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**Ordained Ministry of Women in the Church of  
Scotland: The first forty years**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Glasgow for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Critical Studies  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis reports on an extensive qualitative study of women ministers in the Church of Scotland. It examines the literature in relation to women clergy in other denominations in the UK and the USA and considers ways in which the Church of Scotland clergy are similar and dissimilar to their counterparts.

The research included a quantitative survey, the examination of data from the Church of Scotland Yearbook and thirty one 'ministry-story' interviews.

The Survey and the Yearbook produced basic demographic data about women ministers in the Kirk showing an increasing age profile and a shortage of younger women ministers. The survey also found that women ministers considered themselves to be different from male ministers most especially in the fields of collaboration and leadership style.

The interviews considered factors in the path to ministry, women ministers in the exercise of their ministry, relationships with congregations, colleagues and the institutional Church. Whilst there was considerable progress in terms of the acceptance of women's ministry by congregations and the wider community, there was also evidence of a lack of acceptance from some male ministers and an unwillingness to confront the issue on the part of the institution. Women ministers consider there to have been some progress towards integration of women's ministry within the Church of Scotland but are also uncertain about the future and whether a backlash against women will be experienced.

Although women have been ordained to ministry of word and sacrament within the Church of Scotland since 1968, this represents the first major study of women ministers within the Kirk and will provide a background for further study and exploration.

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***To the Women Ministers of the Church of Scotland***  
***in awestruck admiration***  
***of their faithfulness, creativity, dedication and commitment***

# Introduction

This study is a major piece of qualitative research on a group which has previously been little studied. The project will provide demographic detail of this group which has never previously been compiled. The experiences of the women ministers of the Church of Scotland from childhood through to day to day working life will be heard and will be compared with those of women clergy elsewhere in the United Kingdom and in the United States of America. The present relationship between the Church of Scotland and the women ministers will be explored and anxieties about the future considered.

The Prologue provides a reflexive account of how the research came about.

Chapter One outlines the Theology, Epistemology and Methodology which underlies the project. Details of the Method are given, including a) details of sources such as the Church of Scotland Yearbook and the Ministries Council Statistics; b) the scope and limitations of the Survey; c) the concept of the ministry story interview. This chapter also makes the case for this being a form of feminist, Christian research. It explores the researcher/participant relationship and outlines ethical concerns.

Chapter Two examines the relevant literature on Women's Ministry to highlight the questions it raises. It considers whether the debate about the ordination of women is theological or cultural and concludes that the cultural argument is strong. The particular Calvinist inheritance of the Church of Scotland is considered and judged to be a mixed blessing. This chapter also raises questions about feminization of the Church, leadership styles and the 'stained glass ceiling' which are considered in later chapters. Finally it raises the disturbing question of whether women can bring about change in the Church.

Chapter Three presents the results of the quantitative part of the study. Data drawn from the Church of Scotland Year Book shows most women ministers are parish ministers in the Central Belt. The proportion of women being ordained as a proportion of the whole body of ordinands is rising. From Ministries Council figures there are inconclusive results about women candidates and a picture of a rapidly ageing ministry within the Church of Scotland. The survey shows that most women ministers are married, that they are not

desperate to move charge and that they do consider there to be some differences between male and female ministry styles. The profile of the Rev Elizabeth Average was drawn up.

Chapter Four begins the presentation of the interview results. The background influences of a Christian upbringing, Christian groups and strong role models are all evidenced. The experiences of call to the ministry are explored along with the barriers to such a call. The importance of envisioning is discovered. Training for the ministry is overall a positive experience for women ministers, though the academic training is perceived in a more positive light than the placements.

In Chapter Five we hear about the working lives of women ministers. For most of the women ministers, the primary consideration in ministry was not the gender issues but just ‘getting on with the job!’ So, in the first instance, we learn about relationships with congregations and parishes. Congregations are the front line of the Church and each congregation within the Church of Scotland is responsible for a parish and the community or communities that lie within it. In this chapter too, we glimpse some of the joys and sorrows of being in ministry, as we consider women ministers in their various roles and in their relationships with friends and families.

Chapter Six examines the relationships women ministers have with the wider Church of Scotland. We hear about relationships with colleagues both the positives and the ‘war stories’ about the negatives. This chapter records the institutional failure to discipline those who break church law on the ordination of women, then goes on to consider women ministers and the structures of the Church of Scotland. The conflicting views on whether or not the institution has changed are reviewed. It is noted that not all those who believe it to have changed consider that it has changed for the better. Whilst the Church of Scotland voted in favour of the ordination of women to ministry of word and sacrament over forty years ago, and whilst many consider that the Church has ‘done’ the women’s issue bit, it is apparent that for many women ministers, there is still some unfinished business.

Chapter Seven considers the position of women ministers in the Church of Scotland today, identifying them as pioneers, as tokens and acknowledging their marginalisation. It considers the ways in which some women choose to use this marginalisation constructively. Moving then to look at the future, the chapter considers the conflicting gender discourses within the Church as a barrier to full integration for women ministers and recognises the extent to which some women ministers feel that their position is not

secure nor the future assured. Women's ministry, for some, feels to be on the edge of a glass chasm into which all the progress might fall.

The Epilogue is a piece of creative non fiction. The blog format was chosen as a mechanism for presenting the responses to the overtly theological question in the interviews. The advantages of the blog are a) that it allows the presentation of the chosen Biblical and theological responses within their settings and b) that it help preserve the anonymity of the writers. In the epilogue we see women ministers displaying their identities as priests, pastors and prophets.

## Prologue: A tale of explanation!

The family was gathered at tea time. Conversation was the usual mix of daily happenings and family banter as I chose to inform those nearest and dearest to me that I felt called to be a minister. The announcement was not as surprising as it might have been – the setting for this scene was a manse. My father was a minister, as his father had been before him. My mother's only brother was a minister and there were various great uncles and cousins and second cousins who had been in the ministry.

The reactions of my family were varied. My father, typically, made no comment. My mother expressed her concern that I was too sensitive and too easily hurt to be a minister. My eldest sister thought 'it was a waste of a good brain.' My second sister was of the opinion that I wasn't 'nearly good enough' to be a minister. My youngest sister couldn't see why anyone was interested in something so ordinary, for she was going to be a Beatle and being one of the 'Fab Four' would surely outrank anything I might do. At no point in the discussion, did anyone point out to me the obvious - in 1964 when this conversation took place, it was not possible for a woman to be a minister in the Church of Scotland!

By 1968, when I was fourteen, the situation had changed. At the General Assembly of that year, Mary Lusk successfully petitioned the 'fathers and brethren' and they concluded that 'women shall be eligible for ordination to the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament on the same terms and conditions as are at present applicable to men.' With this, perhaps less than enthusiastic decision, the way was cleared.

For me, this meant an alteration to my school timetable to allow me to study Greek. In time I went to Edinburgh University to complete, as was usual at the time, a first degree (in my case an MA in history) before applying to the Church of Scotland to become a candidate for ministry. The selection process was an alarming experience for a quiet, shy twenty one year old. I was one of only two women at the residential selection school. After much questioning about what my father thought and about what my (newly acquired) fiancé thought, I lost patience and suggested that if the assessors were really so concerned about my father and my fiancé, they should send for them. If however, they were interested in me and exploring my call to ministry, then their questions should reflect that. Surprisingly, I was accepted by the Selection School and embarked on my BD at New College. In the first year of that degree, I married. The years at university passed

successfully, though without any academic distinction and I was launched into my probationary period with a thoughtful 'bishop' and a kindly congregation. I was ordained as assistant in that congregation in 1981 and at that time could count on my fingers the number of women ministers in parishes in Scotland.

The first indication that my 'being a minister' might not be as straightforward as I had supposed, came as I began the task of applying for vacancies. I chanced upon one of the male candidates who had been in my year from New College one day. He asked where I had applied for. I named a parish and he laughed 'There's no point in you applying for that, Anne! Fergus and I both have. If we've applied, they won't take you.' In my innocence and ignorance, I was offended by his assumptions, but he proved to be so right. He and Fergus were both interviewed, though both went off to bigger and better charges, I did not even receive an acknowledgement of my application.

There followed a testing time applying for vacancies. Many vacancy committees were not courteous enough even to respond. For some I preached and was interviewed and had the dubious privilege of being 'runner up' in a number of desirable and not so desirable parishes. For many years I kept the collection of letters from clerks to vacancy committees and interim moderators, nice letters expressing their regret that I was not to become minister of this or that congregation. I was offered and accepted a part time post, doing development work in a parish where a great deal of new housing was being built. From there, my career has been wonderfully varied. I have worked in a succession of full and part time posts, and was able to accommodate two pregnancies and our sons' early years. I am now minister of a parish in central Edinburgh and have been for the last seventeen years. When I was called here, it was the first of the 'desirable' full tenure parishes in Edinburgh to call a woman. I suspect that it did so, was partly to do with its own identity as a forward thinking, liberal congregation. I am grateful to the members of Stockbridge for their friendship, support and our shared ministry over the years.

Throughout my ministry, I have tried to retain a commitment to my ongoing professional development. To which end I have completed both M.Th and D.Min courses. During the time when I was working on the D.Min., I first came into contact with feminist theology. At college I had not really been aware that 'feminist' and 'theology' could be used in the one sentence! In the last seventeen years, I have also been involved in the practical training of candidates for the ministry and have found that rewarding and

enriching. But an incident with one of my students caused me to stop and wonder - about the Church, about the ministry of women, about change.

I met Louise in the street near the church one day. She had just returned from a candidates conference and she was incandescent with rage. The conference had dealt with gender issues and she was hurt, offended and infuriated by the reactions of some of her fellow candidates and indeed by the responses of some of the staff from the Church headquarters. I suggested to her that she should simply calm down - it was their problem not hers. We women just needed to keep our heads down and not rock the boat. We just needed to work on quietly in parishes, get on with the job and prove ourselves. 'Not good enough, Anne,' she retorted and she reminded me that she had been sitting beside me during an incident in a Presbytery meeting in which I felt one of our female colleagues had been spoken about harshly and treated unjustly, because she was a woman and particularly because she was a woman who had held a position of power within the Church. That student provoked me to think, to consider, to wonder, had the Church changed in all these years of women's ministry? Was the experience of the young women coming into ministry today any different from that of those of us who were ordained earlier. As time passes and retirement approaches, I've asked myself the question more and more. So this study is an attempt to answer the question, to ask my female colleagues about their experience of the Church: to ask them whether they think it has changed, to ask them 'Whether we have made a difference?'

This research project is founded in my own experience. It is born of a troubling question and a 'need to know' (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, 1992, p. 260).

# Chapter 1 Researching the Lives of Women Ministers

## *Introduction*

This chapter first of all establishes the project as a form of Christian research, outlining the Theology, Epistemology and Methodology used in the project. It then discusses the credentials of the project as feminist research, highlighting: focus on experience; agenda for change; power, control and collectivity; and reflexivity. The Methods, both quantitative and qualitative are then described. In the quantitative method, details of sources are given and the extent and limitations of the survey are described. In the qualitative method, the concept of the 'Ministry Story' interview, a modification of the 'Life Story' interview is introduced and shown to be particularly relevant for this project. The advantages and concerns of the method are discussed.

## *Christian Research*

'In the beginning, God.....'(Gen 1; 1).

This study, as has been noted, is born of my own experience. It is driven by my commitments and understandings. First and foremost amongst these is that I am a Christian. It is this aspect of my life, rather more than my gender, educational qualifications, marital status or profession which defines me and forms my understandings. The desire to establish this research as Christian research and to ground it in theology is not only personal preference. In this study, I will be working with other Christians professionals, people for whom theology is also what underpins all their understanding and practice, so it not only makes sense that this project should begin with theology, it is necessary that it should.

Caroline Ramazanoglu advises that the best place to begin research is with 'existing beliefs and knowledge', and that we don't need to 'invent a position from nothing' (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 150). This project begins with my existing beliefs and knowledge and this chapter endeavours to make these plain.



Experts in qualitative research advise that projects begin with a trinity: ontology, epistemology and methodology.<sup>1</sup>

The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis) (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 29/30).

However, because of my Christian commitment, this project begins with a different Trinity: a Trinity of Mother, Lover and Friend (McFague, 1987) ;a Trinity of Creator, Healer and Spirit (Galloway, 1996, p. 165); a Trinity of God unbegotten, God incarnate, God among us (Ward & Wild, 1995, p. 65); a Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This project begins with God.

It begins with God because it is in my knowledge of God, that my ‘set of ideas,’ the ‘framework’ with which I approach the world, is formed. My ontology, my interpretation of the world and its realities are entirely dependent on my understanding of God. So, this section is concerned with theology, for my ontology is dependent on my theology, what I believe about the world and about human beings is drawn directly from what I believe about God. What follows is a personal statement of my theology for the purpose of making plain the commitments and beliefs about the world, about human beings and their relationships and about the nature of reality which underlie the project. However, although this statement is personal it is not individualistic, it lies comfortably within the mainstream of Christian understanding and belief in Scotland in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Theology

There is a popular perception and misconception that theology is a fixed set of beliefs and dogma, that theology is a candidate for ‘absolute truth.’ Our understandings of God and our interpretations of God are affected by the lives that we live, and by the culture that surrounds us. All human thought reflects its context. We are, after all, creatures of time and space. Theological thought is no exception. Theology, then, is not a fixed body of

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<sup>1</sup> See Ramazanoglu, Caroline *Feminist Methodology* p 11 Denzin, Norman K and Yvonna S Lincoln *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* p 33 See also Silverman, David *Interpreting Qualitative Data* p 2 – 4. Silverman uses Model, Theory and Methodology as his terms

absolute truth but is contextual. From the start, let it be noted that my personal statement of theology is located in Scotland at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Douglas John Hall in 'Thinking the Faith' comments that theology is a 'human enterprise,' that it attempts to speak of a 'living God and of God's relation to a dynamic creation' (Hall, 1991, p. 93). Whilst I do believe that there is an ultimate reality - that is God's story - human beings tell a more limited story.

Theology lives between the stories – God's story of the world and humanity's ever changing account of itself and all things. Theology is what happens when the two stories meet (Hall, 1991, p. 91).

What we human beings can understand of God then, is limited by the context in which we lead our daily lives simply because we are limited by our context.

I believe in God. In particular I believe in God who is beyond and more than a human construction or creation. In declaring that, I declare my belief in an ultimate reality. God is 'over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:6). Far from being a human construction, the reality that is God is only accessible to human beings in limited ways. Human beings, of themselves limited, are unable to perceive or apprehend this ultimate reality. 'I AM that I am.. Tell them that I AM has sent you to them' (Exodus 3; 14).

I believe that God created the universe and all life. I do not pretend to understand how. Creation, however, is not a single act but an ongoing commitment. God continues to hold us in creation. Life depends on God from moment to moment from nanosecond to nanosecond. God, wishing to be in relationship with God's creation, shows Godself to human beings in a variety of ways. The impetus of this lies with God, it is God's desire for relationship that initiates the relationship between Godself and human beings. 'This is what love really is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us' (1 John 4; 10).

Although God is ultimate reality, we as human beings understand that in God ultimate reality exists but we are unable to comprehend it fully. 'At present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror,' our knowledge now 'is partial' (1 Corinthians 13;12). As human beings we live in a world of partial understandings for we are people of a particular space and time. God, desiring relationship, shows us aspects of God, which help **us** to understand our lives and help **us** to give them meaning. It therefore follows that what God

reveals to us is not fixed once and for all, but is adapted to the context in which we find ourselves.

This project sets out to describe and interpret a limited reality. Using the experiences of women ministers, it paints a picture of Scottish Society in general and the Church of Scotland in particular, at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. This background picture gives the context in which the women ministers in the study have shaped their understandings of God, the ultimate reality. The project describes the meeting between God's story and the story of hopeful, faithful ordained women in Scotland in the last forty years.

God calls people to be God's people, to enter into relationship with God. God calls people individually, but calls them to live in community. 'If you will now listen to me and keep my covenant.....you will be to me a kingdom of priests, my holy nation'(Exodus 19; 5-6). That community we describe today as the 'Body of Christ,' the Church. Whilst Christianity is a personal religion, in that God calls each one of us personally and knows each one of us by name (John 10; 3), it is not an individual religion but a faith that is lived out in community (Acts 2; 40-47).

At the heart of this Christian God then, is community. The Trinity, the three in oneness of God is essentially communitarian. The inter-relationship is that of love and mutuality rather than power or domination. Thus the drive and focus of Christianity is to consider individuals in community rather than individuals on their own or communities on their own. Christian people live as individuals in community recognising their responsibilities as persons within their own communities, relating to one another in love and mutuality rather than seeking power or authority. As God is self-giving, so Christians are called to be self-giving. As God is loving, so Christians are called to be loving. As God is compassionate, so Christians are called to be compassionate always recognising that they are made in the image of God and should reflect God's wonder. So, this project considers individuals, but not in isolation. This study of women ministers reflects on their place in society, their interaction with the wider community that is parochial Scotland, their attitudes towards service, compassion and power.

God reveals Godself to us in many different ways. We have the words of Scripture, the stories of the Old and New Testament. These are words and whilst they may point towards truth, they are not of themselves truth. They are words, stories, always interpreted.

The words and stories were interpreted by those who first told them, by those who wrote them down, by those who edited them and are interpreted today by those who read and hear them. Each generation interprets Scripture within the community that is the Church in that particular time and place.

Likewise we see God in the traditions of the Church, in the stories that the Church has told to itself and to others over two thousand years. These again are interpreted for each new generation by the community that is the Church in that time and place. Tradition is not fixed, but vibrant and living. It is, as Elisabeth Behr Sigal, the Orthodox theologian says, the work of the Holy Spirit, to suggest otherwise is to imply

that the future of the Church is nothing more than its past indefinitely repeated. The whole history of the Church reveals, however, that even though the life of the Church is continuity, it is also dynamism and creativity. Authentic faithfulness to Tradition is creative and requires each generation to respond to new needs and challenges according to the dynamic of Tradition. Faithfulness to Tradition is the work of the Spirit in the Church, raising the heavy dough of humanity (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 30).

Christianity, then, is a storied faith. From the pages of Old and New Testaments come stories. Jesus, God incarnate, was a storyteller extraordinaire. Throughout the generations, human beings have told stories of their relationships with God and stories of God's action in their lives and in the lives of others. Robert Alter, in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, has observed that the ancient Hebrew writers developed a narrative art because only through narrative could they convey a view of human life as lived reflectively, "in the changing medium of time, inexorably and perplexingly in relationship with others" (Gilligan, 1993, p. xviii). Theology is born of people reflecting on their own experience and fitting it into those stories, stories which form the overarching meta-narrative of faith. Sam Amirtham explains this process

So we say, people make stories. This itself is a revolutionary concept. For it has always been held that "story-tellers" create stories. People only listen to them. The stories give them certain roles in life and places in society, which they often passively accept. Some stories lull them into a conformity, others challenge them and arouse a new awareness. Whenever the latter happens, people begin to construct and reconstruct their own stories. For in telling new stories, or old stories in a new way, they rewrite, remake their own history. By telling Bible stories differently, and by making new faith stories, Christians are creating a new identity, and indeed a new church (Amirtham, 1989, p. viii).

As the world develops and changes, Christians reflect on their own stories, not just in the light of the stories of the past traditions and the stories of Scriptures, but now too, in the light of the stories that come to them from other Christians all around the world. Each generation of Christians selects from the stories available to them, those which most readily make sense of the world in which they live and which shed most light on the stories of their own lives.

Ordained ministry for women has not been a salient feature in the Christian Church over the preceding two thousand years. Gradually over the twentieth century, it has become the practice of many denominations across the globe. For others it remains contested ground. The move to ordain women has for some been a matter of re-interpreting Scripture and Tradition to suit a new age and a different world. Others would argue that the ordination of women is simply a recovery of a lost tradition and the recovery of a story which has been hidden in Scripture. Given the narrative nature of Christianity, which has progressed and developed through the contextual reinterpretation of old stories and the creation of new stories, this project uses a narrative approach, drawing on the stories women ministers tell of their ministries.

For Christians, the primary revelation of God is in Jesus Christ, God incarnate. In becoming human, God sacrifices those attributes normally associated with God, omniscience, omnipotence, immortality. God does this for the sake of experiencing, and thus redeeming the human experience of death. By the incarnation, God transgresses the boundaries of mortality and enables human beings to enter into a deeper relationship. ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life’(John 3; 17). In the life and death of Jesus Christ, God models for us the perfect human life. Jesus’ teaching is concerned to show us how to live and love. His commandment ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind ....Love your neighbour as yourself’(Matthew 22; 37-39) is what inspires the life of Christians. His reminder, to ‘love one another, as I have loved you’(John 15; 12) underlies our relationships. Our knowledge of Jesus’ life is interpreted, however, in that our knowledge of the life of Jesus is encased in words and stories. We interpret these words and stories from within our own context.

Just as Creation is not a once and for all single action, neither is the incarnation. God’s willingness to be immersed in the lives of human beings continues, and on a day- to-day basis human beings experience that relationship with God. In and through other

people, they are aware of God. In the word and actions of others, human beings experience God's love. However it is not only through other people that we experience God. For many of us there are transcendent moments, moments that point to the existence of something or someone beyond the human reality in which we live. These moments of transcendence may be triggered by the grandeur of creation, the mountain top or the restlessness of the ocean. They may be triggered by the perfection of a baby's fingers or the silvery trail of a snail. However, if the moments of wonder come to us as an experience of God, how much more do the times of loss and pain? At times in their lives human beings experience dislocation and disorientation. We feel out of step with the world and that 'out-of-stepness' brings a huge loneliness, the sense that no one has experienced, or could experience our present situation. 'I know how you feel' leaves us with the total conviction that no one knows how we feel. Into this desolation comes God, not a triumphant fix-it-all God, but the broken, lonely God. The God-on-a-cross, the God who experiences daily rejection by those God loves. This is the God who offers for-giving love to all and is met with laughter or indifference. God reveals God in the wonder of creation and in the depths of despair. This is God the Spirit, God among us. It is because God is still amongst us, still involved, still speaking, that the Church can change, grow and develop. It is because God is still amongst us, still involved, still speaking, that women have come to be ordained.

The Trinity, God who is three in one; incarnation, Jesus who is wholly human and wholly divine - within the very fabric of Christianity is paradox. The dualistic, oppositional nature of much modern thought has no place here. Christians live with paradox, with the inexplicable and the unexplained. They live with mystery and questions. They live with the eschatological puzzle of the 'now' and the 'not yet.' Using the experiences of women ministers, the project considers the Church, the body of Christ and whether it truly reflects the values of the coming Kingdom, whether it lives out in the 'now' the community of creation promised in the future.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian God is not neutral or remote, but involved and passionate. God is concerned for God's creation and loves it sacrificially. In seeking relationship God shows that relationship is founded in reciprocity, therefore human beings have freedom, the freedom to love and accept God and the freedom to reject God. For there to be genuine relationship there can be no compulsion. God is concerned for the individual and has provided for individuals to live and be supported in communities.

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<sup>2</sup> For instance Isaiah 65:17 – 25, Matt 5: 3 – 12, Rev 21

It is in the nature of God to be concerned for justice and fairness and to seek to overcome poverty and oppression. 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; he has sent me to announce good news for the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4; 18-19). That concern for justice and the lifting of oppression marks the life of the Christian and in the context of this study, gives rise for the concern that women should be able to take their full place in the ministry of the Church.

## **Epistemology**

What then are the consequences for epistemology? What can we know? I believe that there is an ultimate reality, an absolute truth, but that this is in God's story. The human story does not know ultimate reality or absolute truth. So, I say 'I believe' for I think that there is almost nothing that human beings 'know' but much that they can and do believe. From a Christian perspective faith/ belief is superior to knowledge. For faith requires a relationship and in particular a relationship of trust, knowledge does not.

For practical purposes, human beings describe as 'knowledge' the structure of beliefs, and patterns of life, which enable us to go about the day to day business of living in our time and in our place. Our 'knowledge' is both constructed and contextual. We construct scientific knowledge based on a shared belief that the world is capable of rational explanation. We construct academic knowledge based on shared assumptions and patterns of thought. We construct day to day knowledge based on shared understandings of language and behaviour. We do not construct such 'knowledge' on our own, but in relationship with others. Our 'knowledge' is a system of shared beliefs and shared meanings. At the heart of this shared system of beliefs and meanings is human experience. We create a system of shared beliefs and meanings, which help us to make sense of our experiences. It is our 'knowledge' that helps us to interpret new experiences and to fit them into the story of our lives.

For the Christian, as previously mentioned, that story of human experience, interacts with God's story, to produce theology. 'Knowledge' then is not absolute but is

constructed, contextual, that is, based on our particular experiences. ‘Knowledge’ is also therefore relational. It has no existence outside of or separate from human relationship. It is in our relationships with others that we co-construct the meanings and interpretations which shape our lives. Experience is gained individually, but ‘knowledge’ is constructed and shared in community reflecting the individual and communitarian aspects of human life in relation to God.

Storytelling, in its most common everyday form, is giving a narrative account of an event, an experience, or any other happening (Atkinson, 1998). We tell stories for all kinds of different reasons. As I discovered in previous research, when trying to give an account of important attitudes or beliefs, human beings resort to stories of their own experience. Karen Sacks had a similar experience when trying to research the attitudes women held to work (The Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 88ff).

Human beings narrate to remember, instill cultural knowledge, grapple with a problem, rethink the status quo, soothe, empathize, inspire, speculate, justify a position, dispute, tattle, evaluate one’s own and others’ identities, shame, tease, laud, and entertain, among other ends. Further, these ends are not necessarily secured at the onset of narration but rather emerge over the course of a narrative’s telling. The emergent content and significance of narratives are an outcome in part of the contributions of other interlocutors. (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 60)

Recounting stories is for many of us a way of understanding. By telling stories we create meaning and often, as the quote from Ochs and Capps suggests, we do not understand the meaning until we have told the story. We tell stories to make sense of events in our lives, we fit them into a pattern or overall scheme of things, into an overall story. We make the implicit meaning in life, explicit in our stories (Jossleson & Lieblich, 1993, p. 5). We look to ‘make sense and preserve coherence’ (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003, p. 220). For Christians that means fitting the personal story into the ‘God – story’ that their faith tells. But Christians cope with paradox too and Ochs and Capps argue that human beings use narrative to articulate questions as well as answers.

All narrative exhibits tension between the desire to construct an over-arching storyline that ties events together in a seamless explanatory framework and the desire to capture the complexities of the events experiences’ including haphazard details, uncertainties, and conflicting sensibilities among protagonists (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 4).



Amongst my colleagues, the use of life story will allow me to hear the theological interpretations they give their lives and ministries as they create meaning and articulate the disjunctions. However, in order to facilitate the telling of the stories and in order to interpret them, the project draws on techniques and methods drawn, not from theology but from the social sciences. Although not sharing all of the commitments of the Empirical Practical Theologians, the project follows their intradisciplinary model of theology in that it borrows concepts, methods and techniques from other disciplines.<sup>3</sup> It is to be hoped that it would also satisfy Leslie J Robbins demand for an inter-disciplinary perspective and would satisfy the scrutiny of social scientists working outside the theological domain (Francis, Robbins, & Astley, *Empirical Theology in Texts and Tables*, 2009, p. xiv).

## Methodology

This research project explores the experiences of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland. It invites them to reflect on their own ministry, it invites them to consider the Church of Scotland as an institution and to consider the processes of change that might or might not have occurred. At heart it asks ‘Have we (women ministers) made a difference?’ Asking ‘have we made a difference’ by implication also asks ‘ought we to have made a difference?’

A project which centres on human experience takes us into the realms of qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln offers an initial definition of qualitative research as follows.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 4/5).

Silverman, however, points out that ‘to call yourself a qualitative researcher settles surprisingly little’ (Silverman, 2001, p. 2). The field of qualitative research is vast and

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<sup>3</sup> See (van der Ven, 1993, p. 101) and (Francis, Robbins, & Astley, *Empirical Theology in Texts and Tables*, 2009, p. xiv)

complex. Qualitative research ‘privileges no single methodological practice over another.....It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own’ (Denzin & Lincoln, The Landscape of Qualitative Research, 2003, p. 6). Denzin and Lincoln use the concept of the qualitative researcher as ‘bricoleur’ or quilt maker reflecting the composite nature of the process. They draw too on the images of montage and Jazz improvisation (Denzin & Lincoln, The Landscape of Qualitative Research, 2003, p. 5). These images are helpful in highlighting the layered approach to research that is necessary.

Qualitative researchers use semiotics, narratives, content, discourse, archival and phonemic analysis, even statistics, tables, graphs, and numbers. They also draw upon and utilize the approaches, methods, and techniques of ethnomethodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, rhizomatics, deconstructionism, ethnography, interviews, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, survey research and participant observation, among others (Denzin & Lincoln, The Landscape of Qualitative Research, 2003, p. 10).

It is hard not to feel as one approaches qualitative research that to call oneself a qualitative researcher in fact settles very little! However being a qualitative researcher opens many possibilities.

Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. At the same time, the field is inherently political and shaped by multiple ethical and political positions (Denzin & Lincoln, The Landscape of Qualitative Research, 2003, p. 11).

However it does reflect a commitment to considering subjectivity and experience and the recognition of the political and ethical issues underlying. In the next few paragraphs I want to explore various aspects of qualitative research which are significant for this project.

## ***Feminist Research***

When is a feminist not a feminist and what kind of feminist might he or she be? Shulamit Reinharz in *Feminist Methods* settles for a broad definition of feminist research methods. Research methods are feminist if they are used by people who identify themselves as feminist or are published in books or journals which identify themselves as feminist or are given awards by organizations who reward feminist research. She accepted

the self definition of those who claimed to be feminists doing research (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 6/7). At the same time Ramzanoglu reminds us that feminist methodology is ‘not distinguished by female researchers studying women’ (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 15), and Diane Bell agrees that ‘add women and stir’ is not a satisfactory solution (Bell, Caplan, & Karim, 1993, p. 30). This research would fit with Reinharz’s definition insofar as I would describe myself as a feminist doing research. The problem that faces defining feminist research is much the same as that which complicates defining qualitative research

Techniques that women have tended to favour are not in and of themselves specific to feminism. Indeed, they are all an integral part of -social science research and have their own histories of development and change outside and independent of feminism. Feminists may have appropriated these techniques, but they did not create them. They have also modified them although they are not alone in doing so (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 14).

Ramazanoglu recognizes the same problems acknowledging that there is no research technique that is distinctively feminist and no ontological or epistemological position that is distinctively feminist (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 15/16). Feminist research is not then simply about techniques or methods or even theoretical backgrounds. For many feminists, action is a critical part of the feminist research process. The personal is political and feminist research should engender change or it is pointless. ‘Feminist research IS feminist theory in action’ says Gayle Letherby (Letherby, 2003, p. 62), and black American Barbara Smith agrees

Women who teach, research, and publish about women, but who are not involved in any way in making radical social and political change, women who are not involved in making the lives of living, breathing women more viable. . . . if lifting oppression is not a priority to you then it’s problematic whether you are part of the actual feminist movement (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 8).

My commitment to lifting oppression is part and parcel of my Christian understanding of the world, but I do acknowledge that it would be difficult to see this piece of research as contributing in any major degree to the lifting of oppression. This research does not inherently demand a course of action from its participants. It invites them to reflect on their own ministry and practice but that is something they are accustomed to doing as part of their ongoing development. Our profession encourages us to be reflective practitioners. It is also true that some of the participants in this research might be offended

or amused by an assumption that they needed to be empowered. It is patronizing to place the respondent in the role of potential victim (Letherby, 2003).

I would, however, consider this to be feminist research and I say that with some hesitation, acknowledging that 'feminist' is a rude word as far as some of my women colleagues are concerned. Perhaps because, as Kate Figes points out

Feminist' has become one of the most loaded and ill- defined words in the English language. Almost every woman interviewed for this book, when asked if she was one said 'That depends what you mean by feminism.' All believed in the principles of equal opportunity, and recognized that women faced distinct problems as a result of their sex. But the word 'feminism' has been so successfully defined as man-hating, aggressive, anarchic and Lesbian that few were prepared to stand tall and claim it for themselves (Figes, 1994, p. 217/8).

Although I know that many of my colleagues would want to describe themselves as 'ministers who are women' rather than as 'women ministers' and I would myself have used the first description until relatively recently, I would justify this focus on the experience of women in terms of the context of today. Throughout the Western world questions are being asked about just precisely what women gained through the feminist movement. Some younger women suggest that their mothers' desire to 'have it all' has led to women being left to 'do it all.' Within the Church of Scotland in particular, as within Christianity as a whole and world religions in general, the contextual issue is the rise of right wing fundamentalism with its emphasis on the superiority of the male and the subjugation of women. The admission of women to the ministry of the Church of Scotland is relatively recent - forty years is a very short time in the life of a church - and it does not yet feel secure. Arguably there remains what Millen calls the 'barrier of male homosociability' to be overcome (Millen, p. 5.5), however, the issue may be much more critical than that. With the apparent rise in power and number of the conservative, evangelical wing in the Church of Scotland and the hardening of attitudes between the conservative and liberal wings over the issue of homosexuality, the continued presence of women in ordained ministry feels precarious. At heart, these are not debates over sexuality or gender but over the status and interpretation of Scripture. Women have a great deal to lose.

Whilst I accept that the concept of woman is 'a relational term identifiable only within a constantly changing context' (Chopp, 1995, p. 37), I do believe that in the present context it is extremely significant. Nonetheless, I heed Reinharz' warning of the dangers of seeing gender 'as the most salient characteristic of a woman, even when the woman sees it

otherwise' (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 266). However, I do believe that 'gender is a difference that makes a difference' (Letherby, 2003, p. 135), and I am grateful to those of my colleagues, who by participating in the research, accepted that this is the case.

Ramazaoglu and Holland suggest that there are the following key characteristics of feminism: It is diverse and decentred, so there is no authoritative ruling on what constitutes feminist methodology; it is exclusionary because any definition of feminism automatically excludes non feminists and 'not quite' feminists and this raises questions about the boundaries and who defines them; that it implies a case for emancipation and is only justified where gender relations are unjust or oppressive; that it implies a unified subject, thus raising the question of whether women (and men) are a real collectivity rather than a social category; and it entails some claim to common interests between women. (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 7). Letherby argues that feminist researchers should pay continuous and reflexive attention to the significance of gender as an aspect of all social life, that they should provide a challenge to the norm of objectivity, value the personal and private as worthy of study, develop non-exploitative relationships within the research and value reflexivity (Letherby, 2003, p. 74/5). I believe that this research will satisfy many of these requirements. Some of the factors which are important in the project and which support its credentials as feminist research are outlined now.

## **Focus on Experience**

Based on my theological background, I have argued that we use experience to co-create 'knowledge.' This study focuses on the experience of women.

Feminism must begin with experience, since it is only from such a vantage point that it is possible to see the extent to which women's worlds are organised in ways which differ from those of men. (Letherby, 2003, p. 42).

This feminist focus on experience also serves as a counter to the myth of objectivity. Believing that only in God's story is there absolute truth and absolute reality, this research is founded in subjectivity, in the belief that personal experience is the basis on which human beings co-construct their understandings of the world. That knowledge or understanding is never separate from, never stands apart from the individual and her or his context. Whilst this study will focus on experience, I recognise that experience is not fixed, it is not a pathway to an objective truth. Rather experience is a dialogical process which is multifaceted.

The experience of being a woman, or being black, or being Muslim, can never be singular. It will always be dependent on a multiplicity of locations and positions that are socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Enquiry*, 2003, p. 191).

As can be seen from the brief autobiographical note that begins this paper, this research is born of my own personal experience. It focuses on a question that troubles me. Feminist researchers start from our own experience for a variety of purposes. The first being a quite selfish 'need to know.' In so doing we merge public and private life, we reassure ourselves that we are starting from the standpoint of women.

Feminist researchers use the strategy of "starting from one's own experience" for many purposes. It defines our research questions, leads us to sources of useful data, gains the trust of others in doing the research, and enables us to partially test our findings. Feminist researchers frequently start with an issue that bothers them personally and then use everything they can get hold of to study it. In feminist research, then, the "problem" is frequently a blend of an intellectual question and a personal trouble (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 260).

Whilst "starting from one's own experience" undoubtedly violates the conventional expectations that a researcher will be neutral and that for many it is a deliberate antidote to androcentrism, in this case it is simply a question which has arisen in my own life and was not conceived as an attack on patriarchy. However, I would do well to heed the warnings that the 'position of "starting from one's own experience" has its limitations, particularly in the sense that it can lay the groundwork for solipsism or projection' (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 261).

## **Agenda for change**

The very act of examining only the experience of women within what was until 1968 an exclusively male ministry is in itself political. But the potential for change does not just lie within the research itself or just within the lives of the individual women who might be willing to participate. The potential for change also lies in the analysis of the experiences (Letherby, 2003, p. 62). The Christian God demonstrates a bias in favour of the poor and the oppressed, offering people life 'in all its fullness' (John 10:10). Whilst it cannot be said that the women clergy of the Church of Scotland are monetarily poor in relation to the rest of the population of the world, it is possible that the position of women within the structures of the institution constitutes a spiritual poverty that blights the whole Church. We still are a long way from the Church as a genuine community of women and

men. Women clergy, I would argue, hold considerable power. Whilst there is a pre-supposition that women exercise that power in less authoritarian, more democratic ways, in fact the research of Adair Lummis and Paula Nesbit in the United States suggests that this is not the case (Lummis & Nesbitt, *Women Clergy Research and the Sociology of Religion*, 2000). Women may be the perpetrators of oppression, not just its victims. By continuing with authoritarian and patriarchal models of ministry are women clergy contributing to a less than fully Christian Church?

## **Power, Control and Collectivity**

Jesus mandates that Christian relationships should be characterized by service and care not by a desire for control.<sup>4</sup> In terms of research this raises immense problems. The question which begins a research project is the question of the researcher. The design of the project is in the hands of the researcher. The choice of method, the form of analysis and interpretation are all in the hands of the researcher. Whilst this is in the nature of research, it seems vital for me to find some ways to mitigate my power and control over this study.

Some feminist researchers, especially students or junior academics, may not appear to exercise much power. Others may choose to study those like themselves (Smith 1999) or more powerful than themselves (Luff 1999). All social researchers, however, can exercise power by turning people's lives into authoritative texts: by hearing some things and ignoring or excluding others...' (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 113).

The study of those who are like myself, decreases the power I have. In trying to research the lives of intelligent, well educated, busy, professional women, I have no power to make them cooperate or participate. However, should they choose to participate, I have power in other ways. In an ideal world, participatory research would have been my first choice.

In feminist participatory research, the distinction between the researcher's) and those on whom the research is done disappears. To achieve an egalitarian relation, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 181).

Although I did adopt an open approach, I also knew that most of my colleagues who were willing to give time for interview would not have the time to revisit their transcripts

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 20: 26; John 13: 1 - 17

more than once and that therefore the ‘ideal’ would have to be modified by the ‘possible.’ However, gaining help from colleagues at various earlier stages in the research process, was possible and was achieved, most particularly in the shaping of the research questions and in preventing the researcher’s ‘application of her own ideas onto the women she studies’ (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 72). Denzin describes a feminist communitarian model in which

participants have a say in how the research should be conducted and a hand in actually conducting it, including a voice or hand in deciding which problems should be studied, what methods should be used to study them, whether the findings are valid or acceptable, and how the findings are to be used or implemented” (Root, 1993, p. 245). This research is rooted in “community, shared governance . . . and neighborliness” (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 227).

This model, with some flexibility about the extent to which the participants are involved - flexibility which depends on their willingness and availability - gives a way forward.

## **Reflexivity**

‘Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the “human as instrument”’ (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 283). As part of the quest for a more collective, communitarian approach, it is my intention to make my own self apparent. How to do this successfully is more difficult to determine. In asking my colleagues to reveal their experience and reflect on their ministry, it would seem only fair that I should do that too, that I should be vulnerable in precisely the same ways in which I ask them to be vulnerable, so I have begun with autobiography (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 169). More than that, is needed however. Ramanazoglu suggests that reflexivity is valued as critical reflection at a number of interrelated levels. These include: identification of the exercise of power and power relationships; the particular theory of power that underlies the research; the ethical judgements that frame the research; accountability for the knowledge produced (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 119). How to be present in the text is something of a challenge. Michelle Fine et al articulate this problem

Although it may be true that researchers are never absent from our texts, the problem of just how to “write the self [and, we would add, our political reflexivities] into the text” remains. Simply briefly inserting autobiographical or personal information often serves to establish and assert the researcher’s



authority, and ultimately produces texts “from which the self has been sanitized”. But flooding the text with ruminations on the researchers’ subjectivities also has the potential to silence participants/’subjects” (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 170).

Just as this project of necessity starts with some autobiographical material, because it is a study born of my personal experience and it seems only fair to state that from the beginning, I am likewise present in the theology which underpins the project: it is mainstream Christian theology, but it is my understanding of it, my explanation of it. The interpretation of the material, will also be mine.

None of this makes my power or control over the project any less. It simply makes it apparent. In this context, working with intelligent women, all of whom are educated to tertiary level, I am content that making my power and control explicit will suffice. My colleagues understand the process of taking part in research well enough, to be aware of the power of the researcher. Sandra Harding introduces the notion of participants in an enquiry ‘gazing back’ and urges that reflection takes into account more than the simple conduct of the research but becomes a ‘steady uncomfortable assessment of the interpersonal and interstitial knowledge producing dynamics of qualitative research’ (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 356).

I understood all too well, the difficulty of being present in the text of the study as a real, passionate human being without dominating the narrative with my own experience, or succumbing to the temptation to top my colleagues stories, or to draw from my own experience stories which are similar to or contradictory to theirs. Using the first person is not enough to ensure the researcher’s real engagement with the study, too much engagement could drown the voices of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Enquiry*, 2003, p. 312).

All told, I situate this study within the Feminist Multi-method heading. As will be seen from the methods description below, the methods chosen touch on ethnography, survey, interviewing and narrative inquiry. It is, after all, not the methods themselves that make a particular piece of research feminist or not, so much as the ways in which they are used (Letherby, 2003, p. 87).

‘Feminism remains inherently contradictory because gender is only part of people’s lives’ (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 168). Gender is certainly only a part, and for some of my colleagues a relatively insignificant part of their ministry. But by targeting

only the women clergy of the Church of Scotland, I am asserting that despite our many and varied experiences, there are some experiences that we share simply because we are women.

## ***Method***

The women ministers of the Church of Scotland are a relatively uncharted research area. Whilst Lesley Orr Macdonald has contributed important work on the history of the ordination of women in Scotland and there are a number of biographies of early women ministers, such as those by Mary Levison and Effie Irvine, the only other research into the women clergy in the Church of Scotland is contained in a couple of MTh papers and the Gender Attitude Project. This project is in two parts: the first part being quantitative and the second qualitative. The first step in the project was to gather some basic demographic information. This came from three sources: The Church of Scotland Yearbook; Figures supplied by the Ministries Council; a Postal Survey. The second step was to conduct interviews with approximately 10% of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland.

## **The Quantitative Methods**

### ***The Church of Scotland Yearbook***

In the summer of each year, the Church of Scotland publishes a 'Year Book.' This document lists all the clergy in the Church of Scotland. Most are listed under the Presbytery under whose supervision they practice, but all are to be found in one of the lists in the Year Book. The ministerial data for the Year Book is gathered as at 31<sup>st</sup> Dec of the year preceding publication. Therefore the 2009/10 Year Book, which was used in this study was published in the summer of 2009 containing information about clergy which was correct at 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008. The information about clergy contained in the Year Book is gathered from Presbytery Clerks across Scotland who are responsible for keeping accurate records of the clergy under the supervision of their particular Presbytery. From this Year Book, some information about the women clergy of the Church of Scotland may be gained by the simple technique of counting! Inevitably, this gives a 'snap shot' of the situation pertaining at a particular point in time. It would be interesting in the longer term to repeat the exercise some years in the future to analyse the changes.

## *The Ministries Council Figures*

At the General Assembly of 2008, questions were asked about the falling numbers of female candidates for full time ministry of word and sacrament. The Ministries Council were instructed to investigate and report. They invited me to contribute to their understanding of the problem and were willing to supply figures on Applications to Selection Conference and figures for Acceptance at Selection Conference. They were also willing to supply a list of dates of birth for male and female ministers who were still active in ministry.

## *Survey*

In past decades, orthodoxy dictated that feminist research was firmly qualitative with the interview, semi-structured or unstructured, as the preferred method (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 3). In recent years however, arguments have been made for a more inclusive approach. In the first instance, the qualitative/quantitative dichotomy is dependent on a dualistic approach to the world which many feminist's find abhorrent. Maynard (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 3), Letherby (Letherby, 2003, p. 86/87), and Reinhartz (Reinhartz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 79ff) are amongst those who advocate careful use of quantitative methods. 'The critical question remains the appropriateness of the method to the research question' (Letherby, 2003, p. 87). As Letherby points out a well designed quantitative study can be more useful and less harmful than a poorly crafted qualitative one (Letherby, 2003, p. 87). Psychologist Toby Jayaratne who has written extensively on the subject of quantified research within feminism argues that

there must be appropriate quantitative evidence to counter the pervasive and influential quantitative sexist research which has and continues to be generated in the social sciences. Feminist researchers can best accomplish this. If some of the traditional procedures used to produce that needed evidence are contrary to our feminist values, then we must change those procedures accordingly. In the process of change we not only must remember to view our research in a political context . . . but we must support one another against the academic and professional pressures to compromise our standards. The better quality research that we do, the more likely that that research will influence others and ultimately help in achieving their goals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> quoted in Reinhartz, Shulamit *Feminist Methods* p 79 and in Letherby, Gayle *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* p 86

The rejection of the qualitative/ quantitative divide is not solely the preserve of feminists. David Silverman warns that qualitative researchers cannot afford to 'live like hermits, blinded by global, theoretical critiques to the possible analytical and practical uses of quantification' (Silverman, 2001, p. 36).

The survey gave background information about the field of participants in this study. It had the benefit of introducing the research to my colleagues in a relatively painless fashion and opened the door to the more demanding later stage of interviewing. It gave a context to the later part of the study, a different perspective, a deepening of the description of the field. But a final reason for including a survey pertains to the potential audience. Paula Nesbitt in her work with women clergy in the United States realised that it was vital to conduct her research in a format that would 'interact with the mainstream,' and that 'statistics provided credibility both within the academy and with denominational officials....' (Lummis & Nesbitt, *Women Clergy Research and the Sociology of Religion*, 2000, p. 5).

The sample frame for the survey was the list of women ministers in the Church of Scotland compiled from the Year Book 2006/7. The survey was designed to find out more about those who are working in ministry in Scotland today and so those ministers on Lists H and I were excluded as many of the questions were irrelevant to them.<sup>6</sup> The women clergy of the Presbyteries of Europe and Jerusalem were excluded in the interests of protecting anonymity, stamped addressed envelopes with foreign stamps would have been somewhat obvious. Retired ministers were sent a modified version of the questionnaire which excluded two questions not relevant to those no longer working.

The questionnaire was sent out by post with stamped addressed envelopes for reply. The questionnaires carried no identifying codes so that they could be returned anonymously although a number of ministers added their names or comments to the forms. It was felt to be important that the questionnaires were anonymous as the answers to at least two of the questions could have been considered sensitive. In all 278 questionnaires were sent out (I, as researcher, did not complete a questionnaire) and 180 were returned - a response rate of 64.75%. Whilst there is no agreed upon standard for a minimum acceptable response rate (Fowler, 2002, p. 42), it must be admitted that mail surveys frequently generate very low response rates. It is particularly difficult to calculate the bias

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<sup>6</sup> Lists H refers to ministers who have resigned their seat in Presbytery (mainly retired) and List I to those who have applied for Practising Certificates and who are not therefore in regular ministry.

in this kind of survey but there are some figures which can be cross-referenced against the statistics available from the Year Book. Whilst in an ideal world, postal questionnaires are followed up by a reminder (Fowler, 2002, p. 50); (Sapsford, 1999, p. 96), this becomes more difficult with an anonymous questionnaire. On balance, it was decided that, given that further co-operation in terms of interview would be required from quite a number of this sample frame, it was better not to cause irritation by sending out a reminder which would inevitably have had to be sent also to those who had already completed and returned the survey. Being aware that ‘people who have a particular interest in the subject matter or the research itself are more likely to return mail questionnaires’ (Fowler, 2002, p. 42), personal notes and good wishes, were attached to every questionnaire where the researcher had any knowledge of, or link to the recipient.

The timing of the survey was also important. There are particular seasons of the Christian Year where it is pointless to send material to ministers and hope for a response. The survey was sent out, about two weeks after Easter because many clergy take holiday immediately following Easter and the questionnaire was timed to arrive on their desks just after they returned. It asked for a response by 8<sup>th</sup> June, so that respondents might be encouraged to deal with it as they cleared their desks before the main summer holiday season. In fact there were a number of late responses, the last of these coming in September. The questions were kept simple and the whole questionnaire was designed to occupy one side of A4 so that it required relatively little effort to complete – ministers are busy people! Inevitably, this being a self administered questionnaire, questions were closed to maximise returns.

## **The Qualitative Method**

### *Ministry Story Interviews*

Scholars in the United States have noted that it has become “the interview society,” that interview has become “a universal mode of systematic inquiry,” and that it has become a ‘routine almost unnoticed part of human life’ (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003, p. 63/64). Something of that culture has spilled over into the United Kingdom and we are accustomed to interviews, from being accosted in the street by market researchers to watching celebrities on television. The American experience suggests however, that the population are becoming ‘interview weary’ and that

response rates are declining (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003, p. 64).

Interviewing has long been regarded as a particularly ‘feminist’ method. However, as far back as 1990 Ann Oakley challenged this perception. She pointed out that traditional qualitative interviewing techniques, focussing as they did on researcher objectivity and the manipulation of the respondent were masculinist. The advice of the textbooks to ‘be friendly but not too friendly’ exposed the control and manipulation of the interviewees as objects of study or sources of data. It implied that if the interviewee doesn’t believe ‘that he or she is being kindly and sympathetically treated by the interviewer, then he/she will not consent to be studied and will not come up with the desired information’ (Roberts, 1990, p. 35). A new model of feminist interviewing emerged based on Oakley’s contention that the

(1) the use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally indefensible; (2) general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of the textbook paradigms are exposed; and (3) it becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship (Roberts, 1990, p. 41).

This model of interviewing is no longer confined to feminist research and Atkinson gives similar advice pointing out that good interviewing depends on the twin pillars of ‘trust and acceptance’ (Atkinson, 1998, p. 35). To this end, I opted for a modified form of a life story interview and in particular for a ‘ministry story interview.’

Whilst Reinharz comments that ‘interviewing is also consistent with many women’s interest in avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with people,’ it must still be acknowledged that a degree of control still rests with the interviewer. In particular, the interviewer decides what questions to ask. In this study, I am interested in hearing my colleagues articulate their experiences of being women in ministry in the Church of Scotland in this first forty years of their existence. Some researchers would want to argue that the ‘Participant role may be conceptualized on a continuum from a *complete outsider* to a *complete insider*,’ others would suggest that there are four distinct roles from complete observer to complete participant (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 55). However, in any conceptualization of participant role, I am a complete participant in the area under

study. Whilst this brings great advantages in terms of access to the field and understanding of the ‘insider’ language and meanings, it also brings the danger of a single voice exploring what is a varied and polyvocal experience. The solution was to invite a wider spectrum of participants to determine those areas of ministry that it would be most fruitful to explore. So I invited small groups of my colleagues, women clergy in the Church of Scotland, to ‘save the research from my particular hang-ups,’ by asking for their help in identifying areas on which the interviews might focus in order to produce the most significant material. These small groups were set up in different geographical areas of Scotland. Each group was differently constructed, they met in a variety of locations, I held different relationships to each group and unsurprisingly each group therefore had a different atmosphere. Some felt more productive than others!

The decision to use small groups was in the first instance almost instinctive. I know, from experience, that my colleagues are good at sharing stories, events and situations. That initial hunch or instinct was supported by reading on focus groups. Bloor et al record the use of ‘Pre-pilot focus groups’ in the initial phase of large survey studies (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001, p. 9). Morgan also supports the use of groups as ‘a source of preliminary data in primarily quantitative studies’ (Morgan D. L., 1997, p. 3). Krueger likewise records the benefits of using groups in planning and exploratory work (Krueger, 1994, p. 21 & 44). Most of the concentration, in the literature, however, has been on the use of groups as a tool before *quantitative* studies. Nonetheless, in recent years, as previously indicated by Morgan, the use of groups has become more experimental and so the use of the groups in this study is designed to make exploration of the area as an aid to a qualitative study. There are features of focus groups which make this an obvious move.

