit a church model developed with close ties to the rise of the bourgeoisie—that is, the capitalist

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<sup>62</sup> *Our Common Vision: Becoming an Intercultural Church*, UCPH, 2011, p. 30.

ruling class.... People are expected to dress up on Sunday in business suits and dresses and to pay church dues. While churches may pray for the poor, run soup kitchens, gather alms and charity for those in need, and even support programs that improve people's living conditions, many Christians are reluctant to question the systems that have kept people poor. In addition, churches are increasingly run like corporations, and many megachurches have executive pastors who function as CEOs." <sup>63</sup>

While most of the group strongly prefer wearing an alb, there are a couple of the participants who were strongly opposed to wear an alb. Again, the reason against wearing an alb is deeply connected with their marginalized identity. The finding clearly demonstrates that clothing is an intercultural issue where an individual identity is never free or neutral from the social perceptions and public expectations:

*5) I never wear an alb. You don't make those distinctions because your spiritual life is not meant to be separate from your ordinary life. Part of it is a queer identity. Growing up my entire life resisting wearing skirts and dresses. So some of that has been allowed to carry over when I look at an alb I see a dress for one thing. My attitude is shifting around the sort of priestly function, but that's a work in progress. The person that you look into the room and clearly tell that's the minister.*

*13) I hate an alb because albs look better on men than women. I inherited mine from a retired (male) minister and I stopped wearing it because it didn't feel me. Theologically speaking, a stole is more important liturgical symbol than alb. Only time I like wearing an alb was presiding at a wedding to counteract the focus from what the bridal party is wearing..on to their relations in Christ.*

One interviewee does not oppose wearing an alb but promotes wearing regular clothes on Sundays.

*1)Wearing my clothes, the congregation enjoys their leadership looking good. You look professional you look like you put some effort into this. They love you giving your best.*

To wrap up this course, a few insights can be gleaned. One is the importance of liturgical symbols, as the presentation of the meal is important. This importance is claimed beyond a general centrality of the power of symbols. It is particularly critical to my McGeachy group as woman and as racialized clergy. Another insight would be to stress the importance of recognizing multiple identities in order to connect them with that of liturgical symbols. Holding racialized, gendered, and sexual identities together with or in tension with the vocational

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<sup>63</sup> Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham, Maryland: 2013), 116.

identities of an ordained minister allows and affirms the unique roles of racialized women ministers in the church and beyond. Having fully appreciated both sets of identities is the key to their leadership.

### **7. Leadership: making bridges, fostering relationships, and maintaining integrity**

This course on leadership is based upon the question (see #7 in Appendix 3), “what gifts can you, personally, bring to the church—and the world—as a racialized/biracialized/queer woman?” The responses have two foci. One is how each interviews individual understanding of leadership and how she sees herself as a leader. The other focus is what the church has to learn about leadership from the racialized, female perspective and how we as community of faith enhance collective leadership by receiving racialized, female gifts of leadership. Therefore, this course is like a give and take potluck meal. A culturally embedded drinking practice in Korea that may illustrate the reciprocal nature of leadership. Though this practice is quite male-centered, I will try to imagine a table full of women and men. It works like this: Someone offers a glass of *soju* (ordinary Korean people’s alcohol) to someone who is sitting beside them. That person drinks it and then fills that same glass with the alcohol and offers back to the one who first offered it. This is a well-known ritual still being practiced over meals in Korea. You need to initiate the practice of offering the glass (leadership) as much as you also need to receive the other’s initiation (reciprocal leadership). It is a give-and-take ritual, receiving and offering over food, sharing alcohol together. By doing so, you build up a relationship, a sense of friendship and affection.<sup>64</sup>

Like this Korean practice of the give-and-take ritual leading to build a respectful relationship, most participants interviewed for this McGeachy research articulated that leadership can be usefully understood as building mutual relationships. Many of the interviewees see themselves as “bridges” connecting different worlds, from positions of privilege to marginal positions, from the culture of their origin to the culture that they adopted and vice versa. They also said that their leadership in the church is often about “building relationships:”

*4) leadership is being able to navigate dominant culture (from marginal positions)*

*13) leadership to me is being able to walk in two worlds in terms of being able to communicate to people who aren’t educated in theology at a doctoral level, and still being able to dig into the difficult theological issues.*

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<sup>64</sup> found at <http://seoulistic.com/korean-culture/20-cultural-mistakes-to-avoid-in-korea/>, accessed on July 8, 2013. Please see # 3 and #4, which refer to a *soju* drinking manner as “a sort ritual of respect and friendship.”



19) *I bring my brown ideas. With my brown eyes, I can see the world from a different perspective. Those eyes can see things that are not visible for other colour of eyes. My other gift is that I care a lot. I have a strong faith for the church. Having also been a place of privilege (candidate for Ph. D. and candidate for ministry) and have been historically assigned to people of one culture and not my culture so with that complexity I can see the other side of the story. Being in both places at the same time I can build bridges.*

3) *I am like a banana (yellow outside but white inside) as a person who can be in both worlds. This can be a dangerous as well.*

19) *I see myself as always building bridges. I continually make the connections for more inclusion and offer my perspective from a minority and being who I am I also have privileges because I know how we all participate in these imbalances.*

15) *I am a bridge builder... My spirit animal is a wolf. The wolf is off to the quiet places and listens and learns the song and then comes back and teaches the other people the song and I really think that's what I am called to do. If anything, what I'm called to do in the church is to educate the main line church to listen to what's going on (in the non-mainline communities).*

9) *I can bring the opportunity to have dialogue and discussion and to talk about things relating to intercultural ministry and intercultural relationships, simply by nature of being different from the majority. And of course I have the advantage and the privilege being able to communicate with the majority marginal perspectives, being able to navigate both worlds.*

We introduced Gloria Anzaldúa earlier in our discussion of power dynamics. In 1980s she wrote a book called, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, a seminal work that opened up discussions about hybrid identity, the quest of identity and being Othered. As an independent scholar, activist, poet, and writer Anzaldúa has written and drawn thought-provoking insights over the years. She passed away in 2004. Her writings have been a well, a source of water, pouring the insight and encouragement for those who advocate the rights for queer and racialized women and people with disabilities. Her work calls for alliances between people beyond differences. This is where her insights on being a bridge come in. In her keynote address delivered in June 1988 at the Lesbian Plenary Session of the annual conferences for the National Women's Studies Association she had the following to say:

“There are many roles, or ways of being, of acting, and of interacting in the world. For me they boil down to four basic roles: bridge, drawbridge, sandbar, and island. Being a bridge means being mediator between yourself and your community, and white people, lesbians, feminists, white men. You select, consciously or unconsciously, which group to bridge with—or they choose you. Often the you

that's mediator gets lost in the dichotomies, dualities, or contradictions you're mediating. You have to be flexible yet maintain your ground, or the pull in different directions will dismember you. It's a tough job; not many people can keep the bridge up."<sup>65</sup>

Now let us move to ministry leadership as strengthening relationships. Relationship is not abstract or distant concept that you cannot feel or see. It can begin with our own family, the very first and most formational of relationships. The following speaks of this kind of relationship:

*5) Leadership is fostering familial relationship. Strengthening family is something we need to play. I had talked in one of my sermons about this woman who had gone up to her mother who had gone to church in an Anglican church every Sunday. She "came out" to her mother one Sunday and her mother refused to let her come to church with her. Sort of the whole 9 yards, if you cannot be Christian and queer. So after that she didn't speak to her mother for 6 or 7 years and then later they managed to reconcile. In sharing that story with the congregation I was struck by how many people were crying. So on that level of mother and child being separated by something like sexuality was so painful to them. And I don't know the source of all of their tears, but it struck me that it was that familial relationship. When that broke down it was very difficult for people to hear about. So when I look at the church and the congregation and who I am and my partner, it is to remember that we are at heart a family and we are God's family. And when people can relate to each other on that level a lot of bad things disappear and a lot things become important. And even if people don't understand all the issues about being queer in the church, they understand our relationship and what allows our relationship to remain intact or not. And that to me is one of our real strengths at my pastoral charge in particular because we do recognize the strength of family. And I know the family value has some negative connotations to it but that's not how it manifests with us in my church. We've had this discussion here at my theological school because people say "well how can I serve that community because I don't know anything about First Nations people?" And that's true and they are good questions. But at the same time I say "my doctor is first generation Korean in Canada and he works at the First Nations health center and people love him." And it's not because he knows anything about my life as a queer woman or a First Nation's woman, [it is because] he's funny and he's kind. So that makes so many things possible. And that is what I call leadership.*

For this interviewee ministry leadership is about building up a community. That role of building up is about nurturing and caring for a congregation like a family. It is about making connections and relying upon each other. Being in relationship, having the firsthand experience of what a

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<sup>65</sup> Gloria Anazldúa, "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island: Lesbians-of-color Hacienda Alianzas," in *The Gloria Anazldúa Reader*, 147.

good relationship can be is such an important and positive contribution to the ministry. In the case of having complex relationships, unusual and marginal experiences can be an asset for developing leadership. For example, some of our participants are in same sex relationships and others are in inter-racial relationships. A few are in both inter-racial and same sex relationships. Working out this complex and marginal relationship enables them to negotiate differences and respect the differences, which can equip others to create inter-cultural spaces. Having been able to navigate multi-layered relationships, they feel confident in their intercultural leaderships and allow themselves to live out their intercultural competency.

Others expressed their understanding of the importance of relationship in more succinct ways:

*(1) Leadership is about a practice of wanting to know the other.*

*(1) I value investing in effective, consistent leadership. That's where my heart is at.*

*3) Leadership is "to stay beside the people who are on the journey." It is an education. It is a learning journey and that is conversion.*

An important aspect of leadership is education and formation. Often this involves education to dismantle structures in order to bring about equity and right relationship. In forming individuals and groups in a good way, leaders create safe spaces where the minoritized in a group can be included and respected.

*4) Leadership is about creating safe places.*

*5) people will never offer their own opinion before they know it's safe.*

*4) being mindful of not creating the hierarchy of suffering (LGBTQ over race, gender over race, race over disability, etc.)*

*5) Leadership is to create the circle style of leadership, that of organization and discussion, the egalitarianism of it, not one holds the rules, no one holds the knowledge. That process is fundamental to the All-Native Circle was meant to inform and influence GC and the wider church about the different ways of doing things. So it's not the hierarchy, not a question of what's the rule, but what's the wisdom in the circle/ So there is that mechanism. But you'd have to spend a lot of time talking.*

This kind of church leadership that focussed on education and the creation of safe places happens in children's ministry:

*11) To me I offer the leadership as the gift of the children in ministry. It is not simply theological but also cultural. In my cultural bringing, children are so important. I know that I have maternal*

*instincts and that is a part of who I am. I always knew that children should not be raised in isolation like I did always have a sense that community's important that it's part of my responsibility that every child is partly my responsibility in the society I wanna create so, that sense of care and nurture are gifts that I bring. However, there is a twist side of it. From the time of slavery to the time past slavery black women have been looking after white women's children, it's something ingrained in this North American society so people often feel uncomfortable with the fact that I wanna do it and they talk me out of it. The more love you put in something the more love you get out.. I would make supper for the University students and they felt loved and cared for but it made them feel to see the black person in a servant type role, which is of course problematic.*

Related to the first two major ingredients of leadership, as being bridges and creating equitable spaces through education and formation, the following comment captures the major role of leadership as intercultural, intergenerational, and interlingual:

*14) To me, what we need the inter-triangle leadership for ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century UCC; intercultural, intergenerational, and interlingual leadership. This is particularly critical if we as church want to support and strengthen ethno-specific congregations and making our white-dominant church more inclusive. The ministers should be equipped to this inter-triangle leadership, to teach how their congregations to be able to be intercultural, intergenerational, and interlingual.*

I appreciate this particular response because it brilliantly captures the importance of a relational nature of leadership as I have tried to articulate it elsewhere:

Here the Japanese aesthetic concept of *ma* may be helpful in elaborating the meaning of “inter” as “in-between.” *Ma*...is the silent pause between musical notes or the flow of descent of the full cherry blossom before it touches the earth... It is an opening through which light shines. The function of *ma* is precisely to let the light shine through, as conveyed in its Chinese character 間 with a gate 門 and sun 日, 間, resonant with the sense of being on a threshold, the *limen*... This same word, 間 (pronounced *Gan* in Korean and *ma* in Japanese)...indicates “in-between.” It conjures up the meanings of inter-relationship between peoples, between peoples and places, and between thoughts and words. Out of such profound concept of inter-relationship and in-between-ness, a Korean anthropological understanding of what it means to be human 人間 (pronounced as *In-Gan*) emerges, combining the

two words, 人 meaning “a person” and 間, meaning “between.” 人間, literally meaning, therefore, “a person-in-between.”<sup>66</sup>

This particular interviewee whose first language was not English shares the story that makes a crucial point in this inter-triangle leadership.

*14) A few years of serving English speaking congregation, one day a parishioner came to her after service, “I heard everything you said. You improved your English quite well.” So I answered, “thank you for the comment. I think you improved your hearing ability, too.”*

The following comment is related to the issue of the tension between becoming intercultural and strengthening ethno specific ministry. This tension is real and something we should not lose sight of. Indeed some have critiqued “intercultural” as a term that secretly serves the dominant culture that preserves its status while justifying the neglect or dismantling of ethno minority congregations. Our interviewees reflected on this issue as well.

*I do believe that intercultural ministry is a way to go. But I wonder if we may be in a danger of losing the importance of ethno-specific ministries. While having a rainbow is desirable, if each colour is dimmed and blurred, can we call that rainbow? In order for the colour to be out as the colour, we need to learn how to respect that difference, and promote that difference. I even think we need repentance from the dominant side, where a certain colour has been glossed over. A true practice of respecting others begins with the recognition of discrimination and wrongdoings, which I call repentance.*

Elsewhere I have written the following in *An Introduction to the United Church of Canada for Korean speaking members*, to review our recent history around becoming an intercultural church decision:

In 2006, at the 39<sup>th</sup> General Council, the United Church of Canada made a decision to become an intercultural church. Such decision was made possible in part through a prayerful discernment and the review of the last 10 years of the Ethnic Ministry Council (EMC) since its establishment, 1996. The findings from the review demonstrated that the church needs to behold the reality of a church membership that is becoming increasingly diverse. These findings named the limitations of separating ethnic minority communities from the rest of the church as it still reveals a patronizing and tokenizing tendency towards them, without fully disclosing the power dynamics prevalent in the entire church. Thus, the intercultural commitment involves more intentional efforts to address injustice issues that face cultural and

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<sup>66</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Joanne Doi, “Intercultural Threads of Hybridity and Threshold Spaces of Learning,” *Religious Education* 107:3 (2012): 268.

linguistic minority communities including but not limited to Aboriginal, Francophone, Deaf, and racialized constituencies. Another significant change that was made through this decision was to challenge the notion that intercultural ministry is only important to the groups who belong to minority cultures and thus not relevant to the Anglo majority groups. As approved in the Council, it was clearly noted that “Not one thing will be left untouched in God’s transformative power” in this process of becoming intercultural.<sup>67</sup>

It would be helpful to examine the reality of ethno specific ministry since 2006 when the United Church decided to become intercultural. It may be a critical study to carry out if it the case that the decision of becoming an intercultural church has weakened ethno minority congregations. But the following comment highlights the strengths of an intercultural approach that fosters relationships across cultural boundaries and an exchange of cultural wisdom.

*At the same time, I think we need to cherish our own cultural treasures to present/share to serve the church. It is a kind of intercultural competency. You know I learned a lot from my missionary, their way of approaching life and being in the world. I think I as an immigrant can offer my own being, my way of approaching life that I inherited from my home cultures. For example, one day, there was a woman who lost her husband 1 year ago who came for a counselling. While she became wealthier (due to the life insurance from this loss), she feels empty and poor because she misses her husband. I was sharing the cultural practice of “Jesa” which is a Korean annual ritual of remembering those loved ones. The family members gather around food and pay respect to their ancestors, and sharing their memories of those passed away. She told me that she would try that. Later she came back thanking me that it was meaningful to do such gathering with her three grown up children and their families, while sharing the meals and the memories of her husband/ their dad. I think that is “intercultural.”*

Personal integrity is critical to leadership. To most of my group, to lead is not to hide who they are in order to over-present themselves big and strong in public. The key to leadership for them is to be humbly human (rather than super woman), maintaining their integrity, recognizing their shortcomings and vulnerability. It also means being grown real, based in experience. Here are some responses on the issue:

*11) a sense of integrity is a big leadership piece. The church that I had my internship rejected me, yes, I had a hell time, but I still love the people I met there and I still think that wonderful things*

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<sup>67</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “intercultural ministry: living into transformation,” *An introduction to The United Church of Canada for Korean speaking members, A Korean translation, edited by HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Don Schweitzer* (2013), 90.

*will come from their future ministry in that church. I love my church. Leadership comes from that love.*

*7) I have a big part to play because leadership is not in a laboratory. Leadership does not exist in a place where people simply write long papers about leadership. It is in the day to day lives of mine and in the witness of individual people in congregations and in the lives of the congregations. That makes a difference.*

*16) We are called and equipped just like men, just like dominant culture people. We're not a little bit of spice you add to a service. There is always this tendency to put a minister on a pedestal in that there's almost a dehumanization that happens and there's a disconnect in the relationship. And if ministry leadership is all about relationship then you want to keep the relationship intact.*

Often those who are marginalized work hard to make up for their marginalization by pushing themselves too hard once they are in a leadership position, sacrificing their personal life, dismissing their personal needs, sometimes ending by damaging or utterly breaking valuable relationships. As one interviewee shared:

*8) Ministry takes everything you can give and more. So it makes demands on your personal life, your married life, the divorce rate of clergy is something like 53%.*

A life partner can also be important:

*13) Having a life partner is important to me. The partner who is different from me who speaks another language, who came from a different country, whose education level is lower than mine is so important because we learn to be gentle with each other, to bridge cultural differences. Through this we have become gentler with the world around us. And that is leadership we need to have.*

*15) How could you know if you've not been loved to know what love is, how can we talk about God's love as a preacher? That's part of the integrity of being clear about who I am (being in a love relationship).*

In conclusion of this course, let me revisit the work of Jill M. Bystydzienski, whose research on intercultural couples is mentioned in the Introduction. Her research interviews about 30 intercultural couples in order to uncover the importance of "crossing boundaries and negotiating differences" in intercultural relationships. My McGeachy group, most of whom who are in a life-long partnership that are intercultural, interracial, or international commented that a commitment to relationships with those whose identities are different from her own is

connected to leadership. Bystydzinenski's research also demonstrates "strategies of accommodation [that] make adjustments to each other's differences... [lead to the development of] shared values and commitments of the partners that allow them to transcend social group boundaries."<sup>68</sup> The leadership that is identified by our interviewees as making bridges, fostering relationships, and maintaining integrity is affirmed in the research of the intercultural couples.