Focus groups are ideal for exploring people’s experiences, opinions, wishes and concerns. The method is particularly useful for allowing participants to generate their own questions, frames and concepts and to pursue their own priorities on their own terms, in their own vocabulary. Focus groups also enable researchers to examine people’s different perspectives as they operate within a social network (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 5).

As a result of the focus groups, the interviewees were asked to reflect on: their call to the ministry; their childhood background; their experience of training and supervision; their call to a charge; their relationships with congregations; their relationships with colleagues; whether they thought perceptions of women ministers had changed; whether

they thought the Church of Scotland was changing; the joys and sorrows of ministry; and any scriptural story, character or verse which had been important in their ministry.

The interviews for this project were carried out between August 2007 and June 2009. Thirty one interviews were conducted. This represents slightly over ten percent of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland. Those contacted for interview were all named in the Presbytery lists and even those who were technically retired were still active in terms of locum work, pulpit supply or part time associateships. Interviewees were self selecting, in that all the women clergy within a particular Presbytery would be contacted by letter or by e-mail and interviews were then conducted with those who responded positively. The letter of invitation made it clear that I hoped to reflect the diversity of experience which I believe exists and indeed the interviewees reflect the entire spectrum of theological colour which a 'broad church' such as the Church of Scotland displays. There were interviewees who defined themselves as evangelical and those who admitted that their theology was far more liberal than that of their congregations. They ranged in age between early thirties and mid seventies, though as might be expected from the survey (Chapter 3), most were in the 41 – 60 age range. They were ordained between 1973 and 2007 and again, as might have been expected from Chapter 3, most were ordained in the period between 1988 and 1998. That said, there were more recently ordained women (ordained within the last ten years) who participated in the interviews than in the survey and the proportion of married women participating in the interviews was greater than in the survey.

Interviews were conducted in a location of the interviewee's choosing. This proved mainly to be either my manse, or theirs. Interviews were recorded, then transcribed. The transcriptions were then returned to the interviewee for any alteration or correction. In practice only one interviewee made major alterations, a number made minor corrections and the majority were happy with the transcripts as they stood. The areas for reflection had been notified to interviewees in advance and they dealt with the information as suited their personality, everything from carefully prepared notes through to stream of consciousness responses!

Bearing in mind that my interviewees are all intelligent, well educated, articulate women and as such might be constricted by self disclosure (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, 1992, p. 33), as interviewer, I tried to keep self disclosure to a minimum during the recorded interviews, only interjecting when I was asked a direct question or when my opinion was solicited. That apart, I only asked the prompt questions to move the interviews on. In all cases I did spend a little time beforehand establishing a relationship



with those whom I hadn't previously met, and renewing relationships with those whom I did know. In fact, there were only six of the thirty one whom I had not previously met - Church of Scotland clergy are not a huge group. I do believe that the time in interpersonal exchange was important for the success of interview process (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, 1992, p. 23) (Oakley, 1990, p. 41).

As discussed earlier, I am a 'complete member' or 'indigenous' or 'opportunistic' researcher (Ellis C. &, 2003, p. 213). With that comes particular knowledge and understanding of the culture in which the women clergy of the Church of Scotland minister. With that too, comes a deep understanding of the importance of confidentiality in this research. The interviewees (often amidst great hilarity) chose their own pseudonyms, and some chose male names; they were free to alter or edit the transcriptions; and they were free to control what information they gave or did not give and I made no effort to record the information they gave inadvertently— tone of voice or facial expression (Collins, p. 11). It had been a matter of concern to one or two of my interviewees, that because I knew them, I might ask leading questions, encouraging them to disclose incidents of which I was aware in their history. In practice, I was careful to keep the questioning the same in all the interviews and I will be forever grateful for the trust of my colleagues as they disclosed important and personal stories. That they did so was, I believe, born of their desire that this research might enlighten and perhaps even change some of the structures and culture within the Church of Scotland.

The project adopts an 'experience centred' and pragmatic approach to narrative believing that narratives 'are sequential and meaningful'; 're-present experience, reconstituting it as well as expressing it' and 'display transformation or change' (Squire, 2008, p. 42). The transcripts were initially coded using NVivo 8.

### *Advantages of Ministry Story Interviews*

In telling stories of our lives, we not only tell the listener, but deepen our own understanding of ourselves. We tell stories of our lives to create meaning, to set them in context as such a life story narrative can be a valuable experience for the person telling the story as well as for the person gathering the data. This fits with the professional discipline of reflective practice, which as ministers we are encouraged to practice. However, the 'Ministry Story' format had several advantages for this project, as listed below.

Changes over time : It is now almost forty years since women were first admitted to the ministry of the Church of Scotland. Many of my colleagues have been in ministry for some considerable time and the experiences of the past are perhaps not the experiences of the present. Atkinson, Josselson and Denzin admit the usefulness of the life story in ‘understanding how the self evolves over time’ (Atkinson, 1998, p. 11) ; (Denzin, *Interpretative Biography*, 1989, p. 29); (Josselson, *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*, 1996, p. 111). That capacity for reflecting the growth and development of experience will be valuable in this study.

Social and Cultural Context: I also wish to place the experiences of women clergy against the background of the church as an institution. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich point out that

Life story is the interface between life as lived and the social times; like Erikson’s concept of identity, life narrative interweaves individual experience with historical reality and thus interfaces with approaches in sociology, anthropology, and the burgeoning field of oral history (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993, p. xiii).

Denzin, too acknowledges this social and political element in life story (Denzin, *Interpretative Biography*, 1989, p. 29). I hope that by choosing life story, the social, political and institutional background against which the stories are told will emerge. More particularly, I hope that the life story method will allow access to my colleagues understanding of the social and political events that have surrounded their ministry and their interpretation of the effects these have had on their own development. Life stories are never an individual production, they are always affected by the contexts, social, political, ideological, historical and group, in which they are told (Denzin, *Interpretative Biography*, 1989, p. 73).

Professional Identity and Status: Narrative is a means of creating identity. It can be, Atkinson suggests, an ‘emphatic answer to the question “Who am I?”’ (Atkinson, 1998, p. 12). Besides the issues of personal identity, narrative is also a means of exploring individual identity within a group. Within a group, such as a professional group, individuals have some idea of how they fit. There are ‘nuances of accomplishment, recognition and status that the group deems significant in evaluating others’ (Josselson, *Finding Herself: Pathways to Identity in Women*, 1987, p. 11). Susan E Chase has observed when working with a group of powerful, professional women, that whilst they

told stories of themselves as ‘highly accomplished, successful professionals’ they also told stories of themselves as women who were ‘subject to sexism and racism in the profession’ (Josselson & Lieblich, *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives Vol3*, 1995, p. 13). Issues of professional identity and status are significant for some women clergy and these are interpreted within the local culture of the Church of Scotland (Josselson & Lieblich, *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives Vol3*, 1995, p. 51).

### *Some Outstanding Concerns*

There remained however, some outstanding concerns which are highlighted below.

Voice: How to make participants voices heard in this study remains an issue.

Atkinson suggests that ‘if we want to know the unique experience and perspective of an individual, there is no better way to get this than in the person’s own voice.’ So he advocates keeping the story in the teller’s own words. However, even keeping the story in the teller’s own words does not get around the reality that life stories are ‘ambiguously authored’ (Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 1992, p. 130). They are always a co-production between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer setting the broad outlines for discussion, the interviewee choosing the stories to tell. Atkinson and Silverman would argue that this co-production results in an ‘essentially monologic view of reality’ (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003, p. 93). In this study, some way must be found to express the variety of experiences of women clergy, to ensure that the reporting is genuinely polyvocal.

Researcher/ Researched relationship: Denzin in *Interpretative Biography* suggests that

Bruner has made a useful distinction between a life as lived, a life as experienced, and a life as told. He states: A life lived is what actually happens. A life experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meanings known to the person whose life it is. . . . A life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context (Denzin, *Interpretative Biography*, 1989, p. 30).

Whilst I accept, that in studying life stories one accepts the existence of a person who lives a life of meaning, I find myself less comfortable with the suggestion that what ‘actually happens’ is in some way separate from either the experience or the telling of it. When telling a life story it is for the narrator to choose the stories and events which are

significant, it includes those aspects of our life and experiences that we want to share with others and also includes the sense we have made of those experiences (Atkinson, 1998, p. 7). Denzin suggests that life stories are formed around significant events or ‘epiphanies’ (Denzin, *Interpretative Biography*, 1989, p. 22). For me, some of the attraction of this method is that it allows significant control of the interview to lie with the interviewee – they alone can determine which stories to tell. That poses two issues for the researcher, firstly that she or he must articulate questions in such a way as to elicit stories rather than reports, and secondly that even so the interview may be difficult if the interviewee chooses to be detached and unforthcoming in the telling of the stories (Atkinson, 1998, p. 9).

Ethics: Qualitative research uses a general ethic of ‘do no harm.’ However in a theological context this is not sufficient. The theological foundations which underlie this project call me to do good – rather than just ‘no harm.’ This poses some of the greatest difficulties of the project. I have little concern over issues of researcher power. Those who choose to participate in this research do so in full knowledge of its aims. They do so from an educational background which allows them to understand research and be aware of the interpretative power of the researcher. That said, narrative research is always based on the lives of real people and involves some making public of what has heretofore been private. After preparing the transcripts of interviews, these are returned to the interviewees for checking, for amendment or indeed for withdrawal. Susan Chase makes a clear case for not sharing interpretative work in progress with participants, particularly when participants are themselves accustomed to research and therefore understand that interpretation will take place (Josselson, *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*, 1996, p. 95). This means that the responsibility for interpretation and analysis will be mine, but that the scripts remained the property of the individuals concerned until such time as they gave permission for their use.

There remains the question of whether this project will do any good. Reflective practice is always of benefit to ministers and I would expect that participation will encourage reflective practice. That said, Millen does raise the question of whether reflection can have the harmful effect of ‘undermining immediate coping strategies’ (Millen, p. 2.3). I do not know whether participating in the study will have any positive effects in the lives of participants. I hope the study will contribute positively to the position of women in training for ministry within the Church of Scotland. I hope it will contribute positively to the wider debate on the ministry of women within the Christian churches. I see the project as ‘participating in a community’s ongoing process of moral articulation,

adding just a little more to the debate' (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 232).

## ***Conclusion***

This project, whilst it began in my own experience, is also mandated by the context of early twenty first century Church life. Being a project which deals with the experiences of women clergy in the Church of Scotland, it was founded in theology. The epistemology and methodology of the project were then considered. In terms of method, this chapter shows that multiple methods on broadly feminist communitarian principles were considered. The chapter showed that both survey and 'ministry story' interview methods were used in order to elicit a greater depth of description of the experiences of the women clergy who participated. Finally outstanding concerns and the ethical implications of the project were discussed.

## Chapter 2 Interrogating the Literature

### *Introduction*

This chapter examines some of the relevant literature on women's ministry. It considers whether the debate is theological or cultural and finds merit in the work of Mark Chaves which suggests that cultural considerations take precedence. The Calvinist Background of the Church of Scotland is considered with its emphasis on the call to the individual. This was reckoned to be a mixed blessing. Questions were asked about leadership styles and whether women choose collaborative leadership or have it thrust upon them. The literature on the feminization of the Church and the 'stained glass ceiling' gave rise to further questions for consideration. Finally the literature on women and change in the church was examined and the question of whether women could bring about change was raised.

### *The Literature*

Although women have been ordained as ministers within the Church of Scotland for almost forty years, there exists very little literature on the subject of the Scottish women clergy. There are several autobiographies of the 'pioneer women' (Levison, 1992) (Irvine, 2003) and a small research project carried out by the Church of Scotland Gender Attitude Project in 2001. There is an increasing but still small literature within the United Kingdom. This literature is growing as the Church of England continues to debate the role of women and in particular the possibility of women Bishops. Although the literature on the Church of England shares with Scotland some of the cultural and social assumptions, the theological assumptions about ministry are quite different. Within the Church of Scotland Presbyterian tradition, ordained ministry is largely a functional office and the arguments about 'priesting,' which so perplex our Anglican neighbours, are not relevant. A more recent publication on Free Church Women's ministry in England is probably the closest match. There is undoubtedly European literature on the ordination of women, however, only the literature written in English was reviewed for this project.

The United States of America has spawned a vast literature on the subject of women clergy, some of which raises interesting questions for ordained women in the

United Kingdom. However, it should be noted that even research carried out within the Presbyterian Church (USA), the nearest American equivalent denominationally to the Church of Scotland, cannot be imported wholesale. Not only are there the cultural differences, the relationship between minister and congregation is quite different in Scottish Presbyterianism from that in the American counterpart. Scottish ministers, although called by a specific congregation, are not directly employed by that congregation, and therefore not dependent on pleasing the congregation's every whim in order to sustain their livelihood. In addition, the Church of Scotland, being an established church requires its ministers to be 'parish' ministers rather than chaplains to their own congregations. There is, therefore, a community involvement and an institutional role for the Scottish clergy which is not part of the American experience. Although there is some disparity in remuneration between the richest and poorest clergy in Scotland, the status differential in parishes is less pronounced.

However, ordained ministry does not exist in isolation, the Churches are set in a particular cultural milieu. Within the wider context of women in employment, and women and the management of change, there are important insights to be gained. So although it may seem that there is a lack of directly significant literature, this review examines various aspects of the wider literature which have some bearing on the project as planned.

### **The Debate on the Ordination of Women: Theological or cultural?**

Behind any story of the practicalities of the ordination of women in a particular denomination, there lies a great deal of theological debate. How could a woman ever represent the male Christ in worship? Would not the ordination of women have a devastating effect on divinely ordained family life? How could women exercise effective Christian headship as envisaged by St Paul? How could the scriptural discrepancies be overlooked?

Women have been accused of a lust for status and power (Bruce & Duffield, 1976, p. 53); (Furlong, 1991, p. 3), though this accusation is never levelled at men in the context of ordination (Rees, 2002, p. 39). Women are seen as weak and therefore unsuited to the rigours and demands of ministry (Furlong, 1991, p. 40), but they are offered a place on a

pedestal provided they are willing to remain in the role of ‘virtuous virgin’ or ‘virtuous mother’ (Furlong, 1991, p. 8). The fact that society has moved on and that women are accepted in other roles which were previously reserved for men, should carry no weight according to some.

Christians should appreciate that attacks, whatever their origin, on family concept are onslaughts on the very foundations of Christian society. It is important for Christians to ask if the hierarchical structure of family life is part of the divinely revealed plan, part of the way God made men and women, the way we observe their make up in everyday life, and if so, whether this concept is compatible with feminist egalitarianism. To speak of the ‘equality’ of women with men sounds superficially very moral and Christian, but interpreted so as to conflict with the divine plan for male-female relationships, it may prove unchristian, indeed antichristian (Bruce & Duffield, 1976, p. 23).

In fact, the studies of the motivation of women clergy in seeking ordination find a single, primary driving force – the personal response to a call from God. (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A new opportunity for the churches*, 1983) (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998).

The arguments against the ordination of women rest, for “the sacramental churches,” on a concern that selected rituals, that is the sacraments, are more than mere human constructions designed to celebrate various aspects of faith. Instead those rites are held as actually bringing about events in the sacred realm.

To the sacramentalist, participating in the rite of baptism actually gives the individual salvation in eternity, the ritual of communion actually renders the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (Lehman E. , *Women's Path to Ministry*, 2002, p. 11).

The principal argument offered by sacramentalist groups is that in worship, especially Holy Communion, the person presenting the Gospel and the elements of communion represents none other than Christ. As Christ was male, sacraments offered by a female would not be valid.

The role of women in Jesus day and throughout the New Testament is hotly contested by both sides in the debate (Bruce & Duffield, 1976, p. 73); (Orr Macdonald, *In Good Company*, 1999, p. 75 Forrester). In particular the anti-women’s ordination groups which hold in the main to Biblical inerrancy or Biblical literalism frequently cite Genesis and 1 Timothy, whilst the pro-women’s ordination groups often cite Galatians 3; 28. Those



who are for the ordination of women would also cite Christ's imperative towards social justice and his concern for the poor, the marginalized and the outcast. Lehman affirms that

There is a particular glaring weakness in the position of those who discriminate in the churches which will probably eventually lead to its demise. Especially in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, *the core ideology involves values that contradict the policies of exclusion*. Those values include the concepts of justice, equality, freedom, and other-centered love (Lehman E. , Women's Path to Ministry, 2002, p. 36).

It is hard to share his optimism that the demise of discrimination on theological grounds is assured.

Although the arguments against the ordination of women are many and varied and appear to draw deeply on theology, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it is something more than theological stance which permits one denomination to ordain women and another to exclude them from ordination. Practical considerations are also given weight. The literature indicates that churches, both at institutional level and in local congregations are concerned that congregations with women ministers would tend to lose members, that financial contributions would fall, and that only women would attend as men found themselves alienated. There is no evidence in any of the American studies to suggest that such concerns have been realised (Lehman E. , Women's Path to Ministry, 2002, p. 32).

Mark Chaves points out in his extensive and important study 'Ordaining Women' that the differences in the use of women's ministry in practical terms are very slight and not dependent on theology or even on whether or not the denomination actually ordains women (Chaves, 1997, p. 5/6). His examination of the practice of a variety of denominations in the United States reveals that even the Roman Catholic Church, renowned for its opposition to the ordination of women, actually uses women pastors to counteract the grave shortage of male clergy. He concludes that the relationship the denomination wishes to display with the prevailing culture is what determines whether or not women will be ordained within a particular denomination.

Organizational theorists have pointed out that the pressure for an organization to adopt a practice increases as more and more organizations in the relevant environment adopt the practice. As an organizational practice becomes more widely diffused, its legitimacy increases, and it becomes more and more difficult to resist as individuals come to believe that a "good" organization will, almost by definition, incorporate that feature (Chaves, 1997, p. 52).

This work, drawing heavily on organizational theory and the notion of ‘loose-coupling’ between theory and practice, has a pleasing tidiness to it and will be useful in the design of my own research project. Chaves insights are confirmed by Percy who comments that ‘I suspect that I am not alone in surmising that one of the main reasons the vote to ordain women to the priesthood went through in 1992 was related to the issue of public credibility’ (Rees, 2002, p. 188). Lehman, in a delightful phrase, describes this as denominations having ‘been caught with their platitudes down’ (Lehman E. , *Women's Path to Ministry*, 2002, p. 5). The progress of women towards ordination tends to be accomplished in stages, they are first of all acceptable as missionaries, then are allowed unofficial ministries before being admitted to the second rank of clergy as deaconesses or something similar. The final step is the ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament (Orr Macdonald, *In Good Company*, 1999, p. 31). The Church of England, and some of its satellites, have managed to achieve a particular and distinctive second class ordination for women! It must be asked however, whether the situation in the Church of Scotland is, in practice, much different.

The work of Michael J Welch comes from a wider perspective, considering the exclusion of women from a broad spectrum of religious institutions, rather than just the Christian church. Welch examines prevailing explanations for the exclusion of women from community religious roles, setting this in the wider context of cross cultural research into sex role patterns. He considers institutional gynophobia, resource theory and the differentiated social spheres explanations. He explores a wide variety of religious leadership roles and concludes that ‘only resource theory appears to have any ability to predict societal patterns excluding females from religious specialist roles.’ (Welch, 1982). This would tend to support Chaves contention that the decision of churches for or against the ordination of women has less to do with theology than might be supposed. Women’s ordination (in Welch’s wider terms, their admission to ‘shaman’ roles) has become an issue only in societies, like the industrialised West, where women can be argued to control and produce substantial amounts of resources. It also supports the contention that the ordination of women is essentially linked to the feminist movement and the more general call for equality for women in the workplace. Chaves states

The point here is simple but important.... From its beginnings, the women’s movement has attempted to influence the major institutions of society and has explicitly targeted churches as an organizational site for movement activity. Because of the pressure of this social movement, virtually every denomination has been forced to grapple with the question of full clergy rights for women,

whether or not there were very many women inside the denomination who actually wanted to be clergy (Chaves, 1997, pp. 47-48).

This was certainly the case as far as the early discussions on the ordination of women within the Church of Scotland were concerned, in 1915-16 there were relatively few women requesting ordination (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 197). Even by 1968, the number of women in the Church of Scotland who felt themselves called to be ordained was very small.

The question of ordination is also linked to the general rise in the educational levels of women (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A new opportunity for the churches*, 1983, pp. 7-10) (Chaves, 1997, p. 44ff) (Lehman: 2002 p5). The women's movement itself was born of the greater financial independence and educational opportunities available to women in the industrialised West during the twentieth century (Maddock, 1999, p. 63). From the perspective of this study, the theological arguments are well rehearsed and, as the study deals only with women clergy, it can be assumed that to some extent at least, they approve of the ordination of women. It would however, be interesting to consider the relationship between the ordination of women and the wider stance of the Church of Scotland in relation to society as a whole.

### **The Ordination of Women in Scotland: The Calvinist inheritance!**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1968, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed that 'Women shall be eligible for ordination to the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament on the same terms and conditions as are at present applicable to men' (Levison, 1992, p. 53). Behind those few short words however, lay a long story. As early as 1916, the United Free Church had considered 'The Place of Women in the Church.' Although it was deemed that the time was not right to 'raise more fundamental proposals,' there were those who acknowledged that there should be no barriers to the full participation of women in the courts and structures of the church. 'Why draw the line? God has not drawn the line for us' Ten years later, the matter was raised again with similar result. 1916 was 'not the time;' in 1926 'the time was not opportune' (Levison, 1992, p. 54) (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 196ff). As the Church of Scotland and the Free Church were reunited in 1929, the question of the place of women was discussed once more. The Moderator, Right Rev John White concluded that

It is right, therefore, that in the Plan of Re-Union, fuller recognition by means of representation on the Standing Committees, has been accorded them. In this way the Church, which has been the pioneer in recognising the position of women, has given effect to necessary and desirable changes, without hurt to honoured features in the life and constitution of the Church,' although 'something may still remain to be done by way of recognising the special aptitudes of women as teachers, and organisers of educational work (Assembly, 1929, p. 19).

However, caution was the main theme. Dr D.P Thomson pointing out that

The Church must not allow itself to drift into action in this direction which might prove hurtful to existing honoured customs and institutions. Whatever may be done to enlarge the sphere of womanly service and influence must be done deliberately, and with open eyes; but already the question is before us, and no man may say how soon it may become the Church's duty to decide upon it (Assembly, 1929, p. 74).

It became the church's duty in 1931 as a result of a petition by almost 340 women of the Church, to consider the matter again and in time-honoured fashion, the Church of Scotland referred the matter to a Special Committee. That Special Committee did not report until 1934, but during this time 'had not had adequate discussion' on the question of ordination and so would not recommend that women should be ordained. Reading through the debates and submissions it becomes clear that the decision not to consider the ordination of women was not made on theological grounds, but out of a desire not to rock the patriarchal boat!

Nonetheless, women had made considerable inroads in terms of a more obvious profile within the Church of Scotland. Lesley Orr Macdonald in her major contribution to the understanding of women in Scottish Presbyterianism refers to the feminisation of the church which took place between 1830 and 1930 but she remarks

the feminisation of the church must be measured largely in terms of service rendered, rather than status bestowed – as a fairly successful attempt to draw on female labour and goodwill without giving up the male monopoly on official power (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 93).

For many, including some of the women within the church, the obvious solution was a church within the church. John White offered a form of subordinate parallel church which would mirror the structures of the church but keep women, apart from a very few representative women, safely excluded from the decision making processes. The notion of a separate sphere of influence for women largely prevailed at this stage, although there

were a tiny minority, like Annie Small and Elizabeth Hewat who, partly because of their missionary experience, looked for more radical change.

Although the debate on the ordination of women continued to be hotly contested in other contexts, within the Church of Scotland it was moved further down the Agenda. The years of the depression were followed by the second world war and its aftermath of returning heroes and these all served to turn attention to other matters in the Kirk and allowed the 'women's question' to be safely confined to the proceedings of previous General Assemblies. From 1958 onwards, however, background discussions were beginning to take place. In 1963 Mary Lusk brought a petition to the General Assembly asking that her call to ministry be recognised by ordination. Five years later, the ordination of women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Church of Scotland became possible.

On the face of it, the ordination of women in the Church of Scotland seemed detached or separate from the feminist movement. Mary Lusk fought her case not on the rights of women per se but on the understanding that all people were individuals before God and that to suggest that God might only call men was to limit the power of God. The Church of Scotland, and indeed all the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, owed their beginnings to Calvin. Calvin, and his disciple Knox, subscribed to the 'great reformation principle of the priesthood of all believers' (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 10). As Orr Macdonald points out in Calvinism individual women had spiritual equality with men. And Knox promoted literacy for men and women so that they would be able to read the Scriptures for themselves (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, pp. 10-14). It is hardly surprising then, that an argument about God's call to the individual would be the telling one in this cultural context. The first of the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland to ordain a woman also did so in terms of the rights of the individual, rather than in the context of gender (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 218). One of the best known American Presbyterian theologians Elizabeth Achtemeier promotes this position as the obvious justification for the ordination of women (Ricciuti, Achtemeier, Swope, & Hawkes, 1978).

However, women's ordination within the Church of Scotland does take place within the context of a wider role for women in Scottish society in general and advances in general levels of education. Women teachers had been allowed from the 1860's, initially as support and help to the schoolmasters, but increasingly they had become dominant

particularly in the field of primary education. Sophia Jex Blake and Elsie Inglis had fought notable battles with the Scottish medical establishment at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 80% of the admissions to medical school were women. The universities had likewise opened their doors, at least by a crack, to women by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The legal profession proved to be a harder nut to crack, but even in law, by 1975, the Law Society of Scotland were concerned that only 9% of lawyers were women.

If proof were needed that the early debates on the ordination of women took place in the context of the social climate of the times, rather than because there were large numbers of women demanding ordination, this can be found.

A comparative study of church responses to calls for women to be eligible for official ministry reveals the remarkable similarities of issues, arguments and consequences across the main British protestant churches. This strongly suggests (as indeed the Scottish Presbyterian discussions acknowledged) that the matter was related to wider social trends, and not predominantly to internal theological issues. It is evident that all mainstream churches were forced to consider the official position of women during the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 211).

The responses of the various denominations varied, however. The Congregational Union was proud to ordain its first woman minister in Scotland in 1929. The remnant of the United Free church did so with rather less grace in 1930. But the Church of Scotland, encumbered by its status as 'National Church' and its close social and political ties with the conservative establishment of the nation, took much longer to shake off the spectre of domestic ideology shaped by the model of patriarchal family life and 'True Womanhood' (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 23 & 46).

In theological terms, the opposition or support of the ordination of women split along predictable lines, those who favoured biblical inerrancy and an evangelical personal faith were more likely to be opposed to the ordination of women. Those who championed Christ's bias towards justice for the marginalized and the rights of the individual before God also championed the cause of women's ordination. However, Scotland had its share of the comic reasons for opposing women's ministry. Within the Church of Scotland there was also a concern that the admission of women as ministers would serve to reduce the numbers of men (especially 'virile' young men) presenting themselves for ordination. Furthermore the notion that a woman minister might marry and therefore a doctor or a

teacher would become ‘head of the manse’ was just too much to bear ( (Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, 2000, p. 208).

Knowing from personal experience, that even as late as my own ordination in 1981, many women ministers in the Church of Scotland would have defended their ordination on the grounds of the rights of the individual, rather than from a gender perspective, it would be interesting in the proposed study, to try to ascertain to what extent that Calvinist theological perspective still dominates the thinking of the women clergy. To what extent do they consider themselves to be ‘ministers who are women’ rather than women ministers? Does this have a bearing on whether the Church will be changed by its women clergy. Jean Mayland comments in her chapter ‘Pilgrimage to Priesthood and Beyond’

When Mary Levison wrestled to become a minister only one skeleton fell out of the cupboard – that of ordination. In the Church England all the skeletons have fallen out at once: priesthood, ordination, inclusive language, the motherhood of God, issues of sexuality. It has made the battle long and bitter; but it has enabled us to put all our cards on the table and to have a chance to break masculine moulds of ministry. Many of the women ordained in the Free Churches were ordained to a masculine model of ministry and are now entering struggle. (Orr Macdonald, *In Good Company*, 1999, p. 48).

Will our Calvinistic approach to the ordination of women, centred on the call to the individual, prove to have been more of a handicap than a benefit?

## **Leadership styles: Collaboration: Choice or Pragmatism?**

There is a common perception that men and women employ different leadership and management styles and techniques. This perception is primarily based on gender stereotypes, however recent research suggests that it may have some basis in fact. (Peters, 2005) (Rosener, 1990) (Vinnicombe, 1987). However, it can be argued that women who have become ‘successful’ leaders have done so precisely because they conformed to a masculine norm (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 20) (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 35). In the other hand, present day literature on leadership displays a preference for ‘transformational’ rather than ‘transactional’ leadership. Judy White, drawing on Rosener’s work, uses the term ‘interactive’ to describe the differences that women perceive in their leadership styles (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 198), although she is also clear that it

would be a mistake to make a definite link between women and any particular style of leadership.

In ministry too, over the years there has come to be a general assumption that male and female ministers differ in their ministry styles. Much of the literature makes general reference to this, suggesting that women are more person orientated and more inclined to power-sharing than are male ministers (Orr Macdonald, *In Good Company*, 1999, p. 141) (Rees, 2002, p. 82). Women clergy often perceive themselves to be 'less formal and more engaging' (Simon, Scanlon, & Nadell, *Rabbis and Ministers: Women of the Book and the Cloth*, 1993, p. 120), better at negotiating (Orr Macdonald, *In Good Company*, 1999, p. 141), less likely to use coercive power, or to require a rational structure or use a legalistic approach to ethics (Lehman E. C., 1997). Nason Clark also found women to be more sensitive and more committed to collective leadership (Nason Clark, 1987, p. 333). Perl's comparison of the time male and female clergy allocate to different ministry tasks, bears out the perception that there are differences and that, although these differences may be relatively slight, they are nonetheless real. Women characteristically apportion more time to pastoral counselling and one to one ministry. They also spend more time on Church meetings, bearing out the arguments for a more collaborative style of ministry (Perl, *Gender and Mainline Protestant Pastors' Allocation of Time to Work Tasks*, 2002).

Rita J Simon and Pamela S Nadell, on the other hand, find that male ministers do not generally perceive there to be differences in ministry style between themselves and their female colleagues (Simon & Nadell, *In the same voice or is it different?*, 1995). Lehman's analysis of lay perceptions of ministry style shows mixed results with men perceiving more masculine characteristics in their clergy and women perceiving more feminine characteristics, regardless of the gender of the minister. However, most lay people were most comfortable with traditional masculine perceptions of leadership. Lehman suggests this is because women's ministry is still 'the new kid on the block' and traditional masculine models of leadership are what laity expect of their minister (Lehman E. C., 1997). Zikmund, Lummis and Chang conclude that the differences in leadership styles between members of the clergy owe more to age and denomination than they do to gender. Presbyterian women in senior roles, in particular, operate with a more democratic style of leadership than do either their male equivalents or their more junior female colleagues (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 115). A study of Catholic women pastors however, attributes their more collaborative approach to their lay status



‘They would not and could not place themselves on a pedestal well above the members of the parish. Instead they were, in conjunction with their parishioners, practicing collaborative leadership, and thus creating a new social reality’ (Wallace, 1993).

This raises an interesting question: if women do indeed have a more collaborative style of leadership, how much is it a matter of appeasing those who feel they should never have been ordained in the first place, a matter of not flaunting their status? Are women ministers more collaborative by choice, or because a more authoritarian model of leadership would be unacceptable from a woman?

Lehman in an extensive study concludes that there are some differences but these are neither as clear nor as well defined as might be expected. He notes two current assertions of the women-in-ministry movement

(1) that women and men by nature take divergent approaches to the pastoral ministry (including the priesthood and the rabbinate) -- a traditional "masculine" style and a recently unveiled "feminine" approach, and (2) that the "feminine" mode is much more desirable than the "masculine" stance (Lehman E. , *Gender and Ministry Style: Things not what they seem*, 1993).

and suggests that these are not, in fact, clear cut differences but rather assertions to bring about change. Lehman suggests that

.. a significant background to these assertions about sex differences in ministry style is the need for a rationale by the women-in-ministry movement to legitimate their demands. Whatever else they are, gender-specific descriptions of ministry styles are legitimations for change (Lehman E. , *Gender and Ministry Style: Things not what they seem*, 1993).

Though it should be noted that only the more positive feminine attributes are claimed and some of the more negative, such as passivity, conflict avoidance and martyrdom, are ignored (Kepler, 1978). Robbins, in her research with British women clergy, concludes that whilst the women do believe they speak ‘in a different voice,’ very few of them would argue that their ‘different voice’ was better. Rather, as Lehman suggests, they offer their different voice as legitimating a more holistic approach to ordained ministry which would include women as well as men (Robbins, *A Different Voice: A Different View*, 1998).

However, all candidates for ministry, whether male or female are more democratic in their leadership styles than the general population (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 115), at least in America! From the secular world there are further studies which suggest

that the evidence for essential differences in the leadership styles of men and women is at best inconclusive (Hall-Taylor, 1997) (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, pp. 34-35), though women are perhaps more willing to use a range of different styles, determined by what seems most appropriate to the particular situation (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 199ff).

Do the women ministers in the study feel that their leadership styles are different from those of their male colleagues? If there are differences in terms of collaboration and co-operation, to what extent is that a matter of choice rather than a pragmatic realisation that the attempt by women to exercise 'power over' will simply be rejected by the congregations?

## **Feminization of the Church?**

A much-heralded concern throughout the discussions about the ordination of women, was the effect of ordination on the status and composition of the ministry. The negative effects of women's ordination could include schism, loss of membership, loss of male members and clergy, lower male clergy morale, increased sexual temptation (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997, p. 22). Drawing from the field of secular employment, Reskin and Roos, identify a 'tipping point,' generally acknowledged to be reached when the number of females in a previously male dominated occupation reaches around 30%. After this point internal restructuring occurs in the occupation, leading to loss of status, authority and remuneration (Reskin & Roos, 1987). There is general agreement that the feminised professions, teaching and nursing most notably, have significantly lower status and remuneration than the traditionally male professions of medicine and law (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 115). Nesbitt, on the other hand, describes a different phenomenon in churches. When the number of ordained women reaches around 30%, she identifies a 'backlash' against the women (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997, p. 588). Denominational statistics from the United States certainly show a decline in the number of ordained women in some denominations (Morgan T. C., 1994). These are denominations in the 'Holiness Tradition' and accords with the findings of Zikmund et al on 'Spirit Centred Denominations'

(Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 13). It must be noted too, that the Episcopal Church, both in England and in the USA, deals very gently and carefully with those who defy the denomination's commitment to the ordination of women (Lyles, 2002) (Rees, 2002, p. 11). The Church of Scotland operates a policy of strategic blindness when it comes to dealing with congregations or indeed Presbyteries which do not ordain women.

In the Church of Scotland over the last thirty years, the number of ordained women has steadily increased. There must be a question around whether such a 'tipping point' has been reached and internal restructuring will follow or whether the rise in the numbers of women will create a reactionary backlash as described by Nesbitt.

Chang and Bompadre in their examination of the causes of oversupply of clergy in fourteen American denominations consider the effects of the ordination of women in creating this oversupply. They conclude that the beginnings of oversupply were apparent before the movement for the ordination of women gathered force in these denominations, but drawing on the work of Reskin and Roos they raise the interesting concept of labour queueing as an explanation for the ordination of women suggesting that 'occupations in decline lower barriers of entry in order to attract a cheaper, qualified labor force.' This suggests that the entry of women into the clergy profession may, in part, be a symptom of occupational decline, rather than a cause of this decline' (Chang & Bomparde, 1999).

Another concern is that by confining women to certain specialities within a profession, a type of gender segregation occurs (Figes, 1994, p. 16) (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997), thus creating a female underclass within a particular profession (Smyth, Acker, Bourne, & Prentice, 1999, pp. 13-14) (Nesbitt, *Dual Ordination Tracks: differential benefits and costs for men and women clergy*, 1993). Is this trend already being displayed in America where so many women clergy have opted into non-traditional ministries? Certainly it seems that the people most disadvantaged by the feminisation of a particular profession are not the male practitioners but women themselves (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997). Gender segregation is becoming apparent in Law and Medicine in the UK. As the number of women in these professions rises, so there has been the creation of particular specialities into which women are often encouraged to divert.

Many clergy, and indeed many lay-people in Scotland, would feel that the status of ministers is declining, but whether this is associated with the increasing feminization of the clergy or whether it is more obviously associated with the decline in influence of the Church of Scotland as a whole is a moot issue. For the historians, this decline has more to do with the loss of the 'Godly Commonwealth' and the concept of 'Christendom,' which played such an influential role in the Calvinist, Presbyterian Scotland than with any influence that women clergy might have had (Storror, 1990) (Brown C. G., 1997) (McCrone, 1992).

Does increased feminization of the clergy bring about intrinsic change in the theology and structures of a particular denomination? As women are ordained in increasing numbers, are there significant changes in the authority structures of the Church of Scotland, or significant changes in its theology or practice? Evidence from the United States would tend to suggest that 'the probability is low that women clergy will reach positions of leadership in sufficient concentration to catalyze strong feminist transformations in the beliefs, policies and practices of their denominations' (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997). On the other hand, Charlton, examining the issue from the rather different perspective of the contradictions and dilemmas of status, concludes that women are bringing about change, intrinsic change in the theology and practices of the churches and that the most noticeable change is in the redefinition of the nature of ministry to include specialised ministries and chaplaincies (Charlton, *Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A longitudinal study*, 1997 ).

How do the women of the Church of Scotland feel about the declining status of the church and its ministry? Is increasing feminisation of the ministry a concern for them? On the other hand, do they feel they are starting to experience a 'backlash' from the conservative wing of the church as the number of ordained women reaches a critical percentage?

### **The 'Stained Glass Ceiling': Second Class Citizens or Quiet Revolutionaries?**

Concern is expressed in much secular literature about the limited success that women achieve in breaking into the higher echelons of business and the professions and

that they remain more poorly paid than their male counterparts (Still, 1993) (McDonald, 2004) (Goetz, 2005) (Rana, 2005) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 6) (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 72) (Charleton, Women and Clergywomen, 2000).

Achieving ordination to ministry can be regarded only as a first step (Sullins, 2000). Appointments which allow the actual practice of ministry can be harder to achieve. Following on ordination, women must receive a call to a charge (a placement in American terms). General perception within the Church of Scotland is that women find the call to a charge considerably more difficult than do their male counterparts. Even after forty years of women's ordination, there is still felt to be a difficulty about women achieving a move from first charge to second or third. It is also still perceived to be unlikely that a woman will be called to a prestigious or desirable charge, they are more likely to be in Urban Priority Area or Rural charges or in those with restricted tenure. Although this is a perception in Scotland, there are studies in America which tend to suggest that it may not be a false perception (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998) (Nesbitt, Clergy Feminization: Controlled Labor or Transformative Change?, 1997). Lehman's crystallization of the five studies that deal with clergy placement in America asserts that

The evidence is quite strong in support of several generalizations: From start to finish, the career paths of clergy men and women differ significantly. Consistently more men than women are placed in jobs defined as more desirable in terms of prestige, autonomy, and remuneration. More men than women find ministry positions in the primary clergy labor market. More women than men are placed in positions in a secondary clergy labor market. Overall, men tend to enjoy higher salaries and other allowances than women. If these criteria help define level playing fields for women and men, then the clergy playing field is filled with peaks and valleys (Lehman E. , Women's Path to Ministry, 2002, p. 21).

It has generally been argued that women are disadvantaged when it comes to finding jobs within their chosen profession and that this particularly holds true in ordained ministry. Yang's study suggests that in terms of first placement after leaving seminary in the United States, women are still disadvantaged in comparison to men but that this disadvantage is decreasing, gradually, over time (Yang, 1997). Somewhat in contradiction, Sullins shows that discrimination against women clergy is not noticeably decreasing over time. Despite organisational measures, he finds that resistance to women clergy in senior posts, in the USA, remains extremely strong in a congregational context. This, he argues, shows that it is a result of the wider cultural aversion to women in senior posts in any profession rather than anything intrinsic in the Churches. Congregations, though, adopt family models of behaviour and are, therefore, concerned about the loss of even one

member, thus they are more likely to try to avoid the conflict that appointing a woman might bring than are other congregations. This family model also accounts for the denominational inability or unwillingness to enforce central policies on equality as mentioned before (Sullins, 2000).

Although it may be true that women have a less easy career path in ministry than do men, there may be complicating factors. Clergy women may have additional concerns in the shape of spouses and families. A number of clergy women are married to clergy and the need to balance two careers is an issue (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985). This is no different from the problems in secular employment, where it is noted that women still carry the primary burden of childcare and are perceived to be responsible for relational well being and the maintenance of family life (Maddock, 1999, p. 52). Role ambiguity has become an issue for clergy of both genders as the laity become increasingly active (Monahan, 1999). However, role conflict is more of an issue for women than for men in both secular and church employment (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 80) (Lehman E. , *Women's Path to Ministry*, 2002, p. 22) (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 23) (Elman, *Juggling Career and Kids*, 2003) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 55), women spending on average at least an hour per day more on domestic matters than do men (Elman, *Every Woman Needs Time for Herself*, 2005 ). Although Elman (and I) would suspect that in fact the time differential is much greater. Susan Cody-Rydzewski, in a study of the marriages of a sample of American women clergy, noted that most clergywomen maintained very traditional marriages in terms of power and labour distribution, despite their status as clergy<sup>7</sup>. For some indeed, attention to domestic detail was the price of spousal acceptance of their ordination (Cody-Rydzewski, 2007). A further complicating factor, too, is that women ministers, by virtue of their participation in a 'sacred calling' are faced with two centuries of tradition, of hymns, of laws and practices, of theology all of which are saturated with masculine language and images (Lehman E. , *Women's Path to Ministry*, 2002, p. 34).

But the most critical question to ask is whether women ministers have less 'successful' career paths by choice. There is evidence to suggest that women in secular employment are hesitant about promotion because their priorities and interests are different (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 54). Satisfying employment, which brings recognition in personal terms is deemed more important than the status of the post (Maddock, 1999, p. 181).

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<sup>7</sup> See Also **Invalid source specified**.

McDuff and Mueller suggest that women who hold posts with fewer material rewards are compensated by higher levels of social support, both from their congregations and from the church hierarchy (McDuff & Mueller, 1999). There is a particular kudos in working in a poorly paid, difficult area. Many women clergy in America have opted out of the mainstream of parish ministry into specialized and sector ministries. This has been a matter of choice rather than because they had no options (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 116) (Finlay, 1996) (Charleton, *Women and Clergywomen*, 2000). In an interesting article Cornelius and Skinner argue that not all women should be seen as 'victims' of patriarchal culture. Using 'Capabilities Theory' (the notion that what matters ethically is whether a person is freely able to fully function, and to be or do what they have reason to value) they suggest that women and men may differ in how they measure career success and that

Men, appear to focus on external criteria such as status and material success while women focus on internal criteria such as personal recognition, accomplishment and achieving balance in their lives. This may in turn affect career choices, as it appears that the need to strive to reach "the top" may be more important for men than women who may perceive that the costs of achieving executive positions outweigh the benefits (Cornelius & Skinner, 2005).

Pleasing though this explanation may be, Nicholson introduces an alternative theory. She argues that some women cope with discrimination and perceived lack of 'success' in patriarchal terms by distancing themselves. Thus, in creating a meaningful narrative of their experiences, they render the gender structures insignificant by describing them as incidental to the arena of knowledge, power and work (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 44)

There is evidence in the United States to suggest that the social justice concerns of women clergy have changed over recent times and that younger women clergy, perhaps becoming irritated with the 'stained glass ceiling,' are adopting an increasingly feminist and liberal agenda (Olsen, Crawford, & Guth, 2000) (Deckman, Crawford, Olsen, & Green, 2003). The writers recognise that women clergy are uniquely situated as female (and in many instances feminist) voices in a social institution that is designed explicitly to provide moral guidance. They may have the potential to act as agenda setters not only for their congregations or denominations, but for American society more generally. At present, although women clergy are politically more liberal than either their male counterparts or women in the general American population, this does not yet show in the number of social programs run by the churches, except to the extent that women clergy are more likely to be

involved with outreach to disadvantaged groups than their male colleagues (Deckman, Crawford, Olsen, & Green, 2003). The increasingly liberal agenda of younger women may also be part of their movement away from patriarchal indicators of success and failure.

All of this tends to suggest that perhaps the assertions of women clergy serving in poor or rural parishes that they are content where they are, are indeed true. Their job satisfaction is shown to be high (McDuff E. M., *The Gender Paradox in Work Satisfaction and the Protestant Clergy*, 2001). Could it be, that some of what is perceived to be prejudice against women or underperformance in career terms, actually represents a movement towards redefining ministry where patriarchal indicators of 'success' in terms of status and financial remuneration are no longer paramount? Or is it simply that, having failed to achieve success in patriarchal terms, women are distancing themselves from the concepts as they create a meaningful narrative of their experience. This may be a productive area to explore with the women in this study. As has already been mentioned, the status differentials are less extreme within the Church of Scotland and it may be easier to ascertain what it is that brings job satisfaction: what it is that women would describe as 'success.' It will also be interesting to consider whether the resistance to appointing women ministers seems to be declining, increasing or holding steady.

## **Women and Change in the Church : Reshaping the body?**

Is there any evidence to show that women change the culture of the organisations within which they work? Kamberg believes that they do. She takes an optimistic view of the business world and believes that gradually, the business world is changing to become more family friendly and that this benefits men as well as women (Kamberg, 2005). Others would be rather less certain. There may be theoretical and even legal changes taking place, which supposedly mean that life should become easier for working women, but there remains a huge question about the extent to which these changes in practice truly change the culture of the organisation (Maddock, 1999, p. 43) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 17). Indeed Nicholson would argue that the legal protections sometimes only serve to allow gender discrimination to go underground or be taken off the agenda. She further suggests that the existence of such policies, sometimes deprives women of the means to negotiate their own careers (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 74). The presence of one or



two token women in an organisation, committee or board can be exploited to give an illusion of equal opportunity (Figes, 1994, p. 73).

There is a great deal of general management literature which lauds the supposed 'feminine' or 'soft skills' as the way ahead for organisations (Hall-Taylor, 1997) (Maddock, 1999, p. 29 & 34) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 20). There are two clear problems here. The first being that it stereotypes women's style of management, and the second being that there is little practical evidence that organisations are changing to the softer, learning structure, no matter what the literature recommends.

Studies of organisational culture and their responses to women are fascinating. Maddock and Parkin developed a typology of gender cultures as follows: The Gentleman's Club; the Locker Room; the Barrack Yard; the Gender-Blind; the Smart Macho; the Gender Neutral.

These cultures tended to rely either on the shared assumption that women and men were very different or to downplay gender differences and pretend that workplaces were gender neutral. The cultures we identified tended to reflect either a traditional view than men and women are very different or the equality at work view that there is no difference at all. Both attitudes are equally distorting of reality and both result in women being trapped in either a female world that is domestic or in a male work model (Maddock, 1999, pp. 91-92).

To effect real change in an organisational culture there needs to be something more than the 'add women and stir approach' (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 69).

Within the literature there is an underlying assumption that women, to achieve the same as men, need nonetheless to be better than them (Figes, 1994, p. 60) (Frankel, 2004) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 9) (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 56). The women who were the first pioneers in higher education were only taken seriously when they came 'first' in class. (Orr Macdonald, A Unique and Glorious Mission, 2000, p. 2006). Today it seems that the situation has changed little. Lois P Frankel gives this ironic warning

Think logically about this. When you look around at the people who get promoted and recognized, are they the people who make miracles? Women take pride in the fact they can do more with less, meet or beat impossible deadlines, and get juice out of a turnip. They actually believe others will recognize and appreciate their efforts. What they don't realize is that every time they make a miracle, they've set the bar higher in terms of what people expect from them. Not only that, but while they're busy jumping through hoops their

male colleagues are doing things that give them more visibility and, ultimately, more rewards (Frankel, 2004).

In working in a male dominated environment, women have the additional disadvantage of being socialised to defer (Frankel, 2004) (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 140) (Maddock, 1999, p. 46). This does sometimes alter the way some women work, adopting an attitude of helplessness, but perhaps women manipulate because they cannot be straightforward within a male culture: 'feminine wiles' are a response to powerlessness (Maddock, 1999, p. 8 & 46).

Although women are stereotyped to be more co-operative and relational, there is clear evidence that women find networking within organisations more difficult (Frankel, 2004). This is, in part, due to the male culture of this networking, much of which takes place in pubs or golf courses and which tends to include risqué jokes and 'laddish' behaviour (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 90) (Maddock, 1999, pp. 104-5). Whilst 'a few women may be admitted to the ranks of the 'lads'', they are only admitted on male terms and will have to play the roles of 'fun-loving sister', or as 'tomboy', able to join in and laugh with the lads (even if sometimes at other women's expense)' (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 16). Even in situations where women do partake in networking, they seem to do so less successfully in terms of benefiting their careers (Van Emmerick, Euwema, Geschiere, & Schouten, 2006). Surprisingly this is an issue within the Church of Scotland, where one of the major councils of the Church is controlled largely by a group of men who play golf together in Las Vegas each year!

Perhaps one of the most significant factors in the ordination of women is the consideration of whether it has indeed, as Lehman suggests, brought about changes in ministry or in our understanding of what it is to be a minister. Some of the pioneer women in the Church of England express the concern that they will become 'coerced into acting in the male tradition.' Yet there is a real hope that they will find ways of ministering differently in a transformed church (Rees, 2002, p. 26 & 56).

For women working in any sector of society, but especially in the male dominated professions, one of the major issues remains that of relating to the established male workforce. Nicholson identifies the roles of 'mother confessor,' 'departmental mascot,' 'departmental tea lady,' 'bridesmaid,' 'seductress' and 'feminist' (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 84), whilst Newman describes the roles as 'mother,'

‘aunt,’ ‘wife’ and ‘daughter’ (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 16). I suspect many women clergy will recognise at least some of these roles and have felt the pressure to play them. Perhaps an even greater pressure is to become a ‘man in skirts’ (Kamberg, 2005) (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 42) (Maddock, 1999, p. 66) (Figs, 1994, p. 66). Mary Levison was clear that she did not wish to be a man or to adopt masculine models of ministry. She wished to minister as a woman (Levison, 1992, p. 71) but the pressures to adopt male models of ministry were felt by many of the pioneers (Rees, 2002, p. 26 & 33). They felt there was a danger that they were invited to be ‘honorary men’ (Furlong, 1991, p. 63).

In the world of secular employment, studies have been done on the importance of role models and mentors in successful development (Van Emmerick, Euwema, Geschiere, & Schouten, 2006). One of the barriers facing women is the lack of suitable female role models or mentors (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 104) (Singh, Vinnicombe, & James, 2006) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 12) (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 60). Within the church, this has been an obvious problem. Only in very recent years have women ministers been around in sufficient numbers and with sufficient geographic distribution, to allow women candidates to be supervised at least once in their training by more senior women.

‘Men attend to and treat as significant only what men say’ (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 109), leaving women to express frustration that they are unable to make themselves heard (Maddock, 1999, p. 44) (Orr Macdonald, In *Good Company*, 1999, p. 152). ‘I have gone invisible and others are apparently deaf’ is how Christine Farrington describes it (Rees, 2002, p. 60). A group of women managers felt that ‘Women are not listened to in meetings.’ They felt that women talked in a different style, so their responses were edited out, and their comments were shot down, and that all the normal intercourse and interactions were between men (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 38).

One of the most pertinent changes in society in recent years has been the illusion or the myth of equal opportunity. Young women are unaware of the discrimination they might face as they enter a male dominated workplace. As teaching has become increasingly feminised young women are less prepared by schools for the realities ahead of them (Figs, 1994, p. 6). At first young women can be loath to believe that sexism exists and it can take two or three years in a profession before sexism is identified and recognised (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 36). Eventually women either become socialised

into the patriarchal structure, devising coping mechanisms, or they leave (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 72).

Will the study show significant differences between senior and junior women clergy? Will the more junior women feel they have benefited from having female mentors or role models? Will it prove to be the case that those more recently ordained have less concern about sexism or discrimination? Do those who are younger find it easier to network, to join in the trips to the pub or the golf course? Monica Furlong, expressing the need for radical change rather than simply tinkering with the edges writes

What we are asking for is a 'new' Christianity. The 'old' Christianity was shot through with the dualism in which it claimed not to believe, with flesh fighting against spirit, reason fighting against feeling, order fighting against chaos, civilization fighting against Nature and man fighting against woman. But perhaps we have reached the point in history where, with insights experience and divine wisdom at last coming together, we might think in terms of integration rather than battle, armistice rather than costly war (Furlong, 1991, p. 153).