## 8. Proclaiming the Gospel

The first four parts of our banquet, theological education, power dynamics, (im)migration, and barriers, have served to describe the background and context in which our interviewees have been formed (misformed), shaped (distorted), and nurtured (deprived). The second four parts, vocation, symbols, leadership, and proclaiming the Gospel, the last one we are about to share, have to do with their identities and roles in ministry. These become most visible in their work of proclaiming the Gospel, namely preaching. I posed the question, "The Good news of the Gospel, Jesus Christ, is that the last shall be the first. How strongly do you relate to this idea?" (see #7 in Appendix 3) Here are some of the responses:

*2) Preaching is not just thinking about who is in the church, but also think about who is not in the church.*

*1) It is the work of lifting up the lack of voice, and you want to raise attention to those who are unheard among us. For example, we have single parents (dads who are divorced and have the kids half the time). We don't speak about it (in preaching) and yet they're right there in the pews. It's what scripture doesn't say in this text is what's worth mentioning.*

*2) Preaching is talking about unpopular topics, such as grieving, the topic that was covered up and now I was bringing it up for them.*

*11) I touched a few cords in people and they were mad because they felt uncomfortable and I kind of didn't care and from a pastoral sense, I totally cared but then I wanted to say to them yes it made you uncomfortable but there are about 5 other people who felt empowered. What makes your discomfort more important than someone's comfort and empowerment? I like to explore this, pushing this perspective for people to see that.*

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<sup>68</sup> Jill M. Bystydzinski, *Intercultural Couples*, 15-16.



Here the article by Nami Kim, a scholar of philosophy and religious studies, is relevant. In the article “‘My/Our’ Comfort NOT at the Expenses of ‘Somebody Else’s”<sup>69</sup> Kim challenges the dominant Western group’s demand to be comfortable. This comfort, she says, is often guaranteed at the cost of the pain and discomfort of the marginalized group. As the hearers of the Gospel, we need to be ready to be in a place of listening to the stories of discomfort, which may stir and disturb our hearts and minds to do something. In the performance of preaching, in the act of hearing and speaking, we find ourselves transformed by a call to action. Writing on Christian faith practices, religious educator Brett Webb-Mitchell utilizes speech-act theory to call attention to the *performative, (pro)creative* nature of human “speech” and the referential melding of mind-body-will in human “gesture.”<sup>70</sup> To preach is to give birth new realities, a gesture that is nothing short of *turning one’s whole self* (mind, body, spirit, will) toward that “other” which transcends our finite present. Let’s see if we can hear echoes of this idea in the following responses:

*14) I never print out my sermon. Preaching to me is an event that happens in the worship between me and the people. When that connection is lost, my sermon is a dead meat. Of course such connection is not only heady but hearty and sensory. For example, instead of reading my sermon about women’s leadership in the church, if people see me leading, other lay women, reading and praying, playing a leadership role in worship, while men serving the food, and cleaning the dishes at the kitchen after worship then the message of gender equality, women’s leadership will be vividly demonstrated and more effectively communicated. To me, that is the meaning of proclaiming the Gospel.*

*3) instead of speaking aggressively, I speak, seeing from their perspective (congregation). I start within their context. With storytelling, I try to deepen understanding of race/ethnicity/culture.*

*16) I am a very contextual preacher. How I preach and what I preach on is determined by the community that I serve. So if it means you go off the lectionary because something happened, you do it. I guess it was 3 or 4 weeks ago on the cover of our bulletins was a thing that made gone around the facebook, it was a thing that God loves you no matter what you are, and made it very clear if we sitting in judgement of anybody because of sexuality, colour, economic status, then we are not doing the work of God and we are not following Jesus Christ, and there is no place for that, here, period. That is what I preached. That is how I proclaim the Gospel.*

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<sup>69</sup> Nami Kim, “Cutting Edges—‘My/Our’ Comfort NOT at the Expense of ‘Somebody Else’s: Toward a Global Feminist Theology” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2005): 75-94.

<sup>70</sup> Brett P. Webb-Mitchell, *Christly Gestures: Learning to Be Members of the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2003), 106.

*4) I know it is challenging how to preach the gospel to the affluent. To me the experiential component is so important.. now you've lived my world, that's the only way that they could understand. Maybe they've experienced marginalization in their own way. ..to recognize that they can only journey to a certain point and then how you get them to interact with racialized people and those who are more marginalized than they are. When that happens, they begin to have meaningful encounters.*

*11) I would tell people smarten up and be real. You cannot compartmentalize your faith with the rest of your life. Faith is not a little cushy feel good thing that you can do on Sunday. Faith is a critical part of your life and it needs to grow and change with the rest of you and your life so get on with it.*

The two responses immediately above speak to the prophetic role of preaching. It takes discipline as a preacher to be bold in preaching. And bold preaching is badly needed. But the balance between the prophetic and pastoral roles in preaching is a tricky one:

*(1) I preach to a congregation that looks nothing like me. It's radical to even have in front of them stories about people who don't look like them, who are their neighbors. To preach like that, use vocab like that, to have Saturday morning workshops on power, racism, culture. There are just little glimpse I can put in front of them. They might turn around not in fear but in welcome. That is our edge. To act in love instead of to act in fear.*

*1) Proclaiming the Gospel is about the sexiness of subversion through radical engagement with the Word and the community.*

*1) Preaching is about asking "tell me your story, wanting to know the other." Because they are unpracticed. They are not as ready to ask for me to tell them my story.*

*16) I am the interpreter of the text. It (preaching) serves as the lens or filter for what I am putting out there. I am more focused on what Jesus can do through me as a racialized woman, as opposed to thinking about what a racialized woman can do with Jesus.*

Our interviewees are conscious that their marginalized identities are an integral part of the style and content of their preaching. Indeed these identities seem to be deeply connected with their ability to communicate the Word of God.

*3) I try to use both (preaching with and without notes). When we have worship service, my focus is about my message. I write down and practice so I can remember and preach without reading. At the time I do care about my voice and how powerful it is. Naturally I use my hands and sometimes I use visual things (like show and tell). That is a very convenient tool for me,*

*especially for me because I have an accent. In some sense I preach from my pulpit that might be masculine, but my content is like a storytelling so people can follow along. I use everything, which is a more female multi-tasking way.*

*8) I would say that my being marginalized and my awareness of my marginalization and my awareness of the experience of what that is helps me to be in touch with the Gospel. You know, I mean I guess in that way indirectly facilitates my proclamation of it. But it's really about being connected with the Gospel and the word of God that comes through me, the marginal voice, that's the important piece of it.*

Some discussion of the role of the Spirit in preaching which is worth noting here before we move on:

*8) And I understand, for me preaching is very much a three way conversation between myself the congregation and the holy spirit and when I'm preaching I ask, you know I call my heaven outline and set kind of what to do and I'm asking the holy spirit ok so what I do say now and sometimes what I have to say comes out different. The first time it was when I was in Nashville the first time that I preached that I felt like I, it was really preaching that I started to get a sense of what preaching really is umm. The one time I preached when I was there, I had umm so I had a manuscript that I had agonized over all night (laugh) and yelled at God is it gonna be this hard all the time? And God said back to me I'm afraid so (laugh) what and so I had this manuscript and I got there and got up in front of the people and I looked down at the manuscript (pause) and I realized that I could not read the first lines that I had on my manuscript, I could not read them. I continue to be attentive to the spirit (laugh) and so I chose to listen to the spirit and started somewhere else in the manuscript that I had. It was a completely different experience for me but it was the first time that I really listened to the spirit and followed the spirit in my preaching the way that I do in my daily life.*

*Well I believe that who I am umm, who I truly am is God's design and so and is in my existence umm is the most, the closest incarnational manifestation of God, of God's presence, of God's dreams of God's (pause) work and so (pause) to not honour who I am is to block out (pause) the most significant information that I have, the most intimate information that I have about who God is and what God has to say.*

*We're open to the movement of the holy spirit and we're inviting the holy spirit to inspire our movements our actions our thoughts and our words then, then the living out of that relationship with the spirit becomes our proclamation. And when that living out is inspiration to speak the Gospel then that's the way we proclaim when it becomes an inspiration to umm be loving and kind to a stranger, that becomes a proclamation of the Gospel, when it moves us to step into*

*umm harm's way (pause) as we challenge injustice then that act in itself becomes a proclamation of the Gospel, also, right?*

These responses on the experience of preaching the Gospel have manifested the tangible and embodied roles of our interviewees as preachers. Proclaiming the Gospel for our group of racialized women ministers can be summed up as relational (three ways between God, people, and the preacher), contextual (reflecting the experiences of the hearers), and incarnational (the Word coming through the marginalized body). With this in mind we are ready to move on to the next course.

### **9. Being at the Margin and Becoming an Ally**

Being at the margin requires making allies. Paradoxically it is one's weakness at the margin that provides the strength to support others. Our dependence on other secures the other's existence. So necessarily the roles of allies imply differences between them. Allies value difference, including power differentials. But sustaining alliances also involves transgression of boundaries where those boundaries exist to maintain the status quo for those in power. The following comments show some of these transgressions.

*2) The gifts that I bring are that I am sympathetic or empathetic. I can see the views and listen to the views of people that are marginalized and/or racialized. And it affects me so I remember their stories and have had that experience of being excluded so I can identify with that feeling. So my role is to bring their points of view into meetings, worship. But it's hard work; easier to go back to the same old thing. Just being here at ABC church. I've tried some new things, but if I get one comment that's a criticism sometimes it's easier to give up than to keep going. Because if I keep going I have to think about why I am doing it and gather my energy, gather myself, and gather my team... But if I'm going to keep at it then I have to stay fresh or be stronger.*

*5) Being an outsider is a tremendous gift. We've done this exercise around power, where a group of people take step close to the centre of the room. And there all white middle class heterosexual people standing in the center of the room but at the outside are all of my friends. And I said I am quite happy to be on the edges and be marginalized in that context because in the center empire and unjust economic systems and all of those things our church says it's struggling against. So I'm quite happy to be marginalized because I cannot participate in that the way (systematic injustice and structural discriminations) other people perhaps can. And I think that's an important challenge for the church and how much it participates in that system.*

4) *When you want to talk about being at the margin, we need to talk about the importance of being experiential. Growing up as a child of colour in a German family, when I got teased at school because of my wiry hair, my mom could sympathize with me but she could not have known what it felt like. So what you (who is in the privileged position) need to be is to be humble and respectful because you can only go to a certain place.*

5) *We understand oppression, being othered, being seen as less than the rest of the dominant people. So I try to draw on all those things and about what people say about Queers, or what people say about women, or what people say about people with disabilities...For example when we talk about anti-Semitism in Christianity, Christians will say these things about Jews and well they say these things about First Nation's people too. And people are saying like, oh my God, 'we don't want to do that, we don't want to be anti-Semitic because we know what that feels like.' That's part of the results of my relationship with my church and my congregation.*

8) *Being an ally, solidarity work with aboriginal people: I feel this is a call, a dialogue between aboriginal-nonaboriginal. I mean generally in Canada and in the US when you talk about aboriginal and non-aboriginal, that's usually an underlying assumption that it's aboriginal and white. And when I read the apology, the united church's apology I am very conscious of points of it that this is a white apostle's apology and I need to be part of that apology too and also feel like I could be the recipient of part of that apology and so my voice in that dialogue is different.*

5) *Church is primarily full of familial relations, having common ground and acceptance by recognizing what unites them all. But the sort of interculturality with the other ethnic cultural groups (recognizing differences) has been just tremendous and amazing. And that's part of why I get excited about intercultural churches. I think it was before the last GC where we met and it was an incredible circle of people sharing their stories and going back and forth. And then I think about the intercultural church and I would like other people to experience these incredible stories and theologies, and experiences of God.*

You may sense the excitement from some of the responses. The interviewees find the dream of a united community that does not gloss over or minimize their differences a source of inspiration. It is, after all, a fullest sense of the banquet that Jesus talked about inviting those who are the edge of society. They would not be invited unless we become their allies and advocates. Our feast is not a meal of the membership club. This banquet is open to all, the gates to the feast is open. This is also a dream shared in the book of Revelation, the new world that God will create "has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites...The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—

and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev. 21:11-12, 24-26).

The next set of responses specifically speaks the importance of allies, of people willing to be in solidarity with those who are different. Becoming allies moves them beyond typical expectations. Marginalized people and a marginalized communities can often feel compassion for other marginalized individuals and communities. But it is also true in that you can have allies who are from the dominant group. According to Anne Bishop, the definition of an ally is “a member of an oppressor group who works to end a form of oppression which gives her or him privilege. For example, a white person who works to end racism or a man who works to end sexism.”<sup>71</sup> You can still be an ally even though you hold a certain power. That is the nature of becoming allies, that is, moving beyond and crossing over the differences. The following response works towards this conclusion:

*8) What saddens me is that I have to connect with this essentially underground marginalized group of racialized people to get through in this church system with a whole bunch of very well meaning liberal minded people who say oh we don't discriminate we don't, we just, oh you know we're open and welcoming and that. You know what I mean? But it's just, it saddens me that umm that for the most part we're on our own and we've got our underground railroad (laugh) to get through to get through the candidacy process. You know I could talk about what's really happening to those folks but I couldn't to the white folks. One of the things that made it really clear to me, you know, I went into the internship saying one of my questions is racism the same in Canada as it is in the States? Is it the race as same culture, you know this whole question of race and culture because people tend to conflate with a culture. One of the things that I discovered was that, like in Kenora I could sit down and talk to an aboriginal person who grew up on a reserve who's cultural experience umm whose social and educational background and whose living circumstances have been completely different from mine but we would sit and we would talk about racism, we know exactly what each other's talking about.*

*So, in a way, we have an underground railroad, we have a common language that blurs the lines of other differences regardless of your ethnicity, culture and language, there's a common ground that we can work for. Racism binds and connects us so, in a way that's paradoxically speaking very powerful, though it's hard (laugh).*

*As an aboriginal young queer ordained woman, you think that those in the same categories (race, gender, sexual orientation, and age) would be my best cheer supporters, and my experiences are not necessarily. The typical dominant group of people (white, male, and straight*

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<sup>71</sup> Anne Bishop, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* second edition (Halifax: Fernwood, 2002), 152.

*middle-aged) not only support my leadership but also get what I am trying to address. Instead of making stereotypical judgement (say, orthodox church people are sexist and patriarchal) I think it is important to make efforts of becoming allies, embracing them as allies despite the differences. We have the tendency to be dismissive of people who have different theological understanding of sexuality... so it's just like well you have to leave the UC instead of accepting the fact that there is a different theology that thinks different...*

Speaking of theological difference and diverse views in theology, the following response from a particular interviewee makes the case for more open mindedness. She argues that her theological differences from the dominant UCC view needs to be respected as interculturally competent:

*16) I am a part of a grassroots call 'crusifusion.' Basically our mandate is to recover Jesus from the fundamentalists within the UCC. And part of the reason I got involved with this group is because I am very passionately Christ-centred. I love Jesus. There is still that feeling within the UCC political system that you have to be very very liberal in your understanding of theology and practice. So those of us who are visible minorities (some of us) tend to be more Christ centered in our theology than others. But there 's this sense that we have to keep the Christ-centeredness out of conversation so that makes it hard for us to come forward if we think that we're going to be shut down on a theological level. If you've got a woman who is racialized in clergy and who is Christ centered, they shouldn't be treated like their theology or pastoral interests are primitive or unsophisticated. They should be upheld and affirmed. Because that's real inclusion. That's being intercultural.*

There are some helpful principles when approaching the task of educating allies . The most critical teaching is to get across the idea that reality as “*structural*” and “*historical*.” It is often wrong to assume that “if we increase the knowledge and change the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, then the organizations, institutions, and society as a whole will also change.” Equipped with the structural and historical approach, it becomes clear that individuals do not exist in a vacuum. “We are seen as products of history, rooted in a class system that makes us very unequal in our access to power, legitimacy, and resources.”<sup>72</sup> Viewing the world reality as *structural* and *historical* does not, however, diminish the power of individual agency that can lead to coalitions and collective action. The responses above, hopefully, have served as the evidence of how crucial personal commitment is with regards to leadership. We, as a committed collective being, become mighty though as marginal individuals we may feel very small.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 125.

## 10. Future of the Church

I would like the readers of this report to imagine a feast at a wedding. The wedding party is set to begin at its sunset. It is almost over. When the meals with the several courses are shared and finished, it comes time for the final speeches, the speeches of the friends and families to give encouraging and hopeful blessings to the new couple. The purpose of these speeches is to show how much the couple are cared for and supported by the community. Perhaps, this last section may be considered as the final speeches of my McGeachy group to demonstrate their care for and their support of their church. It is a love song of the beloved (church). It is a witness and the testimony for their commitment to this church. Each group member, was in fact, asked to respond to the last question, "if you had the floor in front of you and the whole membership (current and future) of the United Church was listening, what would you want to say to and about your church?" (See the question #7 in Appendix 3) I arranged their speeches into seven themes.

### Plant seeds

*1)It feels like our church is a palliative care church, soon to be dead. People begin to talk about church planting. We are not training for that. but we should. We need to spark and create a "forward momentum."*

*(The future of the church) depends upon "the practice observing beauty and responding to the call of beauty to create more beauty.... if you look at the current church, meaning the people, there is beauty all around, gifts, talents, generosity, compassion, imagination, art, dance, political insight, justice making. And if we lift our heads up and we practice their observation of beauty and we hear the call on our lives (I think this is what the Good News, the Gospel message is) to amplify God's beauty in the world. Plant more seeds; plant a garden of it. I think that's what it takes. That would be the spiritual practice, and the practices that come out of that approach the attention that impact how we approach mission, overseas partnership, gentleness, worship. A practice to the beauty of God's people.*



7) *God created a garden and in that garden there are flowers of all different colours not because they are just pretty (of course nothing against beauty) but because it is necessary for their well-being of life.*

19) *We are in great times in the church. We are making decisions and come to the point where we have realized that we need to do things differently. We are not in the complacency of being a strong voice in society for being rich church. So now is the same with the early church when things were looking shaky, it made the Gospel stronger. I can see the intention in that statements made in General Council to be an intercultural church, to examine how we're doing in terms of racism, heterosexism and homophobia. So we're putting resources into some components that are important to becoming a different church.*

1) *Those "self identified, marginalized" people in leadership (as historical movements show) we will be the ones to invest the energy and the risk of getting this platform out there. So I'm trying to do that in my own little ways because I believe in it.*

4) *So we want the dominant culture to buy it, we have to find ways to speak to them. Because if we're going to grow the church we're going to do it by intercultural, and intergenerational and welcoming racialized people in.*

2) *I helped to facilitate a Filipino group to have their own bible study and worship on Saturday. My own congregation didn't really understand my role in that and felt that the people there were not all members of the congregation, so why was I spending time with that group.... But sometimes they would sing during the church services. And that was generally well received, I thought. But I had heard from one of the members (of the Filipino group) that she still didn't feel all that comfortable participating in a worship. She felt that the standards of the music program in our church were quite high. ...She felt that there was the need for four part harmony...So she felt a little bit intimidated. Standard would be formal, quiet in worship. In the vision statement it says good quality music... that can have an intimidating effect because who defines quality?*

The response above seems to call for seeds to be planted in both the hearts of the white dominant existing congregation members and the hearts of the Filipino group. The dominant group needs to be sown with seeds of openness to difference and change. The Filipino group with seeds of bravery to move into a space and experience that is new to them. This leads nicely into our next theme.