## **Women in the Church and Women Church**

A deep and profound question remains. Will it ever be possible to change the church not simply so that it accommodates women but so that they feel truly at home in ministry? In a very real sense this question applies not only to the Church. Writers in the field of secular employment acknowledge the tension between 'those who are committed to change and those who are more energetic in making the systems work' (Maddock, 1999, p. 6). There are issues here about the nature of power and prestige and about the nature of traditional institutions like the Church

those structures built by and for powerful men in a culture of second-class citizenship for women. Making room for women within relatively unaltered structures would leave intact the overall system that historically has denied leadership opportunities to women and other powerless groups (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 69).

Chittister would suggest that the situation within the church is extreme. The language, imagery, polity and ministry of the church was entirely male and women were 'nowhere to be seen except sometimes crawling around the floor doing the dusting'

(Chittister, 1998, p. ix). The pioneer women of the medical profession, when confronted with a system that would not accommodate them, started separate institutions. Sophia Jex Blake set up her women's medical college in Edinburgh and the early women physicians in Ontario likewise set up their own hospital.

Women clergy, it would seem, by virtue of their accepting ordination within the patriarchal church, must belong to the group who are committed to 'making the systems work.' Some indeed did see the achievement of women's ordination as being the end of the story. That largely was the attitude of those of us who were in the second wave of women ordinands in the Church of Scotland. We felt that if we did just keep our heads down and get on with the work, time and patience would change the church and its attitudes. In the early 1980's a group of 'ministers who were women' met about once a year partly just to meet because there were relatively few of us, and partly to discuss matters of common interest (from the wearing or not of dog-collars, to the gendered or ungendered nature of God!). By the mid 80's these meetings had ended. As the number of women increased, it became a concern that we should not be seen as a separate group within the Church. Others however, have seen ordination only as a beginning and argue that the fact of women's ordination will not, of itself, bring about change in either Church or congregations (Rees, 2002, p. 34). For some the answer lies in meeting together in a separate woman's church. Others would acknowledge that

alternative groups are not the answer but a way of buying into the already failed pattern of separating ourselves from those with whom we don't agree (Orr Macdonald, In Good Company, 1999, p. 58).

Others still are 'defecting in place,' still active in their churches, some as clergy, but finding their spiritual nourishment elsewhere (Winter, Lummis, & Stokes, 1995).

Within the Church of Scotland, I am aware, through personal experience of a number of ordained women who have either left the church altogether or who now find it quite peripheral in their lives. For them the experience of the patriarchal government, the sexist language, and the sheer bad manners of those who oppose women has become too much to bear and they have lost all hope that the church could be reformed. It is interesting that a number of these women have found a spiritual home in the Iona Community, whose founder was not notably a fan of women's rights!

Those women who were ordained but have left the Church of Scotland are also important, but are outwith the scope of the present study. Overall it will be interesting to discover whether the women ministers of the Church of Scotland feel oppressed or valued by the Church. It would be interesting to discover too, how many of them are effectively ‘defecting in place’ and finding their spiritual support elsewhere.

## **Conclusion**

The literature leaves us with many questions but these perhaps come under three main headings.

First of all there are the theological questions: To what extent is the experience of the women clergy in Scotland coloured by the Calvinistic heritage? Did the context of the acceptance of women’s ordination leave ‘skeletons which are now falling out of the cupboard in terms of sexism, language and structural change?’

Secondly there are the sociological questions: Was the ordination of women in the Church of Scotland simply a response to wider social movements? Was it a result of the feminist movement, a way of the Church defining its liberal status vis a vis the wider society? Is there a backlash from the conservative wing who would wish to ‘fence the boundaries’ between the Church of Scotland and society as a whole? Or was the ordination of women simply a symptom of the feminisation or decline in status of the church and the clergy, a decline which was already well underway in Scotland by 1968?

Finally there are the ‘feminist’ questions: Did anything change, if so what and how? Do the women feel that they minister differently from men and if so in what ways? Is there a ‘stained glass ceiling’ or do women deliberately choose different models of ministry and different criteria for measuring success?

It is unrealistic to hope that this study can answer all of these questions. However, I hope that, through both the survey and the ‘ministry story’ interviews it will go far towards

answering many of them and that as the first major study of the women ministers of the Church of Scotland it will provide a platform on which others may build.

## Chapter 3 Surveying the Field

### *Introduction*

This chapter reports on data gathered from three sources. The Church of Scotland Year Book, figures held by the Ministries Council of the Church of Scotland and the results of a postal survey. From the Year Book it became apparent that most women ministers are parish ministers working in the Central Belt of Scotland. Comparisons of the ordination patterns for men and women were carried out showing that women's ordination is rising as a percentage of the whole. From the Ministries Council figures, the percentage of men and women presenting to and being accepted by the Selection Process were compared. The ageing profile of Church of Scotland ministers was also obvious. From the survey the figures on role and age were compared with the Year Book and Ministries Council figures and provided useful validation. Marital status, willingness to move charge and gender differences were all explored. As a result, the profile of the Rev Elizabeth Average was drawn up.

### *Why survey?*

Standing on a hilltop, I survey the surrounding countryside – I look out over it and see what is there (Sapsford, 1999, p. 1).

This chapter presents an overall survey of the landscape – a looking out over it to see what is there. However, when a house is to be built or land to be developed, there is need for a different kind of survey, a more precise charting of the features of the land, especially those which are of relevance to the development. Some of the features of the landscape of the women ministers of the Church of Scotland which are relevant to the further research are also described and detailed here (Sapsford, 1999, p. 1).

Though the underlying ethos of this project is feminist and post-positivist, it adopts a multi-method approach (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 236) (Denzin & Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 2003, p. 8).<sup>8</sup> A simple survey of the women ministers

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<sup>8</sup> Qualitative research by its very nature does not have a distinct set of methods or practices which are entirely its own (Lincoln and Denzin 2003:10) and sharing the belief that whilst 'qualitative research does imply a commitment to field activities. It does not imply a commitment to innumeracy.' (Silverman 2001:35), there seemed much to be gained from gathering some basic information about the women ministers of the Church of Scotland.



in the Church of Scotland was carried out. Consideration was also given to some facts and figures about the ministry of the Church of Scotland which are in the public domain. As was noted many years ago, ‘in a bureaucratic – technological society, numbers talk’ (Silverman, 2001, p. 35). That said, there is no attempt within this paper to apply rigorous statistical analysis to the figures gathered because the field of women clergy in the Church of Scotland is not huge and any researcher considering quantitative research would discover that the numbers in variable fields would be too small for acceptable and reliable statistical analysis (Cramer, 1994, p. 13). Rather, this was a simple information gathering exercise which generated only Nominal rather than Ordinal, Interval or Ratio data. Generally, the statistics in this paper are presented as simple Frequency Tables (Cramer, 1994, p. 13) (Fielding & Gilbert, 2000, p. 49).

### ***The Year Book***

As at 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2005, there were 303 women, ordained to full time ministry of word and sacrament recorded within the Church of Scotland. 7 of these were living and working abroad and 1 was working within the Presbytery of England. 17, including 3 of those who live abroad, are listed, not under a Presbytery but under list I ‘Ministers Holding Practising Certificates (under Act II as amended by Act VIII 2000)’ A further 5 are listed under List H ‘Ministers having resigned seat in Presbytery (in terms of Act III 1992), 1 of these lives abroad and a further 1 is also listed in I. The remaining 283 are members of a Presbytery in Scotland.

Women ministers by role:

Parish	Retired	Chaplains	Associates	121staff	specialist	other	teacher	locum	List:I	ListH	Total
194	49	16	11	4	3	3	1	1	17 (16)	4 (5)	303

As can be seen, most women clergy are parish ministers. At this point, women occupy just under 16% of the parishes in the Church of Scotland. Of the chaplains, 10 are healthcare chaplains, 2 are forces chaplains, 2 are university chaplains, whilst there is a prison chaplain, and a school chaplain.

Although Nesbitt (1997), Zikmund, Lummis and Chang (1998) and others express concern in the American context at the limited range of posts available for women, it would seem that this is not borne out in the Scottish context where women are represented in almost all areas of ministry. (It should be noted that the Army does not currently allow female chaplains.) The concern over the exclusion of women from some areas of ministry and in particular from supposedly higher status areas of ministry and leadership roles is rooted in the understanding that unless women are in leadership roles, they are unable to influence or affect organisational practices. If women are not to be found in leadership roles are their attainments 'being structurally controlled in a manner that effectively grants female presence but little substantive opportunity for transformative influence' (Nesbitt 1997(2)). However, given the different nature of the Church of Scotland, the fact that women are found in all aspects of ministry does not necessarily imply that they are to be found in elite leadership roles. More telling in the Church of Scotland context is the fact that in the 2006/7 Year Book, 5 of 23 conveners of Committees were women. Janet Wootton highlights a similar theme in the Introduction to a book on Free Church Women's Ministry in England.

While women have had limited, and occasionally celebrated, access to the largely figurehead role of President or Moderator, there are very few women at the head of the administration of Free Churches (Wootton, 2007: 5).

Studies from the United States have highlighted the systemic exclusion of women clergy from elite or senior ministerial roles. (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985) (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983) (Nesbitt, *Gender, Tokenism and the Construction of Elite Clergy Careers*, 1997) Of course, in 2007, the Moderator to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was an ordained woman.

Examining the statistics Presbytery by Presbytery shows an interesting geographical distribution. The figures below show the percentage of women parish ministers in each Scottish Presbytery. These figures are drawn from the 2009/10 Year Book and show some variation from the 2005 figures.

<b>Presbytery</b>	<b>Charges</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>%</b>
Edinburgh	83	17	20%
West Lothian	22	2	9%
Lothian	34	8	24%
Melrose and Peebles	16	5	31%
Duns	10	1	10%
Jedburgh	13	4	31%
Annandale and Eskdale	12	0	0%
Dumfries and Kircudbirght	25	3	12%
Wigton and Stranraer	12	0	0%
Ayr	36	4	11%
Irvine and Kilmarnock	27	1	4%
Ardrossan	24	5	21%
Lanark	18	6	33%
Greenock and Paisley	55	12	22%
Glasgow	137	24	18%
Hamilton	72	16	22%
Dumbarton	32	7	22%
Argyll	35	4	11%
Falkirk	34	7	21%
Stirling	34	8	24%
Dunfermline	22	6	27%
Kirkcaldy	25	7	28%
St Andrews	23	4	17%
Dunkeld and Meigle	13	5	38%
Perth	27	2	7%
Dundee	32	8	25%
Angus	24	5	21%
Aberdeen	36	5	14%
Kincardine and Deeside	18	5	28%
Gordon	25	5	20%
Buchan	24	3	13%
Moray	20	3	15%
Abernethy	7	2	29%
Inverness	20	1	5%
Lochaber	9	2	22%
Ross	18	0	0%
Sutherland	10	1	10%
Caithness	8	0	0%
Skye	9	0	0%
Uist	8	0	0%
Lewis	10	0	0%
Orkney	14	4	29%
Shetland	7	2	29%

From this table we note that as at 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008 women occupy 17.89% of the parishes in Scotland. There are, of course, also women Associates, Sector ministers and specialists in many of these Presbyteries. However, it should not be assumed that all other parishes are occupied by male ministers, in fact, in the 2009/10 Year Book 16.75% of Scottish parishes were vacant. So, as at 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008, women represent 22.44% of parish ministers. The shortage of clergy is already a problem for the Church of Scotland and likely to become an increasing problem as we shall see from the Age Tables.

It can be seen that most women parish ministers work in the Central Belt. Meikle and Dunkeld has the highest concentration at 38% with Lanark not far behind at 33%. That said, Shetland and Orkney show fairly high proportions of women parish ministers. Noticeably there are seven Presbyteries with no women parish ministers. In the 2006 yearbook there were only five Presbyteries with no women Parish ministers. As might be expected for theological reasons most of these are in the far North of Scotland. However, two Presbyteries in the South West have no women parish ministers.

Throughout the years of the ordination of women within the Church of Scotland there has been an apocryphal understanding that women were more acceptable in less desirable parishes - that if there were no men available, then a woman might be appointed. It should be emphasized that there was no research to support this in Scotland, but it was a general understanding - an understanding shared in the United States of America and supported by some research there (Chaves, 1997, p. 31). Therefore, the Presbytery of Edinburgh was considered difficult territory for women. Because of its convenience for the Church headquarters, most Edinburgh charges were regarded as desirable for those men who wished to be movers and shakers within the committee structure of the Church; women were therefore likely to be found only in Urban Priority Area (UPA) charges within Edinburgh. The Presbyteries of Orkney and Shetland find it difficult to attract clergy, to the extent that there are 'special arrangements' which offer incentives to those prepared to minister there. These might therefore be considered fertile ground for women. As previously mentioned there are particular theological circumstances pertaining to the Presbyteries of the North.

As we noted on page 45 Mark Chaves in his important work *Ordaining Women* argues that the ordination of women within a particular denomination is rarely, simply a matter of theology. Rather, denominations are influenced by the prevailing culture (Chaves 1997: 50) and by the behaviour of other denominations perceived to be similar.

In sum, denominations engage in a kind of structured watching and influencing of one another. The direction of this influence, however, varies substantially depending on a denomination's position in the Interdenominational network - depending on whom it turns to for purposes of comparison (Chaves, 1997, p. 59).

Further, he suggests, that the decision to ordain women owes more to the desire of a denomination to portray itself within church networks and to the wider world as a particular type of church, than it does to the desire for ordination from the women within it.

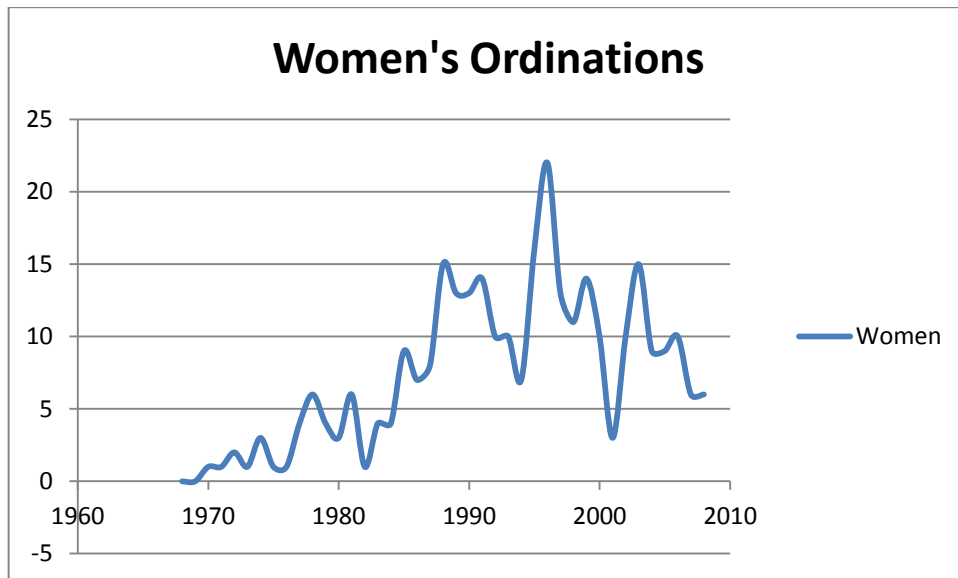
If rules about women clergy are largely symbolic display to relevant environments, and denominations are embedded in denominational environments that send different signals on this issue, then identifying a denomination's position in the overall denominational world should help to explain its relative openness or resistance to ordaining women (Chaves, 1997, p. 60).

Broadly speaking, one might argue that denominations which wish to portray themselves as 'encultured' are more likely to ordain women than those which portray themselves as 'counter-cultural.'

For now, however, the key point is that denominational policies about women's ordination carry a symbolic meaning well beyond their pragmatic consequences for religious organizations. Denominations not yet ordaining women after the policy comes to mean "gender equality" resist something more than actual females in pulpits and at Stars. They resist modernity. More accurately, they resist a part of modernity in which the liberal agenda of elevating individual rights is of paramount importance (Chaves, 1997, p. 83).

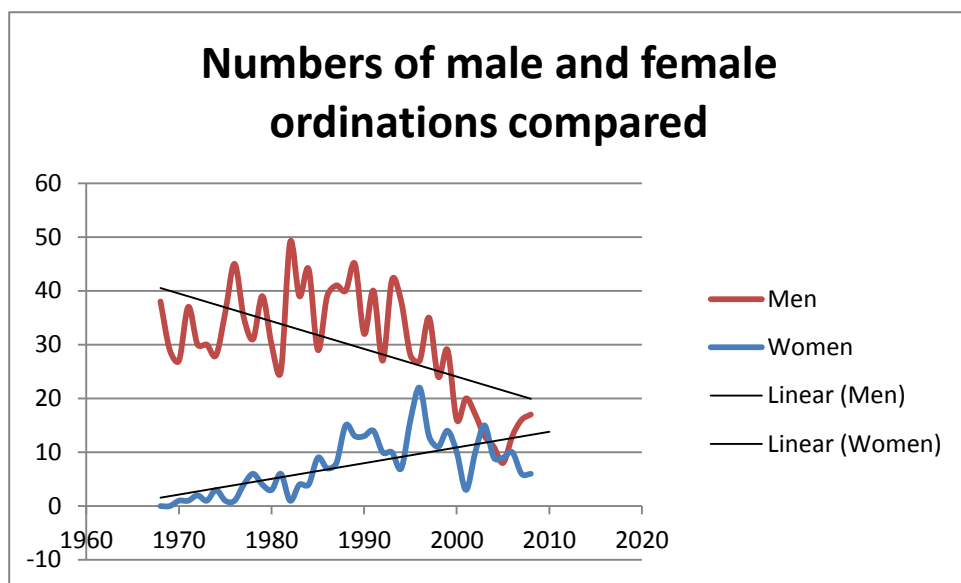
In the late 1960's when the battle for the ordination of women within the Church of Scotland was being fought, there were, in fact, relatively few women waiting to be ordained. The argument within the General Assembly did not focus on the rights of women as a feminist issue but on the ability and willingness of God to call any particular individual regardless of gender. This can be contrasted with the situation in the Church of England in 1992 (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004).

The number of women now within the Church of Scotland who were ordained in any given year is shown in the chart below. It should be noted that not all of these women will have been ordained by the Church of Scotland, some may have transferred from other denominations. Indeed there is one woman who was ordained in 1966. However, the same holds true of the figures given for total ordinations.



It can be seen that very few women were ordained in the years immediately following 1968. Not until 1988 does the number rise to double figures. It peaks at 22 in 1998 and has shown since then, with the exception of the severe dip in 2001, an apparent rate of decline. However, the trend line, as we shall see, continues to show steady increase.

That there was apparent decline after 1998 is misleading unless the figures are looked at in conjunction with the total of all ordinations to full time ministry of word and sacrament for the period. The chart below shows the numbers of male and female ordinations compared. As can be seen, the numbers of men being ordained declines quite sharply after 1993 and the trend line shows overall decline whilst the trend line for women shows gradual increase.



## ***Ministries Council Figures***

In 2008, at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, questions were asked about the declining numbers of women candidates coming forward for full time ministry of word and sacrament. In order to help the Ministries Council respond to the question, I was given access to some of their data on clergy. However, as can be seen from the figures, although the number of women candidates is declining, the number of women candidates as a proportion of the total is not. From the point in 2005 where we have 9 women listed as ordained in that year as opposed to 8 men, the figures begin to diverge again and show an increase in male ordinations

2006 – 13men and 10 women

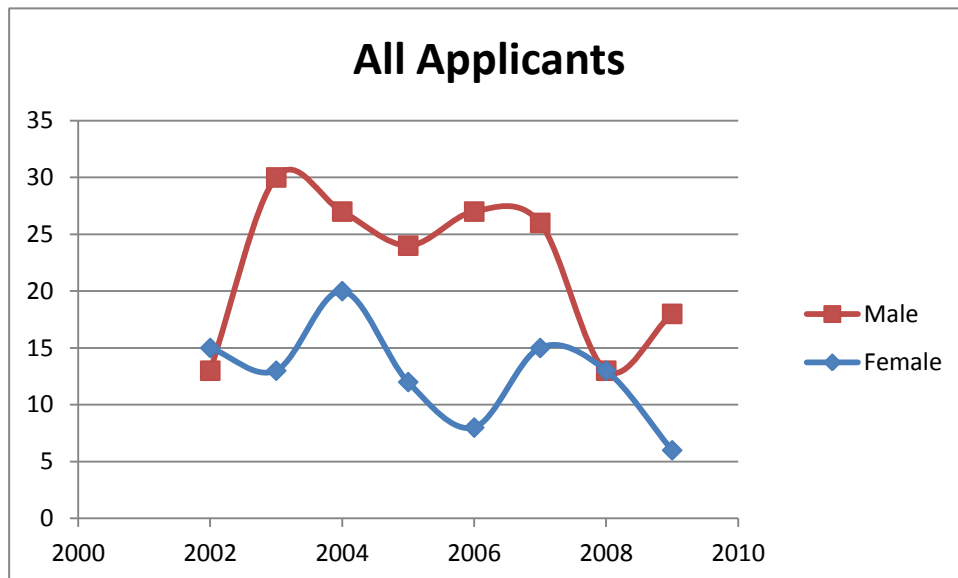
2007 – 16men and 6 women

2008 – 17 men and 6 women

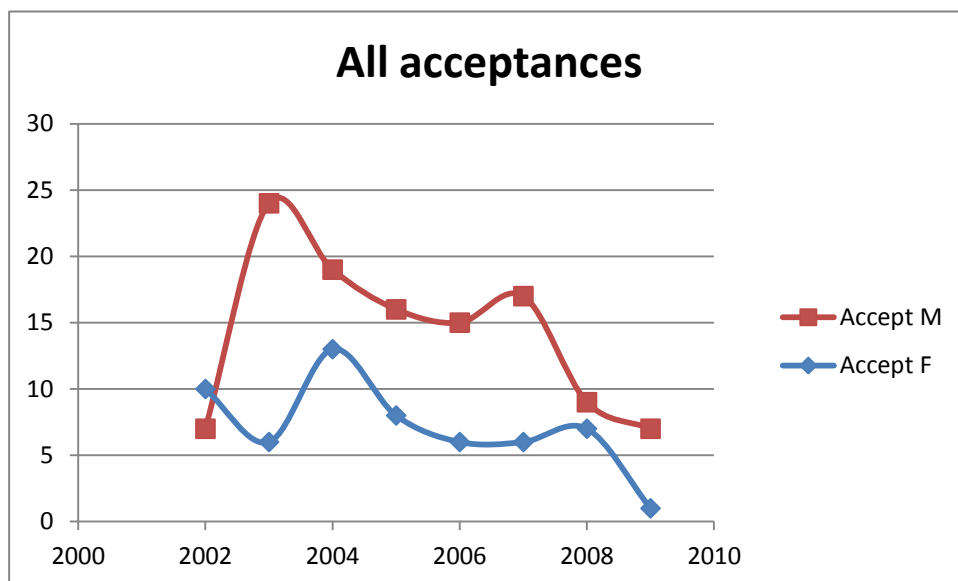
It is too early, however, to know whether the increase in male ordinations in the last two years is a trend, or simply a spike.

What is very clear is a steady decline in the total number of those coming forward for ordination. This trend is echoed in the Church of England which has also seen a decline in the number of ordinands in recent years (Robbins, *Clergywomen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study*, 2008, p. 64). The shortage of Roman Catholic clergy in the United Kingdom has been well documented through the media.

All candidates for the full time Ministry in the Church of Scotland attend a selection conference. The figures for those applying for Selection Conference in the last eight years were then looked at.



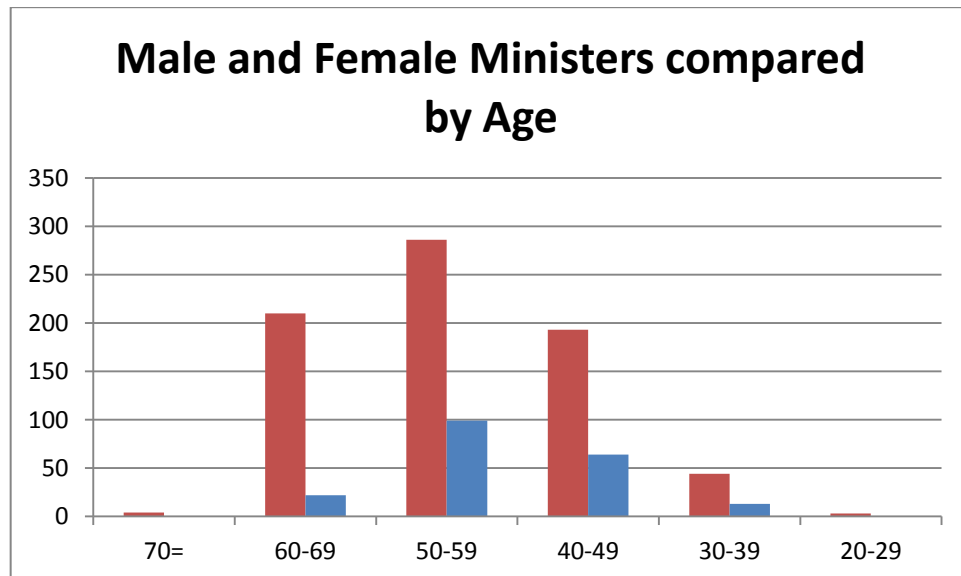
Again there will be noticed a slight increase in numbers of male applicants in the last year (2009).



When consideration is given to the numbers of men and women being accepted at Selection Conference, it can be seen that the figures are still inconclusive. However, given the increase in the number of men being ordained since 2006 and the increase in the numbers of male applicants for Selection Conference in 2009, it would be worth re-examining the figures in two or three years time.

In the autumn of 2009, the opportunity came to examine the dates of birth of all clergy employed by the Ministries Council at that time. The dates of birth were given along with the indication of whether the minister was male or female, the tables are shown below.





Average Age of Women ministers 51.5years

Average Age of Men 53.3years

	Women	Men
70+years	0%	0.5%
60 – 69 years	11%	28.4%
50 – 59years	50%	38.6%
All told 66% of the ministers in the Church of Scotland are 50years of age and over!		
40 – 49	32%	26%
30 – 39	6.5%	5.9%

There are three men under thirty and no women. Only 6.3% of all ministers are under 40years of Age.

There are 200 women ministers and 741 men though the calculations are based on 198 women and 740 men because there are three ministers for whom the Ministries Council do not have dates of birth!

As of the Ministries Council November 2009 figures women are 21.25% of the ministers in the Church of Scotland (200/941). This contrasts with the Year Book figures for 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008 which showed women as 22.44% (204/949). Obviously equal numbers of male and female ministers left their parishes during 2009.

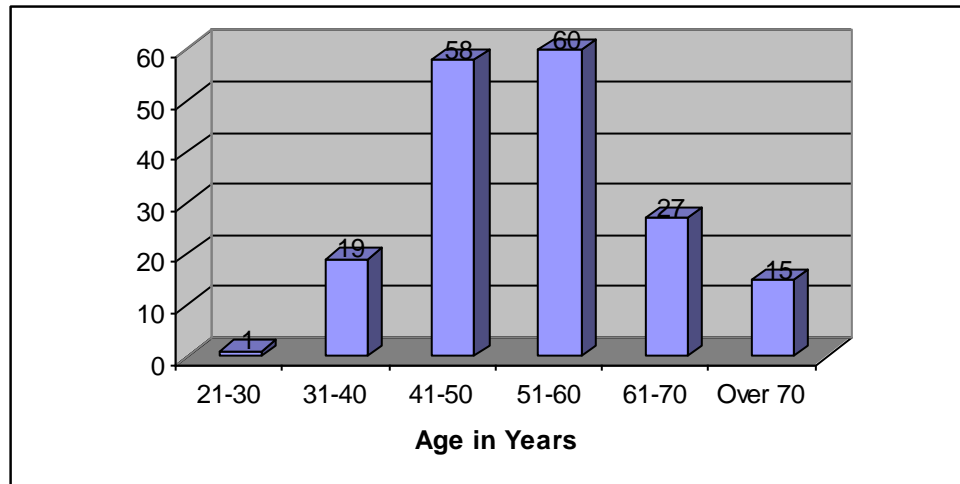
## ***The Survey***

A survey describes a population - it counts and describes 'what is out there' (Sapsford, 1999, p. 1).

The survey undertaken as part of this project was to add to the information gained through the Year Book and to take further the background information about the women

clergy of the Church of Scotland. In reality, it could best be described as a census (Fowler 2002: 5) in that the whole population was approached. The goal was not to generate statistics but to describe some characteristics of this group in a more general way (Fowler 2002: 5)

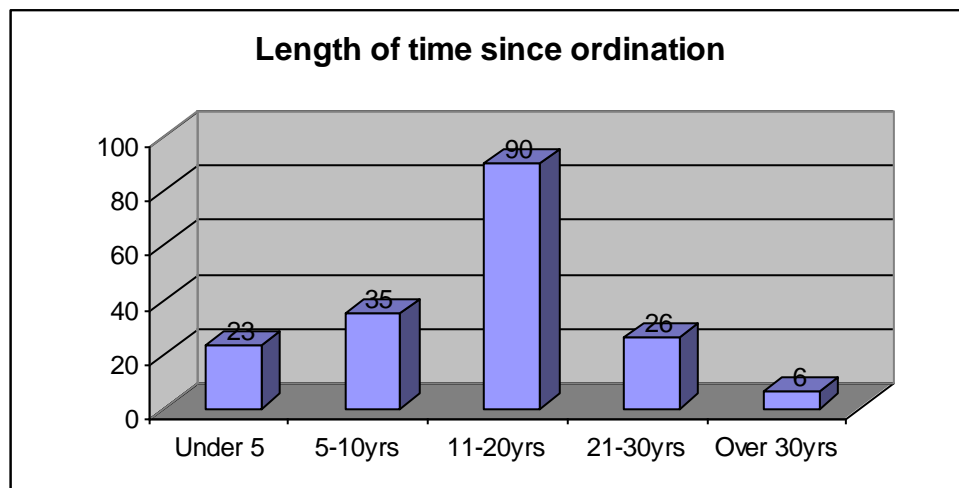
The first question concerned the age profile of women clergy and the results are presented in the table below.



As can be seen, this bears out the age profile of women ministers drawn from the 2009 Ministries Council figures and gives a useful confirmation of the validity of the survey. The lower numbers of those over 61 is readily understandable given the previous graphs on ordination. Much more worrying is the lack of younger women. Whilst it is generally true that many people now come to ministry as a second career, it is perhaps particularly true that women are now coming to ministry later.

Women may have been less sure that their call was to ordained ministry though, often lacking the amount of social support that men received for pursuing a sense of vocation. This may be one reason why clergywomen enter seminary at later ages on average than do men. Clergywomen's delay in acting on a sense of call has also been found in the Church of England, for similar reasons (Lummis, *Forever Pruning?*, 2008, p. 165).

The next question considered the number of years since ordination and again the results are presented below.



Of the 51-60 year olds, 8 (13.3%) have been ordained for less than five years and 12 (20%) for 5 – 10 years. 1 of those in the 61 – 70 age bracket has been ordained in the last ten years. By contrast, 1 of those in the 51 – 60 age range has been ordained for over 30years and a further 7 of that age group have been ordained for 21 – 30 years. There are also four in the 41 – 50 age group who have been ordained for over 21years. This perhaps reflects that women, as with men, were in the past generally ordained at a younger age than they are today.

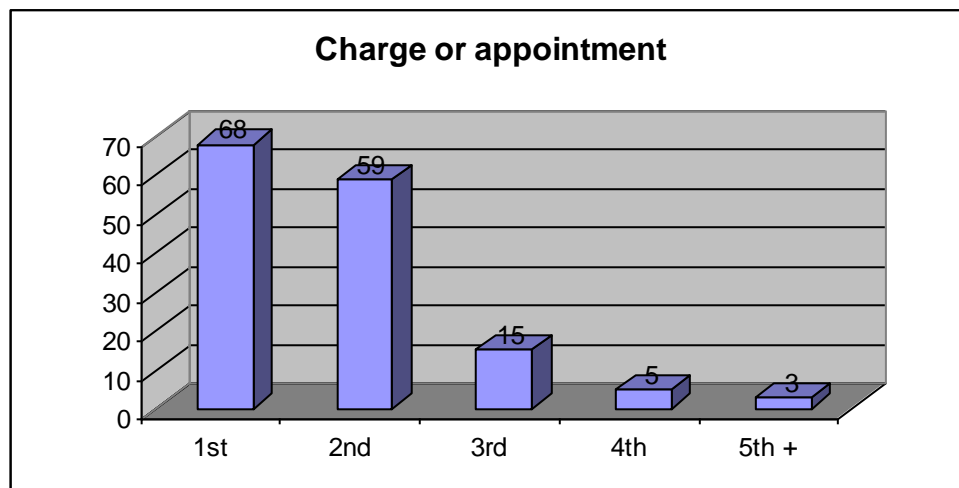
The question about marital status is one of those that could be deemed sensitive. The figures presented below need little comment. The proportion of married women at 52.6% is well in line with the Scottish average of 53%. However, although 12% of women in Scotland are widowed, only 2.6% of women clergy come into that category.<sup>9</sup> The Church of England statistics from 1994(which only covers women clergy in England) showed 55% married, 34% single, 5% widowed and 5% divorced. (Robbins, Clergywomen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study, 2008, p. 187)

#### Marital Status

Single	Married	Widowed	Separated	Divorced	Partnership
59	100	5	2	13	1

Another of the apocryphal understandings about women ministers in Scotland, again not backed by any research, was that whilst they were able eventually to obtain a call to a first charge, moving on to a second charge was more difficult. Certainly as can be seen from the table below, most women are in their first charge but a very substantial number have moved to a second charge or appointment.

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government 2002



The second sensitive questions asked concerned readiness to move. It was asked in order to clarify whether there were indeed a considerable number of women who felt ready to move but were trapped in their current charge or appointment. As can be seen, only 9 indicated that they would like to move 'As soon as possible.' Most will consider a call to another charge 'sometime'. There are however 23 who are sufficiently close to retirement not to consider another call at all. It is in the nature of ministry that movement within the last five years before retirement is unlikely. This was a sensitive question as most ministers would not wish their congregations to know if they were thinking of making a move. It is also tied in with the whole sense of call and there were 8 respondents who wrote comments beside the question 'I will always respond to a genuine call from God, whenever' and 'God knows' being the flavour of the responses. 5 people did not tick any of the boxes for this question.

#### Call to another charge/appointment

ASAP	Within 5yrs	Sometime	Not at all	Retirement	Nonresponse
9	26	74	13	23	5

Of those who responded to the survey, most were parish ministers, but then, as we have seen from the Year Book statistics, most women ministers are parish ministers. The results for this question give us some indication of the bias in the survey.

#### Type of Ministry

Parish	Assoc/Specialist	Sector	Academic	Other	Retired
122	11	13	0	4	30

From the Year Book figure 69% of the sample frame were parish ministers whereas 68% of the respondents to the survey were parish ministers. 17% were retired in both Year Book and survey. Those involved in other types of ministry (Associates, chaplains, etc)

represented 14% in the Year Book and 15% of the returns in the survey. So it can be seen that the survey is very slightly biased away from parish ministers. Unfortunately it is impossible to calculate bias overall ‘non response is a problem because of the likelihood – repeatedly confirmed in practice – that people who do not return questionnaires differ from those who do!’ (Bell J. , 1999, p. 130).

The final question in the survey was the most difficult and brought the greatest number of non-responders. The question asked ‘In the Scottish context have you noticed any difference between the genders in the following areas of ministry?’ The table of responses is given below.

Gender Differences in Leadership styles

	Yes	No	No Diff	Don’t know	Nonresponse
Collaboration	95	23	32	21	9
Leadership	108	19	31	13	9
Pastoral Care	97	27	29	15	12
Preaching	63	40	47	19	11
Committees	83	39	30	18	10
Vision Building	58	33	31	47	11

7 gave no response at all in any category

1 ticked yes and no in all categories

1 omitted collaboration, leadership, committees and vision building

2 omitted pc and preaching

1 omitted pastoral care, preaching, committees, vision building

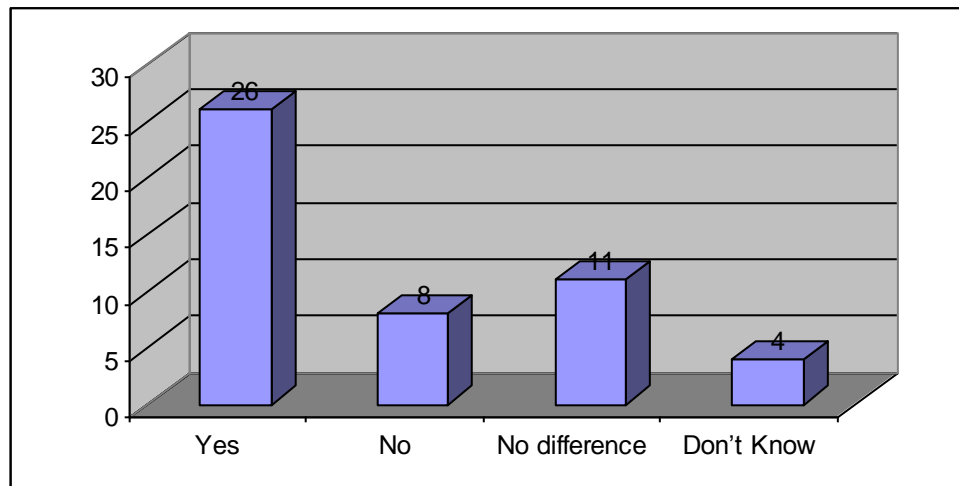
1 omitted vision building

1 omitted pastoral care

A number of questionnaires included written comments about the response being a generalization and that personality was perhaps as much of an issue as gender.

The completed questionnaires were then checked to count how many gave one answer down the whole table, i.e. ticked ‘Yes’ six times or ‘No’ six times indicating maximalist or minimalist responses (Lehman E. , Gender and Ministry Style: Things not what they seem, 1993).

Numbers giving same response down the whole table



Apart from 1 response where both yes and no were ticked throughout and which was treated as a non-response (see above) all other questionnaires showed a range of answers across the table.

With hindsight, the extra category 'no difference' should have been omitted. It was included in response to the pilot questionnaire. One of those involved in the pilot argued that there is a clear difference between, 'no' as in 'I have not noticed a difference between the genders' and wishing to assert as a point of principle that there is 'no difference' between the gender. In practice it just caused confusion without generating any useful differences in the responses. Overall, these two answers are best collapsed in order to gain an insight into whether or not women minister felt there was a difference across the genders.

With the categories collapsed it becomes easier to see the areas in which women ministers thought there might be a difference.

	Yes	No
Collaboration	95	55
Leadership	108	50
Pastoral Care	97	56
Preaching	63	87
Committee Work	83	69
Vision Building	58	64

The categories for this question were motivated by the literature on women's ministry in the States which suggests that women are perceived (by themselves and by congregations) as being more person orientated and more collaborative in their leadership styles. Rita J Simon and Pamela S Nadell (1995), on the other hand, find that male ministers do not generally perceive there to be differences in ministry style between

themselves and their female colleagues. As noted previously, there are studies which suggest that differences in leadership style may owe more to factors other than gender (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998, p. 62) In particular there are questions about whether women are more collaborative leaders naturally and by choice or because they have to be, because as women their authority to be traditional transactional ‘do it my way’ type leaders would be challenged or not accepted by congregations? (Wallace, 1993)

The other areas in which the women ministers who took part in the survey saw differences between women and men were in the fields of pastoral care and committee work. However a majority did not perceive differences in preaching or in vision building.

Although the statistics here were considered to see if there were obvious trends in terms of age or length of ministry as some of the American research suggests, it really was not possible to draw any conclusions because the numbers are too small. Very generally, it looks as though younger women (under 50) may be more likely to perceive differences in the way men and women minister than the older women do. If younger women have more of a sense that women do things differently, that would not be surprising. Partly, because they were probably more affected by the feminist movement and partly, because most would have female supervision during their training and have perhaps seen or experienced women doing things differently. However, given the fact that women are older coming into ministry, some of the older women should have experienced female supervision too. It would be worth further qualitative research into whether age and length of ministry make any difference in the response to these questions.

### ***Rev Elizabeth Average***

From the data, an archetypal woman minister of the Church of Scotland, Rev Elizabeth Average can be created. She is Elizabeth because that is the most frequently occurring name within the women clergy of the Church of Scotland. Rev Elizabeth Average is a parish minister in the Church of Scotland. She is between 51 and 60 years of age – she has been in the ministry for between 10 and 20 years and is still in her first charge somewhere in the Central belt. She is married. She is open to a call to another charge – sometime but is not actively looking or desperate to move. She believes that women ministers have a different leadership style to that of their male colleagues and that they approach collaboration differently. She believes that there are differences in the approach to pastoral care and committee work too, though these differences are not as

marked as in the fields of collaboration and leadership style. She does not believe that women preach differently or go about the business of vision building any differently.



## **Conclusion**

The Year Book and the Survey have yielded interesting results and were a worthwhile exercise. The high response rate and lack of bias in the survey were especially pleasing and probably indicate a considerable level of interest in the subject (Fowler, 2002, p. 42), because despite best advice (Fowler, 2002, p. 49) (Sapsford, 1999, p. 96), but for valid reasons, reminders were not used.

The research raises questions about the ageing profile of women clergy. Is this purely and simply part of the ageing trend which affects not only the whole ministry of the Church of Scotland but is also not unknown in other denominations? Or are there barriers which make it seem a particularly difficult career choice for younger women?

The research shows that women are involved in every type of ministry in Scotland, although there are geographical areas which seem less accepting of women's ministry.

Further research could be done on perceived differences between the genders in the way they minister. Do women, indeed, do it differently?

However, the most interesting questions of all, are those which arise out of the ordination figures. Are we watching the feminization of the Church of Scotland and if so, what might be the implications of that? As the acceptance rate into UK medical schools has recently risen to 80% women, there might be interesting comparisons and contrasts across the professions. On the other hand, will the slight rise in male ordinations and candidates in the Church of Scotland become a trend, which, if it were coupled with a continued decline in the numbers of women might indicate a backlash against the ministry of women as some writers have feared? The history of women's leadership in the Church is, as Janet Wootton comments, 'more like a series of matches lit in the dark than a steady burning light' (Wootton J. (., 2007, p. 203). There will be a need for further research on these figures in two or three years time.

## Chapter 4 Before we were ministers

This chapter explores the background of the women ministers, their experience of ‘call’ to the ministry and their stories of training for ministry both in university and in placement. The chapter shows that, as in other denominations, women clergy were more likely to come from Christian homes. The literature suggested that strong role models, often provided by the father were important and that was also borne out in this study. The women clergy in this study also spoke of the importance of group influences and the role of women clergy themselves as role models was also considered but the evidence was inconclusive. The chapter then goes on to consider the ‘Call’ to the ministry. The concept of call is outlined and the experiences of the women are explored from the beginnings of call, through debates about ministry role. The barriers to ministry found in the literature are considered and found in some cases to be barriers for the women in this study too. The importance of envisioning and confirmation of call are also shown. The third section of the chapter explores the experience of training for the ministry and finds that women ministers found their academic training mainly good and their academic teachers supportive. Experiences of placement and supervision were rather more mixed but still mainly positive.

### ***Influences from childhood***

The part played by childhood influences in the lives of women ministers is of particular interest to me because I am, as previously mentioned, a daughter and granddaughter of the manse. From personal knowledge, I am aware that between the late seventies and the mid-eighties there were at least ten ministers’ daughters, some belonging to even more extensive clergy dynasties than mine, who entered the ministry as young women. That represents almost 20% of those ordained during the period. So during interview, women ministers were invited to reflect on the influences from their childhood which they felt might have had a bearing on their eventual arrival in full time ordained ministry.

If we consider the research from other situations on the background of clergy we find that the 1955 study by Philip Allen into the childhood backgrounds of Methodist ministers in the USA showed that successful ministers came from larger communities, attended larger schools and belonged to smaller professional families, but the world has

changed radically since 1955 (Allen, 1955). Carroll, Hargrove and Lummis in 'Women of the Cloth' considered that women clergy were more likely than men to have experienced working mothers, well educated parents and to have come from a professional/ business background (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983). Nancy Nason Clark, however, found no discernable differences in the family backgrounds of male and female clergy in England (Nason Clark, 1987).

## **Brought up in the Church**

It is perhaps not a great surprise to discover that almost all the women interviewed were brought up in Christian families. This is in line with research from the United States (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983) and in England (Robbins, *Clergywomen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study*, 2008) 'Churchgoing,' was, said Alison, 'what we did.' The sense of being part of the Church community was very strong for most. Parents were elders, Sunday school teachers, Session Clerks, BB captains, choir members, guild members and so on. Several women were exposed to a variety of different denominations during their childhood and one was exposed to a variety of different faiths by a 'free spirit' mother. For most, both parents were involved, but for some it was only one. Only two of the women interviewed had parents who were not interested in religion and one of those found that, after she became heavily involved in the Church, her parents came to faith too and that was a profoundly confirming experience for her.

Being brought up in a Church-going family inevitably led to amusing incidents. Ruth's parents remind her that as a four year old, she would make her dolls sit nicely, so that she could conduct a service for them and 'sometimes it would be a normal Sunday and sometimes there would be a wedding.' I have my own recollections of conducting funerals for worms and burying them in little graves marked with twig crosses! Catherine wrote essays at school on 'What I want to be when I grow up' which outlined her desire to be a missionary (which she understood at that age to mean being a minister) or a ballerina. Grace A, likewise always answered the question 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' by saying, 'Well, I'd really like to be a minister, but it's not possible.' Jane B longed to be a missionary as a child, again understanding a missionary simply to be a minister who worked overseas. Amusing though these stories are, they probably have little significance other than indicating that little girls do not necessarily understand that gender might limit their choices!

One or two of the women, like Alison, found their church backgrounds oppressive or restrictive

I wasn't allowed to play in the school hockey team if matches were on Sundays because we went to church on Sundays and that was sacrosanct. And I suppose that kind of put me off the church a little bit, although I never did a big rebellion against it. (Alison)

But most enjoyed being part of the Church. Parents and Sunday school teachers were strongly influential and many of our women found themselves 'helping out' from quite an early age. Those who did not go into the ministry directly from school, speak of being Sunday School teachers, youth leaders and elders. These roles were important in the formation of our ministers, developing patterns of church-going and service which would then be extended.

As most of our women clergy were brought up in Scotland, all of this must be set against the background of Scottish society. Given that we know from the survey in Chapter 3 that most women ministers are over forty, the majority of our interviewees were brought up in a culture where Church-going was still reasonably strong and 'Church – association stronger still (Brown C. G., 1997) (Brown C. , 2001). Callum Brown goes on to trace a decline in religious adherence in Scotland in the 1960's and he attributes this to the rise of feminism which caused Scottish women to be more aware of opportunities available to them and to reject the 'feminine identity' which was offered to them by the churches (Brown C. , 2001, p. 179) (Brown C. G., 1997, p. 196ff). If we were to take Brown's argument, further, it might be suggested that this feminine identity was rejected, not only because of the rise of feminism as a cultural phenomenon, but quite specifically because the failure of the churches to provide intellectually satisfying role models for women left modern women with few resources to move from inherited faith to owned faith. Many of the women clergy do speak of making that necessary transition, whether they use the language of 'conversion' and 'coming to a personal faith' or the language of 'thinking things through' or 'it had more personal impact.' One could wonder what might have allowed those women to make that transition to personal faith at a time when many of their contemporaries did not. The answer may indeed lie in their family upbringing. There is evidence that parental church attendance encourages church attendance in children through until their adult life (Francis & Gibson, Parental Influence and Adolescent Religiosity: A Study of Church Attendance and Attitude Toward Christianity Among Adolescents 11 - 12 and 15 - 16 Years Old, 1993) and that attendance at church through childhood and into adolescence leads in turn to a high level of personal religiosity (Robbins, Clergywomen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study, 2008, p. 41/2).

## Role Models

Anita Harris did some work on the feminine identity of professional women in the USA and focussed particularly on the relationship between professional women and their mothers (Harris, 1995). That work is now, perhaps, a little dated and there is nothing in our interview responses to indicate that mothers rather than fathers were of particular importance as role models, indeed quite the reverse may be true. Robbins cites Blohm ‘who found that the father acted as an important role model in terms of vocation for the women in her study’ (Robbins, *Clergymen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study*, 2008, p. 42). Oddly enough, or perhaps not oddly at all, Shirley Williams in her recent autobiography notes the importance of the father in the lives of women politicians (Williams, 2009, p. 152). Carroll, Hargrove and Lummis highlighted the importance in the American context of a strong male role model in the early lives of women clergy. For some women, these male role models were relatives but not always (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A new opportunity for the churches*, 1983, p. 50). There are strong hints of this from our interviews with women clergy in the Church of Scotland. Edna speaks of the importance of her upbringing as the “daughter of a country ‘dominie’”<sup>10</sup>. Many of the women mention their fathers. They speak about them as influential in decisions about university and future careers, they speak about them as Elders and Session Clerks. Fathers are much more frequently mentioned in the interviews than are mothers, particularly by those women who entered ministry as young women. This comment from Ruth perhaps sums up the situation most clearly,

My parents continue to inspire me. My Dad in particular. I love my Mum very much but my Dad much more so. He was an elder at 21, during what was obviously quite an exciting time in that church, in a different way. He's always been.... I think one of the things I admire about my Dad is, my Dad had three girls, long before my brother came along and because he had three girls, he's always encouraged women to have their place and will always say he would much rather have a woman work with him rather than a man, because women actually work and men don't. And he has always encouraged, all three of us, to do what we should do, and the things that we wanted to do, but has this amazing capacity to learn everything as well. When we were learning the piano, my Dad learned to play the piano as well. ....he now plays better than us. (Ruth)

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<sup>10</sup> Scots word for Headmaster

Carroll et al, suggest that mothers are less frequently mentioned because of their strict immersion in the domestic scene (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A new opportunity for the churches*, 1983, p. 50).

However, there were other important role models too, from outside the family, and these were most often clergy. Ministers were often personal friends of the parents. As Alison says, 'They were in and out of the house regularly, and we were in and out of the manse.' Antarctic remembers a minister who spent time taking her seriously when she was a precocious nine year old and Ruth recognises the influence of a childhood minister who

always had a space in his diary. He would open his diary and if you wanted to see him, there was always a space in his diary, and I don't, to this very day, know how he managed to make a space in his diary for people, but there was always a space, if you needed to see him on Tuesday..... and I think I admired him for that and the fact that people mattered so much, he would find a place in the diary for you. (Ruth)

It is that quality of taking the individual seriously, making time and space for them, which seems to have been the biggest influence in childhood and right up through the teenage years. For Suzie,

the minister that was in charge of the parish where I grew up, during my teenage years, who was incredibly good at youth work and at creating an atmosphere and a space for young people, where they felt they were accepted for who they were. You know at an age when you were the teenager thinking, 'Oh, nobody likes me' and adults are the enemy anyway, to have somewhere where you could just be. (Suzie)

A major part of her motivation for going into the ministry was that she appreciated how important that 'space' had been for her and she wanted to be able to provide that kind of space for others. Merle too speaks of a

minister who had an amazing understanding of what it was to be a young person and gave us lots of opportunities to express ourselves in the church. So he had quite a profound impact on me at that age. (Merle)

These men modelled, for the women ministers who were influenced by them, the kind of person they would like to become. Carroll et al, also found that it did not seem to matter whether the strong role model encouraged the individual woman to enter the ministry, what was more important was that they 'stressed the importance to the woman of being her own person, making her own decision, even if these were very different from those her friends made (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A new opportunity for the churches*, 1983, p. 51).' We see examples of this from our interviews.

Lindsay comments 'my dad always instilled in me that I was as good as everybody.' And Ruth A says,

Well, my father, I think was the greatest influence, in that I was the oldest of four. I was the only girl and he made a big play of the fact that, the fact that you are a girl is an incidental thing. You know, you can do whatever you like. (Ruth A)

But it wasn't just the conventional role modelling in terms of the personal characteristics that was important. The age of the minister could also be important and for several women the influence of young assistant ministers was crucial too, because they showed that being a Christian was not simply for older people. Joanna speaks of

'a succession of assistant ministers as well.....probably, looking back, my minister would have been in his mid forties at the time, but you think of him as being a lot older than that .....and these young ministers that came along always had something.' (Joanna)

As we noticed at the beginning of the chapter, a significant number of the women who were ordained in the earlier years, had clergy fathers, who offered that strong male modelling. There have always been significant numbers of clergy sons who have followed their fathers into the ministry of the Church of Scotland, which is why I am not alone in being both daughter and grand-daughter of the manse.