**Try new things and Attend to young and newer people:**

19) *I think a combination of how this (intercultural commitment) is in Scripture and how we believe. How it is present in our denomination and in our history in opening doors for the*

*marginalized and their issues, things like ordination of women. We have taken not only a prophetic role but also a pioneer role. In doing things where society is not there yet, nor other churches. But we have been blind to the fact that the demographics in Canada are changing and we in the church are not. We are neither a mean denomination nor have done everything bad, but we must go deeper. We must take commitments we have made more seriously and be more intentional.*

*2) The church could be more "permission givers." Because the church as gotten to be so small, a lot of focus is on council members, doing the maintenance stuff.... There has to be more opportunities for people to try new things and given permission to try new things.... when people are coming and offering their gifts they need a lot of encouragement.*

*17) Personally it's just because of women of (non-European) ethnic background, some people are just not into it. It's hard to convince those people. Instead, we should aim for young people, educating children what intercultural means. I don't think there will be a barrier in doing that.*

*2) Diversifying participating group, not just racialized group but youth. Maybe it's become so professionalized that it's always the minister doing things. More lay participation, that is "a whole change in culture. We have to go back to a kind of house church where people are leading bible studies and this and that."*

*17) If we have more intercultural services, that would help. I was thinking of a heritage week. So even some look like white Canadians their backgrounds are different. We must do more of that. Educating would make a big difference.*

*11) (The future of the church is to develop) diversifying students' demographics in theological education because majority of students are also dominant culture and so until we start to shape, the future of the church is not going to be coming forward.*

The following speeches warn against a church that is palliative centred and backward looking:

*(1) There is no future with hardened hearts, small imaginations, and lack of exposure (to new things and new people).*

*5) (The challenge we face for the future of the church is that we are) too comfortable. I ask people to think big and to imagine a new reality... the answers were so very tiny.*

*2) How people are stuck on its traditions, too rigid, which becomes exclusive to newer members.*

2) *I am starting to see more and more that our church is designed for seniors. Generally the worship style is made so that seniors are comfortable. If we had a congregation that was designed for young people (people in their 30's) it would look a lot different.*

2) *I like that analogy that "the good news of the Gospel is that the last shall be the first." Building something more inclusive together and not having who was here first, and not having tradition weight so strongly. Instead new voices will be heard and how do you encourage those voices to speak. I've been thinking a lot recently about being missional. This means instead of always thinking about who is there at worship, you must also think about who's not there. And that we have to be open to where they might be at. So we often only think about the people here and the members instead of thinking about what God would want; what the people out in our neighborhoods would want.*

5) *It plays a big role in my larger vision of the church that has very much yet to be realized. I think it's a tremendous thing to hold up and should our church actually succeed in becoming an intercultural church it would be a truly revolutionary movement.*

### **Be Patient and Optimistic, "The Last shall be the First"**

5) *"the good news of the Gospel is that the last shall be the first" is a really great idea and I think it's a really, really long way away.*

17) *I am optimistic (about our multiple and marginalized identities can be building blocks to create a community of faith that is intercultural and just) but I think it takes time for people to change their thinking. It's not going to change overnight.*

8) *Intercultural ministry does not mean a lot unless you put action and create meaning. It is not about checking off and move on. It is about keeping going for revival and renewal of the church. It is an ongoing, never ending, steady and patient journey.*

3) *I give them the time and space to tell their honest feelings. We as oppressor just have to "listen and listen and listen until we can really establish a good relationship."*

19) *The good news of the Gospel is that "the last shall be the first" is nothing new. I see in the Gospel: in the bible constant stories, constant challenge to the establishment as we understand it. This for me is the core of the Gospel. God said in Genesis diversity is good and in Revelations everyone is worshipping in different tongues, cultures, sizes, and ages. For me that is the part of the Gospel story.*

9) *I can make some difference to create a community of faith that is intercultural and just. But how fast I don't know. I think that is where the challenge lies because sometimes it feels like it*

*is an uphill battle you know, gotta be constantly working at it, but for me, what we would like isn't the vision but the vision we pull forward, we may not get to that point but it's the process of a journey there. I am pretty passionate about that. I will keep at it even when it seems tough.*

*2) The vision is a wonderful one, to become intercultural, to share their gifts and be welcome; to have a worship service that is truly reflective of people's culture and where they're coming from and they feel energized by the service and uplifted and they see themselves in it. Like right now we don't see the youth in it very much. So an intercultural would be comfortable for people of all ages, abilities, etc. So how do you get there? And how do you present that vision? It's trying to help people become aware that our church is very mono-culture. But there is a journey and it's a challenge because people are not used to change, because if you change something and they don't like it, do you keep pushing? And do you just make the change or do you try to explain to people what you're doing? Sometimes I think if you explain it, they might now like it and then you don't get to try it. I don't know which to do first. For example, PowerPoint projection. So sometimes I do something and it works, sometimes it doesn't. Some people love it and some people don't. After 2 years finally people were liking it. At the beginning I heard more negative than positive. Likewise, everything takes time. We all need to learn to be patient.*

### **Remember Who You Are:**

*17) I think it (becoming intercultural) will help a lot because the people in the pews will be more sensitive to people coming from different ethnic backgrounds and once they understand I think we will resolve a lot of issues. It's just the not knowing is the big problem. Wherever I can, I try to educate people, just to let them know that even though I look different we are together as disciples of Christ. We have one faith. To help them to be educated enough to know who I am and my background. As a leader I try my best to educate them.*

*9) It is an opportunity for growth and for a deepening of relationship and of faith because I trust that God walks with us and all that we do. I think back to Jesus' baptism at the beginning of his ministry where you know the heavens opened and said, "this is my beloved I am well pleased." Each of us is a child of God and we are all created in God's image and God has named us and that's good and that recognizing that in each other that I am a child of God. I firmly believe that if we're listening and if we're attentive and if we're awake to the spirit within us something amazing can happen. Even though there are challenges to being a part of the marginalized with some privileges in the UCC, I am still encouraged by those.*

### **Give up the Power of being at the Centre**

4) In order (to become fully intercultural) to happen, dominant culture people are going to have to give up something. But there is great resistance to that. They're also going to have to own their position of power and name it. But most dominant culture people won't want to go there.

2) Unless we are ready to give up, we will always think about survival. But 5) every institution has a life of its own. And people end up serving the institution instead of the institution serving people/God when we don't learn when and how to give up the power. It takes 5) the work of spirit, the work of heart, and the work of prayer.

5) Our church is so rule and structure bound. That is a sign of dying church. In order to renew our church as a decolonized church and more of an indigenous church, we need to give up the power of being in the centre.

4) My church couldn't care less if there was another person of colour, but what they do care about is the fact that our membership in the UCC has gone down 50%. That is the sign of dominant culture people resisting to give up their power.

3) While most united church members are 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants and they struggled (their ancestors struggled) to settle down in Canada/ But now they have a lot more money and economic power... The mainstream church is a theology of prosperity. Most of the congregation never experienced the struggle of having a church building in Canada, for example . They don't understand the new immigrant situation where they do not have a church building. And they have a bigger need to come to church because of their economical struggle. People need God so they come to the church. But when people don't need God (because they have money and economic power), how can you see the use of the building faithfully for God's mission? Mission is inviting all people to be part... but now the new generation needs to engage with the Bible. The first challenge is to read the bible. Then they need to understand about conversion. Is it about daily conversion, and without understanding this piece they cannot understand the joy, and they just hold the church building, and it's not faithful. The consequence of their unfaithfulness. God is waiting for people to convert.

9) We have to change our story, that is at the very core of it we have to change the way we tell our story and who are the players in the story because for me it's about that narrative. How do we understand who we are in relation to one another in relation to the world, and if we are at the centre, if we still have that mindset, we are the subject and everything (everyone) else is object then that is not based on mutual respect. If we tell our story in a way that recognize the image of God and each other and if we can actually have that change the way we treat each other that would naturally become intercultural. It is changing the story that we are not the most important thing or people. I would say that it goes all the people like majority and those at

*the margins. We need to lament all that from the past and perhaps in our present but there is something beyond and our story needs to change and evolve as we move, rather than we stay in that same cycle.*

### **Lament and Do not Fear:**

*8) I'd offered to facilitate toward justice and right relationship which is a five module five session study of umm exploring the legacy of residential schools. It's a process that invites the people in the study, for the five sessions it says don't jump to solutions right way to stay in with the difficult place or brokenness to lament to stay with the lament until you get to five because what, especially well meaning people of privilege want to do is they hear the problem let's fix it, wait a minute, wait a minute, to jump to fix it is to skip over the pain and we need to be in the lament and one of the things. I would say that the church needs to embrace lament. The church needs to learn to lament. Truly being intercultural and truly breaking down the barriers cannot happen until we all move into the experience of the pain and the brokenness and the missed opportunities and, and the injustice of the barriers. Until you know what the wall is that you're trying to take apart you'll never take it apart and that together we need to be willing to embrace pain umm and know and trust and have faith that God is with us in the pain that (pause) we have a God who is capable of resurrection.*

*Easter Sunday means nothing without Good Friday absolutely nothing and the church in so many ways. I think all of us, this human nature would love to skip the Good Friday part of the becoming an intercultural church. Racialized people have been forced into the Good Friday place but we can't get from Good Friday to the Easter without the rest of the church being with us in the pain and the betrayal and the crucifixion and the death of Good Friday. And I think that's why the prostitutes and the tax collectors you know, I think it was Luke's Gospel that says, well we'll get to the kingdom of heaven before and I think that rings true because they're the people who are closest to the lament of God's heart in the brokenness of our world.*

*13) I don't know there's like this soul wound in the church or something and like I don't know if it's grieving through the loss of white privilege because the power dynamics in society or in the church are shifting. It is so much fear based rhetoric. It is true that people are tired but part of that is people stick with what they are comfortable with.*

*13) Getting over their fear (say, confronting land claims does not mean a complete 180 degree overturning of the system)*

### **Receive the Gifts of the Spirit (curiosity, positive energy, and paradox)**

*1) It's hard for me to think of a negative because I try to turn them into positive.*

*1) Unless you change the hearts of the people, if they don't have the heart to listen to their voices, then it will stay the status quo.*

*3) The law or the policy can change. But it does not change the people. Usually it takes about 3 generations to change a culture. I don't expect them to change quickly...to make it happen we have to work on it, the heart of the matter.*

*5) A group of primarily white people that are waiting for asking for permission. There is the willingness and the energy to be corrected and changed.*

*3) Having been the first woman minister in many places, who is confident. Making people shock is also a gift because my presence will be their learning process.*

*2) For me, who used to be Anglican, UCC was liberating in terms of liturgical language.*

*3) my character is optimistic. My method is not competitive, not aggressive. It needs a process or conversation. I always think of truth, instead of who is winning. I don't judge.*

*4) I am a maverick. I speak my mind. If something is unjust I will name it. I will not let dominant culture people speak for me.*

*9) A positive open curiosity that comes from truly wanting to learn and expand their own understanding and if it's meant as a starting point for a relationship that we can develop and I am welcome. But if curiosity is for judging or anything negative then that is not helpful towards intercultural. In open curiosity there is that eagerness to learn more and to be challenged in different ways and that it wasn't one-sided. It's not one person trying to teach the other person but it's that we share and learn from each other and maybe we're transformed in that encounter.*

*Open to surprises. For example, who would have thought that an Orthodox Rabbi who completely changed my life? He loved God so much he made me want to love God.*

*3) Paradox, the last could be first but then the first could be last.*

How can I conclude this course? It is hard to make a conclusion when the future of church is already spoken and envisioned in such concise and proclamatory ways as these above. Instead, it may be wise to listen to the elders among the interviewees. Earlier I have referred to the stories of five Aboriginal leaders as a way of honoring their wisdom and receiving their wisdom in turn. As a church, as a community of faith, we have not been successful in respecting the elders, certainly failed to listen to our Aboriginal elders. As a society, shaped by the individualized notion of self, we have not learned how to grow to be a self (young self) in

relation to and in light of the teaching of our previous generations. In the first course of this feast, we pointed out that mentorship, learning and teaching by example (from our elders and leaders who have gone before us), is a much needed area, intrinsic to leadership and succession planning of our church. For these reasons, I have decided to include the stories of the two eldest participants from this research. I would designate them as elders not simply because they are the oldest participants in this group. Their wisdom is unique in terms of their long experience of teaching and ministry in theological schools and in the church, and of providing leadership to the various courts of the United Church. To envision the future of the church is, ironically, to revisit the past, honoring those who have gone before us. It is almost universal to claim that in most religions and cultures wisdom is found and passed on from the elders. So here we have a chance to rediscover this tradition.

Shema (Hear), O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

This “Shema” teaching echoes in the teachings of our elders, The Rev. Dr. Kyoung-Ja Kay Cho and The Rev. Dr. Wenh-In Ng. Kay Cho’s teaching is found in the Korean book called, *At Place Where I Live*. This book is an anthology of the five Korean Canadian women from Toronto who shared their immigrant life in writing. It is a translated summary of her essay called “The Rainbow Ministry.”<sup>73</sup>

*It has been such a long time since I got a chance to really rest due to my hospitalization. I have been blessed with many letters of comfort and get-well cards. While feeling overwhelmed, I sense the pressure and tense moments, the urge to write this essay to keep the deadline for the newspaper. My feeling may be similar to the writers of the New Testament who had an urgency to tell the Good News, the triangle relationship between God, the neighbours and myself. To know that you are loved by God and my neighbours is to also know that you are related to and responsible for them.*

*While reading the letters from my congregation, I cannot help but project the letters with the faces of blonde hair and blue-eyed members who are so intently listening to my sermon full of Konglish (English with an Korean accent),*

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<sup>73</sup>Kay Cho, “Rainbow Ministry,” in *At Place Where I Live* (Voice Publishing House: Seoul, Korea, 1989), 214-216.



*so attentively looking at me, who is dwarfed by the Pulpit that is designed to fit the big white male minister. Then I confess, "I don't know how to say thank-you for the love and the care so strong that they permeate into my bones. It is YOU, the lay people who are doing the ministry to me, rather than I as the ordained minister am doing a ministry to you." Then one member tells me, "Ministry is not the work that you do alone. It is with us together." Another member says, "We are doing a rainbow ministry, in some ways." The other adds, "Right on. A true ministry is a rainbow ministry and not a ladder one." The last one sums up, "The ministry of hierarchy, from the member, to deacons, to the elder and then the minister, is dangerous. What if one slips off the ladder, trying to climb up to be higher than others, it endangers the whole community of falling down." Finally, I join in their conversation, "I love the metaphor of rainbow as our ministry. The rainbow is the symbol and the biblical witness of God's promise. It is also beautiful, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, navy, and purple, each colour radiant yet in harmony with each other. Each member of our congregation, just as each colour of the rainbow, shares her and his gifts, radiantly illuminating for the sake of God, seeking to create a space of peace and harmony. I think that is the rainbow ministry."*

*The January Sunlight, shining through my hospital window, touches the chandelier crystal, creating a rainbow colour, as if it makes a promise of a rainbow ministry, comforting my pain and despair to lift up a future of healing and hope ahead...*

Let us listen to the elder Wenh-In Ng's wisdom in response to the question, "what do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities facing the United Church as it aims to live up to its commitment to become fully intercultural?" (See # 9 in Appendix 3):

*It is the fact the people in power are still white majority, even though we have a mayor in Calgary who is Muslim and I was reading something about "oh look at Toronto's City Council." The percentage was under 20%, and look at Toronto itself. So I think one of the biggest hurdles is as long as the powers that be (Ottawa or whatever) are still majority Euro Anglo, this process is an ongoing process. It's what Beverley Tatum says, "anti-racism work or fighting for justice or intercultural ventures, is like going up the escalator. If you stay there you're going to go down." The Chinese saying goes "learning is like going upstream in a boat, if you not progressing you are already going behind. So where the church and Canadian society has to start is it has to help people (even the people who*

*feel powerless like white women who feel they have no power), they actually have a lot of social power. So it's to unmask that white privilege. I am part of Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network, the next resource we are producing is about white privilege. It is to help congregations who are still majority realize that the need to acknowledge their privilege, otherwise they won't (just like class privilege) there's no sense going to do charity, you're not into justice work. So the UCC cannot change the system by itself because we still exist within a very colonializing vestige of colonialization. Not just here but around the world. Just look at Aboriginal peoples. So how do we stand in solidarity? That is one thing that I want to do, horizontal relating. I want to relate to people with a lot more power than me; and I want to do more stuff around the margins. And the people in the middle, we can be in solidarity with them and they can help us. But you cannot do it with people who are not conscious about their privilege.*

*Justice for me is the other side of the word love. So for me justice is primary. And therefore, it takes the form of racial justice. Not only for minoritized persons but for the other, and white colleagues because it diminishes them as us. Not maybe as much as it diminished the racialized person but when they do the racialization they also diminish their own humanity. So that's an area that I've done a lot of work. I'm into anti-poverty and all this homeless stuff, but my passion is in the mutuality, respect of people's identity that they couldn't change because they were born that way. And that also extends to bi-racial people and multi-racial people because, again, when a child comes out of that union... (a lot of European Anglo people are Welsh, English but they've never thought about it because they were not penalized for it. For them it was fine.) There was a group called exploring faith through the eyes of culturally diverse people now still at Emmanuel college. And there was this Welsh person and two majority Anglo people and one of them started to say, I just think of myself as Canadian, then we say "no, what about your 5 generation, who were they?" So you have to push that so they don't even acknowledge that they have an ethnic identity. So justice is central to our vision of the reign of God.*

It is a time to bring our feast to a close, the banquet provided by a group of racialized women ministers in the United Church. It is freely offered. So please come and receive the blessing.

“When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be

blessed, because they cannot repay you, for your will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:12-14)

### Part III What Next?

The end is the beginning in our faith and faithful journey. As one of my McGeachy group members said, “*ministry is not the goal of the church but the process. The goal is how to be faithful.*” Thus, it is only appropriate to suggest remaining thoughts and further areas of study, marking a new beginning from this end, a modest closure of this particular study.

#### Remaining thoughts

The metaphor of “feast” or “banquet” and the use of the research materials as “ingredients” of the meals for the feast and the banquet as well as the themes viewed as the courses in the feast aim to honor and recognize our sensory knowledge that is beyond the realm of the cognitive and logical analysis. It evokes creativity that is inherent in us yet is undercut by our traditional and conventional way of thinking and writing. Knowledge is produced to privilege certain ways of presenting that secure hegemony and status quo. This report attempted the counter-conventional way to opt out for alternative ways that unlock the security of hegemonic knowledge by revealing stories that are highly personal, anecdotal, and may be perceived as ‘biased.’ In fact, such (ill) treatment is nothing new in the academy, and certainly in the church politics and policies’ discourse. When stories that deal with injustice, marginalization, discrimination and inequity, are characterized as ‘anecdotal’ and criticized as ‘biased’ in the academic research, it signals and communicates a dominant methodological conceit. Prof. Malinda Smith from University of Alberta, a political scientist, who does research on equity, race, gender, and social justice, captures this issue well: “this critique [anecdotal and biased]... assumes the role of a social science scholar is to advance a ‘scientific frame,’ one which offers an ostensibly objective account of social reality.... Storytelling...reveals the excavated and submerged experiences, and engages subaltern voices without granting epistemic privilege to the oppressed or any pretension that those who are marginalized speak with one voice.”<sup>74</sup> I hope that this feast has offered “critical tales” and “unapologetic use of creativity” from our participants whose stories and experiences unsettle and contest a dominant methodological conceit. After all, this feast deals with the bodies of real people, arguing for these bodies as “epistemological sites and sources of knowledge” which are imperfect but honest and “keeping

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<sup>74</sup> Malinda Smith, Gender, whiteness, and ‘other Others’ in the academy, 43-44.

alive a sense of what it means to live in the world,"<sup>75</sup> the world of the United Church and the world beyond it.