## **Group Influences**

Other important influences on our women ministers included youth groups and activities, especially during the teenage years. Sophie and Lindsay remember taking worship as part of their youth fellowships. Scripture Union was likewise a strong influence for a number of women, helping bring them from inherited faith to owned faith. A number of these groups were quite conservative in their theology and even although some of the women were later to go on to reject the theology, they were nonetheless grateful for conservative teaching. Iona recalls,

'I was invited along to a youth group at another church, which I subsequently became a member of, and they had a really good strong youth group and I got quite involved in that. And this was the church, I then joined which didn't approve of women ministers and at the time I was a member there, they didn't have women elders and to this day, they don't have women elders. So although I actually got quite a lot of nurturing in that Church and actually it was really....in a strange way it was a very good experience for me in terms of my Christian faith - it was quite challenging to me and made me think about things a lot more - it also wasn't the easiest church to be in, in terms of my calling.' (Iona)

## Women Clergy as Role Models

It was always assumed or hoped that the very presence of women in the ministry would have an enabling or beneficial effect on the perceptions of young women in churches. Uta Blohm in her research on 'Women Clergy Working with Rituals' comments that it was thought to be a positive thing to 'see a woman at the altar and was also thought of as empowering to other women' (Blohm, 2006, p. 29). The evidence from this study is mixed. There is little evidence however, that the presence of women in the ministry is providing a role model for younger women as the presence of women in other professions seems to do (Kahveci, Southerland, & Gilmer, 2008, p. 48). At least one of our women interviewees expressed the hope that she might be providing a role model

I must admit I did have a sense that I was maybe encouraging other women to think of how their gifts could be used in church - just by my very own presence at the front of the church. This sense of..... that this is now a time when the Guild is not the only place to get involved any more. ....actually all sorts of things are open. (Suzie)

However, as we have seen in Chapter 3 there are relatively few younger women entering the ministry of the Church of Scotland at present. That must be set alongside the pattern of increasing age on entry to ministry for both genders, a pattern which is echoed in the Church of England as ministry increasingly becomes a second career. It remains to be seen whether the perceived rise in the number of conservative young men entering the ministry of the Church of Scotland is a reality or merely a perception. If the presence of women ministers seems to have little effect or influence on young women, it does seem to have an effect on older women who were coming into ministry as a second career. Ruth A recounts an experience with a book cover,

‘I just had inherited this, well I suppose a literalistic view of the Bible, or at least of the New Testament. I was able to cope with the old Testament in a non- literalist view, but the New Testament, I thought was very important and I had read all Paul's letters and thought ‘Hmm! This is not for me.’ In fact, I didn't change until, one day, I was looking at a book by John Drane, and there was a picture of a woman, an older woman,.... white haired woman celebrating communion, and I just felt as if it was OK. That picture, made the difference for me. I suppose it was kind of like a brick off my head.’ (Ruth A)

Getting rid of the conventional or traditional images of ministers helped Froddo too, speaking of a woman minister at a Training in Leadership and Service (TLS) weekend she said

‘For all the weekend she'd just been normal, just an ordinary person, but then when it came to the Eucharist at the end, all she did was put on prayer stole, but there was a difference and it let me know that you could be both normal



and a minister, which to me was quite important. You didn't have to be fitting into a particular mould or set of speech patterns, you know.' (Froddo)

## ***Call to the Ministry***

### **The Concept of Call**

In recent years, part of the selection process for the ministry of the Church of Scotland has focussed on the concept of 'Call' - that God calls particular individuals into full time ministry of word and sacrament. I say 'in recent years' advisedly, because I am well aware from having spoken with older colleagues and from family history that there was a time when people went into the ministry because it seemed appropriate, or because they seemed to have suitable talents and skills and the question of 'Call' was not to the fore until the later stage of 'Call to a parish.' This difference shows in the transcripts. For the most part, the women who were ordained earlier present a less articulate or less coherent account of their call – stories are more of being in the right place at the right time, and of things unfolding. Those who were ordained more recently and for whom clarity of "Call" was a vital part of the demands of the selection process, tell an 'oft told story!'

The concept of 'Call' is not peculiar to the Church of Scotland. "Traditional religious norms generally dictate that religious leadership is ultimately legitimized on the basis of a supernatural "call"" (Perl & Chang, *Credentialism Across Creeds: Clergy Education and Stratification in Protestant Denominations*, 2000, p. 172), which McDuff and Mueller describe as 'a professional service value' (McDuff & Mueller, *The Ministry as an Occupational Labor Market*, 2000, p. 96). Even in modern day Scottish society, where the churches are no longer central to the lives of most people, there is an expectation that clergy will live out the values they express, that they will embody their ideals. "It is popularly believed that ministers are unique in that they initially made and continue to make their job decisions almost entirely on the basis of divine calling" (McDuff & Mueller, *The Ministry as an Occupational Labor Market*, 2000, p. 96). The ministry is unusual too, in that it is one of the few areas where opponents of women within the profession can claim Divine legitimization for their views. As Lehman points out, the traditional view of 'call'

"contained in the Bible, written in song, sanctified in shared theology, and codified into church procedures and laws, is replete with masculine language

and images. And those ideas are typically seen as coming from none other than God” (Lehman E. , *Women's Path to Ministry*, 2002, p. 14).

The Roman Catholic Church most notably does not oppose the principle of full gender equality, it merely says that the Catholic Church is not subject to that principle because ‘the priesthood does not form part of the rights of the individual but stems from the economy of the Mystery of Christ and the Church.’ (Chaves, 1997, p. 179). Thus, for some opponents of women’s ministry, the ministry is exempt from all human notions of equality or justice.

Although ‘Call’ remains the primary gate for entry into the profession, particular denominations may require further entry criteria to be met. Perl and Chang in their study argue that these additional requirements are related to the extent to which a denomination wishes to ‘accommodate secular norms’ (Perl & Chang, *Credentialism Across Creeds: Clergy Education and Stratification in Protestant Denominations*, 2000, p. 171). In the Church of Scotland context, the additional requirements include education to tertiary level. This has long been a requirement for clergy within the Church of Scotland which prided itself on a highly educated ministry. In bygone times the minister and the ‘domine’<sup>11</sup> might well be the only people educated to tertiary level in a parish (the doctor was a later addition). Whilst there is evidence from the States that some denominations have introduced lower educational requirements for a subordinate form of ministry as a way of excluding or discriminating against women, that cannot be said in the Scottish context (Nesbitt, *Dual Ordination Tracks: differential benefits and costs for men and women clergy*, 1993). Although, it could be argued that the educational entry requirements for ministry were lowered around the time that women were accepted for ordination into the Church of Scotland, there has never been any suggestion that the lowering was related to the admission of women. It was, rather, related to a perceived shortage of candidates. Where the Church of Scotland has more obviously accommodated secular norms is in the introduction of the ‘Selection School’ later ‘Selection Conference.’ This much more formal, three day residential process, includes interviews, exercises, IQ tests and psychological evaluation. It is now preceded by a period of ‘enquiry’ in a neighbouring parish. All told, this represents a considerable process of ‘Boundary Making’ in an effort to keep the ‘undesirables out’ of the profession (Smyth, Acker, Bourne, & Prentice, 1999, p. 5), but there is no obvious evidence, as we saw in Chapter 3 that the Enquiry Process or the Selection Conference is a particular barrier to women.

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<sup>11</sup> Schoolmaster often appointed by the Church

## Beginnings of Call

Most of the interviewees articulated their “Call” as a gradual process rather than as a dramatic moment and often a gradual process with many hesitations and deviations along the way. Some would consider the beginning of the process to be in childhood. We have noted that some of the women share experiences of ‘playing church’ or ‘playing ministers,’ yet some of those interviewed would consider the childhood experiences to be part of the ‘Call’ process. Ailsa recounts the experience, as an eight year old, of hearing a missionary talk and feeling as though ‘God was tapping me on the shoulder and saying ‘Right! That’s for **you**.’ Catherine wrote essays at school on ‘What I want to be when I grow up’ which outlined her desire to be a missionary (which she understood at that age to mean being a minister) or a ballerina. As we noted earlier, Grace A, always answered the question ‘What do you want to do when you grow up?’ by saying ‘Well, I’d really like to be a minister, but it’s not possible.’ Jane B longed to be a missionary as a child, and for Joanna, the initial stirrings came in late primary school years, during the induction of a minister. However, for most of the interviewees, although there may have been important or transcendent experiences in childhood, the first stirrings towards ministry became apparent in their teens or early twenties. For some, that led straight into training for the ministry, but for others, those early notions were, for a variety of reasons, ignored and they pursued other paths and later came back to ministry. That said, just as a minority trace the beginnings in childhood, another group still were drawn towards ministry at a turning point in their lives, whether after a bad time in relationships, or at work, or when children were becoming more independent. It seems that for women, the path to ordination is often slower than it is for their male counterparts. Carroll, Hargrove and Lummis found that women, despite feeling called to ministry, often did not pursue the call until later in life. (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983). Increasingly, ministry is becoming a second career and that seems to be particularly so for women (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997).

## Call to What?

Although for some it was clearly and always ministry (and those who wanted to be missionaries as children equated missionary and ministry), for others, particularly for those who experienced their “Call” in later life, it often started out as a more generalised, ‘call to do something!’ So Froddo says

‘Gradually, I started exploring things..... ended up doing a TLS course, on the theory that it would be handy for later, but I didn't unpack the “later”’ (Froddo)

and Fred mentions trying to ‘bargain with God,’ to ‘keep him quiet’ by taking on more commitments at Church and Jane talks of ‘toying with doing some sort of work with the Church’ and spending ten years trying to talk herself out of it. Muriel sums up the inevitability or compulsion that many felt about their “Call”,

‘Nobody ever appeared at the foot of my bed and said ‘Muriel, this is it! You have to do this’ but a gradual increase in my involvement in the church..... an increase in thinking about what was going on in church both in terms of worship and just the general organisation of it.....made me feel more and more that this was something that I **had** to do and that really there wasn't anything else that I could do - not there wasn't anything else, I was capable of doing- I had proved that and maybe that was quite good - but that this was something I had to do.’ (Muriel)

Thirteen of the group interviewed went directly into ministry with no previous career, but for most of the others the progress toward ministry was more of a dance. Alison says

‘And people kept saying things like, ‘Would you not like to be a minister?’ To which I always said ‘No! I would **hate** to be a minister. I don't think I can be a minister, and I'm very happy with the work/ church life balance that I've got. But every time somebody said it, the ‘No’ became slightly less definite as a ‘No.’ (Alison)

Catriona echoes that

‘And then as soon as people knew I was doing this part-time BD, they all started saying, ‘Oh, are you going to be a minister?’ ‘No, no, no, no, no, no, no!...Oh, alright then’ (Catriona)

and Ella's experience was similar ‘I kept getting this feeling and I kept saying, ‘no, not me.’

## Barriers to ministry

As noted, many of the women clergy did not become ministers as young women and for some this delay was because of perceived barriers to their “Call.” Lehman in his 1985 study amongst Presbyterian women clergy in the United States found that the women cited four major obstacles to their achieving their position.

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Their own shortcomings | 17%   |
| 2. Lack of Resources      | 12%   |
| 3. Family Impediments     | 18%   |
| 4. Sexism in the System   | 53% (Lehman E. , Women's Path to Ministry, 2002, p. 19) |

Nancy Nason Clark in her research finds five major obstacles faced by women wishing to minister in the Christian Church. Firstly there are structural barriers prohibiting women’s ordained ministry as, for instance, in the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, there are issues around placement and in particular placement in senior roles. Thirdly, there is resistance from the laity. Fourthly there is resistance from male clergy and fifthly there is ‘the traditional symbolism and liturgy of the Church’ (Nason Clark, 1987, pp. 335-337). This study finds many similar obstacles. The issues of lay resistance and the traditional symbolism and liturgy of the church are dealt with in later chapters.

Although Lehman asked his question of women who were already ordained about the barriers they had faced in achieving a particular parish and role whereas this study is considering the barriers to women becoming ministers at all, there were some striking similarities. Looking first at Lehman’s category of ‘Their own shortcomings.’ Quite a number of women expressed feelings of inadequacy. This could be quite generalised as with Alison

‘But I still felt deep within that I didn't have the resources to be a minister and that even if I thought it would be something that I would quite like to try, I wasn't equipped to do it.’ (Alison)

Or the feeling of inadequacy could be much more specific. Lack of academic qualifications was a worry as Merle amongst others recalls

‘As far as the training for ministry was concerned - academically, I doubted whether I would have been able to have done a degree..... But as a mature..... as a mum, and a wife, and having been away from studies for a

long, long, long, long time, I really wasn't sure whether I was going to be able to cope with it.' (Merle)

However, it wasn't just the academic concerns, the public profile of ministers was another concern. Elizabeth says

'And I was absolutely no way thinking of ministry, because I've never been the kind of the kind to do debating or .. you know...speaking..... I wasn't that sort of person. I much preferred the thought of the diaconate, you know, the kind of caring, pastoral side and I did have this image and I remember thinking of this - the dog collar, distances you from the people. So I obviously had really not exactly a negative thing about ministry, but the Minister was 'up there' and I didn't see myself that way at all.' (Elizabeth)

That same concern about the public profile of ministry led one or two others, like Fred, to consider the diaconate instead,

'So I applied for the Diaconate because I thought, 'I am not a parish minister. I do not like standing up in front of people. I like to be in the background, not up front. I'm not good enough, I'm not educated enough.' (Fred)

For others it was a matter of social class and the perception of ministry being somehow, out of reach, John comments

'and I never thought I would be one.....never in a million years. If someone had said, 'You'll be a minister,' I wouldn't have believed them. My dad was a farm worker - ministers were people who were up on pedestals.' (John)

There were concerns too, not just about preaching, but about the whole area of leadership as Jane B articulates,

'So what happened is, when people started saying to me, 'You should go to the ministry.' I still couldn't see myself as a minister. I think I had an image of a wonderful person, a brilliant preacher, a very charismatic personality, really good up front and I wasn't really an up front person and I'm still not really an up front person, I don't find it easy. I have always been much happier, one to one. I'm not really the life and soul of the party type, I'm not an extrovert naturally, I get on much better with people as individuals or in small groups. So I really couldn't see myself as a minister at all. I couldn't see myself as a leader.' (Jane B)

Whereas for Jo it was not being a good enough person that was the concern,

'I think ministry is a really good thing to do, I would like to do it but I don't think I'm good enough,' and it was a moral thing, 'good enough' rather than intellectually or being a woman. And pretty much ever since then it stayed with

me, but this issue, of being somehow morally not good enough for it, haunted me.’ (Jo)

Lack of resources in the Scottish context rarely meant lack of funds, although loss of earnings was sometimes an issue. The scarcest resource was child care. For instance the sheer logistics of the situation was a problem for some like Grace A who found herself saying to her husband,

‘I really think I've got to think about all this again,’ and it was a dreadful thought, I do have to say that. I had four young children and the thought of going back to studying..... and just the requirements of ministry generally.’ (Grace A)

For Jane A too, there were family issues to be considered,

‘And I was horrified, I didn't want to even think about it. I always think of Jonah and running away. I had two children still at school. I worked night shifts so that I could be at home for my children....and that kind of thing during the day. Didn't want to think about it, couldn't really afford to drop everything and go to university and get a degree. I had had no higher education so there were lots of obstacles, I felt.’ (Jane A)

Thirdly there were those who faced a different kind of family pressure. These were people who were discouraged from their call by family as, amongst others, was Ruth A,

‘And my dad was horrified, not because he didn't think I should be doing it, but because he thought it would ruin my life and make me miserable. It certainly changed it - no doubt about that.’ (Ruth A)

And Lindsay

‘When I told my mum I was going into the ministry she burst into tears. Not of joy either, I don't think! She could see, more than perhaps I could see at that point, that the chances of me therefore getting married and having children and having a ‘normal’ life were going to be greatly reduced.’ (Lindsay)

In some of the families, however, the concern was not just for the well being or emotional health of the woman involved, a few were openly disapproving of women clergy, Sophie recalls ‘my father quite openly said he didn't think women should be ministers. So I suppose there was the influence of not feeling it an appropriate thing to do.’ And Alison shared that experience

‘But my family were very much of the view that ministers were men. And so I remember, my mother in particular, saying ‘They’ve called a woman’ and sort of thinking that this was the pits. So there was a sense, kind of deep-seated I suppose, that ministers should not be women.’ (Alison)

As Nason Clark found, in terms of sexism in the system, clergy could be very discouraging. The approval of one’s own parish minister is a pre-requisite for applying for selection as a candidate for ministry within the Church of Scotland. Muriel still remembers with horrible clarity that,

‘I went to see the Minister of our church at the time, and he was quite an elderly guy, and I went to tell him that I thought I should become a minister. And it was a very difficult thing to do, to go and tell him this. But I did, and he said to me - and I can see myself in the room, feel it happening - he said, ‘little girls don’t become ministers!’ (Muriel)

Jane B’s minister told her that she was ‘really, totally going away from God by applying for the ministry.’ Nancy Nason Clark found that women were not encouraged by ordained clergy to consider ordained ministry. She comments

These results confirm one major reason why more women are not entering into the profession – they are not encouraged to do so. For many careers, such encouragement by local practitioners may be unheard of, but for ministry the recognition of one’s gifts and abilities by the congregation, through its leader is vital (Nason Clark, 1987, p. 333).

The Church of Scotland, being a National Church is also a very broad church, home to a wide range of theological perspectives. Several of the women ministers interviewed are still, or have come, from a conservative background and that presented specific problems. Ruth A acknowledges,

‘it was really a personal thing that held me back, it wasn’t..... It was my belief that..... you know, I wasn’t frightfully sure if that’s what women should be doing really.’ (Ruth A)

For Ella, the gender issue had arisen even earlier,

‘When I was asked to become an elder, I really had to think and pray-although I had been in congregations women were elders, I’d never given it much thought. I had to think, how did I really feel about women elders, and then 2) did I really feel that I was being called to be an elder. I felt yes, but there was still that wee bit..... and on the actual day of my ordination as an elder, again, I had that feeling, this was right.’ (Ella)



For some of those from a conservative background, it involved a period of justifying their decisions to themselves, a period of departing from what they had been taught, to arrive at a position where they could reconcile their “Call” to the ministry with their taught understandings of the role of women. Ailsa recalls,

‘I had a lot of friends who were fundamentalists who said ‘But it says “suffer not a woman to speak in church” and things like that.’ So I really, partly because of Scripture Union anyway I knew the English Bible very thoroughly, but I really went through it and gutted it and then realised for the first time that you had to know, not just what the Bible says, but what the Bible means. And I realised for the first time, without understanding the expression, that you have to contextualise the Biblical truth. What does it mean for now ..... what did it mean “then” and what does it mean “now.” (Ailsa)

Iona used her school work to take her forward,

‘I was in a church that didn't approve of women ministers, so I used my higher religious studies to do an exploration of whether women should be ordained or not, and the conclusion of that I found, was that women were entirely justified in being ordained.’ (Iona)

And Jane B responded to her critical minister by ‘writing back to him and saying,

‘Maybe I am wrong,’ but quoting a passage out of Acts, where it says that if this is of God, it will work out, and if it isn't of God it will come to nothing. ‘And I really believe that - maybe, I am wrong, but I believe God’s going to show me if I am, but so far, He’s showing me that this is what He wants and I have got to go forward in faith.’ (Jane B)

## Envisioning

When considering their “Call” to the ministry, women often talked about their inability to ‘see’ themselves as a minister and that difficulty of imagining themselves in the role was often the cause of evading or rejecting the “Call”. Sometimes as with Ruth A and Froddo, it took a specific experience of a woman minister to allow them to ‘see’ themselves in the role. For others it was a more gradual process. For one of the interviewees, it was precisely her ability to ‘see’ herself as a minister, to look critically at the work of ministry (although she admits to knowing only at that stage the public face of ministry) and accept that she had the skills and qualities that were necessary, and it was ‘imagining’ herself in the role, that was the basis of her “Call.”

That ability to envision themselves in the role comes from their knowledge of ministers generally. Through preaching, teaching and being, ministers shape the lives of their congregations. Edward Lehman in 'Women Clergy: Breaking through Gender Barriers' comments,

The implications for women of this inspirational function seem fairly obvious. If clergy do not deal with the issue of women in ministry, especially as advocates of clergywomen, the possibility of many women entering full-time Christian service will be very slight (Lehman E. , Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers, 1985, p. 59).

Once women can 'see' themselves in the role of minister, once they have come to accept that their gifts and talents can be used by God in ordained ministry, then although there may still be some doubts and concerns, the barriers mentioned above will not prove insurmountable. Some of the women interviewed overcame immense barriers and surmounted great obstacles in their path toward ministry. When God called, these women answered, often at considerable cost.

## **Confirmation**

Whilst coming to terms with a gradual and growing "Call," many women clergy go through a process of seeking confirmation. This may come from others but may also come from external incidents. Firstly their own clergy were often important in the process. This is borne out in Lehman's research.

Validation of a sense of call by a minister is probably a major factor in a woman's decision to enter the ministry. It is listed by clergywomen as an important influence in their commitment more often than any other single element (Lehman E. , Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers, 1985, p. 60).

Many women speak of getting positive reactions and support from their own ministers when the question of ministry was approached. Ruth indicates how important confirmation by the local minister could be,

'And I think from knowing that that's what you're to do, there's something in you that's telling you that this is what you could do, you want other people to experience this experience, and to have the person that you trust the most other than your parents to say, 'Do you know, because you're sitting here telling me this, I think this is the thing you should do.' (Ruth)

Catriona remembers, amidst all her doubts, her own minister assuring her that she had a 'classic call.' Elizabeth was encouraged to think of ministry, rather than missionary work teaching overseas, by her own minister saying 'You know I'm tired of people always going off to the mission field. The mission field is Scotland.'

Ruth in describing her minister as 'the person you trust most other than your parents,' articulates how important confirmation from the minister can be. By contrast, the length of time it took Muriel to return to pursuing her call after a bad experience with her local minister is significant. As Lehman points out, for a woman contemplating ministry, 'the response they get from the minister they consult can be decisive' (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985, p. 60).

Those from the conservative wing of the Church drew great strength from having their sense of "Call" confirmed by men who didn't believe in women ministers. Grace recounts her own minister saying to her 'Grace, I don't believe in women ministers, but do you think God might be calling you to that?' which, as she comments, was a funny question to be asked. Her "Call" was again confirmed for her by a very senior evangelical minister who said to her one day over a cup of tea, 'Grace, you must go forward for ordination.' Whilst all this left her flabbergasted, it did give her the courage to go ahead. Jane B likewise found part of her confirmation from a fellow student,

'he was dead against women being in the ministry, we used to have theological discussions about it - and when I said to him, 'I'm thinking of going into the ministry,' and he said, 'Yes, I don't really agree with women in the ministry, but I think it's right for you.' So the fact that somebody who didn't even really think that women should be in the ministry, thought it was right for me spurred me on to perhaps, take the next step.' (Jane B)

For these particular women, that official authorisation from an opponent of women's ministry seems to be of vital importance. It does not serve as a confirmation or authorisation of women's ministry as a whole, but it does confirm and validate their own personal ministry. It gives them credibility within the sub-culture of conservative clergy.

The second important source of confirmation is from family and friends, Alison acknowledges that 'other people identified my "Call" before I did,' and it was, in part, their insistence that wore down her doubts and resistance. She comments that 'every time somebody said it, the 'No' became slightly less definite as a 'No.' Ella remembers that 'there was quite a few folks, even folks outwith the Kirk, who were saying, 'We'll see you

in the pulpit yet.” Whereas for Froddo, ‘part of my confirmation of it was that when I mentioned it, people didn’t throw up their hands in horror and say, ‘What! You! You couldn’t possibly.’” And for Jo, it was actually a friend who pushed her into it in the end, saying, ‘It costs you a 20p stamp to send off the application form, do it!’

With the decisions made, the battles won, the confirmation given, for many of the women there was final confirmation in terms of inner peace and even greater certainty. For Jo ‘the moment I got that letter of acceptance, it all just fell into place as a kind of ‘Yes, that’s it.’ For Fred ‘the niggles stopped’ Elizabeth remembers just thinking ‘Wow’ and others spoke as Lindsay does of the ‘rightness’ or like Ella ‘found an inner peace.’

As we saw from the responses, for women, the path to accepting the “Call” to ministry is rarely smooth and is sometimes, as Ella says ‘mountainous.’ For many women ministry is a second or even third career, arrived at later in life. In the present day, that is also true of many men. Lehman argues that women may have a slower acceptance of “Call” because ‘ministry is a relatively new choice for women’ (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985, p. 60). However, we saw from those in our study who were ‘direct entrants’ to ministry, ie those who had not had a previous career, that the “Call” can be accepted and responded to quite quickly. Explanations for the slower process in older women might rather be found in experiences of discouragement when younger, as with Muriel and Ruth; and in the sheer complexity of pursuing a calling to ministry once a woman is married and has a family, as we saw, for instance with Froddo, Merle, Jane and Grace A.

## ***Training for the ministry***

### **Academic Training**

Training for the ministry has changed radically over the forty years of this study. As Martha wryly points out, even the terminology has changed. The point used to be, she says ‘to educate us, to give us the tools to do the job, rather than train us to be monkeys.’ One of the major changes on the academic side is the loss of the position of dominance once held by the Church of Scotland candidates within the Divinity faculties. The Church of Scotland colleges were absorbed into the Divinity faculties during the 1960’s but still throughout the seventies and eighties, the Church candidates were in the majority and the

Church appointed to most of the chairs. For those who completed their academic courses after that, the situation had changed. Church candidates were a minority, albeit often a highly vocal minority, and the overarching Christian narrative – morning prayers, grace at mealtimes, mid-day worship – had gone from the faculties and as Froddo reflects, that is not necessarily a benefit,

‘I think it's much more complicated these days and trying to fit into a department that doesn't really have ministry as a real focus of the academic staff, I think is more....complicated.’ (Froddo)

During this period too, it became possible to do the B.D as a first degree, candidates were no longer required to study Greek and Hebrew, and Practical Theology developed as something more than a skills based course for candidates.

Those of our women clergy who went straight from school or a first degree into their Divinity studies enjoyed the experience immensely. For many of them, as with most younger students, the social side of university was important too. Lindsay recalls,

‘There was a significant group of us, (20-30 candidates in her year) and we had a great time, really. .... We organised a lot of social events, we had a great lot of parties and social life.’ (Lindsay)

Others speak warmly of friendships and community. For this group, understandably, the academic work held few fears. However, the situation for the later entrants was quite different. As previously noted many of them suffered from feelings of inadequacy and were anxious about how they would cope. Merle says, ‘as a mum, and a wife, and having been away from studies for a long, long, long, long time, I really wasn't sure whether I was going to be able to cope with it.’ For one or two the academic experience was to remain a struggle Jane says,

‘The hardest thing I found, was probably the university experience - being in my forties when I started, with no previous qualifications, I remember that being very difficult.’ (Jane)

However, for others, the fears were unfounded. Ella found, ‘that I had been given a golden opportunity that I hadn't had when I was younger and although it was very hard work, I thoroughly enjoyed it.’ That university experience could be important and enlightening in terms of developing their theology. Tigger, too, enjoyed being back at university,

‘because I think as an older student... well I certainly felt I got a lot more out of it than I did when I was younger because I valued it, and I valued just the opportunity to use my mind again and to think and reflect.’ (Tigger)

Catherine reckons that the training changed her ‘from being very naive, to realising a lot of things that were going on, that I had no awareness of.’ And Antarctica was aware of ‘broadening out’ theologically, but Suzie puts it most passionately,

‘So, to go to university and suddenly not to have to hold back with your questions and actually find that all those myths about how it is going to destroy your faith are complete rubbish - and quite to the contrary, it deepens your faith to get a chance to query things and get to the bottom of them. I absolutely loved it. This real sense of freedom, and being able to explore things ad infinitum, but actually finding it was getting me somewhere..... And I found it absolutely fascinating when I then got some tools to put it into context and to try and understand a bit better where that came from. The usual stuff - you get to university and you find out that actually they've known for decades that you don't really need to take the virgin birth story literally, because that was one of the things that I'd been struggling with in that kind of evangelical context, and you think, ‘And they never told us!’ I felt quite outraged at the sense that they had kept all the important stuff to themselves, which would have made it so much easier for me. But this real sense of liberation and getting a chance to explore.’ (Suzie)

The attitudes of Academic staff were generally supportive as Ailsa recalls

‘there were some wonderful supportive teachers, like the principal, whom I contacted in my final year of the arts degree, [he] was delighted and very pro the ordination of women.’ (Ailsa)

Grace A was thankful for a degree of flexibility as she coped with being a mother and a student ‘Everybody was helpful. They were helpful in terms of allowing my classes, in a way, to suit my availability to be at college. I don't think that would happen now.’ And even those, like John, for whom the Academic experience was difficult felt supported by the staff

‘But again, lecturers were good because they could see if you were working or not, and I think they quite liked some mature students in the class. And most of us sat in the front row because either we couldn't see or we couldn't hear, and they called us “the golden oldies.” But there were a few mature students, and it was fine, it was good.’ (John)

On the whole, the women clergy were grateful for their academic training and were conscious of the privilege. Antarctica says ‘Some of the lecturers, they were really amazing people that you were sitting and listening to, so it was great.’

The Church of Scotland has always prided itself on a highly educated ministry. Built into that perception was the notion that in a bygone age, the ministry was open to the 'lad o' pairts' or young man from a poor background who was, by dint of hard academic graft, able to break into the middle class enclave of ministry. Whilst this may largely be a myth, it is notable that one of the most influential clerics of the late 1800's and early 1900's, Rev Dr Alexander Whyte, was born the illegitimate son of a working class girl from Kirriemuir and became in his time Moderator of the Free Church, Principal of New College and minister of Free St George's, Edinburgh. Whilst research from the United States shows that different ordination paths are sometimes offered to men and women resulting in differences in educational requirement (Perl & Chang, *Credentialism Across Creeds: Clergy Education and Stratification in Protestant Denominations*, 2000, p. 184) (Nesbitt, *Dual Ordination Tracks: differential benefits and costs for men and women clergy*, 1993). Evidence from the Church of England shows that women are less likely to be offered full time stipendiary posts than are men (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 112), and the situation is similar in the URC in England (Wootton J. , *The Ministry of Women in the Free Churches*, 1995 Vol3, p. 70). None of this is of particular significance for the Church of Scotland. All ministers in the Church of Scotland are educated to degree level and all are encouraged by the Ministries Council to continue their professional development. A limited amount of financial support is available to those wishing to undertake Masters or Doctoral programmes and there is no evidence that that is restricted by gender. Although there is a category of Auxiliary ministry in the Church of Scotland, at present, this is not widely used and is occupied by both men and women. Likewise the Diaconate and the Readership are ministries occupied by both genders. The ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Church of Scotland is, at the time of this study, usually full time and paid.

The interviewees in the study showed mainly positive responses to their Academic training. Whilst some of them found it difficult, women did not find opposition from the academic staff. Indeed some of the women who were trained in the early years speak positively of the encouragement they received from their lecturers and professors. This contrasts with the situation in the USA where often women, especially those training in the 1970's found some opposition amongst academic staff and administrators (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983, pp. 84-87). Generally it could be argued that the theological colleges have been in the forefront of liberal theology and the academic staff, being employed by the Universities, must operate under strict equal opportunities guidelines. The recent accreditation by the

General Assembly of the Highland Theological College changes this rosy picture somewhat and it remains to be seen whether that college not only can, as it claims, but will, offer a comfortable and nurturing environment for potential women ministers.

However, if the attitude of lecturers and staff at the universities was positive, the attitude of fellow students often left a great deal to be desired. In the early days, it might simply be a matter of debate. Ailsa recalls, 'some students were very "pro" and some were very "anti" and one was debating all the time and having one's leg pulled all the time, and you just got on with it.' Elizabeth too, felt it was mainly teasing,

'I remember people within the faculty, some of the students teasing you, but in a very nice way. I mean I had a very positive experience of my divinity degree. I never felt resistance or whatever and I think there were some quite conservative students there, but I think they mainly accepted you for who were.' (Elizabeth)

Martha remembers it being suggested that 'She's here to marry a minister, she'll never finish her training she'll never get a charge, nobody will accept her, people, especially men will not feel able to speak to her,' all of which were conventional arguments being put forward in the early days in opposition to the ordination of women. But whilst it might have been expected that matters would improve over the years, in fact the evidence suggests that attitudes hardened and Ruth A found that,

'the attitude of the men on the course was appalling. People actually said things like, 'Yes, I believe you got a call, but there are plenty of other things that women can do in the church; like there's the ministry of the flowers, and there's this and there's that and there's the next thing.' And I was absolutely shocked, perhaps because of my supportive kind of childhood, that people would actually say that to you, even if they thought it, I thought 'well that might be hurtful,' so they might not say it. In fact there were men in my class, I was president of the students committee one of the years, and two of the people on the committee left the room if I was doing the opening prayer, because I was a woman. I just found that really difficult to cope with.' (Ruth A)

Some like Merle, decided to ignore it

'But we did encounter that with the guys that were on course, especially those from the Western Isles. So we just sort of learned to ignore them, that was the best way.' (Merle)

On a positive note, one of the older students was grateful the younger students were so accepting of her advanced years.



## Placements and Supervision

If there were changes afoot in the academic side of training for the ministry, there perhaps were even greater changes in the placements. In the early days, as we hear from the interviewees, the focus was not on training the candidate, so much as providing extra pairs of hands in busy parishes. Candidates might have one or two ‘student attachments’ during their college career, which could be extremely casual. They might have a student assistantship, which was a more formalised arrangement which involved preaching once a month. In recent years candidates have been required to undertake three placements during their university course, two of which are part time and during the university term and the third is full time for ten weeks during the university holidays. Whilst one could argue that these changes came about as the Church of Scotland realised that ‘ministerial formation’ was an important issue, it would also have to be acknowledged that the changes in the grant system for students made it a necessity to find some way of paying candidates at least a little sum towards living expenses, as for most the BD is a second degree. Added to which many now come to ministry as a second career and have family commitments and mortgages to cope with. All students are required to undertake a final or probationary full time placement, in the past for nine months, at present around fifteen months. Another very significant change was the introduction of training for supervisors.

Most of our women clergy had fairly positive experiences of placements. For Peter, they were a ‘respite’ from the rigours of the academic course. The more recently trained, like Iona tend to be most positive ‘Placements and supervisors - I could not fault any of them and that was definitely, definitely a good experience.’ For those whose training took place in an earlier period there was a more mixed reaction. For some, the previously mentioned emphasis on visiting was unhelpful. Fred says,

‘What I didn't enjoy so much in that placement was the additional hours..... to my memory was entirely visiting. Go and visit old people, and here's your next list of three.... and here's your next list of three. I didn't get a variety of experience. And I would have to say I don't think I got supervised that much - ‘This is your job, on you go.’ (Fred)

Joanna too feels,

‘looking back, one thing I would say is, if I ever had a probationer, I don't think I'd quite give them a constant diet of visiting because that seemed to be, ‘this is what Parish Ministry's about,’ then you get into Parish Ministry and

you discover you've not got the time to commit to that level of visiting.'  
(Joanna)

The lack of training for Supervisors brought problems for some of the women who trained in the earlier years. Catherine was sufficiently concerned to make an uncharacteristic protest,

'it was again, completely disorganised, although a good experience in many other ways. Such that when I went to probationers conference, the only thing I managed to pluck up courage to say was when they were talking about experience of probationary periods and so on, 'Is there any thought of any kind of training for the ministers who take on probationers, so that they too know what's expected? And I couldn't believe I was saying it. But I realise now there's a lot more goes on but at that time I don't think there was very much.'  
(Catherine)

For Muriel it caused problems in the relationship with her supervisor,

'My probation year wasn't such a good experience. I was in a UPA with an experienced minister but I don't really think..... these were the days before supervisors were properly trained and I don't really think that the minister was quite up to the job of supervising a probationer. Pretty much I was allowed to do what I liked. Then when I did a lot, he would very snippily say things like, 'Oh so you thought you would just visit the whole congregation last week, while I was away.'  
(Muriel)

Many probationers in the early years did feel thrown in at the deep end. At that stage most probationers started their placement in July – in time to cover the minister's holiday. So, fresh out of college and with little experience, they found themselves responsible for the entire range of preaching, pastoral work and funerals - with no support or supervision. Joanna's experience is typical,

My first one [supervisor], he was a minister with, probably then, fifteen to twenty years experience and he.....although when I look back and see how the training happens nowadays..... I was thrown in at the deep end, I mean.....but it was no bad thing. I think there's sometimes a wee bit of cushioning goes on in some of the student placements nowadays. I mean, I started in the October and in the February I was left in charge for a whole week while he went away. And I remember I picked up an abortion case and thinking, 'Oh what do I do with this?' but you didn't question it, you just sort of, 'Oh that's what I was to do' sort of thing.'  
(Joanna)

However, not all experiences of supervision were positive. In some cases it was simply a clash of personalities, as can happen in any situation of supervision. For Maggie, the issue seemed to be her supervisor's jealousy,

‘I think it would have been a deeply unhappy experience for me, if it hadn't been that I had this little group who were extremely supportive and who could sense - they knew there were problems between the minister and myself. And I stuck it out, though at times, I wanted to go but I thought no! I'm not going, I will stick it out – and I did!’ (Maggie)

In some cases there were issues within the congregation as for Grace, ‘Second attachment was in a suburban congregation and that was at a difficult time in the church's life and in the minister's life. I won't go into detail!’ and for Joanna

‘My second placement they tried to send me to work with a woman and I must admit, that wasn't very successful..... for a whole lot of reasons.....some of it was to do with her relationship with the congregation.’ (Joanna)

Some women were placed with ministers who had issues about gender albeit, as in Sophie's case, they weren't necessarily aware of it. She remembers,

‘I'd said ‘is it fine for you that I'm a woman coming into this job, because there are other options around,’ and it was in a part of the country where there were not a lot of women ministers, I think there was only one other one in the presbytery, and he said that was fine. .... and I realised only at the very end of the 18 months, that actually, at some level of being, he really had been very uncomfortable about it. ....afterwards, it became very sharp that, in fact, there were issues for him.’ (Sophie)

Jo recalls that her probation

‘was a disaster, absolute disaster. Looking back now, there were a lot of factors came together and the minister should never have taken me on. But he was known, for one thing, to be rather unsure about women in the ministry and made that known to me - sometimes in very roundabout ways.’ (Jo)

As Suzie points out, even for the most determined and committed of women, these experiences can be very damaging. It can be almost impossible not to absorb the negativity of the placement,

‘The first placement was incredibly hard, because I was in a very conservative church and people had very..... well sometimes subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways of letting me know that - alright, maybe it was ok what I'd been doing, but really, I shouldn't have been there at all, because of course women in ministry were really not.....and I found it quite amazing to watch myself and observe how undermining I found that. You know, I went away from that placement thinking ‘Well, maybe I can't be a minister.’ (Suzie)

The Church of Scotland, as previously mentioned, prides itself on being a Broad Church and it is part of the policy of those who place candidates for supervision to try to expose them to as broad a range of theological understandings as possible. Theoretically, as previously discussed, there ought to be no congregations or ministers within the Church of Scotland who do not accept women's ministry. However, in reality, there are. It has to be asked whether these particular congregations and supervisors should ever be allocated placements. Equally difficult for the women is when there are sexual issues. Merle says,

'I didn't particularly enjoy my first placement. I didn't like my supervisor. I felt uncomfortable in his presence, and I actually advised the committee not to send anybody there again, which they respected, for the reasons that I gave.'  
(Merle)

Supervision was most often by male supervisors. For many of those who trained in the earlier years of course, there was no option, there were no female supervisors around. Most of the women feel that this was not a problem. For Edna, it simply wasn't an issue,

'it so happened, that none of the people who gave me practical training was a woman and I don't think I lost out at all from that, and I didn't at the time feel any need for that. I didn't feel that there were elements of ministry that a woman was likely to do so differently that you would need to have a woman teaching you how to do it.' (Edna)

This, of course, reaches the heart of one of the great debates about women's ministry – are there women who are ministers, or are there ministers who are women? For some, like Edna, ministry is ministry regardless of the gender of the minister. For others, the matter of gender is indissolubly linked to ministry and so there were one or two who specifically asked to be placed with at least one female supervisor, so that they could observe women's ministry at close quarters. However, there were good and bad experiences reported with male supervisors and good and bad experiences reported with female supervisors. The generosity and training of the supervisor seem to have been more of a key to the positive outcome from the placement experience. As Jo says,

'The two placements that went so well - the colleagues were wonderful and these were middle-aged men who had very little feminist awareness. But there was never an issue - quite the opposite - they were just very generous and very honest about their own vulnerabilities and weaknesses in terms of ministry. It was great.' (Jo)

## **Conclusions**

Whilst in some senses there is little in the background of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland that is unexpected or surprising, the presence of the strong male role model in the lives of many women ministers is interesting and confirms the American findings. The jury is still out in terms of women ministers providing role models for younger women, there is little evidence at present to support the notion. The interviews do show the importance of Christian nurture, whether through Sunday School, Youth Group or Scripture Union, in the formation of women ministers and it would appear that the conservative churches and groups often provide a more conducive environment for the transition from inherited faith to owned faith. It is not obvious from the interviews that there are any factors in the background of women ministers which would be different from the backgrounds of their male colleagues. Further research on the importance of Christian nurture through groups is important in the light of the declining number of people, men and women, who grow up in Christian households.

The “Call” to ministry for women clergy in the Church of Scotland takes many forms, but is often a dance, as women advance towards the notion of ministry, then take fright or feel themselves inadequate and retire again; they swing around through different careers, dance figures of eight round obstacles and past people who discourage them, but are given confirmation by others who help them to ‘see’ themselves in the role of minister, and at the end of the dance, despite insecurities or false steps along the way, comes a feeling of peace. Further research on women’s experience of “Call” and the hesitant progress towards answering the “Call” would be interesting, such research would examine too, the barriers to ministry for women.

Academic training saw many changes over the forty year period. Women clergy generally enjoyed their academic training and value what they learned, even if one or two found it something of a struggle. Attitudes of staff in the universities were positive and non-discriminatory, but attitudes of some fellow students over the years, hardened and moved from teasing and debate, to speech and action which the women found hurtful and difficult to deal with. We will return to this issue again, as the women speak of their relationships with colleagues.

Generally the experiences of supervision were positive. Early issues around a lack of variety and the sense of ‘being thrown in at the deep end’ were addressed by the introduction of training for supervisors. Inevitably there were one or two personality clashes, but perhaps more serious is the damage done to women candidates when they are placed with supervisors or congregations who have doubts about or theological objections

to women's ministry. It might be imagined that after forty years of ordaining women, this would no longer be an issue, in that the Church of Scotland would not have accepted as candidates for ministry, men who did not approve of the ordination of women, however, this appears not to be the case! There is no evidence from the interviews that the gender of the supervisors made any difference to the supervision experience, rather it is the openness and ability of the supervisor that makes for a good placement.

## Chapter 5 Getting on with the Job

### *Introduction*

This chapter considers women ministers in their day to day working lives. It presents the findings on being called to a charge and although there are still delays and rejections, although there are still barriers to such a call, the study finds an improving situation. In terms of relationships with congregations, the women ministers in the Church of Scotland, in common with women clergy elsewhere, find that individuals are won over by experiencing the ministry of a woman. ‘Getting on with the job’ is a strategy adopted by many women in the face of opposition – whilst it wins over individuals, there is little evidence that it brings about change in the Church as a whole. Relationships with the wider community again show an improving situation. The women speak of their roles as Pastors, Preachers and Worship Leaders, Administrators/Managers and as Leaders. Administration is not generally a favourite role. The strategies for accommodating family and friends are considered. Finally the women ministers speak of the joys and sorrows of ministry - the greatest joy being the privilege of sharing in the lives of people.

### *Call to a Charge*

Within the Church of Scotland, after the initial ‘Call’ to ministry, ministers are also ‘called’ to a particular charge or parish by the congregation of that church.

Calling is a continual process; there are several other calls within the overall framework. Sometimes there is the inner certainty that it is God’s will that one should move to serve another pastorate (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 144).

### *Delays and Rejections*

There has been, as was noted in Chapter 3, an apocryphal understanding in the Church of Scotland that it was difficult for women to accomplish a call to a charge. After women had been in ministry for some years, it was reputedly easier for them to manage to be called to a first charge, but still difficult for them to move to another charge, though as we noted in Chapter 3, this was not borne out in the survey. However, as noted in the Literature Review there is a considerable body of research from furth of Scotland which suggests that it is more difficult for women ministers to get jobs and to move up the career

ladder than it is for their male counterparts (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985) (Carroll, Hargrove, & Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches*, 1983) (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998) (Nesbitt, *Dual Ordination Tracks: differential benefits and costs for men and women clergy*, 1993) (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997) (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004). The women clergy in this study were invited to talk about their experiences of being called to a charge, because this usually represents the first interaction between a particular congregation and a minister. Whilst there were women who, in the early days, applied for twenty or thirty charges before being called, there were also women of the same era who were called quite quickly to their first charge. The longest any interviewee waited was two years. Some women took a sideways step, as it were, to move into sector or specialised ministry – sometimes this was deliberate and intentional, but others moved into non-parochial ministry as a way of staying in ministry at a time when no parishes seemed to want them. So, Elizabeth says

I mean I don't remember any bad things but I did have to wait a while. And then I did actually go into a specialist type of ministry for a wee while.  
(Elizabeth)

In fairness, generally the women who were ordained quite early on did not expect things to be easy, they accepted that women's ministry was new for the Church of Scotland and that congregations would need time to come to terms with it. Antarctic says, 'Then I didn't expect it to be straightforward. A lot of congregations came and heard you to see what it looked like.' And a number of women had the experience of splitting the nominating committee and seeing the vacancy re-advertised. So Catherine notes,

There was one, I had an interview and everything had gone well, they were exceptionally nice and they wrote back to me saying they were sorry - they had been pleased with everything but they wanted to try and get the candidate that everyone could agree on. (Catherine)

Again this is an experience which is shared by women ministers in other denominations. Lehman, using organisational maintenance theory (the methods employed by members of an organisation so that the organisation might maintain its viability) recognised that there was an inevitable problem

Most church members would agree that women should enjoy just treatment and that church organizations should be maintained. When in conflict, the values



appear to become ranked, usually with the desire for organizational maintenance being given precedence over equal opportunities for clergywomen (Lehman E. J., 1981 Vol 42:2, p. 117).

## **An improving situation**

However, the evidence from the women who are more recently ordained suggests that there is now little difficulty either in getting a charge or in accomplishing a move. All of this bears out research from the United States. Patricia Chang notes that in the United States there have always been a minority of women who found parishes relatively quickly and she also records that the situation is improving - the likelihood of a woman achieving a 'call' relatively quickly is increasing (Chang P. , 1996 Vol 36 No 4).

It would have to be recognised that there is now, and has been for a few years, a shortage of ministers in the Church of Scotland and, as we saw in Chapter 3, that situation is likely to get worse. Many congregations, especially in rural or difficult areas have experience of long vacancies and are delighted if anyone applies. Martha comments,

Sometimes it's easy to get charges – like just now. There's so many vacant charges that if you are still living and breathing and preferably preaching you are in with a winner. Whereas when there was great competition and the number of charges was being reduced it was very difficult and I always felt that women were the last on their list. (Martha)

And she went on to point out, that was often true in secular life too, that when jobs were scarce, it became more difficult for women. Reskin and Roos speak of labour queueing when jobs are scarce and Bock recognises that 'The lack of males to fill the increasing number of professional positions may necessitate greater reliance on female occupants to perform these roles.' (Bock, 1967 ) It is the stated position of some of the conservative ministers of the Church of Scotland (both male and female) that in the present shortage of men, God has graciously permitted women to be ordained!

However, on a more positive note, Iona records,

there is a thinking I've heard around here that they were actually hoping for a woman minister, they'd never had a woman minister, and they were feeling that the time was right for one. And also, I think, the fact that a woman could maybe do some things differently – I'm not sure about the logic in that. (Iona)

## Barriers to the Call

Generally it seemed to be easier for women to find a charge if they already had children, single women and worst of all married women who hadn't yet had children, had most difficulty. Even today, as Suzie ruefully recalls, it can be a mistake to remind a Nomination Committee about the possibility of having children,

I remember one congregation, I had a sense that when I somehow, in conversation, related a story about me having been pregnant in my last placement - certain lights went on and people thought 'Sugar, she might be getting pregnant again while she's with us.' Just the sense of 'I have just closed the door here by reminding them of my fertility.' (Suzie)

Other things which represented irritating barriers to the call included age. Some were regarded as being too young, which was the excuse given to Elizabeth 'and it was down to my youth and inexperience was what they put in the letter.' Generally younger women are aware that some of the resistance they meet could be attributed to age rather than gender. However, it was also possible to be too old as was the case for Peter,

that was probably one of the low points and I think still is, in the church. I wasn't getting jobs. It wasn't all being a woman, though I think a bit of it was. But I was older but I didn't have the experience to match the age. So I wasn't really..... they would only have me for 10 years at the most. So, not the experience in ministry. (Peter)

That is one of the areas in which the Church of Scotland differs from the Church of England. Currently Church of Scotland ministers who were inducted to a charge after 1974 are encouraged to retire at 65 and must do so by the time they are 70 years of age. With the shortage of clergy forecast, it seems likely that this legislation will change.

Congregations could also be very slow to accept non parochial experience as relevant. Catherine felt that factor had delayed her move into parish ministry and Lindsay discovered, after extensive sector ministry, that

applying for parishes was a real eye-opener. At one point I was just going to forget the whole thing and leave the church, I found it so de-motivating and so soul destroying and that wasn't to do with being a woman, although that might have been a slight factor. It was that all my experience.....counted for nothing. People saw me in the same light as someone who was just newly qualified. (Catherine)

Most of the women interviewed had Nominating Committee funny stories, stories of impromptu interviews in the back pew or the vestry, stories of inappropriate questions 'Will your husband be moving with you?' or 'What will you do when the children come

along?’ or ‘What do you do when the children are ill?’ Ailsa pointed out to the Nominating Committee that this last was the wrong question – they should really have asked ‘What do you do during the school holidays?’

For most of the women too, being in the right charge had brought confirming experiences, a sense of ‘rightness’ and that confirmation kept them going even when things were difficult. Catriona says,

it seemed, when I came here, that it was a very positive experience of being interviewed. There was a sense that this was the right place to come, which was reassuring, because we all wondered, ‘Will you feel a sense that this is the right place to come?’ and it did. (Catriona)

Jane B remembers,

And everything for me seemed to be pointing to a possible ministry here. And when I came for the interview, again I felt a rapport with the people and the vacancy committee voted unanimously to call me as Sole Nominee. And then again I prayer, ‘Lord, show me, if this is the right place then, when it comes to the voting for the congregation, then I’ll get more than 90%.’ And the vote was something like 96%. So, again, I felt it was a confirmation that this was the right place. (Jane B)

The reverse side of that confirmation was the attitudes to the ‘ones that got away!’ Martha notes of one vacancy who didn’t appoint her, ‘It broke my heart at the time but it was maybe for the best’ Ruth reckons she had a lucky escape,

The other probationer went to the charge and had to leave eventually, because they were as horrible to him - as they would possibly have been to me, and I was so glad that I didn’t go there. (Ruth)

As does Iona,

I got to a shortlist on a particular vacancy, along with two of my probationer group, and that church had obviously decided that they wanted a probationer, and the three of us were short-listed. So it became quite an interesting situation. There was two women and one man in the group, and we got to the shortlist, and it was the other woman who was chosen actually. Which to this day I’m really quite grateful for because, I know with hindsight, it would not have been the right place for me and I also know that she had a very difficult time there for all sorts of reasons, some of them being associated with her being a woman. (Iona)

That attitude, being thankful for the ‘ones that got away’ is an extension of the concept of ‘call.’ Ministers who truly believe they are called to a parish by God, also believe that if they do not get the charge, then that is also God’s will. But for all that some things still hurt. Ruth remembers a vacancy committee who turned her down because she was ‘giggly’

– a description she didn't and doesn't recognise of herself. And Jo articulates an underlying hurt for women,

But what I found personally very difficult and distressing was the seeming ease- and there were enough vacancies around –the seeming ease by which, particularly the men, seemed to find something, including particularly the men where I thought 'Gosh, I wouldn't want you as my minister.' I found that very hard. (Jo)

So, in terms of call to a charge, the situation for women has changed over the period and generally women find it easier now, both to achieve a call to a first charge and to move, though whether that is entirely to do with improved acceptance of women ministers or whether it is in part to do with the declining number of ministers compared with the number of vacancies is debatable. There are signs that fertility may still be an issue for some congregations and that being very young or quite old may be a barrier. Nominating committees still ask inappropriate questions and can be quite dismissive of sector ministry experience. Generally women ministers look for confirmation of their call to a particular ministry in a sense of 'rightness,' equally, they often find good reason to let go of 'the ones that got away.' There remains, for some, a hurt that sometimes any man is still seen as preferable to a good woman.

## ***Congregations***

Congregations are the backbone of the Church of Scotland. With its present commitment to having a presence in every parish in Scotland (3<sup>rd</sup> Article Declaratory), the Church of Scotland indicates the importance of the local congregation. Each congregation comprises a central corps of those who attend church and take part in the life of the congregation, but also a hinterland of those who are technically members but who rarely attend and have little or no active participation.

Scotland, although one country, shows tremendous theological variation. There are areas, particularly in the North, North West and the Western Isles where generally ministers and congregations display a more conservative theology. We have already seen in Chapter 3 that these areas are less fertile ground for the ministry of women as Edna puts it 'there are sort of patches of Scotland, where the gender thing is more important.' The central belt and more particularly the cities of the central belt are reckoned to be more liberal. Catriona reflects, 'There is definitely a rural reticence; there is definitely a rural suspicion, and I definitely believe that part of that suspicion is because I am a woman.'

Lehman building on the work of Roof found that congregations which are more local in outlook tend to be more prejudiced against women, whilst congregations which are more cosmopolitan are more likely to be accepting of them (Francis & Robbins, *The Long Diaconate 1987-1994*, 1999, p. 10). However, Ailsa found that even in one of the big cities,

very recently, I went part-time to congregation as a locum. They were very odd about me coming and I remember going home and saying 'I don't know why I am in this congregation. They just seem in the dark Ages, it's extraordinary! (Ailsa)

But she continued

But I kept going and ended up loving them and they loved me. And then they called a woman minister. (Ailsa)

Overwhelmingly, that last comment is borne out. Once congregations are exposed to women ministers, attitudes change. Across the literature on Women's ministry, there is general agreement that exposure to the ministry of a woman generally leads to acceptance of that ministry (Lehman E. , *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985) (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004). As Jane Charman puts it in 'Voices of This Calling', 'I have met a great many people who used to be opposed to women priests but are now in favour. I have yet to meet anyone for whom the opposite is true' (Rees, 2002, p. 130).

Sophie says, 'I suppose what I'm saying is that change takes place when people get to know you.' Froddo reflects that it's often the idea of a woman rather than the reality which people reject,

I do think that people have theories..... I don't think it's so prevalent even since I started..... they don't like the idea in principle of a woman minister, but actually when they get to know one, it ceases to be an issue. And certainly I've had a few comments from members of the congregations, 'I didn't think I'd like a woman, but you're OK' and I think there is this theory that - among congregations who haven't had very much experience of women - a woman will be strange and different, but in actual fact, they just are what they are. And women and men come to the whole job with a whole variety of backgrounds and experiences, hang-ups and whatnot. (Froddo)

For Edna, change comes as people get to know the minister as a person, rather than as a category. As another writer puts it, when people begin to understand that the woman minister is 'normal' (Wootton J. , 2007, p. 90/1).

To the extent that people have a hesitation about a minister because she is a woman..... I think there's an almost universal phenomenon, that the expectations are connected to the category in which they belong, until the members of the congregation get to know the individual - when the category, the box into which they've been put, stops being the most important thing. If you're that woman that's coming to be the minister, then the fact that you're a woman is possibly the only thing they know about you. After six months quite a lot of them will know that you're Anne and you play golf, or go ice-skating, or preach very badly, or visit very well, or did a beautiful funeral for Mrs Smith, and the fact that you're a minister who's a woman stops being important because it is replaced by other more important things. (Edna)

Most of the women interviewed in this study recounted the need to win people over and to overcome opposition. Generally, they had done so by gentle persistence rather than by dramatic confrontation. None of the women interviewed had 'argued their case' with a member who was opposed to their ministry, rather they had just set out to prove themselves by doing the job. Highly prized are the affirmations which come from people who initially opposed the ministry.

In my first charge, it was quite funny, there was one lady who said, 'I'll never darken the doors of the church when it's a woman minister.' When we were leaving, who was the person who said to us, 'Now come and have your last meal with us before you go,' - that person. (John)

Lehman in 'Women Clergy: Breaking Through Gender Barriers' applies cognitive dissonance theory as an explanation of the value of contact with a woman minister on the receptivity of the individual member to women's ministry

One aspect of that process appears to involve reduction of cognitive dissonance, especially on the part of those members who try to establish good relationships with the woman pastor. The idea that "we've got to make a go of it" becomes transformed into the perception that "we really had nothing to be concerned about in the first place." The contact simply structures a situation which gives church members an opportunity to act overtly in such a way that they in effect force attitude change upon themselves! (Lehman E. , Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers, 1985, p. 204)

Arguably, the more committed the member is to the congregation, the more they have to lose by being at odds with the minister and the more likely they are to 'come round' to women's ministry. Whilst it is always possible to move to a different congregation and indeed people do, congregations are close networks of relationships and friendships and it is difficult for a member to leave a particular congregation whilst still retaining the

relationships. However, the women clergy interviewed do not apply cognitive dissonance theory but attribute the change much more straightforwardly to knowledge of the individual minister as a person coming to outweigh the expectations or fears attached to the category 'woman minister.'

For many congregations though, a woman minister represented the 'unknown' with all the fears and concerns that might bring.

There are stereotypes about women's presumed lesser ability to perform well as top leaders in any organization, especially the Church. Some pastoral search committees fear clergy-women will be less effective in promoting monetary and member vitality and growth, and may even reduce the number of men in active congregational membership. There is no support for either of these apprehensions, as numerous studies have shown (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 163).

Grace A acknowledges that the change comes partly through pastoral work and partly through reassurance that the predictions of disaster have not come true,

In these circumstances, if there have been two or three people in the congregation who didn't want you because you were a woman, you can win them over, and in time, they will value what you do, either because of funerals and things like that or else they've just seen the place doesn't fall down and the church carries on. 'You can do it!' in other words. (Grace A)

Of course, there always were people in congregations who were in favour of the ordination of women from the very start. Martha treasures this memory from her early days in ministry,

One of the elders there looked at me, and it was quite funny, he said 'Aye weel, we've had wifie bobbies and we've had wifie doctors' and I thought 'Oh my word, what's coming next' and he said 'ach and it's right fine to have a wifie minister. (Martha)

Peter reckons that the gradual progress in the ordination of women in Scotland has helped it become the norm,

**that** has been one of the great advances for the church.....and because it's been done gradually, and alongside gradual ordination for women - not like the rush that they had down South, which frightened a lot of people off.....because we've been patient and taken people right through, and now affirmed even more by having two women moderators behind us.....it's again, what eventually becomes the norm. (Peter)

For the women in our interviews, the emphasis was on 'doing the job' or 'getting on with the job' and these are phrases which appeared time and time again during the interviews. This is a strategy which has been adopted by other women clergy both in the States (Charlton, 1997, p. 604) and in England (Cornell, 2003, p. 46) (Wootton J., *The Ministry of Women in the Free Churches*, 1995, p. 73). It is generally hoped by women clergy that 'doing the job' will prove that woman can be ministers and that by 'doing the job' they will gain recognition and acceptance. The problem arises in that this quiet, working in the background approach to change can be perceived as being redolent with all the traditional feminine qualities of patience, perseverance and passivity. It is also a sad truth that successful contact with one woman minister does not necessarily mean acceptance of women ministers as a group (Francis & Robbins, *The Long Diaconate* 1987-1994, 1999, p. 11) Merle wryly comments

And on my last Sunday four women came up to me and said, that I was what this church was needing, it was good to have a woman. I thought that was a really lovely thing to say. I said, 'You'll be getting a woman after me?' 'Oh we don't know, we will just wait and see.' (Merle)

Unfortunately though, a negative experience with a woman minister can do quite a lot of harm as Ruth A recounts

My mother's congregation..... were calling a new Minister and my mother was telling me that she was at a meeting where they decided what kind of minister they wanted to have. They said, 'Well, first things first, we had a woman in the past and we don't want another one, because we didn't like her.' and my mother, bless her soul said, 'We've had lots of men, and we didn't like all of them, does that mean we're not going to have a man what are we going to have - a Spanish hermaphrodite.' (Ruth A)

It has to be recognised that not all women ministers are good or even competent. Just as there are male ministers who are less than inspiring, there are women ministers whose talents leave a lot to be desired, as Ailsa points out

I think that there are an awful lot of good women ministers out there. I think there have been some dud ones to be honest..... I don't want to say dud ones .....there have been some that haven't enhanced the idea of women in ministry. Just as you get some dud men ministers and there are duds around in any profession, and some of the duds in ministry will be women. (Ailsa)

Nonetheless, it should also be recognised that women ministers, precisely because they are women in what has been perceived to be a male profession 'had to actively demonstrate



superior competence before others perceived them as equally competent to a white male' (Roth M. , 2004, p. 204). Men are simply assumed to be more able in male dominated professions. However, the women ministers in our study strive faithfully and honestly to serve their parishes and congregations

### **The 'troublesome individuals'**

No matter how faithfully and successfully women ministers 'do the job' there are still individuals and small groups who remain in opposition. For some, it is simply that their 'generic notion of the profession is a gendered one' (Witz, 1992), and they are either incapable of, or unwilling to, move beyond that gendered notion. Catriona is aware that 'the so-called senior elder, who even before I came here, campaigned around the town against me because he didn't think we should have this "woman" coming here.' And Jo acknowledges

There have been individuals, on occasions, in the congregations, including my current congregation. There have been two men in particular, who I think it found the idea of a woman in authority quite difficult to come to terms with. One of them, I think will never come round to it, he's a very awkward character at the best of times.(Jo)

Despite all their attempts, some women (and indeed some men) ministers simply find themselves up against implacable opposition.

While a woman may find openness and acceptance of her ministry in many contexts, she will never have to go far to find her very existence as an ordained woman called into question. (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 13)

That opposition can be hugely damaging firstly to the health of the minister as one or two of our women have found, but also to her ability to minister to the rest of the congregation (Francis & Robbins, *The Long Diaconate 1987-1994*, 1999, p. 120). These conflicts are not always readily resolvable, it can be difficult to compromise with individuals who will not communicate directly with the minister (Francis & Robbins, *The Long Diaconate 1987-1994*, 1999, p. 121). Those women ministers who were caught in situations of conflict were of the view that there had been little help or support from the Church hierarchy.

Within congregations, the resistance to women ministers often comes from a slightly unexpected source - other women! Elizabeth reckons, 'you do get resistance from

older ladies often more than men' and Merle agrees, 'I could also say that the biggest critics of women have been women themselves and I found that quite interesting.'

Antarctica is aware that it was the women who voted against her on a vacancy committee. Joanna reckons that the issue is particularly with successful women, women who have fought to gain their own position in their own careers, a little like Margaret Thatcher,

And I have to say, some of the hardest folk to win over, or not even to win over, just to help them to see that it's possible, are women – and successful women. (Joanna)

Whilst Jane A suggests that women's ministry demands more change from women in congregations,

And I think it has been women who have had to change the most. Men are much more accepting in my opinion. Rightly or wrongly, I don't know what other experiences are - but I think men have found it much easier. (Jane A)

It may be that women find it more difficult to accept women ministers because there is a confusion of roles. Congregations within the Church of Scotland were for many generations used to getting 'two for the price of one' in that, generally, minister's wives were very active within the Church. In years gone by, it was quite common for Nomination Committees to interview the minister's wife as well as the minister. Do women find it harder to accept a woman minister because they feel it leaves the 'women's' church devoid of leadership? Gwendoline Malogne-Fer in her study of the French Polynesian Church, a denomination which was also accustomed to the married male minister with involved wife (indeed, that denomination required male ministers to be married) notes that the advent of ordained women

conflicts with the expectations of parishioners, who continue to want a married man assisted by his wife. They cite parish organization (more particularly the existence of a Women's Committee, usually chaired by the minister's wife) as the justification for keeping the traditional 'pastoral couple' (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 183).

She comments further that this is played out even at the level of dress-codes, with women students for the ministry being asked by congregations to dress in a white dress like minister's wives, rather than in the traditional navy blue suit of the minister (Jones, Wootton, & Thorpe, *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches*, 2008, p. 184). On the other hand, there is well documented evidence that some successful women are unwilling to accept or encourage the success of other women, sometimes because their

own positions are sufficiently precarious that they are unwilling to be seen to promote other women. Alison wonders whether it is just an issue of power and authority,

Whether they just don't like a woman in authority or whether somehow feel threatened by a woman in that position of authority, I don't know. Probably a bit of both! (Alison)

In the interviews most of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland mentioned pastoral care as being an important way of breaking down barriers and prejudice as well as the dawning realisation that women can take funerals and that the Church will not fall down if a woman is called as minister. So many women ministers tell a story of congregations and individuals changing and becoming supportive as they come into contact with women ministers. There are still geographical areas of resistance to women's ministry. There are and always will be problems with individuals and groups within congregations but these problems are inherent in ministry. That women are more resistant to women's ministry than are men, would bear investigation.

In order to gain this acceptance though, most of the women ministers interviewed downplay gender as an identity. In so doing, they have much in common with women clergy in the states (Charlton, 1997), with women clergy in England (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 104) (Wootton J., *The Ministry of Women in the Free Churches*, 1995), and indeed with women in other male dominated occupations (Charleton, *Women and Clergywomen*, 2000) (Crawford, Olson, & Deckman, 2001). As members of a subordinate group, they concentrate on basic survival (Fagaol, 1992, p. 13), and conform or even over-conform (Lehman E., *Women Clergy: Breaking through gender barriers*, 1985, p. 148) rather than trying to 'rock the boat' or make radical changes. Both Lehman and Jones find in their research that it is this very lack of radical change which has made the ministry of women acceptable to most, if disappointing to some. Jones comments on the ministry of women as being 'strikingly similar to the kind of ministry long provided by men' (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 103).

In reality, although 'doing the job' helps win acceptance from congregations, who are reassured that nothing will change and that a woman will be pretty much like a man, there is little evidence that simply 'doing the job' brings about any change in structures or any real change in the Church.

## ***The Wider Community***

Church of Scotland ministers are, as we noted earlier, usually parish ministers with a responsibility for all who live within a geographical area rather than simply for a congregation. Inevitably this brings them, through services like parish funerals and weddings, and through parish contacts with schools, nursing homes and day centres, into contact with a wide range of people who have little contact with the church per se. Whilst within congregations acceptance of women clergy is improving and within the profession attitudes may be hardening, in the context of the wider Scottish society, the situation is different again. The women interviewed allude to it again and again, society has changed and is changing. Although church-going in Scotland has been in decline since the 1850's, the patterns of church adherence remained strong and for the Church of Scotland, peaked in 1956 (Brown C. G., 1997). Throughout this time, the Church of Scotland as the National Church exercised a strong influence on Scottish society. Using its extensive network of hall accommodation, the Church provided the social focus in most communities. Young people met and married at Youth Fellowship, Badminton Club or Scottish Country Dance Club, all hosted by the local church. Decline in membership and adherence to the Church accelerated rapidly from the 1960's onwards. However, the influence of the Church of Scotland still remained remarkably strong. Ministers were chaplains in the local schools and hospitals. Hospital 'in patient' lists were available in the chaplains department and it was routine practice for a parish minister to visit anyone from the parish who was in hospital, whether member or not. For some, the General Assembly and its wide range of interests provided the nearest thing to a national forum, though it should be noted that the General Assembly is generally a much more conservative body politically than is most of Scotland. Just as the decline in its influence began, the Church of Scotland admitted women to the ordained ministry. From Chaves (1997) perspective, by so doing, the Church of Scotland was positioning itself as a liberal, modern organisation, willing to embrace the culture of the time, rather than demonstrating its traditionalism. However, as we noted in the previous discussion about conservative congregations and the 'markers' of conservatism, perhaps there were other 'markers' of traditionalism being displayed by the Church of Scotland.

All the women ministers feel that the perceptions of women ministers in the wider community have changed. To some extent, the initial reaction of the wider community to women ministers was more one of wonder, than opposition. It was not so much that people

were against women ministers, as that they didn't realise women could be ministers. Grace A says,

And the attitudes of congregations have changed so much. When I started people would say 'Oh, I didn't know a woman could be a minister' .... at weddings and funerals and things like that. But now I don't think you would get somebody saying that. (Grace A)

Iona recognises that there is no longer the 'novelty factor' in being a woman minister. John reckons,

They're more used to it now. I think at first with women ministers, it was a bit, 'Hmmm, I don't know about this' but yes, I think it has changed. I think they are more accepting. (John)

Again, as with congregations, there is a recognition that acceptance may vary with geography and that the more conservative areas may see things differently as Lindsay, who has some female colleagues working in her own area recognises

Nobody thinks it strange when you turn up at the door and you are a woman. You get very few comments about being female and give it another two or three years and children brought up in this area will think that all ministers are female. But I would guess that there are other parts of the country where there are no female ministers and it has never been in people's perception. (Lindsay)

Women have the sense of having to earn their place, earn the respect of people in their parish, but in that they are being treated in exactly the same way as men. Once parishioners get to know and trust a minister, acceptance follows. Lorraine says,

I think once people get used to you there's not a problem. In the beginning, there's a hesitation about it, where folks are just not too sure. But once you've kind of made your mark, then folks know. Certainly my present parish has never had a problem with women ministers and has quite a history of them anyway, and I just sense that there's just that kind of hesitation, until you get.... till folks can see whether or not you are worth..... whether you are worth your dog collar or not. (Lorraine)

All of that said, a number of women recount that when they answer the phone or the door, whether for funerals or just to let the gas meter reader in, there is still often an assumption that there must be a husband around and he will be the minister. All this despite the fact that there is now an entire generation who have grown up with women ministers. Martha points out,

The biggest change now is that women ministers are taken for granted by the young people – I'm talking about under 35, under 40 even. Because all of their life, there have been, not women ministers, but ministers who are women. Because that's where we are. We are talking about ministers – we don't say 'women doctors' – you never hear that now. (Martha)

Alison echoes that,

and I really think society has changed so much that people don't think 'what's appropriate for a man or what's appropriate for a woman.' It is something that is simply is not there, and the younger people coming into the church really couldn't care. .... they just want the church to exist as the church does, and do the things the church should be doing, and have ministers to lead it and support it and do whatever ministers are thought to be doing and don't mind. And I think that's great, that's much healthier attitude. And even younger people, children coming to church, teenagers, I think if you ask them questions about 'is it appropriate for a woman?' they don't really understand why you're asking the question, because it has not for a moment entered their thinking. (Alison)

One woman minister recounts her delight when her four year old son told her 'Don't be silly, men can't be ministers!'

Whilst many women feel that change is slow, a couple reckon that in the grand scheme of things perceptions are changing quite rapidly. One thing many women agree upon is that it would be good to get to the stage where gender was not mentioned and the phrase 'lady minister' was never heard. Suzie explains,

you feel it would be even nicer if it didn't even need to be mentioned any more, whether it's a female or male minister. Yeah, I think, very slowly but surely..... you don't get the same jokes any more about handbags on Communion tables and that kind of stuff. I must admit, I believe, just the fact that more people have now experienced or observed female ministers....you know, it does sort of sink in eventually, in a generation or three. It takes a while, it takes a while. (Suzie)

However, some women ministers, like Tigger, feel it stretches beyond mere acceptance,

My sense is, certainly in our area, that there's a very positive attitude towards women ministers. People value, I suppose the complementarity, the feminine side coming into things as well, because you can sometimes perceive things in a different way or have a slightly different attitude to the way you are with people, especially at the time of bereavement and different things like that. I certainly know in the Catholic community, people are very supportive because they envy the church and would love to have the same. I know a lot of the Catholic community here, they are very supportive. (Tigger)

That sense of being part, not just of the Church, but of their parish community was very important for a number of women and they counted it as a real joy. Jane describes,

when you're walking down the street and you have an 8 or a 9-year-old boy shouting 'Hiya! Minister.' because they haven't quite remembered your name, but they know they've seen you at school and things - that I think, is one of the great joys, being recognized as 'the Minister' ..... just knowing that you've been to the school and that they associate you with the church, is one of the great joys. (Jane)

Tigger too enjoys being part of the wider community and acknowledges the support and depth that has brought to her ministry. It is possible that the support of a community compensates women ministers for a perceived lack of support from the church itself.

Just so many different things. Just events that you've been able to share with your community. This is a kind of funny community, it's still a recognizable community. There are parts of it where people really do know one another, they do watch out for one another in the street, especially in the council estate - and to be part of that and to be known. Even though people don't come to church, they know you as the Minister. At one point, folk thought I was going away, and 'Oh no, you can't go. You're part of [this town] now' and that's a real privilege to be allowed into a community like that. (Tigger)

Undoubtedly, the Church of Scotland now finds itself marginalised. For most people in Scotland it is at best an irrelevance and at worst a dangerous, reactionary institution. Whilst the Victorian ministers were wont to castigate their godless parishes at a time when Church-going was actually quite high and the Church well regarded, the ministers of today console themselves that things are not as bad as they are portrayed. To derive positives from the present position of the Church of Scotland involves a massive reframing exercise!

The plus side, for the women clergy of the Church of Scotland, is that in the wider community, gender is not a defining issue. Just as society has accepted women in every other walk of life, so it accepts women clergy. As one of our interviewees notes, if you ask young people whether it is appropriate for women to be ministers, they cannot understand why you should even ask the question. The issues within the wider Scottish society are more to do with secularisation and whether the Church of Scotland can continue to play any meaningful role than to do with the gender of the clergy. Hoist on the petard of the traditional institutional forms, the issue for most of the women ministers is whether the Church of Scotland can be heard at all, rather than whether it speaks with a male or a female voice. Women ministers enjoy the positive responses to their ministry from the wider community but generally will be content when their gender is no longer worthy of mention.

## ***Women Ministers at Work***

We turn now to some of the roles and tasks of women to hear what the women ministers have to say about these. We hear of the joys and opportunities of day to day ministry and also explore the frustrations and sorrows.

### **Pastor**

Overwhelmingly, the joy of ordained ministry lies in working with people. Most of the women ministers enjoy being pastors. Ailsa says,

I think the joy of being allowed to be present in the family's deepest sorrows and joys is such a privilege. To ring the doorbell, when you know there is great grief behind the door, and have the door flung open and them say 'Oh! Come in! We just wanted to see you.' It's a huge responsibility and a huge joy. And to be wakened at six in the morning, or was it half past five, by the phone call that said 'Valerie's had her baby - Ah weel you've shared in wur sorrows, so it is only right you should share in wur joys. (Ailsa)

Antarctic too thinks 'it was the most interesting thing you could do with your life.' Edna says 'I have always thought that being a parish minister is the best job in the world. I've always thought it was one of the most privileged jobs in the world.' That word 'privilege' arises time and time again in the interviews. Women ministers recognise the 'privilege' of the pastoral relationship. Some feel that they have particular gifts in pastoral work but there is a division of opinion about whether that is inherent in being a woman or whether those gifts are individual. Jane outlines the debate

As a minister, I think I am immensely privileged.....to go into people's homes and elsewhere in times of great joy and great sadness. There are great extremes, and to be a part of all that is a privilege. People you have never met before, you're invited in - no question. You're invited in and they tell you their deepest secrets or their fears, family fallouts and things that you would never discuss with anyone. But they discuss it with the minister and I think that's an immense responsibility and I'll be honest, I think people open up to a woman easier..... than to a man....minister. I'm not sexist in any way and I don't want to draw distinctions, but I think women bring something different, not necessarily better, but different. Most women, I think, are more open to what people are saying to them and deal with things .....more sensitively probably. That might be very unfair because I know some very sensitive men ministers too. That's a difficult one. I accompanied my male supervisors on three occasions to visit and felt that, not that they were cold, but that they weren't just tuned in..... women pick up the vibes..... perhaps is motherhood that does that to you..... I don't know, I don't know. Or maybe it's just in the genes. I think women are different and we have to accept our differences. And



I'm never going to apologise for being a woman and I hope men don't feel they have to apologise for being a man. But we are different. I would never ever want to be exactly the same. (Jane)

However, for a number of women there is a sense that men in particular will open up to a woman in ways that they couldn't with another man. Martha says,

And I've discovered that people, particularly men, will open up because we are not perceived as the threat that another man would be. So that is an incredibly valuable thing. (Martha)

And another interviewee with experience of prison chaplaincy confirms that,

I really found in there, that in a macho environment, prisoners were much more able to be themselves and to let go and to speak more to women. That was noticed by staff and people. That was a very positive thing. (Maggie)

If pastoral work is a joy and a privilege, it also a major sorrow. Edna says, 'The sorrows are the obvious ones, because you're sharing other people's sorrows as well as their joys.' In particular funerals can be difficult because the minister is also bereaved. Jane A says,

I think the most difficult part for me is losing people you've become very fond of .....and I have found that tough. (Jane A)

And Tigger reflects

I think if you love people, then that's both the joy and the sorrow, because the longer you're in a place then the people are your friends, and it's very difficult when you lose some of your closest friends. (Tigger)

## **Preacher and Worship Leader**

If the privilege of the pastoral relationship was the greatest joy, then conduct of worship and preaching come a close second. Despite Samuel Johnson's oft quoted comment that 'a woman preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all,' the women ministers who were interviewed enjoyed preaching and leading worship. Catriona says 'I thoroughly enjoy leading worship, because it is to me the most important thing that we do. Everything else comes out of that.' And Froddo agrees 'being able to lead worship, and I suppose trying to help people understand what their faith is about and - given my background - what the

texts are about as well.’ Tigger acknowledges the sheer hard work of worship, the wrestling to find meaningful ways of engaging a congregation,

Worship, I love. I love the privilege of conducting worship and that's also a struggle, because it is such a privilege week by week, trying to find something different to say..... saying the same thing again and again. But for me worship is just so important that you are trying to find new ways of engaging - using symbols, using pictures, using all sorts of different things. (Tigger)

And Ailsa shows us something similar in terms of preaching,

I also loved preaching. It was a sort of terror and there was a sort of tyranny of the sermon. You can't put it off. It has to be ready for 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning. But there was a great joy in communicating the gospel..... and the hope and comfort of the gospel. (Ailsa)

The tyranny of that Sunday morning appointment with the congregation was acknowledged by a number of women, but as a positive rather than a negative factor in their lives. The feeling that God could use them to do or say something meaningful was important and was bound up in their identity, their understanding of who they were. Grace A comments that in worship she understands ‘this is me really, that is what I am.’ Others, like Maggie and Ruth ,rejoiced in seeing people grow and experience the Holy Spirit in worship. For others, like Merle, working with a group to prepare worship was an important part of the experience too. Perhaps the most poignant comment comes from Grace,

I think the woman bit is simply the privilege of being able to preach. Having lived through the era when women were not allowed to preach. That is very special to me, that's the greatest privilege. (Grace)

In Chapter 3 we noted that only a minority of the women who took part in the survey indicated that they thought there was a difference between men and women when it came to preaching. Merle however, recounts

Wherever I've gone, even if I've done pulpit supply or whatever, I have always felt very welcome, and people have consistently said, ‘It's really nice to see and hear a woman conduct worship,’ - and then I came to ask them why and they said, ‘Well it's just different.’ (Merle)

Merle herself attributes the differences not so much to the content of the worship or the preaching, but to the voice and the delivery. Most of the women who took part in the interviews made no effort to compare their conduct of worship or their preaching with that of their male counterparts. What did come over was their immense commitment to

preparation and engagement and their sheer joy in finding the Holy Spirit working through them to bring about meaningful and much appreciated worship for their congregations.

## **Administrator/Manager**

It is a fact of life that most clergy today find themselves with administrative or managerial roles, indeed at times the minister can effectively be the manager of a small business. Mandy Robbins in her study of Church of England clergywomen found that, between training and actual ministry, role priorities change particularly with regard to the role of administrator. The role of administrator was given a very low priority during training.

What is surprising, however, is the extent to which role priorities change particularly in respect of the role of administrator. For clergywomen, the pastor and counsellor role to which they gave emphasis during training is overtaken by the role of administrator (Robbins, *Clergywomen in the Church of England: A Psychological Study*, 2008, p. 133)

Many of the women in this study express frustration at being managers rather than pastors. It is a particularly difficult role to manage volunteers for whom you also have pastoral responsibility, the blurring of the boundaries between roles makes it especially difficult for ministers.

And the frustrations are maybe that parish ministers are having to be managers, more than other tasks - and are having to be managers almost exclusively over volunteers, who are the most frustrating people to manage because you have no leverage over them at all. We don't even have the leverage we used to do of people being in awe of the Kirk Session, who could tell them what to do and tick them off if they didn't. And people will just take the huff and go.....they just take the ball off the park. So you are having to bend over backwards being charming, to persuade unreasonable people to do things that you need them to do, otherwise you'll look bad, when you really would just quite like to tell them what you thought of them - but of course you can't, because you could be burying their wife next week. (Edna)

Working with volunteers, needing to take them on board can make for slow progress too, and that sometimes is frustrating and leads to the temptation just to do everything oneself, but for most ministers, just 'doing it themselves' contradicts the collaborative model of leadership which many perceive themselves as using.

I think what frustrates me most is working with volunteers, if you were working with paid employees it would be easier to say to them, 'Just do that, that's your job. When you're working with volunteers, you can't and so the stuff doesn't get done and you say to them, 'I asked you to do this, have you

done it yet?’ And unless you pick it up and run with it yourself, which is not a workable model either, everything slips and I find it frustrating..... things not happening at a pace that I would like them to happen at. I think that frustrates me more than anything. (Fred)

Lindsay sees this as something that has changed over the years,

I can still remember when it was a massive privilege to be asked to do something in the church. It was a huge privilege to be asked to be the Session Clerk, or the Treasurer, or whatever. And if your Treasurer resigned you would be sitting down with a group looking at maybe 5 or 6 or 7 names and who would you decide on. Whereas now it is – ‘oh heavens, who can we get?’ and I think that puts huge pressure on ministers because you maybe have to tiptoe around people....more than you would have in the past because you are frightened they’ll maybe just resign, and then what are you going to do. (Lindsay)

Muriel points out that finding people to do things has been made worse by the recent changes in the charity legislation,

I think the difficulties I find now about ministry are nothing to do with being a woman; they are to do with all this kind of regulation that I’ve been talking about. I feel that’s a great sorrow of ministry. (Muriel)

## **Leader**

As was noted in Chapter 3, the wider group of women ministers who took part in the Survey did think there were differences between male and female ministers particularly in the areas of collaboration and leadership. In this, they are supported by research from the business world where researchers like Bass and Alvolio (Bass & Alvolio, 1994) and Rosener (Itzen & Newman, 1995) note that women tend towards more transformational forms of leadership. There is a general understanding that women will be more collaborative and less confrontational in their leadership styles and, as discussed in Chapter 2, there is some debate about whether women might be more collaborative by nature or whether the collaborative style is simply the result of a lack of authority (Wallace, 1993). David Musson, in recent work on the personality types of Church of England clergy found that in several noticeable instances the results from the clergy differed quite markedly from the results obtained within the wider population. In particular women clergy were significantly less outgoing, more assertive, and less apprehensive than male clergy. They were also more emotionally stable, less sensitive, less rule conscious and more radical (Musson, Male and Female Anglican Clergy: Role Reversal on the 16PF5, 2001). Whilst

Musson's data, like that of a previous Church of England study was obtained from the 'pioneer' women, in that it was obtained not long after the 1992 vote, previous research by Lehman (Lehman E. , 1993) and by Zikmund, Lummis and Chang (Zikmund, Lummis, & Chang, 1998) suggests that the general perception that women clergy have of themselves as more collaborative and less assertive would bear further investigation. As we noted in the previous section, some of the women interviewed recognised the problems of exercising a collaborative form of leadership and acknowledged that it caused particular stresses.

Part of the problem for women ministers stems from the very patriarchal role of a previous generation of ministers. In my present parish, created after a Union, some elders remember a previous minister who only held Kirk Session meetings four times a year, at which point he reported to the Kirk Session, 'decisions made and actions taken by the minister in the name of the Kirk Session.' The situation is changing as Lindsay comments

So, actually, I would say there is a big shift in power.... I think the laity have a lot more power than ministers have. 20 years ago the minister was 'The Minister' and was kind of in charge, and while that's still the case up to a point, I think the laity have a lot more power than they realise (Lindsay)

On the other hand, women ministers can be quick to recognise when they are being slighted and as Antarctic says there were times 'when I didn't get my place as 'the Minister.''' There is a conflict sometimes between the expectations of the behaviour of 'The Minister' and the expectations of behaviour of a 'woman'. That conflict caused by the changing but not wholly changed expectations is unsurprisingly most acute in the more rural, conservative areas.

[T]his place is so different. It is like a stone wall. It's as if people sat back and said, 'So, you're the Minister. Well, let's just see what you'll do,' ..... There is definitely a rural reticence; there is definitely a rural suspicion, and I definitely believe that part of that suspicion is because I am a woman. And worse still, I don't even seem to be how a woman should be because I'm here with the authority of being the minister. So, there's a huge uncertainty in how to approach me, because there's almost sort of 19th-century model of where the Minister stands in the pecking order in the world (Catriona)

There is too, a recognition that in society as a whole the notions of women as leaders have changed and that women are widely accepted in professional roles. The Church however, is something of an anachronism

And I think that for me is a sadness that we live in a world where women do all kinds of things and do them extremely well and are trusted to do their jobs.

Women take on some of the biggest positions in our Scottish culture, and yet in the church we're still to have heads patted and told we're doing a very good job, but a man would do better than us. (Ruth)

That said, there is evidence from the secular world that women in management are still 'measured by two yardsticks - how as women they carried out the management role, and how as Managers they lived up to the images of womanhood.' (Itzen & Newman, 1995, p. 200)

On the other hand, there were times when a few of the women clergy were happy to make use of their more authoritarian male colleagues. Antarctic recalls an incident from early on in her ministry when she was having difficulty with her Kirk Session, difficulty bringing them to accept their responsibilities, and the Presbytery Clerk intervened. She was happy for him to do so and didn't find it patronising or an insult.

And it was only because of his interest, because I would never have said to him 'Look they've never decided.' And he just thought 'no, no, they're probably not taking it from her,' so he would sort it. And I was never unhappy for that to be the case. (Antarctic)

Whilst there are people who find it difficult to accept the notion of a woman in authority, it should be recognised that some women ministers are not enthusiastic about having that kind of authority at all.

Yes, there are hard parts. There's times when I really don't like being the boss, if you like, and having to make the decisions that go along with being in charge of anything. (Jane)

But when the minister does have to make decisions, even quite tough decisions, it is good to have the support of a congregation. Ruth remembers with fondness the support in her first parish.

I was very much the professional and the woman bit didn't actually matter to my congregation. I was the person who had the degree. I was the person they expected to be the minister. And there were some decisions that they thought I would make because - they were the minister's decisions, not decisions that they would be involved in... and occasionally I found that strange because my idea of the church is - all people; all together; and we all make the decisions; we all do it. But there are times when you have to make the decisions, and it was quite nice to have that. (Ruth)

For many of the women it was a difficult balancing act between being assertive enough to lead the congregation without being labelled 'bossy' or 'aggressive.' This was

one of the areas in which they recognised that the reactions of other people were different depending on whether the minister was male or female.

If you see the ministry, as some conservatives might, you know, you are **the leader**, you are definitely the boss kind of thing, well, maybe then you don't want a woman, unless you can find a bossy woman, but no one likes bossy women. They'll accept a bossy man, but probably not a bossy woman. That's why we didn't like Mrs Thatcher – sorry 'we' meaning me!! (Elizabeth)

However, it is clear that the women ministers monitor people's reactions to them and respond accordingly, adjusting their behaviour if they feel they have been perceived as too aggressive or too feminine. For the women ministers this stereotyping is dealt with as a personal rather than an organizational problem (Maddock, 1999, p. 201).

But for most of the women, despite the need sometimes to make decisions on their own, the best part of leadership was being able to take people forward and bring them to new insights and new ways of doing things. For most of the women it was enjoyable to bring people together and to lead them into new action. Though most of the women were aware too, that a collaborative form of leadership can mean that the minister does not always get what he or she wants.

I think over the years, I know I've had to learn that just because I have an idea, doesn't mean to say that the congregation's ready to pick up on it. But it's striking that balance between keeping a bit of movement around and not frightening folk off or asking them to do something that they can't do. (Joanna)

The more wearing side of leadership for many women ministers and something which was a huge sorrow for some, is when conflict arises within the Church. Leading people towards change frequently causes conflict and many of our women ministers were clear that they did not like dealing with conflict. For instance, Fred says,

conflict management, I'm not good at. I don't like conflict. I've only had to deal with it once or twice and I've absolutely hated it. (Fred)

Most of the women try really hard to resolve conflict

I suppose the sorrows, first of all, are the difficulties in personal relationships, because I like to get on with people, and I feel in all the parishes, I have tried really hard. (Jane B)

Trying hard is not always enough and for two of our interviewees, situations of conflict within their congregations have come close to driving them out of ministry. Iona finds it difficult when colleagues are hurt like that,

it's hearing of other people basically being torn apart and being left a shell of their former self. I think that's awful to hear about in any working situation, but when it happens within the Church, I think it is even worse.....I think one of the greatest sorrows is when Christian folk act in completely the opposite way that you would imagine Christian folk should act. When situations arise like that, that's what makes me question the whole thing. I do think we have a responsibility to try to actually live up to what we are trying to follow and so when I hear people dismissing other people or when I come up against intense prejudice and pressure - that kind of thing, it really distresses me and it makes me think, 'What is the church all about?' (Iona)

The fact that often conflict arises over trivial matters is a source of great frustration as Catherine says, 'They'll argue more over buildings, property and that kind of thing than over what really matters.' Fred cites examples of the pettiness,

And also adults behaving like children.....in every other context you would say to them, 'for goodness sake, behave!' But in the church, we've got to be so nice to one another and we are all Christians and we all love one another, and at times you feel like slapping them and saying, 'You know, you are big people, why are you arguing over this..... flowers, why are you arguing over flowers..... whether a chair's put back on the right place. These are not the things that the kingdom is built of.' There was a colleague of mine who was at a Session meeting and they were debating - the children ate the biscuits first at a tea and got crumbs on the floor - and they were debating crumbs on the floor.' But he said, 'there is absolutely no way that somebody's going to come, in a hundred years time, and read our Session minutes and see that we, the spiritual leaders of the congregation, were talking about biscuit crumbs on the floor. Behave yourselves! But that's what they were debating.' (Fred)

Though leadership has sometimes been a contested area for women ministers, there is a general sense of satisfaction that through God's grace they have been enabled to rise to the challenges of leading a congregation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. As Maggie says

I had to be tougher....I've had to be tougher, I think, in some ways, because I think there are men who, and some women too, who could walk all over you if you let them - try to bring you down. But I would say it's been a positive thing. (Maggie)

Women ministers show themselves well aware of the issues of leadership today and well aware of their own strengths and weaknesses as they exercise that leadership. They recognise the conflicting role expectations and have found strategies for dealing with that.



Preferring, for the most part, a consensual and collaborative form of leadership, they find conflict painful and distressing.

### ***Women ministers among family and friends***

From the earliest times that the ordination of women was mooted, one of the objections stated concerned the impact on family life. Given the Christian emphasis on stable and harmonious family relationships, would permitting the ordination of women be, in the long term, dangerous for the family?

Within the Church of Scotland, judging by the survey, most women ministers are married. This is also true of the Church of England women clergy. However, there are issues for women ministers regardless of their marital status. For those who are single, whilst some of them regret the lack of a spouse to do useful things, most are also of the opinion that being single has added value to their ministry.

I think probably, if I reflect upon it, it just was my life. I was never married, so it was only me, so ministry was my life 24hours a day, seven days a week.  
(Antarctic)

It becomes a moot point whether the minister works long hours because there is no spouse to stop them, or whether they work long hours because there is no partner to share them with?<sup>12</sup> However, being in the ministry can be a barrier to ever getting married. Jo comments that

on a personal level, I think your chances of meeting anybody are reduced, if you're not married by the time you go into ministry. (Jo)

A number of the married women found that their own ministry was restricted because they were married and the couple took the decision to 'prioritise' the husband's career

Well as it turns out, I ended up not going into a first charge, though I'd started to apply, because I got married we prioritised my husband's career because he was older and I was happy to do bits and pieces and so I had a lot of experience from that point of view. When my husband retired, we moved to what was technically my first charge. (Catherine)

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<sup>12</sup> See discussion in Francis and Robbins 'The Long Diaconate' Ch 9

For some of the women that meant giving up their ministry, at least for a time, for others it simply meant making some adjustments, some moved to specialised or sector ministries, others worked for charities

By the time I finished my probation, I was pregnant with my first child, so we had kind of reached the stage where we prioritised my husband's career and we would see what unfolded. So what followed were interesting years, because I found myself, for convenience.....and I was interested - but mostly for convenience, going into sector ministry. (Joanna)

There is evidence from other fields that women, more than men, consider their families when building careers and will subjugate the career to the needs or perceived needs of the family (Reid Keene & Reynolds, 2005, p. 277). Women ministers are no exception. Where the decision to go forward into ministry is taken, the spouse's job still needs to be taken into account

So my husband and I went around in our car in May, driving through all these various places. My present parish was certainly on our list because we wanted to keep within an hour of my husband's place of work, as we felt that that's what God had wanted. So that was our beginning parameters. (Lorraine)

But then, if the minister went on to have a family, a different range of issues arose and the women ministers remained very conscious of the impact of their ministry on the family.

Well, I think it's still the case that every woman carries, who is working carries, a sense of 'How is it going to affect the family?' I don't think we can really throw that off. I was very clear that obviously the charge would have to be somewhere where my husband could travel easily to work, so that restricted the area. (Grace A)

The very fact of having a family raised issues for congregations who were, for obvious reasons, very concerned to know how the practicalities would work out.

But I think for many people there may be still are reservations about a woman, in terms of the practicalities, if you going to be married, have family.....there's maternity leave, there's.,..... You tend to hear 'Oh your children, how do you juggle?' I get people saying that to me. In one sense it's a little bit more flexible. Obviously there are set things like Sunday mornings and it happens every week. You can't get out of it if your child is ill, you would just have to..... your spouse or somebody would help look after them. You would do that as you would in another job, you know. But I think there's still reservations. (Elizabeth)

Whilst the women ministers were very understanding of their congregation's need to know the practical arrangements, many of them felt they were subject to unfair criticism and, in some cases, stupid assumptions. One minister recalls being asked what she would do with her son if she had to take a funeral. She had to point out that her son was at nursery during the day whether or not she was at a funeral, writing a sermon or hospital visiting.

Obviously, the assumption was, that when I wasn't in church on a Sunday, I was playing with my two year child! Those things are a give-away, when people ask these kinds of questions. Actually, I wouldn't get any work done if he was at home all the time! (Suzie)

However, it came as a shock to realise that the issues surrounding motherhood were wider than congregations and nominating committees though and extended into the institutional structures of the Church.

So they sent me into the hospital chaplains department, and I did several placements. And at that point I was pregnant, and I was told, by one of the women who worked for the [Ministries] council, that really what I should have done was have my children first and then go into ministry and this was all wrong. (Suzie)

The very nature of ministry with its demand for weekend working places particular strains on family life. Martha notes

And if your spouse is in a secular job you don't have time with them - time off with them in the regular and ordinary way (Martha)

More than half the married women deacons surveyed for the Church of England indicated that they found it difficult to make time for family and some were aware that spouses were becoming less than supportive of their ministry because of the time demands (Francis & Robbins, *The Long Diaconate 1987-1994*, 1999, p. 123). Whilst none of the women interviewed in this study indicated that their partners were unsupportive, quite a number of the women felt that they did not spend enough time with their families and expressed their regrets

And I think trying very hard to find time to be with the family was hard as well. You really had to work that and I've got regrets there.....I guess most of us have..... I've got a very loving family, very forgiving and they're still around. (Merle)

Susan Cody-Rydzewski in her study of married women clergy in the United States noted that although women clergy could be held to have gained a new place of authority and

influence within the Church, within their marriages they remained subject to the dominant gender discourse and indeed sometimes make extra effort in the traditional housewifely roles in order to reassure a partner who felt threatened by their ordination (Cody-Rydzewski, 2007). There are signs that many of the married women clergy of the Church of Scotland have quite traditional marriages. Both Catherine and Joanna speak of ‘prioritising’ their husband’s career, although both are married to ministers. Jane A comments,

A lot of it depended on my husband who was still working at the time – about how far we could travel (Jane A)

Lorraine speaks of wanting ‘to keep within an hour’s travel of my husband’s place of work, as we felt that that’s what God had wanted.’ Whilst Froddo hoped ‘the Holy Spirit would take us somewhere close enough to an airport for my husband to commute.’

The women ministers interviewed for this study were grateful for the support of family and friends. They paid tribute to those who had kept them going during difficult times. Family and friends provided their support network, relatively few felt themselves to have significant professional support from other clergy or from the Church of Scotland as an institution.

## ***Joys and Sorrows***

### **Joys**

For most of our women ministers the joys of ministry were bound up in Pastoral Work, Preaching and Leading Worship and the Social Role in the parish, but there are other joys too. A number of women mention freedom, flexibility and variety as being joys of ministry – there are the joys too of being able to use previous degrees and skills, from engineering; to cooking; to music. Sophie sums it up,

So I've been incredibly lucky to find a little space [where she can use her previous training]. And in a sense, I feel I have actually managed to embody a lot of what I think ministry is about. (Sophie)

Suzie feels that one of the joys is of being a role model,

In a funny kind of way, on the women subject, because it has felt more of a pioneering role than I expected it to be, I must admit I did have a sense that I was maybe encouraging other women to think of how their gifts could be used in church - just by my very own presence at the front of the church. This sense of..... that this is now a time when the Guild is not the only place to get involved any more. ....actually all sorts of things are open. (Suzie)

The joys of ministry are many and varied, but the privilege of pastoral work, the challenge and honour of preaching and conducting worship, being part of a community, these along with freedom and variety are the joys of ordained ministry.

## **The Sorrows**

Most of the sorrows of ministry had to do with conflict, though as we noted women ministers also felt their bereavement work to be partly sorrow. But it wasn't just bereavement, there were other losses which caused sorrow too. Joanna mentions seeing folk 'just drop out along the way, for no apparent reason..... they can't articulate.' And for Tigger it is when

they've fallen out with the church, and sometimes you just can't bridge the gap. And that's sad. And I think if you care about people, then you wonder if it's your own fault.....if you could have done differently. (Tigger)

However, there are other pastoral situations that bring sorrow too. Iona speaks of her feelings of helplessness

sometimes the horrible situations that are happening in people's lives that you are part of, that you feel helpless to do much about, but equally you're part of it. Some of the saddest things are obviously when there's real tragedies in people's lives – that's some of my biggest sorrows (Iona)

and Fred thinks of 'some of the sights and some of the things that you were involved in - your heart just bled for them.'

That leads into another of the sorrows for women ministers, the limitations on their ministry. For Tigger it has been a matter of health,

The sadness, I suppose is, I would love to have more energy. I don't have great health. I would love to have the energy that would let me do a lot more. That holds you back. But then maybe also, it allows you to understand what a lot of people in the congregation are facing and the humility to say, 'Ok tell me what my priorities are today, what I can get through.' (Tigger)

Merle acknowledges that the busy-ness of her first parish meant there were things she was never able to do there

The downside of it is for myself personally, the regret that I couldn't do everything that I wanted to do. Once you got thought you'd got something sorted out, you saw a hole appearing for something else..... Yes, I think being over- critical of myself, or setting far too high a standard for myself, probably that was a bad thing. (Merle)

Froddo admits that she finds it hard

that you cannot be, even in terms of worship, everything for everybody. And you would like to be inclusive. .... And I struggle with the fact that I know other people would want other things than I can give them out of a service. (Froddo)

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has examined the experiences of women ministers from the time when they were finished their training and were eligible to seek a call to a charge. For some women, particularly the early pioneers, achieving that first charge was a difficult and slow process. Youth and age, having a family and being married but not yet having a family, these were all issues which could become barriers to a call. The chapter has considered women ministers in relationship with congregations and with parishes and shown a gradually improving acceptance which, as we noted, is in line with evidence from women clergy in other denominations. The strategy of 'getting on with the job' was highlighted and it appears a successful strategy in terms of winning acceptance from lay people. As women ministers have quietly gone about the work of ministry, lay people have come to appreciate them. Often those who were most vocal in opposition become most accepting. Parishes in rural Scotland may be slower to reach acceptance of women in ministry. However, generally, within Scottish society, the gender of a professional is no longer a defining issue.

It would appear that 'getting on with the job' is also quite an important coping mechanism in that when women clergy feel alienated by or excluded from the power structures of the Church, they find their satisfaction in 'getting on with the job.'

The issues which faced the women ministers as they fulfilled the roles of ordained ministry, as Pastor, as Worship Leader and as Leader/Manager, were also discussed and set in the context of the literature. The women who were interviewed often felt that, as women, they had some advantages particularly in pastoral work. That said, it was recognized that 'leadership' was a more contested area for women. Many of the women feel that women lead differently and that the differences are not always appreciated by congregations.

Ministry, as a profession, has a severe impact on the social and family lives of its practitioners. The women interviewed, recognized both the benefits and the hazards of being married, of being single, and of being a parent.

Finally some of the joys and sorrows of ministry were outlined. The greatest joy was clearly named as the privilege of sharing in the lives of others. High on the list of sorrows was the issue of conflict. An examination of the 'getting on with the job' strategy and a comparison of the preferred roles of male and female ministers would be fruitful areas for further research. In the wider field of ministry, some research into the causes of congregational conflict would probably be helpful for most denominations and for the Church of Scotland in particular.

## Chapter 6 Unfinished Business

### *Introduction*

This chapter presents the findings on women ministers and their relationships with male colleagues. It records the many positive experiences, but also recounts the ‘war stories’<sup>13</sup> of negative relationships. These negatives include colleagues with gender issues, the competitive nature of ministry, feelings of isolation and overt displays of hostility towards women ministers. The chapter then examines women ministers and their relationship with the structures of the Church. The question is asked about whether the Church has or is changing. There is no consensus amongst the responses of the women ministers. However, the question of women’s ministry within the Church of Scotland is still for most ‘unfinished business.’ Many women ministers are also concerned about the inability or unwillingness of the Church to change to meet the needs and hopes of those whom they meet in their congregations and parishes.

### *Colleagues*

As we noted in the literature and in the previous chapter, exposure to the ministry of women seems to bring about increased acceptance of that ministry within the laity. It is less apparent that this is the case with colleagues. Over the forty year period, many of those in the Church of Scotland who were initially uncertain about the ministry of women have retired, whether or not they were won over in the meantime. The present generation of male ministers have, by and large, come into ministry with their attitudes to women’s ministry already formed and, whilst it might seem a harsh judgement, it is not apparent that those who oppose women’s ministry are open to having their views changed. Although some of the women interviewed talk in terms of the situation improving or express hope that it must be, there is a sense from a number of the women ministers that attitudes are hardening and that opposition to women’s ministry whilst not openly articulated, is growing. Interestingly, that may also be the experience in the Church of England (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 38) (Cornell, 2003, p. 50). Within the Church of Scotland the situation is changing as I write. Some of the women interviewed expressed concern both about the hardening of attitudes between liberal and

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<sup>13</sup> Joy Charleton in ‘Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation’ makes reference to the ‘war stories’ incidences and examples of resistance to the presence of women clergy (Charleton, *Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A longitudinal study*, 1997 )



conservative wings of the Church of Scotland, and about the rising power of the conservative clergy. The spectre of the Presbyterian Church in Australia looms large.<sup>14</sup>

## The Positives

Church of Scotland ministers, on the whole, work independently of one another as ‘pope in the parish.’ That said, we rely on one another for pastoral cover during holidays, illness etc. Previous generations of ministers met together in local groups, ‘fraternals,’ sometimes for academic study and often for mutual support. In more recent years these groups, where they still exist, have often become ecumenical.