### **Further areas of study**

Using the metaphor of an iceberg, we have to say that our study has not even touched the whole part of the tip of the iceberg. While this study touched the tip for sure, we have a long way to go in fully and faithfully examining and discovering the whole of the iceberg, full of differences, particularities and complexities. Here are some of the areas I offer as a few areas to work on:

First, we need a fuller data of who/where the racialized ministers are. This includes male clergy as well as diaconal ministers and designated lay ministers. One interviewee wondered how many of my racialized clergy sisters are in rural ministries. The UCC should continue to collect the data of the demographics of racialized ministers because it is of importance on many different fronts and grounds.

Second, as remarked the discussion around symbols, it would be interesting to investigate how dressing affects female and male clergy. Dress is such an important part of personal, professional and vocation identity. It also makes up part of the social fabric, establishes hierarchy, reflects culture attitudes, perspectives and wisdoms. Thus, this topic on clergy clothing would generate fruitful insights. While I am finishing this report, the news on the Quebec government's proposal of a Charter of Quebec Values, banning people from wearing religious clothes and symbols in while working for public institutions has been making headlines. Apologists for this legislation such as Bernard Landry, the former premier of Quebec, overtly criticized Anglophone multiculturalism and contended that newcomers are better off if assimilated into the Western liberal society.<sup>76</sup> But can privileging of European white de-Christianized and de-religious culture really lead to more harmony? It seems that not only Quebecers but many English speaking Canadians agree that it does. What does this mean for the church as a religious institution in a society that does not tolerate religious difference or expressions of religious individuality?

Finally, another topic, raised in examination of leadership, is about a study on ethno minority and ethno specific congregations in relation to the intercultural commitment and mandate. There has been opinions (which have never been documented in public to my knowledge) that a decision to become an intercultural church only serves English speaking and dominant White

<sup>75</sup> Kristy Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing: A Case for Phenomenologically Oriented Religious Studies Ethnographics" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79:2 (June 2011), 402.

<sup>76</sup> CBC radio, August 29, 2013, accessed at <http://www.cbc.ca/asithappens/features/2013/08/29/bernard-landry-quebec-bashing-anglophone-coverage-of-secular-charter/>, September 4, 2013.

congregations and that intercultural ministry will not contribute to strengthen ethnic minority (non-white, non-English speaking) congregations. I have heard these opinions more than once from more than one group. However, unless we intentionally make an effort to document this issue to see what is actually happening to ethno specific congregations and examine the situations with proper analysis we run the danger of turning a deaf ear to those with insights and experiences that are critical to the health of our church.

All of these areas of study require a serious consideration of an “ensemble of subject positions”<sup>77</sup> which entails a new methodological approach to ethnography. Over the last ten years, ethnography has gained acceptance in religious studies and practical theology but it is viewed with some suspicion as an insufficient methodology. As this particular study has contested this idea. Further studies should continue to engage real people in order to attend to their needs, neglected realities. Furthermore, all of the suggested studies cannot be properly carried out unless such ethnographical approach is equipped with critical scholarships including postcolonial theories, critical race theories, and a critical Canadian studies. In fact, one without the other may end up taking a colonialist stance. But equipped with both capacities, we can and will grasp the complex realities and make meaningful connections, which lead us to create a web of life, the Body of Christ, intertwining our own flesh, bones, blood, and sweat with that of others.

## Appendix 1

### Identities Form

#### PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- Aboriginal
  - First Nation
  - Metis
  - Inuit
- Non-Aboriginal racialized (specify ancestry) \_\_\_\_\_
- Hybrid or bi-racial (specify ancestry) \_\_\_\_\_
  - If you have felt “forced” to choose one identity over the other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Visible minority (i.e., not white)

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Bramadat, “Religion, Race, and Remembering: Indo-Caribbean Christians in Canada,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79:2 (June 2011), 335.

- Language of comfort \_\_\_\_\_
- Born in Canada
- Born elsewhere
- Childhood spent mainly in Canada
- Childhood spent mainly elsewhere
- If elsewhere, age at which you immigrated to Canada
- Identify today as an “immigrant”
- Identify today as a “Canadian citizen”
- Both parents born in Canada
- Both parents born elsewhere
- One parent born in Canada/one born elsewhere
- LGBT/queer
- Person with disability
- Marital status
  - Single
  - Living as a couple
- Family/household status
  - Live with children in household
  - Live without children in household
  - Live with other family members (parent/sibling, etc.)

## Appendix 2

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FOR THE STUDY OF RACIALIZED ORDAINED WOMEN MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

**RESEARCHER:** HyeRan Kim-Cragg (Professor of Pastoral Studies, St. Andrew’s College, Saskatoon)

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**RESEARCH ASSISTANT:** Jamie Armstrong (Employee of Jane Armstrong Research Associates)

[Jamie@armstrongresearch.com](mailto:Jamie@armstrongresearch.com) 416-903-9022

#### The Research Project and Process:

As a recipient of the McGeachy Senior Scholarship 2011, I am engaged in a project to produce a comprehensive data around the identities of the racialized ordained women (including queer) ministers of the United Church of Canada (UCC) and study their pastoral, pedagogical, and priestly leadership. As a key part of this research involves conversations and interviews with people who have served, are serving, and will serve as ordained women ministers and their congregations. The object of these interviews is to provide the opportunity for their voices, stories, to be heard, to hear about the joys and challenges of their ministries, and to construct the pastoral theologies that entail interculturally competent leadership.

**How I Will Use the Data:**

Most interviews will be done by my research assistant, who is employed by Jane Armstrong Research associates, while I will do some interviews and the final analysis of the entire research. I hope to prepare a report for the use of both church and academic circles. This may take the form of printed and on-line material (book and/or journal articles). I will share my report with the Academic committee of the St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon Theological Union, as well as my academic guilds of North American Academy of Liturgy and Religious Education Association.

**How I Will Keep the Data?**

The data that is collected will be stored in the hard drive of my work computer, which is protected by me and secured by the University. Unless there is consent by the participant, no one other than myself will have access to it. There may be a possibility to be used for the future research that is related to the current research. Otherwise, it will be kept undisclosed for 10 years.

**Your Participation and Consent:**

The academic community in Canada mandates that all research involving human beings, including the sort of interviews I am conducting, be governed by ethical guidelines and include the full and informed consent of the participants. In order to adhere to these guidelines and to respect your rights and privacy, I ask you to sign this form indicating the extent of the participation you are willing to undertake.

The reverse of this document contains a consent form. You and I or Jamie will each keep a copy of the form, and you can contact me at the above email or phone, or my supervisor, Principal Lorne Calvert ([lorne.calvert@usask.ca](mailto:lorne.calvert@usask.ca); 306-966-8975, St. Andrew's College, 1121 College Dr. Saskatoon, S7N 0W3) at any time for information or if you have concerns. The interview process will take 2-4 hours.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT!

**The Study of the Racialized Ordained Women Minister Interview Consent Form**

**Name of Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Congregation and Community:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

I understand my rights as a participant in research involving the study of the racialized ordained women ministers of the United Church of Canada, as described on the previous page. Understanding that I may withdraw from the research at any time, I consent, by marking the circles beside the applicable statements, to the following:

**1. Interview:**

- I agree to participate in a recorded interview with the researcher (HyeRan Kim-Cragg) or the research assistant (Jamie Armstrong) about my experiences as ordained minister and/or to be.

*or*

- I agree to participate in an interview with the researcher (HyeRan Kim-Cragg) or the research assistant (Jamie Armstrong) about my experiences as ordained minister and/or to be, with the researcher taking written notes only.

**2. Interview Material:**

I grant permission to the research to use the material from this interview in print and electronic materials and in teaching settings in the following ways:

- IDENTIFYING ME IN ANY RESOURCE LIST THAT ACCOMPANIES THE RESEARCH

*and*

- ATTRIBUTING MY RECORDED WORDS AND IDEAS TO ME, understanding that the researcher will share these with me for final consent before including them in any print or shared electronic resource

*or*

- QUOTING MY WORDS AND IDEAS ANONYMOUSLY ONLY

**Interviewee** signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer** name and signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 3**

### **McGeachy Research Project (HyeRan Kim-Cragg): Discussion Guide (FINAL)**

**1. Introduction/ Establishing identities / background /overall perceptions of injustice and discrimination**

To begin, I want to assure you that all of our conversations are confidential and of course all of your contributions will be anonymous when we prepare our final report. The overall findings of our research will be used to inform this project only and at all times your identity will be protected. In other words, your name will never be associated with any of the findings.

Could you please tell me how you would like to identify yourself. Ask interviewee to complete attached **Identities Form**.

Throughout this interview, I will be asking you for some details about your experiences, good and bad as they relate to your various identities. But for now, can you tell me, in general, the extent to which you personally have experienced injustice / discrimination as a result of each identity described above. Use



a scale of 1 to 10 where 1? means you have *not* experienced a great deal of injustice or discrimination and 10 means that you have experienced “a great deal” of injustice or discrimination. Your answer can be about your life in general, both inside and outside the church.