From the outset, it should be said that all women have positive experiences with many colleagues. Some attend ‘fraternals’ (though some also object to the name) and generally the experience of those is more likely to be positive if it is an ecumenical grouping. Fred remembers,

‘the fraternal there always was ecumenical and the Episcopal priest was female, the URC minister was female, there were catholic nuns.....there were three other Church of Scotland ministers..... no, five, and catholic priest..... and you were just accepted, you were on an equal footing with everybody, there was never an issue.’ (Fred)

Iona too reckons the ecumenical dimension helped

‘it was an ecumenical grouping, so there was another few Church of Scotland churches, but there was also other denominations and I would be.... me and one other minister in that grouping, would be what you would call mainstream to liberal and the others would be classed as conservative evangelicals without any hesitation, so that often led to interesting discussions when we would get together to plan things together, or to do things together, which we did very successfully, but on the understanding that we did have very different outlooks on things. It never caused any friction. I tend to deal with a lot of things with humour, so issues that could create friction, I tend to manage to wind my way round them. So despite quite significant theology differences, we got on well, and carved a path that was helpful for working as a local group.’ (Iona)

It might seem strange that ecumenical groupings, which very often included Roman Catholic and Baptist clergy, should seem more comfortable for the women ministers even if they were still, sometimes, the only women present. It may be that part of the answer lies

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<sup>14</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Australia began ordaining women in 1974. Most of the denomination became part of the Uniting Church in 1977. The remnant who are now called The Presbyterian Church of Australia stopped ordaining women in 1991.

in the sectarianism which has afflicted Scotland for many centuries. Ruth A says of her time working in an area dominated by the Orange Lodge,

‘In fact some of my most supportive colleagues were the Roman Catholic priests, because in a sense they were a bit of the leper, like I was, because I was a woman, and they were Roman Catholics and we felt like we were in the same category.’ (Ruth A)

Even in ecumenical groupings, the women ministers were likely to be in a minority. As can be seen from Chapter 3, there are areas of Scotland where there are very few women ministers around and there feels to be very little support. Where there are other women, although the relationships may not be particularly close, there seems to be a certain amount of camaraderie and a few of our women remember with gratitude the support of female colleagues at difficult times in their personal or congregational life.

## **The Negatives**

However, it has to be acknowledged that the positive experiences of male colleagues are far outweighed by the negative ones. Although the positive experiences are greater in number, the negative experiences tend to be the ones with greatest impact. These negative experiences fall into four categories.

### *Gender Issues*

Firstly, there are the straightforward gender issues, some of which could be counted as verbal or emotional harassment. In the early days of women’s ministry, when dealing with a group of male ministers who were accustomed to being an ‘all male’ group, there might have been some justification for those who found it difficult to know how to respond to women as colleagues.

If men and women are unaccustomed to working with each other, inevitably numbers of men will be unable to distinguish sex from gender in the workplaces, particularly when women are mostly their subordinates. (Figs, 1994, p. 26)

Nonetheless, even those men who were accustomed to being a group of ‘male ministers’ dealt with women on a daily basis as members of their congregations. Now that women have been in ministry in the Church of Scotland for forty years, there can be little excuse. A number of the women reported incidents of inappropriate behaviour or speech from

colleagues, but, there being no structured management system for ministers, they had nowhere to report this and were left to deal with it themselves. Younger single women were more likely to be subject to harassment and a couple of those who reported inappropriate behaviour on the part of their supervisors whilst in training were left feeling that the officials in the Church Offices were more likely to believe the supervisor and to brand the woman a 'troublemaker.' This can be the case in the secular world too.

Too often when a woman reports harassment to personnel or line managers, the response is to move her away from the harasser for her own good, rather than to reprimand the man (Figes, 1994, p. 26).

Interestingly, the one older married woman who reported a supervisor for inappropriate behaviour felt that she was listened to, and that steps were taken to avoid that supervisor having female candidates again. However, the damage to the women remains. Jo is still indignant about one colleague,

who unconsciously expressed issues he obviously has with sexuality in general. It was just so bizarre, so bizarre. I slipped off my sandals when it was very hot at a meeting outside and I was wearing a long skirt, and I had just slipped them off because my feet and started swelling - and for weeks on end he went on, and on, and on, that I had taken my shoes off and exposed my naked feet. I don't even paint my toenails! (Jo)

Even where there is no overt harassment, women ministers are often aware of double standards amongst their colleagues. They are aware of different attitudes and a 'laddish' culture (Nicholson, *Gender, Power and Organisation*, 1996, p. 90).

You do get all that sort of stuff you hear about women, 'Oh she's so ferocious' and 'have you seen what she wears'. 'She so sexless,' I hear all this from male colleagues and I just think they wouldn't talk about their male colleagues like that! So you've got to get over all those sort of things, whatever kind of woman you are, because there is all that stuff going on under the surface with a lot of people. (Maggie)

There are male ministers who have difficulty relating to female colleagues in other ways too. For Jane, it was a culture of bullying which was her primary concern as she speaks of two of her colleagues,

One, I'm fairly certain the way he is when I'm in the company, is to do with the fact that I'm a woman. Whether it's because I'm a woman in ministry, or just a woman, I haven't quite established. I'm not quite sure that that he has any basic objection to women in ministry, I think he's just very awkward around women in general. One of them, I would say, it's definitely because it's

a woman in ministry, and I have found him to be very much of a bully, not just with myself, but with other female colleagues as well. (Jane)

Because of the way the Church is structured, accomplishing much of its work through committees, there can be particular issues for women (and indeed for some men) about the ways in which committees can be swayed by those male colleagues who speak very forcefully or who are openly disparaging of the ideas of others. Women are usually encultured to be more hesitant in speech, by asking questions or by ending sentences with phrases like ‘don’t you think?’ Men, on the other hand, are more likely simply to make a statement in such a way as to discourage disagreement (Maddock, 1999, p. 101). This can be quite hard to challenge and, although some women are willing to speak out, they then run the risk of being branded ‘bossy’ or ‘aggressive.’

I sometimes feel a little bit.....you have to.... I think sometimes you have to be quite strong around your colleagues. I don't know if it's the age thing or the gender thing or a combination of both, but I think there are certain colleagues who feel that if they just say something slightly more forcefully, or slightly more loudly, then that makes it fine for some reason. I don't quite go with that opinion! So I would challenge people on that. (Iona)

For most of the women it is really a matter of sadness, rather than anger, that there is so little real engagement with their male colleagues

I have felt a distant respect, but I find very little engagement, really. That's my difficulty and I suppose I would be quite interested also to talk about the sense of what, if any, difference there is about relationship with me as a woman. But I feel like it's a taboo subject. (Sophie)

Undoubtedly, the women in this study would for the most part, have liked to have better, more equal, more accepting relationships with all their colleagues

### *Competitiveness*

The second area of concern for women is competitiveness. It is documented in the secular world that women are usually less competitive than men when it comes to their careers, partly because they make meaning of their lives differently and partly because job satisfaction is more important than status or money (Maddock, 1999, p. 181) (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 55). Fred was first taken aback by this competitiveness in College,

‘I found it a hugely competitive environment. I had never come across that before, ‘What marks did you get for this? What did you get in the Bible

exams?’ And I actually found that quite threatening.....and everybody was kind of.....almost one-upmanship.’ (Fred)

It could also cause problems during supervision if the female candidate was perceived to be more popular than the male supervisor,

And if they think that people like you, want to talk to you, ask for you to visit, I think some men can get a bit miffed with that and they feel kind of inferior, they don’t need to. Sometimes people can relate better to different people - whatever sex they are. (Maggie)

The issue of competitiveness raises its head at local level too. Notoriously there is competition at a local level between neighbouring ministers who compete to have the largest Sunday School or the biggest youth group. Martha comments, ‘Each is competition for the other and I find that – not helpful!’ Ailsa says, ‘but I remember at least one, being very, very difficult and obviously had to prove that he was doing things better and bigger and you know. ....’ but she goes on to place herself differently ‘I didn’t bother with that.’ (Ailsa)

Whilst all of this may be simple competitiveness, and caused by an overdose of Alpha males in ministry, it may also be rooted in the Parish Re-appraisal policies of the National Church. As the number of congregations and parishes has steadily been reduced over the years, a ‘survival of the fittest’ mentality has come into play. Congregations (and by implication their ministers) have become convinced that the only way to survive the next round of readjustments is to be bigger and better than your neighbours!

I do think there's still something going on that I perceive to be a fairly male game, but we women can do it too, about - 'look at how hard I’m working, I must be really brilliant’ and showing off all the wonderful projects I’m doing in my church.....and this kind of competitiveness.....rather than being supportive of each other, this kind of ‘mine’s bigger than yours’ kind of stuff. (Suzie)

Although women say they do not want to compete with their colleagues in terms of the numbers game, there is one area where women are every bit as competitive as their male colleagues. In the field of ‘look how hard I’m working’ women are every bit as guilty as men. The prize for ‘late Christian martyr’ is open to both genders of minister! For the most part, the women in the study stated that they were disinclined to be competitive themselves and rejected competition as valid in ministry, even although they were well aware of the competition around them. Peter says,

And it [women's ministry] is not seen as competitive so much, because I'm sure there is a lot of competition. One minister has told me that the most difficult time they had was when other ministers came to their churches, because they couldn't bear preaching in front of their peers. (Peter)

Whilst competitiveness can be an issue at local level, it can also serve to affect relationships between colleagues who are involved in the National Boards and Committees. It may seem strange in a Presbyterian Church with no obvious hierarchy of parishes or positions to speak of career progression, but the concept undoubtedly exists. Although the Church of Scotland lacks any formal career structure and, in theory at least, all parishes and therefore all ministers are equal, in fact some parishes are more desirable than others. Despite all the references to God's "Call" and the notion of "Call to a charge" there is good evidence that clergy in the United States approach their careers with a very secular attitude to advancement, that they are 'economically rational employees' (McDuff & Mueller, *The Ministry as an Occupational Labor Market*, 2000, p. 97). A more recent study by the same authors found that women clergy differ very little from their male colleagues in terms of workplace values **Invalid source specified..** However, in common with most qualitative studies of women clergy, this study finds women ostensibly less interested in climbing the career ladder. There were comments about 'those who wanted to see themselves in higher places' and these were comments made mainly about male colleagues. There was reference too, to the 'increasing power of the central church,' the 'same names' appearing from the Nomination Committee and 'manipulative people.' Although there is no organised career ladder to climb in terms of parishes, there is progression to be made in terms of power and influence. It is widely accepted within the Church that serving on national committees can give access to considerable personal power and to socialising with people who are deemed, in Church circles, to be important. The obvious final goal is to be selected as Moderator of the General Assembly or to be appointed to one of the well paid posts within the Church headquarters. This kind of careerist approach is seen by the women to be mainly a male characteristic

I am aware of a number of men who are climbing the greasy pole, but I suspect, I could only name one woman that I think is trying to climb a greasy pole. Maybe that says something about women in general. (Fred)

However, just to prove that women are sometimes competitive too, Lorraine expresses her concerns about a colleague who is much her own age,

but he gets to do **everything**, you know. There is no question about him doing everything. He's on a 121 committee; he's involved in major, major outreach things

that affect the whole of Scotland; he's a convener of a committee of Presbytery; he's back to back interim Moderator etc, etc, etc. And for me looking at that, you know, I think 'Well, why is he offered everything and the rest of us are somehow to be protected from extra workload. (Lorraine)

Many of the women interviewed have served on national committees, some still do. Most women ministers know perfectly well how to be 'successful' within the committee structure – many of them, like me, have tried it and then opted out, choosing instead to focus their talents on their parishes or on matters outside the church. There are questions to be asked about why that is the case. Quite a number of the women interviewed are, or have been involved at senior level as convenors or vice convenors of national councils or committees, yet the underlying narrative from women clergy is one of rejection of the 'career ladder' and the 'power structure.' Is this symptomatic of women finding different ways of creating meaning in their lives? Is it because job satisfaction is more important than career success? Does it indicate a rejection of a system which does not hear the voices of women but forces them to mimic male language? (Maddock, 1999, p. 115) Is this an instance of women exercising 'Positive Marginality?' **Invalid source specified..**

### *Isolation*

A third issue which concerns the women ministers in relation to their colleagues is that of isolation. Catherine acknowledges, 'there isn't really a lot of direct contact other than when you happen to meet in Presbytery or whatever.' And Catriona contrasts ministry negatively with her previous profession,

'I found here in this Presbytery, that while ministers are friendly enough, and one or two of them I've made good friends with, there isn't much collegiality in terms of professional support. And just that kind of useful 'too-ing and fro-ing' of ideas and information, which I was so accustomed to in my previous profession, which made the actual working of it so much easier, and I think we would all benefit from more of that.' (Catriona)

The lack of day to day contact and collegiality may be a result of the competitiveness just mentioned because, Elizabeth acknowledges, as do a number of the women, that isolation is not purely a female issue, 'So I would say that is something the church should look at, and that's not for the female thing, but for young ministers, - that you are not just left to get on with it.' Lorraine also acknowledges that isolation is not a gendered issue,

as Christians, we can be very poor at supporting each other - the kind of community aspect of it. The fact that through quite a lot of my training, I felt

really quite isolated and I think that's.....that's the hardest part. It's actually a very lonely place, ministry, and I still find it an incredibly lonely place. And I don't think.....it's not entirely gender that, I think it's the way ministers are. We're a very.....we talk well about Fellowship and supporting each other and how we should be able to share our woes and joys and all that kind of stuff, but we are absolutely diabolical at it. And it is the isolation in ministry that I find the most difficult to deal with. (Lorraine)

Of all organisations, the Church is the very place where people should not feel isolated, unsupported or alone. Martha feels that the sense of isolation is increasing and she links that to changes in the wider society,

'Nowadays colleagues tend to be, not what I grew up with or was expecting. I would expect one to be friendly with one's congregation and friends with none and I would like to be friendly with colleagues and assume a certain equality – one doesn't necessarily get that now. People are isolated in society now, where they didn't used to be and that is reflected in the church 'You in your small corner and I in mine!' (Martha)

Suzie describes it as the 'Lone Ranger' mentality, a determination to do everything in one's own way. Some women are honest enough to acknowledge that they have chosen isolation from their colleagues. Merle admits that she has chosen not to have anything to do with her colleagues – because she doesn't trust them,

there's only about a handful of people that I actually got on well with and trusted. I do think that there are some very manipulative people about..... I have to question what their motives are.. .....I do think that some people want to see themselves in higher places. (Merle)

That lack of trust and openness has led quite a number, like Sophie, to look outside the church for their support

it has been very lonely at times actually, and in terms of development, personal development I've used more people in the psychotherapy world, and the spiritual direction world and even the Sufi world that have helped me to develop my understanding of prayer and spirituality, and how to stimulate personal growth. I feel in that sense slightly abandoned by the church. (Sophie)

Others are aware of support networks nearby but find it difficult to break in as these are often groups of conservative ministers. Elizabeth says,

Near by there are some more .....there is definitely a little group of conservative ministers who get on very well together, but as I say, I think it's maybe my fault I haven't tried really to get into that. (Elizabeth)



Working in partnership or as part of a team with other ministers can help that sense of isolation. Muriel comments,

It had all kinds of strengths, and you didn't feel any kind of relentlessness that sometimes you can feel in a parish on your own. And that's nothing to do with being a woman, that's just being in a parish on your own. You don't feel this kind of relentlessness and it really was a very good experience. (Muriel)

And Suzie is envious of colleagues she knows, overseas,

As a whole, I think there are a lot of people out there that I can relate out to.....having said that, I'm the kind of person who would love to have more contact with colleagues. Because that is one thing that I really envy my overseas colleagues over - that a lot more of them work in teams and have that kind of regular, almost daily contact with colleagues, to do some debriefing, to work together, to support each other. (Suzie)

Peter finds working in a team to be an essential part of her ministry,

But team ministry depends on the willingness of the whole team and their openness and what ever else, I've known the huge support and love of a team. (Peter)

However, working as part of a partnership or team where the interpersonal relationships are not good is a hugely isolating and debilitating experience as one or two of our women ministers know to their cost. There is though, an underlying narrative of isolation or perhaps even of exclusion, though there are also indications that perhaps some of the isolation is as a result of deliberate distancing from colleagues.

### *Hostility*

Far and away the biggest issue for women ministers in terms of their colleagues is the hostility of some male colleagues. With some this is demonstrated in patronising behaviour. Edna remembers,

‘I think my relative youth, which is now passing, in relation to some of the posts that I've held..... I have sometimes found was an excuse for patronising behaviour by those who maybe, somehow, felt threatened. And if I were going to give them names, which I'm not, they would be men.’ (Edna)

There are times too, when the actions or the attitudes of a particular male minister are probably well intentioned, but nonetheless are perceived as patronising. Lorraine finds it

irritating that her Presbytery Clerk protects her because she has young children, yet he makes no effort to accord the same privileges or protection to male colleagues with young families.

When I wrote to tell him informally of my upcoming maternity leave, I did write to the presbytery clerk and I did put on it that I did not want to be mollycoddled when I came back to work, because I had two young children. I said I would far rather be asked and to say 'no' because I can't take it on, than for people to make assumptions, you know. But .....I don't know how that went down. I really don't know how that went down. (Lorraine)

Something strange happens to women when they become mothers of young children, all of a sudden their competence becomes a major issue.

When a woman marries or becomes a mother she suddenly becomes mysteriously retarded, unable to distinguish boardroom meetings from ante-natal classes, or minutes from shopping lists. Her fecundity is interpreted as a divided loyalty. (Figs, 1994, p. 29)

However, competence and ability are, as we have noted a major issue and women are irritated by the assumption of male colleagues that they are somehow less competent or less able. Ruth remembers being told by a colleague, 'It's just that I find women awfully burdening on my time sometimes, they seem to expect a lot of reassurance.' And Grace A discovered,

When I went to my first charge, I was told later by somebody, that one minister had said, hearing this woman was coming, 'I hope she can stand on her own feet,' and they meant, you know, that they wouldn't have to take funerals, because I couldn't cope and I was asking them.... it was this sort of thing. (Grace A)

Again research in the secular field indicates that this is not an uncommon situation for women working in male dominated environments. Men in the work environment consistently have lower expectations of women, considering them less competent or even inept. There is too, usually an assumption that a woman will be the junior in the team (Roth M. , 2004, p. 204).

Some men adopt bullying behaviour and women find their own strategies to deal with it. Jane found one colleague

to be very much of a bully, not just with myself, but with other female colleagues as well. So that causes friction, because years ago I worked in a job where I was being bullied by the manager and I just won't allow it to happen. (Jane)

Suzie sums it up,

‘And I **do** get the impression that there is an assumption that I cannot do things as well, because I'm young and female, .....and that annoys the pants off me, you know.’ (Suzie)

All of the women interviewed acknowledge that there are those with theological differences. Jane puts it very simply, ‘I know there are still some of my male colleagues who think women shouldn't be ministers.’

Martha recognises that the situation is changing over the years and not necessarily for the better. In the early days of women's ministry, there were men, already in ministry, who disagreed with the notion that women should be ordained.

In the old days, and I sound like my granny, even if one was theologically thoroughly opposed to someone they were mostly gentlemen and times are reflected differently – or at least there's something different to reflect. There are very few gentlemen that one meets and I find it a miss. That doesn't mean to say I am a lady of course! People were in the main, colleagues, were kindly and courteous, often quite clear that they didn't agree with what I was doing. Though some really felt they were making a huge concession. I remember one student, who has since been moderator and who was a contemporary of mine. We shared a New Testament honours class and he did say that even though I was a woman and he disagreed with me, he would speak to me. And he seemed to feel that I was to be honoured thereby! (Martha)

So we find that whilst women ministers have many positive experiences of their colleagues, and especially their colleagues from other denominations, there are deep seated concerns and anxieties about the behaviour of others. Many women feel quite isolated in ministry and are concerned that isolation is a feature of ministry generally rather than women's ministry in particular. There are concerns about colleagues with gender issues, colleagues who are competitive and colleagues who are openly hostile to the concept of women's ordination.

### ***Women ministers and the structures of the Church of Scotland***

The 2009 debate at the General Assembly on the ordination of gay clergy looks set to divide the Church of Scotland. For some of the women ministers interviewed, this

particular debate also raises issues about the ordination of women. It is felt by some women that the conservative wing of the Church have chosen to fight the battle over 'gay' issues, because they feel that is the area where they are most likely to gain popular lay support and where they are most likely to be able to take the greatest number of lay people with them. However, some women clergy are well aware that the underlying debate is not about homosexuality but about the interpretation of Scripture and a worldview which includes gender relationships formulated in a particular and patriarchal manner. That sense of hardening of attitudes was a concern for a number of women. Some of the women like Antarctic are willing to allow those who reject women's ministry some leeway.

And the bottom line for me is, if they don't like the idea, then they have a right to that opinion. You don't have to like me, you don't have to like women in the ministry. (Antarctic)

However, if one or two women are prepared to be tolerant of those with theological concerns, others are not. Ailsa says,

I think there are, in the Church of Scotland, ministers, male ministers, who simply do not believe that women should be ordained as either elders or ministers, and I actually think they should have the courage of their convictions and go to the Free Church. If that's where they feel they belong, if that is their theology, let them go! .....And if they believe that, then they should go, because it's quite clear in the 1968 Act that we can be ordained on the same terms and conditions as men. It would be appalling to go backwards. Maybe they think they can go backwards, maybe they think they can repeal the Act, but in the meantime, it just annoys me that they are taking up space in the Church of Scotland. (Ailsa)

Lorraine finds it disheartening that even forty years on,

We still have to train with and work with people who don't think women should be ministers or even women should be elders, (Lorraine)

Whilst, as we saw in the section on colleagues, there is a concern about the behaviour and attitudes of individual male ministers, there is also a deeper concern about the attitudes and behaviour of those in positions of authority within the Church. Ailsa remembers,

one minister who was Moderator of the General Assembly said to a young woman who was going to be married by a woman minister, 'Oh, I'll marry you if you like, you couldn't possibly feel properly married, if you were done by a woman minister!' For goodness sake! (Ailsa)

Others raise concern that the Church allows the appointment to positions of considerable power and authority within the Church of men who are openly known to be against the ordination of women. Fred remembers challenging one such appointment,

You know this guy does not agree with the ordination of women, he should not be [appointed to this role],’ but because his theological argument is - that these are particular times when there are not enough men, therefore God is graciously allowing women to be ministers - that was okay, at the highest level that was okay in the Church of Scotland. So that is sanctioned standpoint as far as I’m concerned, which I think is appalling. (Fred)

Two of the interviewees recall the destructive power of having conference chaplains during their training who were opposed to the ordination of women. Other negative issues mentioned were the Church of Scotland’s apparent enthusiasm for conversations with the Free Church which remains implacably opposed to the ordination of women. Those conversations feel to some women like a negation of their ministry. In the Church of England context of course, the ordination of women is likewise seen as a barrier to conversations with the Roman Catholic Church. It would appear that ordained women, simply by existing, can be the inadvertent promoters of ecumenism in some male colleagues which takes us back to Chaves argument, outlined in Chapter Two, that the ordination of women depends on where a particular denomination wishes to place itself in terms of the prevailing culture and with which other denominations it wishes to be associated and allied.

Behind all of this lies a deeply felt concern that the Church of Scotland, for all it ostensibly asks questions about the ordination of women during the selection process, then fails to follow through with any kind of sanction against those who lie during selection. One of the women (un-named for reasons of confidentiality) involved in the selection process says,

And it’s something we check with every applicant for the ministry, they are all asked. Now there’s some debate about how many of them are saying they don’t have an issue until they get through all the hoops and then, lo and behold, they do have an issue. I think there are one or two congregations in my presbytery that have no women elders, I don’t understand why superintendence doesn’t jump on them. But then they argue, there is nobody with the right skills and qualifications amongst the female membership, which I find very hard to believe.

Over the years, women clergy in the Church of Scotland have watched with interest the movement towards, and then the accomplishment of, the ordination of women within

the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of England. In particular, the introduction of Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod, which effectively created safe space for those who opposed women's ministry to continue and develop that opposition, was seen as a damaging limitation. Church of Scotland women were content that ministry was entirely and wholly open to them on the same basis as to men. Theoretically the ministry of the Church of Scotland is entirely open to women as it is to men, in reality that is not true. There are geographical areas of Scotland where the ministry of women is still unacceptable and the Church, as a whole, does nothing about that. There are individual congregations throughout Scotland who do not ordain women elders and who would not consider hearing a woman minister in a vacancy, superintendence committees fail to make them comply with Church law and practice. There are, appointed to high level positions within the boards and councils of the central Church, men whose opposition to women's ministry is well known. There may be no legislated 'safe havens' within the Church of Scotland, but the Church as a whole turns a blind eye to those who do oppose the ministry of women, even after forty years. That forty year time-span is important, in that it means that there are almost no ministers still serving in parishes in the Church of Scotland who were ordained before women were admitted to the ministry ie before women's ministry became a recognised part of the Church of Scotland theology. Therefore, all who have come into the ministry in the last forty years have known that the Church required them to accept the ordination of women, both as elders and as ministers. Those who do not do so claim that they operate 'double integrity' – it seems a novel use of the word 'integrity.'

It may though, be a misconception that if the Church of Scotland is becoming increasingly conservative, that the ordination of women will necessarily be a casualty.

Whilst women are concerned about these issues, they are also aware that for many of their male colleagues, the matter is closed; women's ordination is 'done,' successfully ticked off the list. Jo comments

There's a lack of awareness of issues of women. Recently we had a committee meeting where we were asked - from the business committee it had been sent down - who would we like to be our next Moderator, could we put some names forward and nothing really happened and I said, 'Well, what about - we've now had two female ministers being Moderator - casting our eyes about and getting a female elder?' We've had male elders, but not female elders, and that was pretty much jumped on fairly quickly - in terms of 'Oh, we've had quite a few women recently' (Well we've had two!) 'and in terms of fairness, we should rotate it.' and I said 'Well, we've had 450 years of men maybe we should have 450 years of only women.' I think that just went too far for some, and one of them spoke to me afterwards and said, 'I find it very surprising that women still find it so hurtful.' (Jo)

Tigger too comments on the lack of awareness, that people feel they have moved beyond the need to be careful in their speech or terminology,

Are you going to the fraternal,' it's always a fraternal and of course, I just refuse to let them call it a fraternal. I just all the time say, 'No! I am a woman, I'm not a man. I refuse to let this be called a fraternal. (Tigger)

In a recent meeting of a Nomination committee which I attended as Presbytery Assessor, when one of the female elders suggested to the Convener who repeatedly referred to the next putative minister as 'he,' that it would be good if he used 'he or she' and recognised that the next minister might be female, the female elder was told 'Oh I don't think we need to worry about political correctness nowadays.' I felt it incumbent on me to point out that it was more than political correctness that was at stake! This was similar to an experience which Jo recalls. One of the interviewees remembers a day at the General Assembly when there were three women conveners all speaking and the Principal Clerk was heard to call it 'ladies day.' The presence of one or two women in senior positions can be used to perpetrate the illusion of equality, for if one or two can make it, then those who do not must simply be lacking in talent (Figes, 1994, p. 73), but encouraging more women into senior positions can run into amusing difficulties. Muriel recounts that when

becoming the convener of a major presbytery committee and Clerk saying, 'Who shall we have as vice convener?' and I suggested a particular woman, and he said, 'I don't think we can have women as convener and vice convener,' and I said, 'Run that by me again, because we've always had men as convener and vice convener. (Muriel)

She later suggested that the matter of women in ministry would be completed when 'the Moderator of the General Assembly five years in a row is a woman.....but by then they'll be meeting in a phone box anyway and just taking it in turns!'

Again, the notion that the 'women' problem has been dealt with is not confined to the Church. In the secular world too, there is a sense that feminism has won the day and discrimination against women is a thing of the past (Rhode D. L., 2003, p. 6).

But if the reality of 'equal opportunity' remains largely denied to women, the rhetoric has been hugely successful. Young people can be forgiven for growing up believing that we now have equality between the sexes – that every male privilege or opportunity is also available to any woman and that she simply has to be brave enough to grab it (Figes, 1994, p. 2).

Indeed, if anything, the popular press would have us believe that women are more than equal and men are the new victims (Maddock, 1999, p. 112).

The failure of the Church to address, at institutional level, the opposition to women's ministry, coupled with a concern that the hardening of attitudes on both sides of the conservative/liberal divide leaves women caught somewhere in the middle, leads quite a number of our women clergy to feel uncertain and insecure about the future of women's ministry within the Church of Scotland. It certainly leaves them feeling that it is 'unfinished business.'

### ***A changing Church?***

As an institution, the Church of Scotland has existed in something approaching its present form since 1690. Over the centuries, changes have taken place, some major, some trivial. Over that period too, there have been massive changes in the society which the Church of Scotland serves. Perhaps the most radical of the changes the Church has faced has been the loss of Christendom. With its parish structure, the Church of Scotland was comfortable with the Christendom model, after all, it owed much of its early understandings to Calvin's Geneva. The history of Scottish Presbyterianism, and therefore the Church of Scotland, is also one of division and re-union as various groups within the church fought for power.

There is absolutely no consensus amongst the women ministers of the Church of Scotland about whether or not the Church has changed. Some believe it has, some believe it hasn't and some believe it both has and hasn't. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the responses to this question was that it was answered in general rather than gender specific terms. As researcher, I had anticipated that this question might provoke reflection on whether or not the situation within the Church had changed for women clergy, or indeed whether the Church itself had been changed by the advent of women clergy, but in fact this only occurred to a minimal extent, which is significant in itself.

Of those who believe that there have been changes, it must be said that quite a number take quite a negative view of those changes. Grace says, 'I do see quite a lot of changes. Not always for the better.' And John agrees, 'I think it's moving, but I'm not sure if it's moving the right way or in the right direction.' It would be true to say that many of the women who express concern that the church is either not changing or who take a negative view of the changes are those who have been ordained for longer. That negativity is not simply a function of age, because some of those who are older but have been



ordained more recently speak more positively. The discussion can be broken down into five areas.

## **Worship**

In terms of changes within congregations, many feel that there have been changes in worship. Again some women view these changes positively, Grace A welcomes the more visual approach and also the increased congregational involvement in worship,

I think that worship has changed - a lot. Modern translations of the Bible were just coming in, believe it or not, just about the time before I started, and that's absolutely general now. I think there's more involvement of the congregation in worship, usually in every congregation, there is a reader - it may not be more than that, though some have a lot more than that, some do prayers and all sorts of things - but in every congregation you go to, there would be a reader. .... And all the PowerPoint, trying to give people visual teaching as well as just oral.....in that way there's a lot of change. (Grace A)

Catherine notices a development in the spiritual life of congregations, she feels there is

a big difference in services when we're praying now, there's a depth in the silence that there wasn't before, and you feel that people are also really praying and you can have a silence in a prayer and they know what it's for now and there isn't this kind of uncomfortable feeling any more. (Catherine)

Maggie reckons that women themselves have brought about changes in worship

I think certainly in parishes, I think women, certain people I know have been quite innovative and tried out new things and are kind of more ..... not people oriented, but,...but they just seem to have a better connection with people and have tried out new ideas, new things which we maybe haven't seen so much, maybe it's a more creative mind.... I don't know. (Maggie)

However, there is also for one or two, a concern about why the church is changing worship and whether as Edna suggests 'people are being trendy for the sake of being trendy, and it makes your blood run cold.' Certainly Catherine is not sure that young people necessarily want the changes or at least not the changes that are being made supposedly to accommodate them,

I find a lot in the church..... there's this big emphasis on music and music groups - which are great - we've got a super one in one of the churches....and it's just a group of people who happen to play a few instruments and for family services or special occasions, they get together and it's super, it's great - no objections to

them.....but it's this having to boom the music out so that you're deafened. I think, 'Well, are we really achieving anything and speaking....we've got quite a number of teenagers out at that church – it's very much still a family type group.....and when you ask them what they would like, I'm always surprised that it's very conventional. And I thought, 'Oh, yes. I was expecting something different.' But I'm quite happy to experiment and try different things and we've done quite a lot of that. (Catherine)

Antarctic is equally uncertain that young people want the changes that are being proposed to attract them in

I recall a time when I was talking about the thoughts that the Board had about taking out the pews in the church, and I was talking about that to my young folk on a Sunday evening, and they said 'but you can't take the pews out,' and I said 'I beg your pardon?' 'Can't take the pews out' and I said 'Why?' 'Because it wouldn't be the same.' I said, 'hang on a minute, you are supposed to be the young people who are looking to the future and I'm supposed to be the old fuddy duddy. Why can't I take the pews out?' 'Because well, it just wouldn't be the same going to church without the pews being there.' And we're talking kids who were at the time 14,15,16. Oh no! (Antarctic)

In the end of the day, there is a feeling amongst some of the longer ordained women that the church of today is 'trying to teach its granny to suck eggs!' Antarctic again,

Don't get me wrong, and this is the point, we've all done innovative things over the years. Folks sometimes used to say, 'Remember the Sunday when we had visitors and they went home after church and over lunch said, 'Oh, I really enjoyed that order of service.' To which my members replied, 'well enjoy it while you're there, it won't be the same next week!' We all did different things. We all spent hours of our lives with kids and I ran coffee bars for all the kids in the village. We all did tons of different things as the church evolved. But everybody wants to tell us it's not changed since 1900. (Antarctic)

However, as Grace A points out, if the changes were intended to bring young people into the Church, they have not been successful.

I'm sympathetic to people who feel we must be much more upbeat with music, of course, I also feel we must be much better understood, and I think it's great to have got rid of 'thou' and 'thee' and all these things, the antiquated language - but if they did it to bring people in - it hasn't done it. (Grace A)

## Loss of Identity

However, some are concerned too that some of the changes represent a 'dumbing down' of the Church and that it can be difficult to find a 'sermon which has been

researched and kind of thought provoking.’ Catherine too, feels that ‘it’s very difficult to find any real depth in a lot of things now and the social side of things seems to be much bigger in some ways.’ Behind all of this lies a concern that the Church is losing its distinctive identity. Catherine is concerned so many of the activities that the church offers now are purely social and do not differ from those offered by secular groups,

I feel that there’s a lot of things going on in church now that could go on anywhere and could be done in any group or any club, instead of having something distinctive. I know you have to have something that meets people that are not members of the church, so that they can feel comfortable....and that’s fine, no problem.....and social activities are a great way of doing that, but if that’s all we have, then I feel we’re losing some depth. (Catherine)

And Froddo worries ‘about the Church in general, it tends to do the numbers game, or it tends to look at business models.’

## Ministry

There are some concerns about the status of ordained ministry. Martha says ‘there has been over the years a denigration of the idea of leadership within the church and a downgrading of the ministry.’ For Edna the concern harks back to the ‘dumbing down’ theme, for her it is retaining an educated ministry that is important,

Or people worry about a lack of respect for the ministry as if the ordained status was very important, that doesn’t bother me quite so much, but I get a bit alarmed when people have a lack of respect for the educated ministry. So that you get congregations that don’t see why they can’t have somebody completely untrained, preaching unsupervised - and don’t stop and think that maybe that is slightly insulting to those of us who actually gave up several years of our lives, to train to do it properly. (Edna)

For Jane B, the change is in the attitude congregations have towards their minister and in particular, the level of conflict,

I mean the changes that I’ve.....I suppose its on my mind at the moment, but the change I’ve seen over the past twenty years is this level of conflict.....and unless this was happening twenty years ago and I just didn’t know about it.... that seems to me, a big change. It’s rather alarming, as far as I am concerned, that people feel they can treat their ministers like this. (Jane B)

Then, she goes on to make an important point,

Maybe because it's a declining church as well, they've got to blame somebody, so they blame the minister, because they can't look at themselves and say, 'Maybe its something to do with what we're doing.' (Jane B)

There were a number responses which reflected, usually negatively, on the changing status of clergy. Even simple things, like the increasingly informal address within congregations were noted. One older woman instanced how taken aback she had been to be addressed by her Christian name by children in the congregation. Behind this lies another debate, a debate not exclusive to the Church of Scotland, but shared with all denominations which have an ordained ministry. This debate centres on the drawbacks of having a professional clergy and the extent to which clergy can be disempowering for lay people.

## **The Institutional Church**

In terms of national Church initiatives and programmes, most of the women ministers are critical. There are a few, like Jane who speak positively about 'Church Without Walls'<sup>15</sup> and think we are moving towards that slowly, but a number of others are highly critical of central Church initiatives Joanna comments,

I think sometimes they spend a lot of money on schemes that actually don't touch the congregations – or they touch a few congregations. I am no great fan of 'Church without Walls,' I think that's been the biggest waste of money and navel examining that's gone on. Because I think in all fairness, okay it's been piloted and it's been marketed but I don't really think it's made that much difference. The congregations who have the desire and the vision to do something different, will do something different and the rest of the congregations will just toddle along in their own comfort zone. And even to a certain extent – this is probably a bit off the wall, but – all these new posts they are creating in 121, they're just creating jobs and in actual fact if some of these folk were just in a parish working away, there would probably be more return on their expenditure in practical ways. (Joanna)

There is a feeling that recent restructuring has done nothing constructive either as Ailsa suggests

I mean they're always renaming committees and boards, and they certainly have a more sophisticated way of selecting ministers. But I'm not sure if things have changed that much. (Ailsa)

Or indeed has, as Elizabeth suggests, made matters worse,

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<sup>15</sup> Report to the General Assembly (2001) of the Church of Scotland on new forms of mission

I must confess I'm a bit cynical about what has happened, supposedly as a result of Church without Walls, in terms of the restructuring of 121. I think there's smaller committees, dominating more things. I think the powers that be are becoming more concentrated. (Elizabeth)

Grace A 'despairs of the power stronghold in 121, whilst Merle and Antarctic express concern about what they perceive as the manipulation of the General Assembly debates.

## Changes in Society

However, the greatest concerns expressed were over the disconnection of the Church from the rest of society. Antarctic suggests part of the problem lies with the Central Church 'But no, it worries me intensely. Nobody's listening to anybody on the ground.' And Catriona shares that perspective,

The feeling I get is that at the centre, if you can call 121 "the centre," the people who are involved in the nitty-gritty of managing the church, are probably away ahead of what's happening in the far flung parts of the church....it doesn't have to be that far flung.... I mean, I think this is a far-flung part.....that they may be aware of the problems on the ground, but they're so far ahead of them that they are losing the sense of reality, of how it is. (Catriona)

The disconnection is not just a problem for the Church as an institution but also for local congregations. Iona hears the Church speak out on a whole range of important topics, but not in a way that allows it to be heard in communities, although she feels people would pay attention,

Because still in communities, I think the church has a place, and people do come to the church for all sorts of different things or contact the church. So, there is still a huge amount of respect around for the church, but I don't think we play on that enough or we don't publicise or promote ourselves enough. (Iona)

Lindsay on the other hand feels that nobody now is listening precisely because the Church has failed to find ways of engaging with the wider society.

The Assembly makes great sweeping statements about all sorts of things and nobody out there is listening. I find that quite frustrating, and I think that's the difference I guess in the 20 years is that 20 years ago people were listening but they are not so much now. I don't think we sell ourselves well. (Lindsay)

However, for congregations, the greatest concern must be the church's inability to cope with changes in society. Ruth says,

Everything is really just a struggle, you know, I think we've always been behind, following on the coat tails of society, when it comes to lots of things, and I think we are probably still doing that. (Ruth)

Martha points to the changes in lifestyle and the impact that has,

So if you get people one in two, one in three in the church, one in four even – they're quite pleased to get to church once a month. Their work lives are horrendous and so they don't get worshipping because they just can't – you know - physically not possible. (Martha)

Muriel sums up the concerns very ably,

I think the other thing, and this is not as noticeable in the country as it is in the town and cities, in the towns and cities, I think there has been an enormous shift in what people see as regular allegiance to the church, because they have so many other things that they do on Sundays. And I think that that has made a huge change, how easy would it now be to have some kind of series of sermons that meant you had to be there for four weeks. Who of us, in our congregations, have people who are there every week nowadays? People now think regular attendance is a different thing from what we thought when I was young and so I think that's changed. Then you have to ask the question, 'Does that mean that the church has not changed and that everything has changed round about it?' I think that there are still a lot of people in churches who cannot get hold of the concept that it is very strange that the whole of the rest of society has changed and they do not want to change. Partly that's kind of..... that's using the church as a security blanket. And I think that .....that attitude of using the church has a security blanket and saying, 'It'll see me out.' That, I think, is the greatest danger that the Church faces in the years ahead, this kind of inability to change in a positive way and to recognize that we have a huge heritage to pass on to those after us, and that if we don't have these people after us, then that heritage will be lost. Maybe, that sounds a bit depressing. (Muriel)

## ***Conclusions***

Although most women ministers have many positive experiences of male colleagues and are happy to tell of support offered and friendships experienced, these positive stories are largely overwhelmed in impact by the 'war stories' of opposition and discrimination from others. All of the women interviewed cited experiences which ran the gamut from simple lack of politeness, through patronising behaviour, to full blown sexual

harassment. There is little evidence that ‘getting on with the job,’ a strategy which, as we have seen, is fairly successful with congregations and the wider community, wins over individuals in this context. Whilst congregations and the wider society can be moved, colleagues either oppose or support women’s ministry and nothing the individual woman can do has any effect on that. Whether this is because ministerial colleagues take a stand on theological grounds, or whether it represents an outplaying of complex gender roles within the organisation, (as will be considered further in Chapter 7), remains to be seen. Although the Church of Scotland as a whole has policies in place which support and affirm the ministry of women, in fact there has been an unwillingness to enforce these policies, with the result that there are areas of the country, and indeed particular congregations, which are ‘no go’ areas for women’s ministry. Although the Church has tried to put its gender inclusive policies into the selection process, it is defenceless in the face of those who lie. Further research areas would include the ‘gender blind’ nature of the Church of Scotland and women’s ministry and the Superintendence process.

As we see there is wide diversity of opinion on the subject of the church and change. The longer ordained tend to be more negative about whether there is any change and also about whether any changes that are taking place are worthwhile. In terms of the programmes and policies of the central Church there is an overwhelming sense of ‘Been there, done that, and already have the T shirt in several colours!’ However, many women ministers are deeply concerned that, in a rapidly changing society, the Church is not changing and so is not allowing the Gospel to be heard.

However, some of the changes taking place in society have had an effect on the status of ministers and quite a number of the women interviewed referred to this. They spoke about the difficulties of managing volunteers, the amount of time and energy expended in keeping volunteers ‘on side.’ Whereas at one time, it was seen as a privilege to serve the local church as an office-bearer, and being a church office-bearer was certainly something people would have mentioned in a CV, in the present day it is difficult to persuade people to take on roles of responsibility within the church. Increasingly congregations perceive their minister to be less of a worship leader or provider of spiritual care and more ‘the chief executive’ of the organisation – the person paid to carry out the will of the office-bearers. This is a mismatch of role expectations which can cause grief and complaint from both sides and is often a source of conflict between congregation and minister. Because just as a ‘chief executive’ might be held responsible for the failure of a

company, increasingly ministers are being held responsible for ‘failures’ within a congregation.

Though the declining status of the ordained ministry finds its roots in changes within Scottish society, it is those wider social changes which most exercise the women clergy in the study. They reflect on the changing patterns of family and working life and are well aware of the stresses and strains under which their congregations live. They are very aware of the difficult working hours which face many adults and the problems of carving out ‘family time.’ These are after all stresses and strains in which many women ministers and their families share. There is an acknowledgement that ‘regular’ church-going is more likely to mean ‘once a month’ than the traditional ‘once a week.’ The changing patterns of attendance have implications for worship and its preparation.

The greatest concern of all, is the Church’s failure to engage with the changed and changing society, the Church’s inability to make the Gospel heard. Whilst women ministers are working within their own parishes to try to engage with modern society, generally much effort is focussed on engaging their own congregation and some women in the study regret the lack of national Church resources or initiatives which would give a lead in the task of engaging with wider society. It is not that the women themselves would claim to know the answers, but there is a great deal of frustration that the institutional church does not know the questions, and instead provides answers to the questions of a previous generation. It would be difficult to imagine that this sense of frustration is in any way confined to women clergy.

So, in terms of the ‘changing church,’ the overarching concern of the women ministers interviewed is the need for the Church of Scotland, and indeed for the Christian Church as a whole, to find meaningful ways of engaging a changed and changing Scottish society so that the Gospel might be heard. Within that context of change there is also some concern about the implications for ordained ministry.



## Chapter 7 Integration or the Edge of the Glass Chasm?

### *Introduction*

This chapter considers the position of the women ministers of the Church of Scotland today, discussing their place as pioneers, as tokens and acknowledging their marginalisation. It considers the ways in which women use this marginalisation constructively. Moving then to look at the future, it considers the conflicting gender discourses within the Church as a barrier to full integration for women ministers and recognises the extent to which many women ministers feel that their position is not secure nor the future assured. Some feel they are on the edge of a glass chasm into which all the progress in women's ministry might fall.

### *Pioneers*

Because women's ordination is so recent in historical terms, most of those who were interviewed found themselves to be pioneers. Every person embodies many statuses such as age, sex, occupation, family role to mention but a few. Cultures organise their social relationships in terms of master or more important statuses. Pioneers are those who combine particular statuses in new ways and therefore confront the dilemmas and contradictions as the relationship between their statuses is negotiated (Charleton, *Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A longitudinal study*, 1997 ). When the combination 'woman' and 'minister' was new, these were the pioneers, those who were showing people things they had not seen before. These were also the women who were in the firing line as other people worked through whether to treat them according to the usual expectations of 'woman' or according to the usual expectations of 'minister.' Charlton in her later study 'Women and Clergywomen' observed that,

Women downplay gender as an identity when working in fields defined and organized by the men who come before them – and still think their experience is different from men's, though neither they nor the social scientists who study them can articulate or demonstrate exactly how (Charleton, *Women and Clergywomen*, 2000).

There are some of the older women, who have been ordained for some number of years, who always knew that they were pioneers, the first to do various things.

I felt as though a lot of what I was doing was shoving the door open, pushing this huge weight of the door. 'Women can't speak with loud voices.' 'Yes, they can,' shove, shove the door. 'Women can do Hebrew because they got different brains.' 'Excuse me!' - shove the door a bit more. 'Women can't really run a parish on their own.' 'Yes, they can!' - and you shove the door a bit more. (Ailsa)

Ailsa was not the only one who found being a pioneer quite difficult and very hard work, Grace too, found it challenging,

So in other words, I've been a pioneer. You may be getting this picture, and it's not always easy to be out front and be a pioneer. A lot of people have looked at me and some of the women who are evangelical and there are not all that many, of course, say 'Well, if Grace has done it,..... maybe if she can do it, we can do it.' (Grace)

Others would acknowledge that they didn't want to spearhead the movement for the ordination of women (Martha) or be a trailblazer (Ruth A) but nonetheless, most of the women recount experiences of being the first in some situation – from being the first woman minister in a particular congregation (still a remarkably common experience), to being the first in a specific Presbytery, to being the first to hold particular offices, to being the first to challenge the Ministries Council over their attitude to childcare. Most of the women ministers would sympathize with Suzie's rueful comment,

Gosh, I never intended to be a pioneer – but that's how it felt, even though obviously, you knew there had been female ministers who started much earlier than you. (Suzie)

Some chose to be pioneers, others had pioneering thrust upon them, but to some extent all those interviewed found themselves in the vanguard as they worked out relationships between 'woman' and 'minister;' between 'wife' and 'minister,' between 'mother' and minister,' to name but a few of the contradictions of status with which they were confronted. Other relationships were more complex, involving relationships between more than two statuses – what does it mean to be a woman, a minister, a mother and a community leader involved in negotiations over a rural school? Each one of the women ministers had found themselves being the first to do something and so occupying a pioneering role.

## ***Tokens***

### **Tokenism**

Kanter (Kanter R. , 1997) considered the effects of working in a group where there existed an imbalance of social types. She identified four types of groups. Uniform groups had only one type of person, one significant type; skewed groups where there was a ratio of perhaps 85:15; tilted groups with a ratio of 65:35; and balanced groups with a 50:50 ratio (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 966; Kanter R. M., 1977, p. 208). The ministry of the Church of Scotland, currently with a ratio of 78:22 in favour of men, falls between the skewed and the tilted groups. However, the rise of women about the 15% ratio is relatively recent and so it is not surprising that these women have functioned as ‘tokens’ within the group of ministers. Kanter developed the idea of ‘tokenism’ to describe the effects of being a minority in the workplace. Tokens are not merely deviants, nor individuals who differ slightly from the main group in one particular, rather they are people who are identified by

characteristics (master statuses such as sex, race, religion, ethnic group, age, etc.) or other characteristics that carry with them a set of assumptions about culture, status, and behavior highly salient for majority category members. They bring these "auxiliary traits," in Hughes's (1944) term, into situations in which they differ from other people not in ability to do a task or in acceptance of work norms but only in terms of these secondary and informal assumptions (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 968).

In her field study of a large industrial corporation, Kanter found that ‘token’ women were associated with three perceptual phenomena

visibility (tokens capture a disproportionate awareness share), polarization (differences between tokens and dominants are exaggerated), and assimilation (tokens attributes are distorted to fit pre-existing generalizations about their social type). (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 965)

Women were particularly likely to be tokens. Janice Yoder, building on the work of Kanter argues the need to look beyond simple numbers and that token numbers alone are not sufficient to produce the three effects Kanter outlined. Rather, the negative effects of tokenism ‘result from a three way interaction involving token numbers, gender status and occupational appropriateness’ (Yoder, 1994). Given Yoder’s understanding, women clergy are prime candidates for tokenism because they score highly on all three criteria.

Numbers: Women are still very much a minority in the Church of Scotland. Whilst overall women are increasing as a proportion of ministers, as we saw in Chapter 3, this is largely due to a decline in male numbers rather than an increase in the numbers of women. A glance at the Presbytery figures, in Chapter 3, will also show that in more than a quarter of the Presbyteries there are three or fewer women parish ministers. For most women ministers the experience of attending meetings as the only woman present, is not uncommon.

Gender Status: On the question of Gender Status, women ministers are beset by the misinterpretations of Paul's teaching on the male as the head of the household. Christianity does not have a good track record when it comes to conferring social status on women. Whilst women might have been looked up to as the archetype of the pious and good (Brown C. , 2001, p. 58), they were nonetheless inferior to and subject to their menfolk. Piety was obviously not a high status attribute!

Occupational Appropriateness: Over the years, many occupations have been considered inappropriate for women, from medicine to the military. However, in this long and distinguished list, ministry holds a peculiar place, for only with ministry do the opponents of women in the profession claim direct revelation from God. Only with the ministry can opponents of women's ordination claim to be in favour of equal rights for women, whilst still justifying ministry as an all male profession.

Louise Roth argues that the creation of 'tokenism' is not a purposeful action by the dominant groups, but rather 'occurs without conscious motivation to discriminate' through homophily preferences and status expectations (Roth L. M., 2004, p. 189). Paula Nesbitt, in her examination of 'tokenism' in elite clergy careers, introduces the Weberian distinctions between *groundbreaking* and *maintenance* tokens (Nesbitt, Gender, Tokenism and the Construction of Elite Clergy Careers, 1997, p. 196). Groundbreaking tokens are the first of their kind to hold a position, maintenance tokens occupy their positions in disproportionately small numbers. Within the group of women ministers interviewed, there were both groundbreaking and maintenance tokens. We now consider the interviewees in the study as 'tokens.'

## Visibility

Tokens are characterised by their visibility, being part of a small minority leads to their actions and behaviours being subject to greater scrutiny. There are fewer 'backstage' areas available for the 'token' than there are for the dominant group (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978, p. 161). Tokens, by always standing out in their work groups, 'suffer exacerbated pressures to perform' (Yoder, 1994, p. 150). Through the interviews, women recount the 'firsts.' Some, like Ailsa, felt quite bruised by continually having to 'push open the door.' Many were familiar with the experience of being the 'first' woman a congregation had ever heard, as Martha comments 'in all these places I was the first woman, of course, they'd ever had.' Being the first meant that the women carried a weight of expectation. As Edna says,

You did a wedding and you got bored by the number of people who said, 'Oh, you know...' and they virtually said 'You've just got the one head.' They'd never been at a service taken by a woman before, they obviously have no idea how patronising they were being, because they would always mean it kindly. And really it hadn't been too bad at all despite their expectations and you'd kind of cured them of hesitation and wasn't that nice! (Edna)

On a purely personal note, I recall the exclamation of one lady after I had conducted a service in the Church where she was a member. She told me that she'd never heard a woman minister before and then said, 'Oh, you've got legs. I didn't expect you to have legs!' Catherine recalls an incident where a young child announced quite loudly, 'It's alright Mummy, she's wearing a skirt!' In the early years of women's ministry there was an assumption that any woman would know all the other women ministers because there were so few of them around.

For others, like Lindsay, it was the experience of being the first 'young' woman that her congregations had experienced. For Alison, it was being part of an all female team that was the first.

The first placement was with a woman minister and she was the first woman minister that congregation had called in its very, very long history. They were very excited about the fact that they had their first woman minister, and that I was the first student that had ever gone there..... I was the first and they were thrilled that it was another woman. If there was anybody that didn't think that, I didn't come across them or they didn't tell me to my face. They just loved the fact that they had two women for a spell. (Alison)

That high visibility carries with it a particular pressure and one of which our women ministers were well aware. When first contact is made with a woman minister, all other women ministers are then judged on that contact, they have a symbolic role (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 973; Kanter R. M., 1977, p. 215). Martha, Fred and Ruth A could recount stories of congregations who were biased against women ministers because they happened to have come across one previously that they didn't like.

A token person's performance is likely to affect not only his or her own personal advancement but also the future acceptability of other members of the minority group (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978, p. 161)

Kanter points out that, as the numbers in a minority group increase, so each individual becomes less 'surprising, unique or noteworthy' (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 971; Kanter R. M., 1977, p. 210). The women ministers of the Church of Scotland look forward to the day when they are no longer referred to as the 'lady minister,' an appellation which most of them loathe!

Within the studies of 'tokens' in secular life (Kanter R. , 1997) (Roth L. M., 2004) (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978), it was noted that the high visibility of women had two possible outcomes in terms of achievement: either women overachieved in an effort to have their achievements noticed, or they underachieved in order not to draw attention to themselves or took other steps to limit their visibility. Whilst the women in this study were conscious of having to be better than the men, there were no obvious examples of deliberate underachievement in terms of parish work. However, the deliberate rejection of some of the women ministers of involvement in the committee structures of the Church, and the under-representation of women at senior level in those committees, may point to a different form of underachievement, a complex response to their high profile.

Those women preferring social invisibility also made little attempt to make their achievements publicly known or to get credit for their own contributions to problem solving or other organizational tasks. They are like other women in the research literature who have let others assume visible leadership (Megaree 1969) or take credit for their accomplishments (Lynch 1973; Cussler 1958). These women did blend into the background, but they also limited recognition of their competence (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 974).

## **Polarization**

Polarization, or the exaggeration of difference, is the second area to be considered in regard to women ministers. Kanter suggests that

The presence of a person bearing a different set of social characteristics makes members of a numerically dominant group more aware both of their commonalities with and their differences from the token. There is a tendency to exaggerate the extent of the differences, especially because tokens are by definition too few in number to prevent the application of familiar generalizations or stereotypes. It is thus easier for the commonalities of dominants to be defined in contrast to the token than it would be in a more numerically equal situation (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 971).

So, as we noted in the last chapter, some male ministers, when learning that a woman was coming amongst them as a colleague, wondered if they would expect their male colleagues to take all their funerals. (Grace A), complain that women are time consuming and need reassurance (Ruth), or consider that women's high pitched voices will not carry in Church (Maggie). The presence of tokens within a group serves to make the dominants more aware of those things which they hold in common, so that, far from threatening the collectivity of the dominant group, the presence of tokens serves to highlight it. It has already been noted that the presence of women in ministry has caused some of the male clergy in the Church of England to become more engaged in conversations with the Roman Catholic Church, whereas in Scotland it has caused some male clergy to prioritize their common ground with the Free Church.

However, it must be acknowledged that although women ministers all have horror stories to tell of male colleagues who are patronising, rude or downright hostile, most male ministers in the Church of Scotland would see themselves as generally supportive of women's ministry. Whilst there are a few who will indulge in the 'locker room' behaviour or who are part of a 'laddish' culture, those are also a minority – it being generally held that such behaviour is not appropriate for ministers of the gospel. Roth, while accepting that tokenism was a real issue for women, also considered that the polarization or heightening of boundaries was not necessarily deliberate but was simply the result of homophily.

The token effects observed by Kanter may be byproducts of homophily processes that define in-group and out-group members. Homophily preferences are a tendency for people to prefer to associate with others who are like themselves .....Individuals automatically and unconsciously categorize others, and these categorizations form a basis of similarity or difference. (Roth L. M., 2004, p. 192)

I suspect that many male ministers are unaware that their female colleagues feel socially excluded from conversations about golf or football which take place physically above their heads! A recent incident may illustrate this. At a conference recently, I was one

of three women present, the remaining delegates, some 32 in number, were all men. The speakers at the conference and the chaplain were all male. On arrival there had been a female secretary from the Church offices to ensure that registration was completed and we were all shown to appropriate rooms. On the second day of the conference, I happened to be first to arrive back in the lecture room after lunch. Being Presbyterian, I took a seat, not in the front row, but in the third row back. Soon a couple of male colleagues came in, already engaged in conversation and, without acknowledging my presence, they sat together in the front row on the other side. A number of other male colleagues came in and sat down, but none beside me or even in my row. One of the other women came in, looked around, smiled and came and sat beside me. Most of the remaining men came in, but none sat in our row. The third woman came in just before the lecture began and joined the two of us already there. At the end of the first lecture, one of the men sitting in the row behind leant over and said, 'I don't know what it is with you women, you always have to sit together.' I felt it incumbent upon me to point out that as I had been the first person in the room, actually the issue was the 32 men who had to sit together! Or perhaps the issue was that they had to sit apart from the women.

Just as girls are socialized from an early age to be less assertive and more diffident, boys are socialized to avoid sitting with or playing with the girls. To be in the company of girls is to be branded a 'Cissy' in Scotland, that is until after puberty, when to be in the company of girls is to assert masculine sexuality. Perhaps it is no wonder that some men are unaware of appropriate behaviour around female colleagues.

However, as the tokenism theorists point out, one of the inevitable consequences of polarization is a sense of isolation.

Women did not tend to be included in the networks by which informal socialization occurred and politics behind the formal system were exposed (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 978).

We noted in Chapter 6 that many women ministers expressed a sense of isolation, being of the view that ministry was 'a very lonely place,' that the day to day collaboration with colleagues available in other professions was missing or that there just seemed to be no opportunities to meet with colleagues. Yet, there are informal networks of male ministers who meet to hill-walk, play golf, go fishing. There are, at present, only one or two such informal networks for women ministers – a couple of groups where the women get together for lunch. The sense of isolation is a real problem for many women ministers.



However, it is also a problem for those male ministers who are not, for whatever reason, networked into the informal groups. There are, of course, some women who accept and indeed embrace their exclusion, those like Merle who 'chose not to have anything to do with colleagues.'

The women who would class themselves as 'conservative' seem to be less isolated, although Grace was concerned that she might be,

I was still having huge struggles and they were mainly theological.....and almost social as well - because I thought 'I am going to really put myself into the doghouse with a lot of my dear friends who will just not accept me and not accept the validity of a call, because of their theological position and I could see where they came from. I knew exactly where they came from, because that was the paddock I came from, you see. So my heart went out to them really. (Grace)

As we noted, these women tell as a crucial part of their narrative, the affirmation of conservative men, who do not approve of the ministry of women as a whole but who are prepared to countenance the ministry of this one individual woman. In this, they position themselves as 'exceptions.' Kanter explains

There are two ways by which tokens can demonstrate loyalty and qualify for closer relationships with dominants. First they can let slide or even participate in statements prejudicial to other members of their category. They can allow themselves to be viewed as exceptions to the general rule that others of their category have a variety of undesirable or unsuitable characteristics (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 979).

In positioning themselves as exceptions, which includes never challenging those who oppose their presence at any particular occasion, these women are largely free to participate in the prayer networks and meetings of the conservative group within the Church. In order to maintain their position as exceptions, they either resist any suggestions that they should meet with other women as a group as Grace does,

and I said 'I don't feel that's going to do any good, there's no point, I'm not interested in having women's meetings. I'm quite happy mixing with the men and I don't feel it a problem.' I go to fellowship group thing here, a prayer group and it's all men except me that it doesn't bother me, and it doesn't seem to bother them. (Grace)

or else they find their female support networks from outside Church circles, as does Jane B.

Research done on women law students and tokenism noted that the women fell into two categories, those who chose not to associate informally with their classmates at all and those who spent most of their leisure time with fellow law students. The researchers concluded that

It is likely that the women who spend none of their leisure time with their peers are avoiding potentially friction-laden situations (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978, p. 166).

Women ministers, like other tokens, have two choices when faced with the polarization, either they accept the isolation with the attendant risk of being excluded from the politics of the Church, or they find ways, as the conservative women do, of marking themselves out as ‘exceptions.’

## **Assimilation**

The third feature of ‘tokens’ is that they are continually subject to stereotypical assumptions and generalisations about their category. These stereotypes tend to force the tokens into ‘playing limited or caricatured roles in the system’ (Kanter R., 1997, p. 980).

Some of the women spoke of people who phoned the manse, or came to the manse and asked to speak to their husbands, assuming that the minister would be male. Discovering that the minister was female led to a variety of reactions, from humour, to amazement, to rejection. Women ministers also found that they might be asked to carry out tasks which they knew would not have been asked of their male colleagues. One woman in training was required to provide personal care for an elderly parishioner during a public holiday when the home helps were not coming in. Assumptions that women ministers will ‘make the tea’ or provide food for Church occasions are also common, though, as one woman pointed out, she has reached the stage where she no longer considers that she is being asked to cook because she is a woman, she is secure enough to know that she is being asked to cook because she is an extremely good cook!

Stereotypical roles though can feature in other ways. Kanter identifies four roles which ‘tokens’ might find thrust upon them.

The first is that of ‘mother’ ‘A token woman sometimes finds that she has become a mother to a group of men.’ In fact, the mother role is one which appears frequently in the

interviews with women ministers. Quite a number of women speak of ‘mothering’ their congregations. Not all of those who use the imagery are biological mothers, or even married. The minister as ‘mother’ is a comfortable role for women ministers, for congregations and for male colleagues.

The second role is that of seductress. This is an altogether more dangerous role for women ministers, but one which, nonetheless, rears its head. We have already noted cases of sexual harassment, and the minister who accused Jo of ‘exposing her naked feet.’ However, Maggie was also aware that when she got married, there were a few of the men in her congregation who treated this as a betrayal,

There were three men in particular, who didn't speak to me for weeks. And one of them actually came up to the house and said to me. I don't approve of you getting married and I couldn't believe it and it was a sort of jealousy.  
(Maggie)

That women ministers are conscious of the dangers of this role is shown in their sometime agonizing over clothing,

how low-cut can you go and still be considered a proper minister..... how mini may the skirt be without people starting to think, ‘Actually that that might be a bit inappropriate. (Suzie)

Generally, the women felt constrained to be modest in their dress and to be careful not to display overt sexuality.

Kanter notes that

men may adopt the role of protector toward an attractive woman, regardless of her collusion, and by implication cast her as a sex object, reminding her and the rest of her group of her sexual status (Kanter R. , 1997, p. 983).

Does this, in part, account for the over protective Presbytery Clerk who so annoys Lorraine? It can also be noted that a number of the younger women have formed lasting and deep bonds with the male ministers who were their ‘bishops,’ who supervised their final placements.

The third of the stereotypes is that of pet – a cute and amusing little thing! From the interviews with the women ministers, it would seem as if that role was confined to the younger women. As a probationer, aged 23, I was referred to as ‘the Bairn!’ Younger

ministers, or those who had been ministers whilst they were young, recounted tales of being treated as ‘pets’ of congregations and colleagues, making excuses for them, or making much of them on account of their youth. ‘She’s just a lassie!’ Ruth’s hurtful description of being ‘giggly’ comes into that category too. A number of the women also reflected on the patience of congregations who experienced them in their youth, so the experience of being a ‘pet’ was not all negative.

The final stereotypical role is that of Iron Maiden. This is a role which most of the women ministers recognise and which, generally, they try to avoid. ‘No point in getting a reputation as a bolshie woman’ says Grace. Whilst Martha reflects on being told,

‘Well no man would ever find you attractive – a woman minister. And somebody as assertive’ (aggressive they meant) ‘as you, just not acceptable’.  
(Martha)

Elizabeth reflects, ‘They’ll accept a bossy man, but probably not a bossy woman,’ Froddo and Ailsa, both talk of letting things ride over them, and Maggie of women being described as ‘ferocious,’ whilst Lindsay feels that assertive women are bad for the image of women in ministry, ‘And I do think actually some women don’t help us. Some females are so strident.’

It is probably, in part, this fear of being cast as an ‘Iron Maiden’ that makes women ministers quite tolerant of the attitudes of their male colleagues and indeed of their congregations. They put up with patronising and difficult behaviour, rather than become a ‘difficult woman!’

This stereotyping, which remains very difficult for women ministers finds its roots in what Roth describes as ‘status expectations.’

Status expectation theories explain the persistence of gender and racial-ethnic inequality as a consequence of interactions in which people use different types of status characteristics (ie diffuse or task-specific) to assess others’ competence (Roth L. M., 2004, p. 203).

Put simply, women are always aware that the expectation of other people, whether ministers or congregations, is that the higher status group, ie men, will be more competent. This contributes to the fact that forty years on, women ministers are still, as we have seen, ‘tokens’ within the Church of Scotland. Whilst sheer weight of numbers is reducing the visibility a little, the other features of tokenism still apply.

## ***Marginalised***

The concept of marginality draws from geographical roots, the margins being the edge or borders of a field or a country. The concept now is widely used in a variety of disciplines from economics to anthropology. There were two main concepts of marginality which underlie the use of the term in the social sciences. The first drawing on the writings of Robert E Park and Everett Stonequist regards marginality as the intermediate position between two poles. Park's 'marginal man' was an individual caught in a permanent conflict of identification between two cultures.<sup>16</sup> However, a second definition of marginality would concentrate on one pole - the marginal is distanced from the centre and, in particular, the centre of power. Describing someone as marginal enables one to have power over them (Cullen & Pretes, 2000). To that extent, marginality is a social construct. Goetze gives a helpful insight with his four dimensions of marginality: 1) cultural marginality which refers to Park and Stonequist and describes groups or individuals caught between two cultures, 2) social marginality relates not to individuals or groups but to social roles for which exist neither adequate role expectations nor adequate reference roles, 3) political marginality by which individuals or groups are distanced from power and decision making and 4) economic marginality those distanced from productivity and its results (Goetze, 1976). In terms of women ministers cultural marginality, social marginality and political marginality all apply.

### **Cultural Marginality**

Women ministers frequently found themselves caught between expectations of them as women and expectations of them as ministers. Catherine acknowledges

You knew there were some who were unsure of a woman in the ministry and they weren't quite sure how you would react to certain situations (Catherine)

On the whole, people's expectations were more likely to follow female stereotypes than ministerial stereotypes, so Edna found that the people of her first charge did not expect her to stay the course because a previous female minister in the district had left after a very short period – the assumption being that a woman would not stay, rather than that a

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<sup>16</sup> For a full discussion see Goetze, Dieter (1976) 'Marginality and Marginalization as Key Concepts in a Sociology of Latin America' *Sociologica Ruralis* 16 56 – 74 and Pilhammer Andersson, Ewa 'Marginality: concept or reality in Nursing Education' *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 21 131 -136

young and inexperienced minister would not stay. Fred followed a woman who had stormed out of Kirk Session meetings, leaving the congregation with the sense that women were unstable and volatile, rather than that ministers could be unstable and volatile.

Catriona acknowledges the problem, it is bad enough to be a woman but,

worse still, I don't even seem to be how a woman should be, because I'm here with the authority of being the minister (Catriona)

As we have noted previously in Chapter 5, the assumption was made by congregations that women ministers with children would prioritize the family and neglect the congregation. One or two of the older women like Merle acknowledge that they probably did sacrifice the family for the sake of the church.

However, the cultural marginalisation probably shows most clearly in terms of women ministers and funerals. A majority of the women ministers had had their ministry rejected around a funeral. There was a cultural tradition in Scotland, now passing, that women did not attend the public part of a funeral - they would be present at the service in the house, but not at the graveside. The wake was a strictly gendered affair with the men gathered in one room and the women in another (often the kitchen). Most of the women who had had the experience of being rejected at a funeral acknowledged that it was 'baggage, rather than a theological thing' (Fred). As Ruth comments,

Often when you went to visit somebody who wasn't part of the church in that first area, they were always amazed that you were a woman. There was a magic moment when I went to do a funeral in a nearby village and I was told, they didn't want a 'wumman' to do their funeral. In that area, it wasn't that the women weren't in charge, they were very definitely in charge of their houses, but men did men's things and women did women's things and that was the way it was. (Ruth)

The experience of being rejected at a funeral is a clear example of the kind of cultural marginality that the women ministers in this study faced. Most acknowledge that times are changing and many express the view that things are changing, albeit slowly

There's definitely improvement, but there is still a long way to go I would say. I think it is still an uphill struggle for women (Lorraine)

Many women express the hope that, with increasing numbers of women in ministry, women's ministry will become a norm and 'not women trying to fit into a male thing'

(Froddo), but for the moment women ministers still experience a degree of cultural marginalisation because the traditional stereotypes are still firmly in place.

I suppose as I go around and people find out who I am and what I do, the sense of surprise that still is there, is obviously significant of still a very stereotypical picture of a minister. And whenever I'm in schools, or even in the hairdresser or something like that, that stereotype is always having to be challenged - if you don't look like a man in a grey suit and a dog collar who looks a bit severe, they just don't think you can be a minister. So sadly, that stereotype remains all these years on, which I think is a shame. (Iona)

## **Social Marginality**

We have already noted that the women ministers have been pioneers, they have frequently been the 'first' to do something. Because of this there were no guidelines available. Women ministers in interview report being careful about what they wear as they go about their day to day ministry – skirts not too short, necklines not too low, earrings not too big! To expand Suzie's previous comment

So I think for me, that has been sort of two edged sword - on the one hand, people don't know what to expect, so go for it, do whatever – but on the other hand, and again that's partly possibly personality, the sense of, 'Well how do I deal with expectations about when you wear your dog collar and when not.' I think for me, interestingly, one issue was about how to deal with your femininity, how low-cut can you go and still be considered a proper minister..... how mini may the skirt be without people starting to think, 'Actually that that might be a bit inappropriate.' (Suzie)

Whilst it is easy to dismiss the concern about clothing as a matter of feminine vanity, in reality dress has to do with identity and the persona on display. Clothes have, not just a practical significance, but a symbolic one too as Joy Charleton points out (Charleton, *Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A longitudinal study*, 1997 ). Martha indicated that whilst with her middle class congregation she could turn up to Church events in jeans and a jersey, members of her previous UPA were offended if she was not formally dressed at Church events – if she were casual in her dress they concluded that they were not being taken seriously.

In chapters 4,5 and 6, we have already considered some of the ways in which women ministers coped with the lack of guidelines as they were the 'first' to do various

things. We have noted the ways in which relationships had to be negotiated with congregations and with colleagues. Women ministers have considered whether or not they ought to cook for Church functions, or bake for the Sale of Work, do the flowers, be President of the Guild and so on through all the traditional 'women's' roles in the Church – many of these roles were fulfilled by the minister's wife in a bygone age, but for several of the women, ministers wives themselves have been an issue too. Again there were no guidelines Martha was aware of relationships with colleagues which were clouded by wives 'nipping their ear, feeling I was competition.' Jo comments,

I've had to deal with ministers wives, and I'm not quite sure whether it's been their issues or whether it's been knock-on things from what they have said or how they relate to me. There's one woman, I always have to tell her why I'm phoning to speak to her husband, and another woman who thinks it would be a great idea if I married her husband when she is dead. (Jo)

Although the issues here are those of the clergy couple and their relationships, undoubtedly the women ministers have to deal with them and there have been no guidelines.

A sensitive area in which women found no guidelines was that of bullying. Some women reported bullying tactics from members of congregations, sometimes the problem lay with one individual but more frequently with a small group. The bullying could range from shouting at the minister at meetings, or even in the street, to gossip campaigns, to threats of reporting to higher authorities. On occasion these threats would be carried out and, in one particular small presbytery, three women ministers were subjected to formal investigations after members of their congregations wrote to the Presbytery Clerk. However, there were other women who reported an experience of being bullied from within the hierarchy of the Church, either by Presbytery Clerks or by members of the staff within the Church offices who would come to see them, sometimes later in an evening after a difficult meeting, and pressurise them to take a particular option. Because this is a sensitive area, the names of the interviewees have been omitted. One of the women remarks,

That was the point at which I felt most rejected as a woman in the ministry – rejected by 121 George St as well as the Presbytery.....

Another sensitive area in which the women found no guidelines was that of sexual harassment or impropriety and, in one case, actual abuse. This is an area where women ministers find themselves marginalised (as perhaps do all women in this situation, as



previously noted). Generally, if the woman does raise the matter, it is not dealt with and she does not feel supported. The experience below is typical,

I had one colleague where there was sexual harassment, and when I did speak to the one other colleague where I thought I might get support, it was, 'No, let's keep the peace.'

Whilst this is not a widespread issue, it is a painful and difficult one for the women involved.

Although most of the women in this study indicated a degree of social marginalisation, this is an area which can be expected to change. As the years go by, women ministers should find themselves less in the pioneering role. There will be fewer situations where a woman is the 'first' to do something, although communication of reference roles may be a problem, but most women candidates in training now can expect that at least one of their placements will be with another woman minister. However, a more formal mentoring system might prove to be a more fruitful course.

## Political Marginality

When the behaviour, or even the existence, of certain social groups is perceived as a threat to the standards and norms of dominant groups, these dominant groups act to restrict the access to power and decision making of the threatening group.<sup>17</sup> In theory, there are no barriers to women ministers accessing power and decision making on the same basis as men. In practice, some of the dominant male group act to make doing so uncomfortable. This can be done in different ways. Dismissive or impatient behaviour whilst a woman is speaking in a committee is one example. Many women have had the experience of making a comment or suggestion which has been ignored, only to have the same comment or suggestion made by a male colleague a moment or two later and greeted with affirmation. Edna found it sometimes quite difficult to work out whether the patronising behaviour previously quoted was gender related or age related,

I think my relative youth, which is now passing, in relation to some of the posts that I've held..... I have sometimes found was an excuse for patronising behaviour by those who maybe, somehow, felt threatened. And if I were going

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<sup>17</sup> This process is described as social marginalisation by **Invalid source specified**.

to give them names, which I'm not, they would be men. So it may be that women don't feel threatened by a young woman in the way that men feel threatened by a young woman. (Edna)

Whereas Iona considers it a combination of the two,

I don't know if it's the age thing or the gender thing or a combination of both, but I think there are certain colleagues who feel that if they just say something slightly more forcefully, or slightly more loudly, then that makes it fine for some reason. I don't quite go with that opinion! (Iona)

She goes on to say,

It can be interesting sometimes, chairing meetings where you're chairing the meeting, but the rest of the meeting are older than you and all men, and sometimes you feel like your credibility or your experience is sometimes being challenged, but I think that could happen in any profession. (Iona)

A remarkable number of the women interviewed too, have come to abhor being described as 'lady ministers' recognising the patronising attitude behind it.

a 'lady' minister, as they keep calling us, which to me always sounds like a diminishing term, like Ladybird or something.....not a proper minister, but a 'lady' minister...(Suzie)

'Lady minister' is a fine example of the 'semantic derogation of women' (Northup, 1996) and women recognise that behind such a description is the stealing of the power to name ourselves.

For some of the women who were brought up within supportive families to consider themselves the equal of any man, the discovery that they were marginalised in this way was quite damaging,

And that was something..... I grew up not thinking that I was different, and it is the church that has made me realise that actually, I am different. And that to me has been really sad, to realise that the church has done that to me, has made me wary of people who exercise different forms of power within positions, and use the fact that they are male in order to exercise that power over me. (Ruth A)

Overall, there is a sadness that the talents of women are so neglected and dismissed in the Church

And I think that for me is a sadness that we live in a world where women do all kinds of things and do them extremely well and are trusted to do their jobs. Women take on some of the biggest positions in our Scottish culture, and yet in the church we're still to have heads patted and told we're doing a very good job, but a man would do better than us. (Ruth)

## Using Marginality

Whilst marginalisation has its roots in the attitudes of others and the exclusion of a particular group or individual from the mainstream or norm, marginality is also an enacted or selected role. Jackie Sanders and Robyn Munford, in their study of young women and education state

Marginalisation is a product of exclusion, reflecting the restrictions on opportunities to participate that result from exclusion and the development by excluded individuals of alternative lifestyles and alternative ways of occupying space and time (Sanders & Munford, 2007, p. 186).

There are signs that at least some of the women ministers in the study have made a virtue out of necessity or have even welcomed their marginalisation because they do not like what they see of the power play in the institutional church. Merle's objections to the puppet masters have been noted previously

And there are people who are articulate and manipulative and they're there, and they're working folk like puppets - and I don't like to see that. ....I've had no aspirations other than being a parish minister (Merle)

For some, like Fred, this is not just a personality issue but a gender issue as the expanded quote shows

I think the church could sell itself .....well, women in the ministry could sell themselves better. But then again, how many women just say Oh, I can't be bothered with the politics and I'd rather just get on with the job. And this is what I'm here to do and I don't want to climb the greasy pole.' I am aware of a number of men who are climbing the greasy pole, but I suspect, I could only name one woman that I think is trying to climb a greasy pole. Maybe that says something about women in general. (Fred)

So there is a sizeable group of women ministers who, like Maggie, simply say 'I don't get involved in all of that!' and, within their identity and their understanding of themselves, this marginalisation is a choice. Whilst Elizabeth wonders if she sits back too much and allows the decisions to be made by others, she acknowledges that she is not much motivated to do otherwise.

Rhoda Unger argues that a sense of one's own marginality is an important precursor to a feminist identity. She further argues that some individuals can decide whether or not they will be seen as marginal or as mainstream. Where they decide to be perceived as marginal, this is positive marginality and is a form of empowerment. Such marginality allows three benefits,

It allows one to position oneself as an outsider who lacks responsibility for the negative aspects of the society in which one lives.....Thus it permits the exercise of social power without guilt. Marginality also intensifies awareness of definitional boundaries. Nothing need be taken for granted. Finally it permits the individual to deviate from normative practices since she or he is already outside some aspects of societal control (Unger, 1998, pp. 163-4).

Whilst I am not sure that any of the women ministers deliberately adopt a position of marginality, some of them do choose to accept the marginal position and make it part of their identity. For some, this may indeed be about rejecting responsibility for the negative aspects of the society (in this case, the Church of Scotland). We have already noted that women ministers gain acceptance by conforming to the existing patterns and models of ministry. This leaves them in the uncomfortable situation of wanting to bring about change, but aware that their acceptance within the organisation is dependent on them adopting the traditional practices and models.

‘I find the church this strange body. You join it, thinking you're going to change it, and actually all it does is make you part of it,’ So all the radicals are subsumed into the church and they're no longer radical, they become mainstream and I think that just is the Church of Scotland. (Ruth)

There are also some hints that women ministers use their marginal position to deviate from some normative practices, particularly in the fields of liturgy and worship. The fortieth anniversary of the ordination of women to the ministry of word and sacrament saw the production of ‘Worship Anthology: A Collection of Worship Resources by Women Ordained to Word and Sacrament’ (Craggs, Macalister, Mehigan, & Steenberg, 2008). This is a collection of innovative, and in some cases challenging resources, which may indeed indicate that, as some of the women interviewed suggested, women are more creative and innovative.

I think women, certain people I know have been quite innovative and tried out new things and are kind of more ..... not people oriented, but,....but they just seem to have a better connection with people and have tried out new ideas, new things which we maybe haven't seen so much, maybe it's a more creative mind.... I don't know. (Maggie)

There is evidence, then, that some women ministers accept their marginal position as part of their identity and then use that marginality constructively.

### ***Women in Trousers v Men in Dresses: Conflicting Discourses***

As a very young minister, I recall being told by a senior male minister that I should not wear a clerical collar because it was masculine. He was less than pleased when I pointed out to him that I was not sure that I could take seriously advice on gender appropriate clothing which came from a man wearing a long black dress! Whilst this issue might seem trivial, it illustrates the conflicting gender discourses which pervade the Church of Scotland (and arguably all churches) as an organisation. As Joy Charleton points out

Having a woman in the pulpit, literally and metaphorically – wearing the clothes symbolizing the position, occupying the space reserved for officially recognized representatives of the divinity, however theologized – was a significant statement in and of itself. (Charleton, *Clergywomen of the Pioneer Generation: A longitudinal study*, 1997 )

### **Personality Profiles**

Elsewhere in the British Isles, studies have been carried out on the personality types of male and female clergy. Francis, in a 1991 study of ordinands in training in the Church of England and using Eysencks model, discovered that clergy differ from the standard religious personality profile which might be found amongst their congregations. Clergy differ from the rest of the population in that generally, in the population as a whole, men tend to be more extraverted than women – more sociable, lively, assertive, sensation-seeking, carefree, dominant, surgent and venturesome. On the other hand, in the population as a whole, women score more highly on neuroticism - more anxious, depressed, tense, irrational, shy, moody, emotional, suffering from guilt and low self esteem. In terms of psychoticism, women in the population as a whole tend to be more empathic, unselfish, altruistic, warm, peaceful and generally more tender minded. Amongst the clergy, on both the neuroticism and psychoticism scales, women display a typically masculine profile, showing themselves to be as tough minded and as stable as their male counterparts. On the extraversion scores

the gender expectations are reversed, with the female ordinands recording a characteristically masculine profile and the male ordinands recording a

characteristically feminine profile (Francis, The personality characteristics of Anglican Ordinands: feminine men and masculine women, 1991).

A similar study carried out with ministers from the British Methodist conference across all parts of the British Isles showed similar results - feminine men and masculine women? (Robbins, Francis, Haley, & Kay, 2001). Studies by Musson in 1998 (Musson, The personality profile of male Anglican clergy in England: the 16PF, 1998) and 2001 using Cattell's 16PF confirm that

in several ways male Anglican clergy display characteristically feminine personality traits and that female Anglican clergy display a number of characteristically male personality traits (Musson, Male and Female Anglican Clergy: Gender Reversal on the 16PF, 2001 Vol 43 No2).

All of this research suffers from the acknowledged problem that the women clergy in the Church of England all belong to a pioneering generation, but as we have seen above, that is also true of their Church of Scotland sisters, despite the twenty five year advantage. At present there is no similar research on Church of Scotland clergy. The pattern of working relationships and expectations between the genders in any organisation is formed, at least in part, by the recognised gender personality differences. If the personality profiles of Church of Scotland clergy were to be similar to those found elsewhere, it might in part explain some of the difficulties many women ministers have found in relationships with their male colleagues.

However, even if the personality profiles of clergy in the Church of Scotland were to prove radically different from those in other denominations, the conflicting gender discourses can be seen in other ways.

## **Congregations and Committees**

The adverts placed in 'Life and Work'<sup>18</sup> and 'Minister's Forum'<sup>19</sup> indicate that congregations seeking ministers look for leadership certainly, but very high on their list of requirements, usually higher than preaching skills are pastoral skills. Congregations expect their ministers to be empathic, kindly, approachable and good listeners. In other words, they expect their ministers to display some of the so called 'feminine' or 'softer' attributes. Even in terms of leadership the situation has changed. Whilst in a bygone era the parish

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<sup>18</sup> The magazine of the Church of Scotland

<sup>19</sup> An 'in-house' monthly newsletter for Church of Scotland clergy

minister might meet with the Kirk Session four times a year before the Quarterly Communion and read to them a list of things that he had done 'in the name of the Kirk Session,' Kirk Sessions today expect a more collaborative form of leadership, transformational rather than transactional (Hollander, 1993). Again transformational leadership is associated with the so called 'feminine' skills. However, even at a congregational level there are traditionally masculinised overtones. Week by week, women ministers conduct worship in sanctuaries where the pulpits and lecterns are too high, where the Vestry has no mirror let alone a toilet and where the entire building is dominated by a massive phallic symbol.

Whatever the expectation of congregations at a local level, the Church of Scotland as an institution has a hierarchical structure which owes more to the Roman Empire than to the example of Jesus Christ. Within this masculinised structure, upward progress is made by those who are assertive and self confident. There are underlying networks of those who pray together (mostly male), those who socialise together (mostly male), and those who play sport together (perhaps exclusively male). This hierarchical structure demands more overtly masculine attributes for success.

## **Word and Sacrament**

However, the conflicting gender discourses go deeper still, beyond the structures and institution of the Church to its core functions and documents. Although most women and quite a number of men, would acknowledge that Jesus had women amongst his disciples and that the women of the very early Church played an equal part in the mission and support of the movement, by the time the Christian Church becomes a recognizable institution, it can be argued that the position of women was being eroded and that the fledgling institution adopted the norms of the prevailing culture rather than following the example of Jesus. During the period when the Gospels are committed to written form, the women are more often there by implication than by name. Week by week women ministers enter the pulpit (or in some cases deliberately remain outside) to wrestle with written texts, regarded by some to be the immutable Word of God, and which are written by and present the viewpoint of men. Within the Church as it worships, there is a deep and growing divide which some would argue is theological, but is also inherently gendered. Pew Bibles in congregations will normally be one of three editions: The Good News Bible, The New English Bible or the New International Version. To give a brief indication of the differences, we examine the much loved and well known prologue in John's gospel.

God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe (John 1:6,7) (Good News Bible, 1976)

There appeared a man named John, sent from God; he came as a witness to testify to the light, that all might become believers through him (John 1: 6,7) (The New English Bible, 1970)

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that through him all men might believe (John 1; 6,7) (Holy Bible, New International Version, 1979)

The divisions show within the hymnody too. Those congregations using the Church's own hymnbook, commissioned by the General Assembly in 1994, will find themselves exposed to a global range of hymns, some old and some modern. In many of the more traditional hymns care has been taken to modify gender exclusive language. So 'O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother' has become 'Children of God, reach out to one another.' In his introduction to the Hymnbook, John Bell, convener of the committee responsible for its production comments,

And in these three intervening decades [since the production of the previous hymnbook] the Church has not stood still. New translations of the scriptures, the ordination of women, increased frequency of Communion, deepening interest in the Christian Year and the Lectionary, the greater use of non-ordained leaders in worship – these and a host of other changes have increasingly featured in and enriched the corporate life of congregations. (Church Hymnary Fourth Edition, 2005)

However, not all congregations use CH4, many still use the previous version and some still use the version before that. Increasingly too, congregations on the more conservative wing of the Church use Mission Praise and the Source with their concentration on an individual, personal faith.

Liturgically, the Church of Scotland uses 'The Book of Common Order.' The 1979 edition offered no concessions to the traditional gendered language of the Church. By the time the 1994 edition was printed however, some progress has been made and 'gender language' is given in the Preface as one of the reasons for the new edition. For instance in the 1979 edition there are no alternatives to the 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' tradition for the Blessing. By the 1994 edition, however, there are alternatives given if you look for them.



The guarding of the God of life be on you, the guarding of the loving Christ be on you, the guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you, every day and night, to aid you and enfold you, each day, each night. (1994, p. 40)

However, much of the language remains gendered, even when it need not! For instance:

Go in the peace of God, in whom there is no darkness, but the night shines as the day. May he renew your hearts with quietness, your bodies with untroubled sleep; and may he waken you to use his gift of life with faith and joy. (The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, 1994)

This could easily have been rendered

Go in the peace of God, in whom there is no darkness, but the night shines as the day. May God renew your hearts with quietness, your bodies with untroubled sleep; and may God waken you to use the gift of life with faith and joy.

The Church of Scotland is prescriptive about its liturgy and clergy are free to use whichever version of the Book of Common Order they please (or none). Indeed the 1940 edition is still preferred by some.

## **The Same Sex Relationships Debate**

The issue which currently exercises the mind of the Church of Scotland is the debate on same sex relationships. The debate covers both the issue of same sex relationships within the Church membership and also the issue of same sex relationships within the clergy and other leadership of the Church. This is a theological dispute and a dispute which rests on different ways of interpreting Scripture, but it is also an inherently gendered debate. At a time when, arguably in the rest of Scottish society, religion has become marginal in gender identity,<sup>20</sup> there is an irony that gender has become important in religious identity.

In response to the debate over same sex relationships, three organisations were set up. Their websites are revealing. OneKirk describes itself as working for an inclusive, affirming and progressive Church. It affirms men and women, whether clergy or lay, who were in same sex relationships. Beyond the fact that there are women on the Working Group, it makes no mention of the role of women in the Church. Forward Together is a group for evangelical members of the Church of Scotland who share a desire to serve our

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<sup>20</sup> See Callum Brown in (Abrams, Gordon, Simonton, & Yeo, 2006) p106

Lord Jesus Christ within the Church of Scotland. There are no women ministers listed either as current or past members of the Steering Group although there are women ministers whose congregations are affiliated – however, as we noted in Chapter 5, conservative women clergy tend to justify their ordination on the grounds of ‘exception’ rather than on the grounds that all women might be ordained. However, a newsletter embedded in the website contains an article on women’s ordination which, whilst it recognises that the ordination of women is Church of Scotland law, goes on to say

The liberal establishment like to describe the Church of Scotland as a “broad church”. By broad church, we understand that a variety of views on a variety of subjects are tolerated. Is there really no room in our broad church for those who believe that the ordination of women is contrary to the Word of God? Must they be excluded from the National Church and forced to find a home elsewhere. (Newsletter. Issue 8 July 07)

A third group called Reformission Scotland have concluded that the only way ahead is ‘a reformed church planting initiative in Scotland.

In Scotland, ten men with the same vision from three denominations, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland and the Associated Presbyterian Church formed an advisory committee called *Reformission Scotland*. (Reformissionscotland.com ‘How we began’)

Under ‘getting involved’ the website goes on to state, ‘we are actively recruiting suitable men.’ This organisation is in partnership with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States. From the website of this parent body it is possible to download an extensive position paper excluding women from ordination to either eldership or ministry of word and sacrament.

As we see, underlying the Same Sex Relationship debate are issues of gender and gender role. This debate is played out against the wider Western societal debate about masculinity or rather masculinities. There exist vague notions of a crisis in masculinity (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2007, p. 4) often incited by the media, popular culture and the advertising industry (Faludi, 1993, p. 9). Some see the media as having taken over the role of the church ‘in producing social cohesion and moral conscience’ (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2007, p. 144). This sense of a crisis in masculinity is frequently blamed on feminism and the desire of women to step out of the traditional gender roles. The present threat to hegemonic masculinity in Western society is the increased visibility of LGBT people. Gay men in particular can, invisibly, gain access to male privilege and then

become visible (as gay) with full male rights.<sup>21</sup> The LGBT movement has enabled gender to become an important lens through which to view the changes in society. However, traditional masculinity seeks to reassert its power and the backlash, especially in the Church, is not only against the LGBT community but also against women – Eve has been at the apple again! There is a fine irony, that if Callum Brown is correct and the Church of Scotland has lost its place in Scottish society as the arbiter of ‘femininity’ that it has now become the battle ground for the definition of ‘masculinity.’ Inevitably, if ‘masculinity’ in the Church becomes redefined in more traditional terms, a more traditional ‘femininity’ is the obvious accompaniment. Several of the women remarked on their concern about the outcome of the Same Sex Relationship debate within the Church and its implications for the ordained ministry of women.

### ***The Future: Integration or a Glass Chasm?***

The notions of the glass ceiling, preventing women from rising to the top of an organisation or profession and the glass elevator or escalator which account for the especially rapid progress of men in feminized workplaces or professions, are well known. A more recent concept is that of the ‘glass cliff’ (Ryan M. K., Haslam, Wilson-Kovacs, Hersby, & Kulich, 2007). The ‘glass cliff’ theory suggests

that women may be preferentially placed in leadership roles that are associated with an increased risk of negative consequences. As a result, to the extent that women are achieving leadership roles, these may be more precarious than those occupied by men (Ryan M. K., Haslam, Wilson-Kovacs, Hersby, & Kulich, 2007, p. 6).

Thus women are more likely to be placed in leadership positions in companies which are showing financial downturn and reduced performance. The ‘Glass Cliff’ is a new theory and the existence of such a ‘Glass Cliff’ was contested by over 50% of the male respondents in a further study (Ryan, Haslam, & Postnes, Reactions to the glass cliff: Gender differences in the explanations for the precariousness of women's leadership positions, 2007). In Chapter 2 we noted the extent to which the Church of Scotland fitted with Mark Chaves theory that denominations ordain women depending on their relationship with the prevailing culture and with other denominations (Chaves, 1997). However, the Glass Cliff theory raises another question. By the time the Church of Scotland began to ordain women (to the eldership in 1966 and to ministry of word and

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<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of symbolic subversion see **Invalid source specified**.

sacrament in 1968), the church was already in serious decline. From a high point in 1956, the decline in numbers became increasingly severe (Brown C. , 2001, p. 165). The 1960's in particular took a heavy toll on Church membership and Church attendance. Brown suggests that an already feminized version of Christianity with a strong emphasis on feminine piety, went into freefall as women began a major restructuring of female identity during the 1960's – a restructuring of identity which did not depend on religious practice or discourse (Abrams, Gordon, Simonton, & Yeo, 2006, p. 105). Was there a 'glass cliff' element to the decision to ordain women? As we have already noted, there are male ministers within the Church of Scotland whose argument is that these are particular times when there are not enough men, therefore God is graciously allowing women to be ministers for the moment. In truth there is at least one women minister (who declined to be interviewed for the study) who holds the same view.

For the future, the views of women ministers are, as you might expect, mixed. There are some who are reasonably hopeful, who identify signs of change within the Church and who feel that as the numbers of ordained women grow, acceptance will increase and women will be integrated in a Church which has grown to accommodate them rather than just absorbed them within the existing structures. However, there are others who feel that as Catriona does that 'the Church has a long way to go in understanding gender issues,' or like Lorraine, that it is still 'an uphill struggle.'

However, a substantial minority of the women expressed apprehension and anxiety about the future. A number mentioned the issue of women as Moderators of the General Assembly. There was a feeling that the appointment of Dr Alison Elliot, whilst a real affirmation of the eldership, was a real setback for women ministers. Whilst Dr Elliot was the first woman, the fact that she was not ordained to ministry of word and sacrament meant that a man was called upon to celebrate sacraments and fulfil ministerial functions during her Moderatorial year. That situation was rectified with the appointment of Rev Shelagh Kesting in 2007. However, women ministers get the impression that this is a box which has been ticked. In 2008 only one of six nominees for Moderator was a woman. In 2009, 2010 and 2011 there have been no women nominees for the role.

Some spoke of the hardening of theological attitudes and the deepening of the theological divide, most clearly seen in the same sex relationship debate. That hardening of attitudes has led to a real concern that women could lose their hard won ordination and that

the Church of Scotland might, under the influence of what one woman calls ‘the strong young men of the Church,’ regress.

For my own part, as I look back to the incident which began this study and my questioning of whether things had changed and whether life was any better for female candidates now than it had been for me, the answer is somewhat depressing. There are undoubtedly areas in which things have improved. Unquestionably the acceptance of women’s ministry within congregations and within the wider community has improved. However, along with Janet Wootton, I feel the present situation is precarious (Wootton J. , 2007, p. 204), because of the backlash against women’s leadership which is somewhat fuelled by the media (Faludi, 1993, p. 99ff), because of the hardening of theological attitudes over the same sex relationships debate and because of the numerical growth of ministers who belong to the right wing of the Church. Women ministers have no defence against those who lie about their attitudes to the ordination of women during the assessment process. For myself, I feel we teeter on the brink of a deep glass chasm into which the ordained ministry of women might tumble and once again for a period, be lost from sight.

On the other side of the coin, this project has filled me with humble admiration for the women ministers of the Church of Scotland who, with creativity, humour and grace simply ‘get on with the job’ of ministering to God’s people in love.

## ***Conclusions***

This chapter considered the position of women ministers of the Church of Scotland today and suggested that they were both pioneers and tokens. Although some of the older women expected to be pioneers, it is a surprise to many of the younger women to discover that, after forty years, they are still pioneering. As tokens, women ministers suffer from high visibility and experience the effects of polarization and assimilation. Moving on to discuss marginality, we argued that women ministers are still marginalised but some chose to recognise this and use marginalisation constructively. Moving then to look at the future, the chapter considered the conflicting gender discourses within the Church as a barrier to full integration for women ministers and recognised the extent to which many women ministers feel that their position is not secure nor the future assured. The edge of a glass

chasm into which all the progress in women's ministry might fall is an uncomfortable and anxious place for some of the women ministers in the Church of Scotland. Further research into the competing gender discourses within the Church of Scotland would not only be interesting, but may also be vital to the long term well-being of the Kirk.

## Conclusion

This project is the first major study of the experiences of the women clergy of the Church of Scotland. As such it has broken new ground, but also, perhaps more importantly, it provides a basis from which other research might, and hopefully will, grow. This is a critical time for the Church of Scotland and arguably for all the mainstream denominations in the United Kingdom. Research into what has been and what is currently happening in the relationships between churches and the wider culture, would enable the churches to understand more clearly, the changes God is calling them to make.

The Prologue set an autobiographical context for the project and showed it to be founded in my own experience and questions. That context, being a member of the researched group, has been a strength of this project. However, it cannot be denied that an ‘outsider’ would bring a different perspective. The context, in that I am a full time minister and a spare time researcher has meant that the project has taken some time to bring to fruition.

Chapter 1 showed that whilst the project began in my own experience it was also important in the context of early twenty first century Church life. The underlying theology, epistemology and methodology of the project were then considered. The method was then outlined and the chapter showed that both survey and ‘ministry story’ interview methods were used in order to elicit a greater depth of description of the experiences of the women clergy who participated. Finally outstanding concerns and the ethical implications of the project were discussed.

Chapter 2 examined the literature on women’s ministry available in English. It recognised that there were many questions raised by the literature and that these fell into three broad categories, theological questions, sociological questions and feminist questions. These questions then informed the remainder of the study.

Chapter 3 presented the results of the quantitative research from the Church of Scotland Year Book, figures supplied by the Ministries Council of the Church of Scotland, and the survey carried out for the project. The profile of the Rev Elizabeth Average, who is a married parish minister in the Central Belt was devised. Elizabeth is in her second or third charge, is over 50 and has been in the ministry for more than ten years. She is content in her present charge and believes that men and women ministers do some things

differently. This chapter indicates the need for further research on whether women ministers really do, do things differently or whether that is apocryphal. If women ministers do things differently, to what extent is that a matter of choice rather than a complying with societal role expectations. This chapter also highlights the need for further research to keep track of what may be a trend towards a reduction in the proportion of women ministers as part of the whole – that is a very simple matter of audit.

Chapter 4 considered the background of women ministers. It found, unsurprisingly that most were brought up in Christian families and, in line with the American research, it highlighted the importance of strong male role models, often the father. Christian nurture was important and the more conservative churches appear to have been better at offering such nurture, though the women may have turned away from their conservative theology in the end. “Call” to ministry frequently followed an irregular path with some barriers which needed negotiating. Training for the ministry was generally a positive experience. Further research which explores the hesitant nature of women’s response to “Call” and which looks further at the barriers to ministry for women, would be valuable. Whilst the women in the project often overcame quite considerable barriers in order to answer their “Call” which would tend to indicate that, if the sense of “Call” is strong enough, nothing will stop women from answering that call, nonetheless, there are a considerable number of women who, having been ordained, then leave the ministry and frequently thereafter have little to do with the institutional church. Those who have left ministry would be another interesting group to study. In the light of the reducing number of people who grow up with a Church background, there could be useful general research on Christian nurture within groups.

Chapter 5 examined the experiences of women ministers from the time when they finished their training and were eligible to seek a call to a charge. It considered their relationships with congregations and with parishes and found a gradually improving acceptance. The strategy of ‘getting on with the job’ to win people over was highlighted. This gained acceptance from individuals but seemed to do little to change the Church as a whole. The issues which faced the women ministers, as they fulfilled the roles of ordained ministry were also discussed and set in the context of the literature. Finally some of the joys and sorrows of ministry were outlined with the greatest joy being named as the privilege of sharing in the lives of others. A closer examination of the ‘getting on with the job’ strategy: whether it actually works, and whether it is a preferred choice or simply making the best of restricted opportunities within the institution, would allow women ministers to be clearer about strategies for the future. A comparison of the preferred roles



of male and female ministers, if indeed there are any differences, would allow the Church of Scotland to deploy its increasing limited number of ordained ministers in the most suitable roles.

In Chapter 6 the positive and negative experiences of women ministers in relation to their colleagues are presented. There are many ‘war stories’ of opposition from male colleagues. Unlike the situation with congregations and the wider community, opposition from colleagues is not reduced by the experience of women’s ministry. The Church of Scotland has been unwilling or unable to address this issue through the superintendence system. Thus women’s ministry within the Church of Scotland is still unfinished business for many women. On the question of whether the Church of Scotland is changing there is no consensus amongst women ministers. However, great concern is expressed by the interviewees that the Church is failing to meet the needs and aspirations of the population of Scotland. Further research areas include: an examination of the organisational culture of the Church of Scotland and the implications of that culture for women; and a study of women’s ministry and the superintendence process, looking at the failure of the superintendence process to enforce the legislation on the ordination of women and at whether women are more vulnerable when situations of conflict arise.

Chapter 7 outlined the position of women ministers in the Church of Scotland today and argued that they were both pioneers and tokens. Following a discussion of marginality, it argued that women ministers are still marginalised but some chose to recognise this and use marginalisation constructively. Looking to the future, the chapter considered the conflicting gender discourses within the Church as a barrier to full integration for women ministers and recognised the extent to which many women ministers feel that their position is not secure nor the future assured. Some women ministers felt themselves to be on the edge of a glass chasm into which all the progress in women’s ministry might fall. The studies of clergy personality types which have taken place in other denominations in the United Kingdom would make a fascinating study within the Church of Scotland. Does the very different Church polity of the Church of Scotland make a significant difference to the types of people who are attracted to its ministry? As this project reaches its end, the Church of Scotland faces the prospect of major rift over the issue of same sex relationships. As was noted, this is a complex debate which is about rather more than same sex relationships. Whatever the outcome, the Church of Scotland is likely to be radically changed. There will be need for further research into the gender issues which underlie the

issue. No matter what the shape of the Church of Scotland in the future, it has a need to take seriously the competing gender discourses of wider society and to pay heed to Professor Callum Brown's research on the loss of women from the pews.

The Epilogue is a piece of 'creative non fiction.' It deals with the responses to the overtly theological area in the interviews. *'Has there been, for you, a Biblical story; a Biblical character or a verse which has been especially meaningful in your ministry?'* In the light of the situated and storied responses the blog format was chosen as a mechanism for preserving the chosen Biblical and theological responses, within their settings whilst still preserving the anonymity of the writers. In the epilogue we see women ministers displaying their identities as priests, pastors and prophets. We hear their voices as they reflect theologically on situations and events in their ministry. In this Epilogue the faith and devotion of the women ministers shines through.

There are other research questions too. In terms of women ministers themselves there are questions to be asked about the difference 'age' makes to the experiences and relationships within ministry. Are the age related issues, which some of our interviewees mentioned, part of a wider societal picture or something specific to the Church. Much of the resistance to women's ministry seems to have crystallized around funerals. As was noted, funerals were traditionally gendered in Scotland. Is the resistance to women ministers simply tradition or are there deeper issues of purity and holiness at play.

The project ends at a time of uncertainty for the Church of Scotland, but then, churches always live, or should live, in uncertain times. There are great possibilities ahead of a Kirk which is very different and which might in time be the fully integrated community of women and men for which most of our interviewees hope. At present, the situation for my female students is better now than it was when I first came into the ministry, insofar as acceptance from congregations and the wider community is much greater than it was then. However, in terms of relationships with the institution and with colleagues, the situation is no better and arguably might be considered worse. From a personal perspective, I have lost the conviction that women ministers will win acceptance simply by 'keeping their heads down and getting on with the job.' Whilst I believe that strategy has worked in parishes and congregation, I also believe that 'keeping our heads down' has allowed the institutional church to overlook us and some of our colleagues to look down on us. I now believe that we, as women, will have to overcome our fears of

being labelled 'bolshy' or 'aggressive' and learn to challenge the institution. I record my respect for those who have and who already do!

In keeping with its Christian commitment, the project finds hope which is why it ends, not with my fears and anxieties but with the faithful, thoughtful practical outworking of theology of the women ministers in the Epilogue.

## Epilogue Rev Elizabeth's Blogspot

### *Introduction*

This chapter deals with the responses to the final area of reflection in the interviews Has there been for you a Biblical story, a Biblical character or a verse which has been especially meaningful in your ministry?

The responses are, in the first instance, woven into a 'creative non fiction' Blog to show them in dynamic use, rather than as detached statements. Discussion of the responses follows showing that many of the responses can be allocated to one of three categories: 1) Priestly words of reassurance; 2) Pastoral affirmations of worth; 3) Prophetic challenge of power. The importance of an inclusive gospel for women is highlighted and the concept of positive marginality is introduced.