## **2. Theological education /ministry preparation/admission processes**

Where and when did you receive your theological education?

What degree(s) do you hold?

Did you enjoy your studies in general?

For you personally, what was good about your studies and what was bad?

Was your school aware of, and sensitive to, the topic of intercultural leadership and racialized/gendered/queer identities?

If so, tell me about any related events or programs that your school sponsored? Were these helpful?

What kinds of events or programs or curricula development would you like theological schools to offer in preparing for ministry in the future?

Generally speaking, would you say your school did an excellent, good, only fair, or poor job of preparing you for intercultural leadership and ministry?

Why do you feel that way?

Turning now to your experiences as a racialized/gendered/queer person going through ministry preparation including internship and admission processes, would you say that overall your experiences were good or bad?

What was good? What was bad ?

If you experienced discomfort or observed others experiencing discomfort, what suggestions do you have to make these processes more comfortable? What reforms might you recommend?

## **3. Overall feelings about GC 39’s commitment to interculturalism**

As you know, General Council 39 made a commitment to becoming an intercultural church. Does this commitment mean a lot to you and your ministry? Or does it have little to do with you and your ministry? Why do you say that?

Do you feel that you, personally, have a role to play in advancing this commitment that the national church has made? If yes, what specifically do you mean by that?

Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic that that your multiple and marginalized identities can be building blocks rather than stumbling blocks to create a community of faith that is intercultural and just?

Intercultural journeys are far from easy. They can involve discomfort, loneliness, and pain-bearing. Overall, would you say that your intercultural journey so far as being very difficult, somewhat difficult, not very difficult or not at all difficult?

Can you share one or two examples of both negative and positive experiences (stories/incidents/adventures) and tell me how you have used them (or could have used them) to strengthen interculturalism within your community of faith?

For example, a church I know has done an “intercultural bible study” as an intentional community building initiative between newcomers and existing members, between English speaking and English learners. They are focussing on the stories of Biblical women (who are often racialized, non-Jewish origin, and/or marginalized in society) by learning about each other in the church community. This kind of practice is a positive success story of showing what intercultural journey looks like.

#### **4. Structural and systemic polity issues**

In addition to thoughts you may have around how the United Church might reform its candidacy/internship/admission processes (asked above), I would now like to talk about governance of the United Church and, if you feel it is necessary, how the church might introduce reforms to reflect its commitment to interculturalism?

Specifically, are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way decisions are made in the United Church, i.e., through the various courts of the church: your own congregation’s governing body / Presbytery/Conference/General Council ?

Do you feel that you and other marginalized people have a voice and that your voice is heard at the various levels of the church?

From your own personal experience and that of others with whom you have shared stories, do you feel that racialized ordained ministers are full participants in decision-making at each level of the church?

What are the barriers to full participation? Are they related to exclusion as a result of cultural issues/ language issues /meeting protocol issues?

## 5. Immigration/intercultural issues

Now I want to get more personal. If some of my questions seem too invasive, just tell me and I will move to a different set of questions.

If you immigrated at some point to Canada, what was the whole experience like (assuming you were old enough to remember the experience)? Was it generally good or bad? Were you afraid or confident? Did you feel excited or concerned about the future? Were you optimistic or pessimistic? Did you feel welcomed or not?

How has your experience of immigrating affected your view of the world and specifically your ministry?

For people who were born in Canada: What does immigration mean to you as a racialized Canadian-born person? In other words, even though you were born here, due to your skin colour, or as a non-European looking person, people may have treated you as if you were a recent immigrant. Have you had such experience?

## 6. Skin colour, language, female body

When you are leading worship, how conscious are you of your identities that make you different from some people in your congregation. With respect to each of the following, are you very conscious, somewhat conscious, not very conscious or not at all conscious of...

- Your skin colour, if it is different from most people in your congregation
- Your skin colour, if you are bi-racial
- Your accent, if you have a less dominant one
- Your female body

Do you think that the majority of people in your congregation are comfortable or not comfortable with your identities?

What about when you preach about racism (or homophobia)? Are people uncomfortable or defensive?

Are you always conscious of issues around marginalized identity when you are preaching, regardless of the topic of your sermons?

Have you ever felt that people in your congregation or elsewhere in the church have questioned, misunderstood or romanticized your identity? (E.g., even though you might have been born in Canada, people asking questions like “where are you from,” or people asking about how your family is doing during the Japanese earthquake, even though you are Korean, or being assumed to be smart because you are Asian, or people being disappointed when you bring non-Jamaican food to a pot-luck lunch since they think that if you are from the Caribbean you are only allowed to contribute that culture’s food.)

Do you have experiences of being tokenized or targeted due to your racialized identity? Please elaborate.

### **7. Gender (in)equity issues**

Turning now to issues mainly related to the fact that you are a female...

Do you happen to know whether there are inequities in the distribution of female and male ordained ministers around the country? If so, what are the inequities that you perceive?

Many more women than men serve rural churches, and many more men than women serve urban churches. Have you ever faced inequity such as this?

Also, male ministers generally receive more benefits and higher salaries than female ministers. Have you experienced such discrimination?

Similarly, some people report that single or childless ministers, especially female, experience discrimination because many congregations seem to want to call a minister with a traditional family structure – for example, a husband and wife and two kids! If you are single/divorced/childless, is this something you personally have experienced? Or have you heard stories from your friends or colleagues about such cases?

Another issue that I want to ask you about has to do with the topic of living as a couple and being in a relationship that is inter-racial, intercultural or inter-national. If you are in such a relationship, could you tell me how your relationship affects and shapes your understanding of leadership, community and ministry?

### **8. Pulpit issues**

I have already asked how conscious you are of your gender when leading worship. Let’s talk now more specifically about how you feel as a person carrying a female body when you are in the pulpit.

First of all, can you describe the look and feel of your pulpit, as you perceive it?

Do you usually feel comfortable in the pulpit? If yes, can you recall any time that you did not feel comfortable?

Is it located above the area where the congregation sits? If so, what in your view are the pros and cons of standing above the congregation?

Given that there are pros and cons of preaching in the pulpit, have you tried to move out of the pulpit and speak to the congregation? I know a preacher who does not use the pulpit at all, and walking back and forth in front of the congregation while preaching. There is a preacher who began preaching in the pulpit and then literally got out of the pulpit in order to convey the message more effectively. What do you think of such gesture and movement?

Some women say that regardless of where the pulpit is positioned in relation to the congregation, it feels too wide and too masculine, and that they almost disappear behind it. Does that reflect your thinking at all?

Have you ever been embarrassed when standing in the pulpit (E. g., one woman reports that because of her (small) size and the (large) size of the pulpit in a sanctuary where she was acting as a guest preacher, the chair of the worship committee decided to interrupt the sermon by putting a stool under her feet. The worship committee didn't even think about the potential for embarrassment or distraction from hearing the message either ahead of time or in the moment.)

Some would say that they don't mind looking small and vulnerable behind a pulpit because it is a physical reminder of the message they preach as a racialized and therefore marginalized minister; others say that they preach through the use of their whole body and, as such, a large and masculine pulpit can be a barrier to full expression. Which view is closer to your own?

Another perspective is that the big and masculine pulpit actually confers some level of power that helps some racialized female ministers to compensate for their marginalized identities. Does this perspective resonate with you at all?

Let's talk just briefly now about the clothes you wear when leading worship. Do you always, sometimes, rarely or never wear an alb when you lead worship?

If sometimes, when do you typically choose to wear an alb?

If you choose to wear an alb, why do you do so? Does it have anything to do with your sexuality or are there other unrelated reasons? Please explain.

If you do NOT choose to wear an alb, why is that? Does it have anything to do with your sexuality or are there other unrelated reasons? Please explain.

In your opinion, since the alb was originally designed for the male and not the female body, does it hide the female form? If so, is this, in your opinion, a good or a bad thing for a preacher in the United Church?

Have you had some comments from the congregation regarding your choice of street clothing or alb? Please describe the sorts of comments you have received.

## 9. Pastoral and Pedagogical Leadership Issues

Now we are looking to sum up this interview. I would like to give you the opportunity to talk generally about the “big picture” and your place in it.

First of all, when thinking about your racialized, gendered, and/or queer identities, would you like to add to anything you have already said about your experiences. In other words, are there any stories/incidents/adventures/misadventures that you have not yet described that you would like to share with me now in light of pastoral and pedagogical leadership?

In your opinion, what gifts can you, personally, bring to the church - and the world - as a racialized/bi-racialized/queer woman? Can you name specific, concrete teaching moments or tools or worship practices that you can provide to the rest of the church?

The good news of the Gospel is that the last shall be the first. How strongly do you relate to this idea of denouncing existing power structures and replacing them with a just and mutually loving community of God? And if you do relate to this strongly, can you share your ideas of how the fact of your marginalized identities may have been - or may continue to be – especially useful in faithfully helping you to deliver the good news and carry the weight of the message God intends us to proclaim? Can you share any success stories that have characterized your ministry?

How convinced are you that your marginal leadership can help to enable the church to listen to the voices of all marginalized people and create a space that respects differences and attends to their needs? Are you very convinced, somewhat convinced, not very convinced or not at all convinced?

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities facing the United Church as it aims to live up to its commitment to become fully intercultural?

Have you found this interview useful, affirming and positive to your ministry and work?

And finally, if you had the floor and the whole membership (current and future) of the United Church was listening, what would you want to say about the joys and challenges of being a racialized ordained woman minister in the United Church? And what would you say about the ways in which the church might actually achieve its goal of being intercultural? Please provide your wisdom and advice!!

## 10. Conclusion

Thanks ...and concluding remarks about what the research process is and plans for dissemination of results, if appropriate.