In designing this project, dealing as it does with women clergy, I felt the need to ask an overtly 'theological' question. Asking the question is the simple part, writing up the responses proved rather more challenging! My colleagues shared their theological perspectives with great generosity. They not only gave me the Bible story, verse or character as asked but showed it 'in use' in their ministry, enlarging the simple answers with incidents, events and people. These responses are highly personal and gave me concerns about confidentiality. At the same time, simply to present the Biblical stories, characters and verses, devoid of their interpretation and situation seemed to do less than justice to the thoughtfulness of my colleagues and to be a blatant form of writing 'research participants out of their lives' (McCormack, 2000). As was noted in Chapter 1, Christianity is a 'storied' religion. The women ministers interviewed are accustomed to shaping the lives and experiences of their congregations through story. In telling the Biblical references with the stories of their use, they gave real insight into their personal identities as ministers. Amidst the biographical detail of their 'lived lives' was the "told story" containing meanings specific to the narrator, including some unconscious meanings..." (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 45). All these considerations led me to consider using what Laurel Richardson describes as 'creative analytic practices' (Richardson, 2003), rather than a more conventional presentation.

In the last twenty years researchers, and more particularly feminist researchers have considered alternative ways of presenting data. In part, this has been a challenge to the patriarchal hegemony of the academy, but has also been born of a recognition that some data can be more effectively presented by appropriate use of different genre. Performance ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003), poetry (Denzin & Lincoln, *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2003) (Etherington, 2004), art (Ellis C. , 2004), drama (Ellis C. , 2004) (Bochner & Ellis, 2002) and fiction (Bochner & Ellis, 2002) have all been used as forms of presentation. The challenge was to find an ‘appropriate’ form of presentation for this material which would do justice both to the stories and to the applications. Perhaps the most obvious would have been to write the responses into a series of sermons or addresses. However, doing that would have meant expanding the responses far beyond the contexts and situations given by the interviewees. Recent years have seen the rise of the ‘blog’ (weblog) and I am well aware that quite a number of my colleagues, male and female, write ‘blogs,’ so this seemed a form of presentation that would allow the theological reflections of the research participants to be set in the brief contexts which they gave. This writing belongs to the realm of ‘creative non fiction,’ somewhat based on the ‘new journalism’ of the 1970’s, and accepts ‘that social life and the reports about it are social constructions’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).<sup>22</sup>

The Blog is ‘creative non fiction’ in that the theological analysis and interpretations of characters in the Blog are all drawn from the interviews. The situations described, along with many of the accompanying thoughts, are drawn mainly from the interviews supplemented by one or two characters and situations from my own experience of ministry. The creative part is in some of the juxtaposition of theology and story and, of course, attributing it all to the imaginary Rev Elizabeth!

From the outset, as discussed in Chapter 1, this project has been committed to ‘crystallization’ as the central image for validity (Richardson, 2003). It is this search for crystallization, coupled with a concern for confidentiality, which led me to consider an alternative presentation of the results of this question. Crystallization lends itself to mixed-genre texts.

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<sup>22</sup> For a full discussion, see Norman K Denzin ‘The Practices and Politics of Interpretation’ in Denzin and Lincoln ‘*Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*’ p 458- 498 and Darrel N Caulley ‘Making Qualitative Research Reports Less Boring’

The quotations from interviews are italicized.

## ***Rev Elizabeth's blogspot***

Welcome to my blogspot. I'm a parish minister in the Church of Scotland and Sunday by Sunday you will find me in my pulpit in St Anyone's, Sometoun. *Day by day, I have the privilege of walking alongside other people, listening to them, talking to them. Sometimes I'm not sure whether I'm doing any good on the alongside journey, I certainly don't have a 'hotline' to God. Sometimes, I think other people don't quite know why I am alongside them either, but hopefully, in some small way, my travelling along with them makes a difference. It's a bit like the road to Emmaus really, two people walking along encounter a stranger – and they don't really know who he is or why he's there at first, but eventually, they understand - it all becomes a bit clearer.*

June 23<sup>rd</sup>

Wandering around the shops this morning, playing hookey really, on my way from a meeting. There I was in the queue for the tills when I noticed the lady next to me, not sure what made me speak, but I made some passing remark about the long wait. She didn't just smile politely, she commented on my bag with its big picture of a cat on the outside. *She was a cat lover and her cat had to be put down a couple of days ago, we talked for a bit about animals and how we get attached to them and how difficult it can be when they die. By this time we'd both been served, but then, well then it all came out, her father is dying of cancer, so her grief about the cat is all mixed up with her grief about her father - the loss she is experiencing now a foretaste of the loss she knows is coming. Would the conversation have happened if I'd been wearing a 'dog – collar' and had looked like a minister?' Probably, I think she just needed to talk and I happened to be around. A casual start to a conversation took us somewhere much deeper. Was it like that for the Samaritan woman at the well – did it take just a random remark from a stranger to unleash the floodgates of her misery? I don't know. But I do think that if we as Christians, as a Church, were more able to get out amongst people – to meet them where they are, rather than waiting in our half empty churches for people to want to come in - we might have a better chance. Jesus didn't always wait for people to come to him' Hmmm! Maybe it's just about being interested in people and their stories. How do we show people that we're interested? But there's more to that story, isn't there – because the whole point about that*

*incident is that not only was Jesus talking to a woman, she was a Samaritan. And in the Bible you can hear his disciples being unhappy about all of that. So, it's not just 'how do we show people that we're interested?' it's more 'how do we show the unseen people, the hidden people, the avoided people, that we're interested? Answers on a postcard please.....*

June 28<sup>th</sup>

Church BBQ this evening. Hope the weather holds! It's something of a special event for us and wouldn't you know it, some of the men have decided that they will cook. What is it about men and barbeques? Tom, one of our elders, said to me that they were just following Jesus, who, after all cooked a barbeque on the beach after his resurrection. Oddly enough, I don't agree with him. *That story, for me, is about Jesus being ordinary, it's about him being part of everybody's life. To me, that's so 'anti' the kind of power trip that we are about in the church and people dressing up in wonderful outfits and parading around climbing some invisible ladder to success. And there was Jesus, sitting on the beach, building a fire and making the breakfast. So, not holding centre stage at a big event barbeque, but making the breakfast for those (men) who were out working – just making the breakfast, doing the ordinary.*

June 29<sup>th</sup>

The weather did hold and the BBQ was a great success. Thank you God! The men did do the cooking – not the preparing of salads or boring stuff like that – but the hot coals and lighter fuel bit! But then, when it was finished, who did the clearing up? Yup, you've guessed! I was reminded of one of my minister friends who always says she should be called 'Martha.' She says *if you want to find me in the Kingdom of Heaven, I'll be the one doing the dishes!*

July 1<sup>st</sup>

Met up with Mary, one of my colleagues, last night. She's having a very hard time. It's difficult to sit and hear such pain and unhappiness. It all started just after she went there with one wee group who didn't want a woman minister. She went to see them but they weren't willing to be won over. Gradually over the last couple of years they have spread more and more gossip and rumours and generally blackened her name. She feels hurt and lost because she asked the Kirk Session to do something about them, to support her, and they wouldn't – those of us who are a bit older could have predicted that. Congregations will usually sacrifice the minister in favour of keeping the peace, living the quiet life. Now

the gossip in the town says she has mental health problems and isn't fit to be a minister. Reminds me a bit of Mary Magdalene, *you know that bit in Luke where she is in a group of women and she is summed up by being described as 'Mary Magdalene, who was healed from seven demons,' and that's all they've got to say about her. There she is, a whole person, with a ministry, but in certain circumstances people will reduce her too 'she's had mental illnesses' or 'she's had demons to fight with.'.... and that's what we're supposed to remember about her, not that she's got gifts, not that she's supporting the other disciples with her money! Mary Magdalene was the first one at the Grave, the first witness, yet what's remembered about her is all the negative stuff. And what will be remembered about my friend Mary when she manages to leave that parish – not her strengths, but her weaknesses, not that she gave her whole self to her ministry, but that it ended disastrously. Sometimes I think that is especially true of women ministers – you have these times when you feel people are looking for the chinks in the armour that they perceive there to be, to take you down a tack.....that sense that they are looking for weaknesses, almost to prove, 'See, well, I'm not so sure women really can do it.'* Mary Magdalene is a reminder of how others can get hold of your story. She just did what she felt was right and she had a gospel to proclaim, but there was still some section of the world she lived in that couldn't cope with her being a female apostle and instead emphasized the fact that at one point she needed healing – and that was counted as weakness.

July 2<sup>nd</sup>

Thinking a bit more about my friend Mary and the Mary Magdalene stories. *How must Mary Magdalene's life have changed when she met Jesus, how much of a sense of worth must she have gained as the first witness?.* I pray that my friend Mary can encounter Jesus again and feel her own worth, despite all that is being said about her.

July 5<sup>th</sup>

The papers make grim reading this morning. Black headlines about the ups and downs, mainly downs, of a cricket team and then, just tucked away in the inside pages, a few lines on famine in Africa – a casual few lines about thousands dying contrasted with pages on cricket. Not that I really have anything against cricket or any sport for that matter, it's just that we seem to take the famine so lightly, the death of a few thousand people doesn't really touch us. *I've been reading through Amos this month in my personal devotions and I think it's just so sad that after almost 4000 years, nothing has changed. The things that he was saying were unjust in this world are every bit as unjust, and every bit still in existence.*



July 10<sup>th</sup>

Another very difficult phone call with Mary. She's had a visit from someone from 121. Was it helpful? – not at all. She says she feels *like John the Baptist, waiting to be beheaded*. I think perhaps she's *like the Baptist in another way too* – because hard though this has all been, hard though it still is, *it has brought to light something deeply divisive in the congregation, something that needed dealt with*, something which hopefully now the Presbytery will deal with. *So I think she's been levelling mountains and filling in valleys – making the rough places smooth*. But at what cost? *Lugging all that rock around was never going to be easy!*

July 21<sup>st</sup>

The holiday club starts next week – what fun! I really enjoy it, enjoy getting stuck in with all the craft stuff. But it's the struggle to make it different, to make it authentically Christian without feeling that we're shoving the Bible down the kids throats. Some of my co-leaders can't see why we need to bother with the Christian bit – *but I feel we sell ourselves short, we sell Christ short, if we just allow the Church to be like any other social group*. *I did ask for help from the central office for youth work in Glasgow. It has not been forthcoming – I wonder if I'm the wrong flavour of theology? I can't help feeling that if some of my colleagues had asked for help, it would have been forthcoming.*

July 28<sup>th</sup>

Don't you just love your fellow Christians? Here we are in the midst of a successful week of holiday club, when - boom – a big row between two of the leaders. Well I say a big row, one of them, Jenny, is a young girl, she's terrific with the kids but she doesn't have a lot of confidence in herself, which makes her easy prey for Ma Thompspon. Ma Thompson – well you know the kind, she's the backbone of the guild, has lived all her life in the Church and is a nippy sweetie. Well, Ma Thompson just laid into her about not keeping control of the kids, about giving them too much leeway. I poured some temporary oil on the troubled waters and calmed things down for the moment. Truthfully, Ma Thompson is *getting too old for this, but I wouldn't be brave enough to tell her. I wouldn't want to tell her either, I wouldn't want to make her feel redundant or useless but it takes too much out of her. I'll need to think of a different role for her next year – something necessary but which takes her out of the day to day hassle*. So many of my leaders are getting older, its quite worrying. Meantime, what to do about Jenny? Well, I think tomorrow's Bible study might be about Timothy – *about Paul's words to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, 'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young.'* And maybe we can apply those words

*more widely 'Don't let anyone look down on you because you are.....a woman.....a mother.....a spinster.....middle aged.....grey haired.....whatever. If you feel that God has called you and you are serving God, don't let them criticise you or look down on you. Paul often gets a bad press, especially amongst women, but here, he's encouraging Timothy – Don't let anyone look down on you, think of the faith that you've had since you were a child. Think of when hands were laid upon you. Yes, think I will run with that tomorrow. Volunteers are such hard work. All the energy we expend on trying to keep them happy!*

July 30<sup>th</sup>

*Another conversation with Mary. Things are not good. I do hate it when I see friends and colleagues basically being torn apart and being left a shell of their former self. I think that's awful to hear about in any working situation, but when it happens within the Church, I think it is even worse. I hear of other people who are basically at the end of their tether because of their congregations or because of situations that've been created. I'm sure they're part of it as well, because nobody is ever innocent in most things. But there are some truly hellish situations that I'm aware of, and have friends who've gone through very bad situations, these have both been men and women. And it would be fair to say that the women friends of mine who have gone through hellish situations, it has often been to do with being women, and the men - it tends to be more to do with power, history in a place and things like that.... but I always find that really hard. Mary says that she's now decided to look for another charge. She sounds quite settled in that decision. She says she woke up thinking of the Mark passage where Jesus says 'This is not why I came,' and is moving on to another town. I think it is time for her to move on. Sad though!*

August 4<sup>th</sup>

*Off on holiday tomorrow – yippee. I've managed to get one of my colleagues to cover. Strange isn't it, that you feel you can ask some for cover and not others! I rarely see any of them to be truthful, just see them in the passing at the hospital or Presbytery. I wonder why the ministry is such an isolated profession – or is it just me?*

August 28<sup>th</sup>

*Back from a blissful holiday. Schools are all started. Young Church and Organisations about to start and I've decided to model myself on Peter and be ready to say 'Yes!' to everything and be full of enthusiasm. Maybe it will rub off on the congregation.*

Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>

Well, there's a danger in being Peter! It's all very well to be enthusiastic and say 'Yes!' *but the other thing Peter was renowned for was opening his mouth and putting his foot in it!* Last night I demonstrated how good I am at doing that too! It was just a passing remark, a throwaway line at a meeting – almost a joke about babies. But I should have remembered, I did remember as soon as I saw Carol's face, that this is the anniversary of her miscarriage. I'll go and see her this afternoon, *hopefully God will dig me out of this mess, the way he always did with Peter.*

Sept 4<sup>th</sup>

God is good and Carol didn't hold my faux pas against me – at least not that she showed. We had a good chat and a wee cry. With my three live healthy kids, *I can't imagine what it's like to lose a child – to be honest, I don't want to even imagine it.* There's a lady I know who lost her four year old in a road accident, it happened fifty years ago but she speaks of it as though it were yesterday. *Even when a child goes missing temporarily, your heart stops and it's difficult to think till you find them again. I often think of Mary, Jesus mother, what all did she go through - losing him in the Temple, watching him begin his ministry, hearing the praise and the abuse, wondering if he has gone mad. Does it get better as they get older, I wonder? Is it easier to lose an adult child than a baby? I doubt it, I doubt Mary felt any better about Jesus being grown up when she watched him hang on a cross.*

Sept 10<sup>th</sup>

Went to visit Mr and Mrs Taylor today. Mrs is just out of hospital having had her hip done and there she was running around after him. He told me 'the doctor said it was good for her to look after me.' Aye! Right! I can't imagine any doctor said that. I said to Mrs Taylor, *you know, you're just like Peter's mother in law in the Bible. No sooner had Jesus healed her than she was expected to get up and help make the dinner for all those men!* Well, it gave Mrs a laugh even if Mr was less than impressed.

Sept 12<sup>th</sup>

Quite a lot of setting up to do for the All Age Workshops, but it was good, there were quite a number of us shifting furniture around and laying out tables and so on. *There is something important about working together with other members of the congregation. The relationships are different when you're doing something practical together. I think people feel they can get to know you better in that context, which is good. Maybe it's back to the*

*good old Martha thing again – there is something important about doing the practical things too – after all it was to Martha, good old practical Martha that Jesus said, probably the greatest words that he said ‘I am the resurrection and the life’ So maybe it’s OK to be Martha!*

Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>

It’s been a busy spell with everything starting up again, but last night there was a special moment. We were at the Study Group and all of a sudden, *George understood a bit more about his relationships with God. It’s always humbling, a real joy to see folk, who you thought had an extreme view or who weren’t grasping something, suddenly grasp a whole new image of God they’d never had before, and that for me is just amazing. We were talking about wonder and awe on Sunday and I think that for me the wonder that God has this capacity to change people in ways that we never expected them to. There’s something very wonderful about helping people on their way to a personal belief – to owning their own beliefs not just going along with something because the minister happens to say it or you have read it somewhere, but figuring it out and owning it. It’s like that bit in Job (I’ve already got it written down that it’s to be read at my funeral) about ‘in the last days when my flesh has gone, I myself will see him.’*

Sept 28<sup>th</sup>

Kirk Session meeting last night - when they’re good they’re very, very good and when they’re bad they’re awful! We had a debate about whether we would be involved in a new project for young homeless people that is starting up. Yes, it will involve time (mainly mine I suspect). Yes it will involve money, but for me, it is something of a no-brainer. *Why is it that some people (and those would mainly be men) think that if you say a thing loudly enough and often enough, there can be no arguing with it?* Well, they can say it as loudly as they want, but we try to operate with a collaborative style of leadership and that means listening to the quiet ones – not just those who shout loudly! I said to them, *remember the sheep and goats, and it wasn’t, ‘I was hungry and you read me a Bible story.’ It’s all about just getting in there and doing the practical stuff and then maybe folk will come along and come to church to see - why did you do that, what’s motivating you?* We’re going to be involved in the project!

Sept 30<sup>th</sup>

I comfort myself with the thought, that sometimes, to make progress, you have to get rid of what's holding you back. *In the call of Jeremiah, God says he's got to uproot and knock things down before he can plant and build. And there have been times, and I think this is one of them, where I've had to deal with problems first before we can see new growth – Oh the wonders of working with volunteers. When I preach on a Sunday, I imagine myself laying another foundation stone towards the new.*

Oct 4<sup>th</sup>

Chatting with another friend this morning, Sarah is retired and enjoying life. She says she feels she has been set free – free from all the hassles, the pettiness, the sheer relentlessness of the job. She misses the preaching though. She's doing supply here and there but it's not the same as having an ongoing relationship with a congregation. Funny that she expresses her retirement as freedom – will I feel that way too when, eventually, I get to retire? *Freedom is such a theme in Christianity generally. Freedom from sin, freedom to be yourself, the person God has called you to be. Early on in my time in this parish it was important to the congregation. We had a little group who were power hungry, they wanted to make all the decisions and weren't thrilled with my more consultative type of leadership – because of course, I consulted the whole of the Kirk Session and not just them. It was a really hard time and eventually, the four of them left and went elsewhere. I remember preaching on freedom and especially on Luke 4; 18 – 19. The idea of setting people free is very important – a kind of manifesto. It was important in helping me to stay here at that time and overcome the culture of domination. And it is important that we maintain and build on that freedom and don't allow another culture of domination to develop. It relates too, to my own experience of being set free to be myself. I want other people to experience that freedom also.*

Oct 5<sup>th</sup>

Still thinking about retirement – when you get to that stage what do you do about your sense of call, or does it just go away? What happens to *the word of God that burns, as Jeremiah says 'Like a fire in my heart?'* That burning fire has kept me in the ministry at times when I've felt like leaving.

Oct 8<sup>th</sup>

My Peter impersonation is doing quite well really. *I feel we're making progress as a congregation. I value especially the deeper appreciation of prayer and silence.*

Oct 14<sup>th</sup>

Yet another parish profile through the door. Not one that would appeal to Mary who is still in the throes of looking and meeting nomination committees and so on, but this parish might appeal to me. On paper, *it looks as though they do the kind of things I would like to do. On paper, it looks interesting and as though they and I might be a good match – but what nomination committees say and the reality of a situation are not always the same. Then I suppose what ministers say at interview and the reality of the situation are not always the same either. This one looks interesting – but is it a call? I tend to feel a bit like Samuel, I hear something, but I'm not sure who is calling.* Is God calling, or am I just hearing my own restlessness? More answers on a post card please!

Oct 18<sup>th</sup>

A phone call from the Presbytery Clerk asking me to act as Interim Moderator in a nearby parish. *Theoretically I could say 'no!'* But I haven't really any good reason for saying 'no,' beyond that it will be difficult (they made their last minister's life a misery) and I don't really want all the hassle. The Clerk, sweet talker that he is, says they want to send a woman, and an experienced woman who will treat them with a firm hand, but won't be aggressive or overtly confrontational. Do I fall for that? Not really, but being Interim Moderator is a duty which sometimes you just have to take on and I don't really have an excuse. *Why do I feel like Jonah? I keep trying to run away from things and keep my head down but sometimes I get spat up on the beach to get on with it anyway.*

Oct 20<sup>th</sup>

Well we've decided to go ahead with a new outreach – a whole different kind of worship, complete with loud praise band etc, designed to appeal to the younger folks in the area. Will it work? I have absolutely no idea, but *it fits with my new Peter image! If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat!*

Oct 24<sup>th</sup>

I was out at my niece's hen night last night. I am so glad we still have a week or two till the wedding as one or two of last night's participants will need the time to recover. Quite something to see the groom's aunt – a very senior civil servant, dancing on the table singing YMCA – and she was stone cold sober! But some of us more senior ladies were talking about being professional working women. To what extent is it legitimate to play on your gender to get your own way? I must admit, I have been known to 'act the daft lassie' when it suited me. I tend to look at things and think, there's more than one way to skin a

cat! The Bible offers some very good illustrations of women who use subtle means to get what they want. Tamar and Ruth both spring to mind – are we supposed to emulate them?

Oct 26<sup>th</sup>

Communion this Sunday. *There's something so powerful about the breaking of bread. It's back to the Emmaus story and Jesus being known in the breaking of bread.*

Oct 30<sup>th</sup>

How bad can things get for some people? Mary phoned a wee while ago, almost unable to speak. *The situation in her parish is to be the subject of a formal investigation and the guy from 121 is threatening that they will enact the 'congregation in an unsatisfactory state' legislation. Meantime, she is to go into hospital for a gynae op. She's worried that they will do this investigation whilst she is off on sick leave.* I advised her to phone the Principal Clerk. Sometimes we wonder about those who are employed by our Church Offices! *Over the years one of the Bible passages I've struggled with is the way Jesus treats the Syro-Phoenician woman because I think that, in some ways, defines the way the Church has been towards women at times.*

Nov 1<sup>st</sup>

All Saints! There are those times when I feel angry or depressed and fed up and it's difficult to know who to turn to. It's quite an isolated job ministry and, of course, you always feel a failure when you feel low. This morning though, my reading scheme turned me to Psalm 139. *I love the Psalms because you can go there and just find....everything. You can curse, you can be angry, you can be despairing, you can be happy. Today though in Psalm 139, I found peace. It's that feeling that no matter what happens to you, no matter where you are, no matter how far you might have gone wrong, God is still there, and not only has he got his arms out to you the moment you turn to him, but he's all around, he's underneath, he's above, he's everywhere. And where, as a child, in one sense that's almost frightening, because you used to think 'Oh and does he even know some of the things I think?' – which used to terrify you – but now, it's so comforting.*

Nov 7<sup>th</sup>

Family weddings are wonderful! I enjoy being asked to officiate and it's good to see my young niece look so happy. Ian seems a nice lad, I wish them well! The trouble with all these family occasions is that Sunday looms beyond them! *Being a minister really interferes with your social life.*

Nov 10<sup>th</sup>

A desperately sad visit today. A young mother, Vicky, whose toddler has died of leukaemia. It is heartbreaking. She is a single mum, Ruraidh was born after a drunken one night stand – and she carries such a burden of guilt over all of that, even to the extent of wondering whether Ruraidh's leukaemia *is God's punishment for her as one of her 'Christian friends' told her*. I've asked her, what sort of God would do that? What sort of God would punish a child just because his mother made a mistake? *In my study I have a copy of the painting by Cranach the Elder of the woman caught in adultery. It just speaks to me, not because I have ever been an adulterer – but if you take adultery to be more than the sexual thing, if you take it as a metaphor for being led in another direction, or being led astray, or doing something you know is not right. And this woman, when you see her in the painting, wasn't happy. But she could come to Jesus, and he said, 'I understand you, and you are of worth, and I need you. So away you go and try not to follow that other path, because I need you to do this.'* I keep going back to that story – it's got nothing to do with feeling isolated, or being surrounded by all the men of the church – because that's part of what the story was about – but for me, its for Jesus Christ to recognize me as being someone of worth – and that he has got a job for me to do. That's important in my ministry, to try to get in amongst people, in all their highs and lows and to be able to offer them, not in any twee....but just in a very kind of normal comfortable way, the love of God - and that they're people of worth ..... to be able to say that to people and not just like that, but just in the way that you work with them and you are there with them. I hope I can travel something of that road with Vicky.

Nov 14<sup>th</sup>

Ruraidh's funeral today. Vicky has asked me to read from John's gospel, the traditional funeral passage *'In my father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you.'* For all the words are often repeated, often heard at funerals, I think there's great comfort there. Funerals come and funerals go and many of them don't touch the minister too much. But there are some – oh yes, there are some! The longer you stay in a parish, the more you bury your friends. *Is it OK for the minister to cry at a funeral?*

Nov 15<sup>th</sup>

Sometimes there just seems to be so much on the go – so much grief, so much hurt – not mine, but it's painful to watch other people. I feel like the epileptic boy's father *'Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief'* or help me when faith falls short, which is probably a better



*translation. Sometimes I have the sense that you struggle with things and that struggle can sometimes.....can always be a positive thing if you let it be.*

Nov 16<sup>th</sup>

Mary has been called to another charge. It's truly wonderful for her, I hope she will have the confidence to put this last experience behind her and start again. *She says she feels a bit like the disciples must have done when Jesus calmed the storm. She sometimes thought God wasn't in her situation and called out 'where are you?' and 'do you not care?'* Now she realises again, that God is always to be trusted – and that is awesome.

Nov 19<sup>th</sup>

Quinquennial visitation to another congregation tonight. I find myself *in the 'Timothy' role* – *not the team leader but necessary nonetheless!*

Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>

First meeting with the Kirk Session of the vacant charge – scary business. *'Be bold, be strong, for I the Lord your God am with you.'* *I just have to remember that when I get there.*

Nov 30<sup>th</sup>

At the induction of one of my former students last night. Why she chose to be inducted just before Christmas is beyond me! The sermon was on *'I have called you and I have appointed you'* which has always been an important and confirming text for her. She's not had an easy road to ministry – she calls it *the 'mountainous road to ministry'* because she says, *'you go up and you come to a bit where you think you are at the top, but then there's a dip.'* I wonder if she feels she's at the top of her mountainous road now? I can remember being told at my ordination *'You are called to be faithful, not successful'* – *true, but oh how I would like to be successful!!*

Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>

The season of sausage rolls is almost upon us! I'm not such a great fan of Christmas. The Church of Scotland does everything else quinquennially, so why not Christmas? However, back into Peter mode – time to be enthusiastic. And I should be more enthusiastic about Christmas, *being so negative is really bad for the church. We come to Christmas and all the stories, wonderful stories. When you think that Christmas is a celebration of the Incarnation, you wonder why the Church is so hung up about the human body and human*

*sexuality. Ministers are regarded really as asexual beings, I think. I've known women ministers criticised for wearing skirts that were too short, or earrings that were too long. I often think Jesus embodies Wisdom – and I suppose Wisdom as a female figure in Proverbs is something of my sense of women in ministry. I like that picture of Wisdom as the woman – and I like the sense that people can't work out whether she's the wise woman or the harlot. Although she can be perceived either way, God still speaks through her, I think that is very interesting and it raises all the questions about sexuality that the church would rather ignore. She feels like quite a wild character, but very profound.*

Dec 5<sup>th</sup>

Sometime people can be so nasty – and they get you at the end of a service when you're feeling quite vulnerable anyway. I just have to grit my teeth and *remember Romans 12 'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.'* I need to keep that as a motto!

Dec 6<sup>th</sup>

Off to the Church offices to take one of the Bible Studies in preparation for the World Day of Prayer in March. I don't really know how I got onto their list but my name seems to come up every three or four years. This year they're looking at the Ruth story. *It's a wonderful empowering story. I love the fact that the story is included in the Bible in the first place. That women are actually given that role and told 'you know, you're needed for the formation of faith – and the way that faith continues because you're the people who will say, 'I will go where you go, and I will love your God as much as you love him,' and I think it is really important that that story is there – though I don't like the last bit where she hands all the power back to the men.*

Dec 14<sup>th</sup>

*What was it like for Mary to hand over her body like that? There's a lot to think about at this season – a lot about Mary and motherhood – not the pale blue and white motherhood of the Madonna pictures – but real motherhood. I've seen a picture of a Madonna and child statue, where Mary is swinging the toddler Jesus on his feet in a dance – that's one aspect of the real thing.*

Dec 20<sup>th</sup>

All the focus now on *Jesus himself – after all, he really is the role model for ministry and all of life.*

Dec 26<sup>th</sup>

*I love the passage about the 'self emptying' of Christ – it really says all that Jesus has done and all that that means. I don't feel any sense of 'self emptying' for myself – I just feel totally drained.*

Dec 30<sup>th</sup>

New Year's resolutions – what will they be? Well, I certainly resolve to get our new outreach services up and running. I share with Paul that missionary imperative, the old Archbishop Temple thing that the church is the only organisation that exists for those outside it.

Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>

Time to start thinking of Easter I suppose. What will we do this year? What will we focus on? *Maybe the fact that women were the first apostles, the ones that actually stood by and managed to deliver, whereas the men were running shit scared out the way!*

## ***Discussion***

As noted in the previous chapter, women ministers find it difficult to bring about change within the structures of the Church of Scotland. Whilst some of the women feel that things are changing, they are changing slowly in the perceptions of most women, though as Muriel reminded us, in the grand scheme of things and given the length of time the Church of Scotland has existed, perhaps the change is quite rapid.

I think this has changed in actually quite a short time. Those of us who are living it probably don't feel it is a short time, but in the big scheme of things, it is actually quite a short time in which these perceptions have changed.' (Muriel)

As denominations consider ordaining women as clergy, as we have noted in Chapter 2, all kinds of anxieties are expressed. Most of these anxieties concern the obvious impact that women might have simply by being visible. Will they lead their susceptible male colleagues astray? Will young men be put off ministry as a career if there are women? Will men be alienated from the church if it is 'full of women?' Can women be good administrators? (Nesbitt, *Clergy Feminization: Controlled Labor or Transformative Change?*, 1997, p. 22). In the Church of England, in common with other denominations, whilst there was a willingness to accept women on the grounds of equality, there was concern that 'women should not be allowed to 'take over' the church' (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 103). In fact, there is little evidence that any of these prophecies of doom come to pass, indeed Ian Jones comments that 'many Anglicans were able to accept women's ministry as priests so easily, partly because it appeared strikingly similar to the kind of ministry long provided by men' (Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England*, 2004, p. 103).

The lack of any transformation is often a cause for depression amongst women clergy and those men who had hoped that the ordination of women would bring about radical change. However, change in a church comes about not just through change in organizational structures or pastoral care but also through changes in theology.

While it is true that women will want to do theology in new ways, from different places and in different places, it should not be denied that women have theological voices. We have as much to say about the Trinity as about the care of the dying, as much to say about who Jesus was and is as about justice, peace and the care of creation, as much to say about how to read the Bible as how to pray in warm lively words (Durber, 2007, p. 128).

Week by week, women ministers in Scotland enter pulpits and worship spaces, lead Bible Studies, prayer groups and adult education groups and week by week, they shape the theology of their congregations. Within these congregations perhaps, little changes are taking place. And as we noted ‘Worship Anthology : A Collection of Worship Resources by Women Ordained to Word and Sacrament’ (Craggs, Macalister, Mehigan, & Steenberg, 2008) shows that women are creative and inventive in worship, prayer and preaching. We turn now to a closer analysis of the responses to the final question of the Interviews.

Many of the women gave more than one character, story or text as significant, reflecting that the significance of a particular Biblical passage or character might change over the years or might be appropriate for different parts of their lives or ministry. So, the two women who were at that stage in sector or specialised ministry, both chose characters and gave explanations which they felt were suited to their ministry at that time.

In crude numerical terms, Martha was the most popular of the characters with four references, whilst Peter, Timothy and the Samaritan Woman were next with three references each. However, perhaps more interesting is the use the women made of their selections. The choices were wide and varied and a few do not fit into any pattern, but quite a number into one of three main strands.

### **Priestly words of reassurance**

The first group of responses could be classified as words of reassurance. Here we find some well known verses like ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions’ and ‘there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ our Saviour.’ Both of these are regular readings at funeral services and it is hardly surprising that they have come to mean a great deal to women who use them very regularly. Likewise the Emmaus road story, a story of Jesus travelling alongside, unrecognised till the breaking of bread was meaningful for more than one, partly because of the unrecognised Jesus but also because of the liturgical act of breaking bread. Included in this group would be an interpretation of Samuel’s call, not just for the call itself, but for the reassurance the story offers in times of frustration, that there is ‘more to life than we can conjure up rationally and physically. God

is there.’ Here too we would find Psalm 139 and the hymn from Philipians. The story of Jesus calming the storm is told in the context of living through stormy personal times. Finally the two texts ‘Be bold, be strong, for I the Lord your God am with you.’ And ‘Do not be overcome by evil, rather overcome evil with good.’

In this first group of responses, the women ministers are using texts and stories in straightforward and conventional forms. They apply the texts and stories to their own lives and from that use them also as pastoral tools in the lives of others. These are the priestly uses of scripture and story, drawing on the familiar liturgical scripts.

### **Pastoral affirmations of worth**

The second group of responses are all concerned with affirmation of worth, the worth of the individual. So the acknowledgement of Martha, not just for her practical outlook, which was acknowledged as important, but rather because she was the one to whom Jesus said, I am the Resurrection and the Life and because she makes confession of her faith to him. Mary, her sister, gets no mention. The Woman and the Well is significant because Jesus stepped outside the societal norms to speak to this woman, for not only was she a woman, she was also a Samaritan and women who chose this character did so for precisely that transgressive quality which they felt informed their ministries to people who were marginalised. Mary Magdalene was chosen as an unrecognised heroine and one whose story was hi-jacked. There is a general perception that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute – but that is never said in Scripture. In the story of the woman taken in adultery, the emphasis is on Jesus’s recognition of her unhappiness, his acceptance of her as a person of worth – an acceptance which minister’s can offer to all who are unhappy. Ruth was chosen as an exemplar of an empowering role for women, a role in faith formation, even if the minister concerned did admit her dislike of the end of the story where, she perceives that Ruth hands her power back to a man. Timothy was chosen by one of the women who had come into the ministry whilst she was still quite young and it was the phrase ‘Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young’ which had been meaningful and which, as her youth passed, she extended into the other roles and places where she felt people might diminish her or look down on her. Then of course, there were the women apostles, who ‘delivered’ at a time when the men ran away ‘shit scared.’ Of course not all the responses in the affirmation of worth category were characters. Verses were offered too and these tended to need little explanation ‘I have called you and I have appointed you’ or from Jeremiah’s call ‘I will give you the words to say.’

In this group of responses, we see women ministers responding with interpretations of texts and characters which affirm their right to be who they are and where they are and which are then developed to offer an inclusive gospel to those who suffer. Within the Church of England, Mandy Robbins has gathered evidence which suggests that women have more inclusive values and beliefs than their male counterparts (Robbins, 2007; Vol 28 No 1). Whilst we have no data for Church of Scotland male clergy to use in comparison, these responses from our group of women indicate their concern for an inclusive gospel.

## **Prophetic Challenges of power**

The final group of responses are prophetic, responses of challenge to the established structures of the Church and Society. These responses include the character of John the Baptist and the reflections of one of the early ordained ministers of her role in levelling mountains and making rough places smooth for a generation of women ministers who followed her. She also reflects on the beheading of John the Baptist, in a reference to a situation which brought her into conflict with many on the right wing of the Church over the issue of homosexuality. But included in these prophetic voices are the reflections on Wisdom, the female figure with all the confusion which pertains to her use of her sexuality. In this category too, we find Tamar who also used her sexuality to seduce her father in law and gain her rights as a widow. We also find the erotic poetry of the Song of Songs given as a text of meaning for one of the women ministers.

Luke 4; 18 – 19 is cited by another as a personal manifesto about setting people free from the domination of the powerful. The challenge to the existing power structures is given too as the reason behind choosing the story of Jesus cooking the breakfast on the beach for the disciples, the minister who chose it wished to celebrate Jesus ordinariness, his being part of everybody's life. This she felt was so ‘‘anti’ the kind of power trip that we are about in the Church and people dressing up in wonderful outfits and parading around, climbing some invisible ladder to success.’

Amos and his plea for justice for the poor and oppressed is cited, and echoing that theme, the parable of the sheep and the goats where the acceptable answer is not ‘I was hungry and you read me a Bible story.’

The psalms, say one woman, allow you to be angry with God, to shout at him or to be depressed or to lament. Again, the story of the Samaritan woman could be cited in this category too, because it's attraction for the women ministers who use it, was the transgression of boundaries. Then there were the responses which cited Jonah, his desire to escape from God – and his finding himself 'spat up on the beach' to get on with it.

The prophets of ancient Israel called their nation to account. They challenged injustice, wrongdoing and the corruption of God's spirit. From a position on the edge, they challenged those who held themselves to be at the centre. Speaking on behalf of the weak, they called on the powerful to change. The tradition of the prophet is long and honourable and readily found a place in Christianity. In this last set of responses, we see women ministers speaking in that prophetic tradition, calling for change and challenging the status quo. Patricia Yeaman in a study carried out within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, draws on the work of Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, 1993) to consider the differences between men's and women's prophetic voices. She found, as Gilligan might have predicted, that there were differences between the men and the women in her study, in that men focussed on fairness and due process whilst the women focussed more on inclusion (Yeaman, 1987, p. 375). As we see from the prophetic responses of the women ministers in our group concerns range from sexuality, to power, to poverty and the transgression of boundaries. Underlying the prophetic voice too, is the call for a more inclusive gospel.

Often, the Christian Church holds itself to be a prophetic voice, calling society to account for infringement of human rights, or exclusion of minorities, and in the present day, in Britain, the Christian Church undoubtedly occupies a position on the edges, but the prophet need not necessarily speak from the margins. Yeaman comments

Often a marginal voice spoken by those on the fringes of the institution, the prophetic voice can also arise from those who, while firmly within the institution, envision its present and future possibilities differently from other members (Yeaman, 1987, p. 4).

As we saw in Chapter 7, women clergy, along with women working in other predominantly male professions are sometimes regarded as being on the fringes of their professions. Those who adopt the prophetic role choose to use that marginality for positive outcomes.



## ***Conclusion***

In the Rev Elizabeth's blog, we have seen the theological responses of the women ministers of the Church of Scotland played out in real situations. In discussion we have noted that most of the responses fall into one of three categories: 1) Priestly words of reassurance; 2) Pastoral affirmations of worth; 3) Prophetic challenge of power. We have noted the importance of an inclusive gospel for women ministers but lack the data to consider whether they are substantially different, in this respect, from their male colleagues. Finally we have again discussed the possibility that some women clergy deliberately accept a marginal position in order to critique the institution, just as the prophets did of old. Most of all, we hear of the faithful and dedicated ministry carried out on a day to day basis by women ministers in the Church of Scotland.

## Appendix

## Survey Questionnaire

**Please complete the following questionnaire and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided by Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Thank You!**

Please mark the appropriate box

Age

21 -30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	61 - 70	Over 70
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Number of years since Ordination

Not Yet ordained	Under 5yrs	5 – 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	20 – 30 yrs	Over 30 yrs
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Marital Status

Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced	In Partnership
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Excluding probationary appointments is this charge or appointment your..... ?

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5 <sup>th</sup> or subsequent
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Type of Ministry

Parish Minister	Associate/specialist	Sector	Academic	Other
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Would you consider a call to a different charge or appointment?

As soon as possible	Within 5 years	Sometime in the future	Not at all	Only retirement
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Research from the USA suggests that there may be differences between men and women in some areas of ministry. In the Scottish context have you noticed any difference between the genders in the following areas of ministry?

	YES	NO	NO DIFFERENCE	DON'T KNOW
Collaboration				
Leadership				
Pastoral Care				
Preaching				
Committee Work				
Vision Building				

***Interviews – areas for reflection***

Call to the ministry

Influences from childhood

Your experience of training for the ministry and of being supervised

Call to a charge

Relationships with congregations

Relationships with colleagues

Perceptions of women ministers

Changes and developments during your ministry

The joys and sorrows of being a woman in ordained ministry today

The Biblical story/ character which best describes your ministry or has been especially meaningful for you.

## ***Interview Letter***

Dear,

Over the last three years I have been engaged in a research project celebrating the first forty years of the ordained ministry of women within the Church of Scotland and you may have been kind enough to return the questionnaire a couple of years ago.

I would like to invite you now to take part in the second phase of the project. This involves taking part in an interview in which I would invite you to tell your ministry story. To give shape and structure to the interview I will invite you to reflect on the following areas:

Call to the ministry

Influences from childhood

Your experience of training for the ministry and of being supervised

Call to a charge

Relationships with congregations

Relationships with colleagues

Perceptions of women ministers

Changes and developments during your ministry

The joys and sorrows of being a woman in ordained ministry today

Is there a Biblical story/ character/verse which best describes your ministry or has been especially meaningful for you?

These interviews generally take 30 – 60 minutes. The interview would take place at a location of your choosing and would be recorded. At the end of the interview you will be invited to choose a suitable pseudonym. The interviews will be transcribed and turned into narrative form, at this stage the tape recording will be erased.

During the transcription your pseudonym will be used and all other identifying details will be anonymised – for instance, the names of your congregations will be erased and they will be referred to by type. The transcribed narrative will be returned to you for alteration and correction and at this stage you can make any alterations that you wish. When you indicate you are satisfied with the ‘ministry-story’ it will be included in the research project. The transcriptions of the interviews will not be printed as part of the PhD, rather quotations will be drawn from them. You may withdraw from this process at any point.

If you are willing to take part in the interviews, please fill in the enclosed slip and return it in the stamped addressed envelope provided, or alternatively please e-mail me on [annetlogan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:annetlogan@blueyonder.co.uk) , or telephone 0131 557 6052.

With all good wishes,

Anne T Logan

Name.....

I am willing to take part in the interview process

I prefer to be contacted by letter/phone/e-mail to set up the interview

I understand I can withdraw from the process at any time

Signature.....

## **Consent Form**

Study Title: A celebration of the first forty years of the ordination of women in the Church of Scotland

Researcher: Anne T Logan

Institution: University of Glasgow

Contact Details: Stockbridge Manse, 19 Eildon St, Edinburgh EH3 5JU.  
Tel 0131 557 6052 E-mail annetlogan@blueyonder.co.uk

I have been given information about the research project and the way in which my contribution will be used

I give my permission for the use of the information I provide for the purpose of illustration in the above Doctoral thesis.

I understand that:

- The researcher will take all steps to preserve my anonymity by the use of a pseudonym and the editing of any recognisable data
- The transcript of my interview will be returned to me so that I may alter or correct as I see fit.
- My contribution will be kept safely and securely with access only to the researcher. Tapes will be erased when transcripts are made and transcripts will be coded to protect my identity
- All transcripts will be destroyed on completion of the project
- No other use of the content of my interviews is permissible except with my consent
- I can withdraw from this project at any time by contacting the researcher

I give permission for the information I am about to give to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity.

Signed Interviewee:

Date

Signed Researcher:

Date

This information will be retained securely and separately from any other information given

## ***Introduction***

This project was originally designed to be a purely qualitative study. However, the decision to include some quantitative material was made at an early stage. Partly because the quantitative material provided interesting demographic background for the major part of the study and partly in acknowledgement of the fact that there are those within both the academy and the Church who are only comfortable with the quantifiable. This appendix shows the Survey Questionnaire; the areas for reflection; the initial letter which invited participation in the interviews and the consent form.

## ***The Questionnaire***

### **Nature**

As indicated in Chapter One the format and the timing of the Questionnaire were critical issues, carefully addressed. Some questions (Age, length of time ordained, type of ministry) were designed to elicit basic demographic information some of which could then be checked against the information in the Year Book to give representative validity. Again, as discussed in Chapter Three, the indications were that the 66% who returned questionnaires were indeed representative of the entire field. Other questions such as those on number of charges previously held; readiness for a further call and marital status were designed to discover whether some of the hearsay about Scottish women ministers, for instance that they found it difficult to achieve a move, was borne out in the experience of the women themselves. The final question were, as indicated in the questionnaire, designed to give a comparison with some findings in the literature about women's ministry in the United States of America. Undoubtedly other researchers might have asked other questions – that is always the case! Undoubtedly too, more questions might have been asked. However, as discussed in Chapter One, it was important to limit the Questionnaire in size and therefore time to complete as that gave a much higher chance of return. It was also limited in size because it was a minor quantitative part of a much deeper qualitative study.

### **Effectiveness**

Insofar as the questionnaire responses gave a good correlation with the information gleaned from the Year Book and from the Ministries Council figures (See Chapter Three) it was an effective indicator that the survey respondents were representative of the wider



field. Likewise the survey did provide some background demographic information which was interesting. It also began the process of testing some of the findings of American studies in the Scottish context and that process was continued in the main part of the project.

The survey was designed to give purely descriptive information and the questions were closed. There was no intention to generate theory from the results and as discussed in Chapter Three, the field is numerically too small to allow for proper statistical analysis. It did generate interesting descriptive material and given that the whole project is descriptive in intention, the survey fitted in well and was a useful tool.

## **Conclusion**

This was not the only survey which could have been carried out. As previously discussed, the area is not much researched so there was a clear field. Other researchers would and no doubt will make different decisions. In the wider question of including quantitative material in a primarily qualitative field, despite the arguments that suggest that quantitative and qualitative researchers worship ‘different gods’ or operate in ‘different cultures’ (Mahonney & Goertz, 2006 Vol 14, p. 227), this is a descriptive or exploratory study rather than an analytical or confirmatory one and the arguments outlined in Chapter One remain good.<sup>23</sup> The only problem which might arise is if the inclusion of some limited quantitative material leads to distorted expectations or understandings of the remainder of the study.

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<sup>23</sup> See (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, On becoming a Pragmatic Researcher: The Importance of Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methodologies, 2005) for the reframing of the concepts

## ***The Interviews***

The arguments for using ‘ministry story’ interviews are outlined in Chapter One. Also to be found there is a list of the areas on which interviewees were invited to reflect (repeated in this Appendix) and the detail of the focus group process which elicited these areas. Chapter One also outlines the interview process.

## **Questions**

It should be noted that there was no formal list of ‘questions.’ Interviewees had been given the list of areas for reflection in advance. As interviewer I simply prompted ‘Would you like to reflect on.....’ ‘Could we talk about.....’ ‘Can we move on now to think about.....’ As might be expected, different people handled the interviews differently. One or two had prepared extensive notes and had organised their thoughts and stories quite clearly and concisely under the various headings. Others were more prone to thinking as they went along with more hesitations, deviations and excursions into other areas. A final group offered almost ‘stream of consciousness’ responses which covered more ground than was ever invited.

On the negative side, this approach made the NVivo coding more difficult and also meant that the writing up could not follow the obvious pattern of simply taking the areas for reflection one by one and working through the answers – quite a number of the interviews departed too radically from the original areas to make that possible. Immersion, the constant reading and re-reading of the transcripts seemed the best option for analysis. On the positive side, the approach allowed for more authentic ‘ministry stories’ in that it allowed the women interviewed, if they wanted, to tell their own stories differently and to tell the story they wanted to tell.

## **Weighting**

Throughout the study every effort was made to treat transcripts equally. Although it is considered normal practice in some qualitative studies to weight the evidence because some data are ‘better’ than others, this was not done in this study. Miles and Huberman argue that data are stronger when

they are collected later or after prolonged engagement and persistent observation; b) when they are observed or reported firsthand; c) when the fieldworker is trusted; and d) when the data are collected in informal settings quoted in (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, *Validity and Qualitative Research: An Oxymoron*, 2007)

None of these conditions applied to this study. Whilst some transcripts were easier to deal with than others they were all accorded equal status in the reporting. Preference was not given to those who were more organised, or to those who were more accessible or precise in their wording. One result of that is that the quotations given from the transcripts are often quite long. This was deliberate and was done to give as much of a flavour as possible of what was actually said and the context in which it was said – again honouring the underlying commitment to keep as much authentic voice as possible. There are times when, in common with other researchers, I have used the same quotation twice. Where this is done, it is to illustrate a different point – quotations are not used twice in making the same point! Again, because many of the quotations are quite long, it is often a different part of the quotation that is relevant to its second usage.

## **Representation**

The question is asked whether this study offers a representative sample of the women ministers in the Church of Scotland. It represents about 10% of them, but it would be difficult to argue that these were necessarily representative of the entire field. In particular, interviewees were self-selecting. Whilst there was some geographical selection as outlined in Chapter One, thereafter interviews could only be carried out by those who responded positively to the letter or e-mail. Diefenbach comments

In the case of research primarily based on interview data the selection of interviewees decides who's worldviews, opinions, and interests will be taken into account – and who's will be ignored and excluded! (Diefenbach, 2009)

Those who responded positively to the invitation to interview may have done so for a variety of reasons; some because they do feel the Church is inherently sexist and some because they feel it is not; some because they have undertaken research themselves and feel a moral obligation to help others; some because they knew the researcher. Interviewees also told their own story and gave their own interpretation of events and conversations. As with any narrative form of enquiry, there can be no external validation of that interpretation. However, the study does not attempt to make statistical generalizations. The focus is on description.

In terms of representation within the body of the study, there was a commitment to try to express as many voices as possible. There was also a deliberate decision not to get tied up in numbers. However, there are clues to the weight of various sections in terms of the use of terms like ‘a few’ – generally under five; ‘some’ - five to twelve; ‘many’ – thirteen upwards; and ‘most’ - more than twenty two.

## Emerging Themes

Questions may be asked in any study about how the themes emerged.

Some of the areas for reflection were themes in themselves. All interviewees spoke of their call to the ministry, of their childhood background, of their training and experiences of supervision, of their joys and sorrows in ways which were relatively easy to identify and report.

In some cases, the themes emerged by sheer weight of numbers. For instance all but one of those interviewed indicated that they felt the perceptions of women ministers in congregations and in the wider community were changing and changing positively. The one exception was a recent arrival in ministry who had never had anything other than a positive reception from congregations. Well over half the women told stories of individuals or groups who had been won over. Around three quarters of those interviewed indicated their awareness of colleagues who did not accept their ministry. As indicated in the study, some ignored it, some were hurt by it, some felt isolated by it. More than half the women interviewed mentioned that the Church had not fully come to terms with women’s ministry or had some way to go - that it was ‘unfinished business.’ However not all themes which had a numerical strength were explored. As discussed in the project, a substantial minority of interviewees made reference to having their ministry refused at a funeral and this issue was not explored – largely because it felt as though it might well be a study in itself. Attitudes to age and youth, this was another unexplored theme. There were also passing references, for example, to the phrase ‘lady ministers’ which occurred noticeably – but these were passing references and did not feel substantial enough to bear anything other than a mention.

Some themes emerged from the literature on women’s ministry. Thus, if there were indications that something found in the USA or in England was also found in Scotland, or

indeed was different in Scotland, that was discussed. Such themes as traditional marriages, dress, leadership styles, barriers to study/ordination arose from the literature.

Other themes emerged in terms of the original question which had provoked the study in the first place. Was life in ordained ministry any better now than it had been when I first was ordained? Only seven of the women mentioned that they felt the hardening of attitudes on both sides of the theological debate and wondered specifically about the implications of that for women's ministry. But as that was where the project had started with the incident with my student and as it is a theme in some of the literature from England and the USA<sup>24</sup>, it was explored. The division between the conservative and liberal wings of the Church of Scotland is a live issue for the denomination at the point of this project's writing and is part of the cultural background. That the future of women's ministry is an issue in this debate takes us back to the arguments of Chaves (Chaves, 1997) and encourages us all to confront the reality that women's ministry depends on particular readings of Scripture and particular understandings of theology and can never be easily taken for granted given the underlying patriarchal texts and traditions of Christianity.

## Researcher bias

There remains with this, as with all qualitative studies, the underlying question of researcher bias and power.

At least theoretically, often practically and emotionally, the researcher is somehow touched by the issues he or she investigates. Researchers are humans. And even if one is not an enthusiastic proponent of certain ideas but more 'a neutral observer', nonetheless he or she usually has an opinion not only about what they investigate but also how these things should be (Diefenback, 2009).

This is particularly true in this study where as noted in Chapter One I am a 'complete member' or indigenous researcher. The study does however, make my commitments and understandings plain. My bias insofar as I know it, is on view for all to see!

A few years ago, I had reason to attend a meeting in a colleague's manse. On my way out, I commented that he, like me, had pictures of the sea and boats decorating his walls. He looked at me askance as he pointed out that his pictures were all of links golf-courses! We see what we choose to see! That is true of research projects too. Other people would have

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<sup>24</sup> See (Wootton J. , *The Ministry of Women in the Free Churches*, 1995) (Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: occupational and organizational perspectives*, 1997)

looked at the transcripts for this project and described a different view. Hopefully, other people will conduct their own research and little by little our understanding of women's ordained ministry will grow.

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