

**BITTER TO BETTER: ENGAGING AMERICAN BAPTIST
AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN CLERGY TO MENTOR
AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN ON THE PATH TO ORDINATION**

**A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree,
Doctorate of Ministry**

Advisor: Dr. David Lawrence, D.Min.

Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett

Drew University

Madison, New Jersey

December 2013

ABSTRACT

BITTER TO BETTER: ENGAGING AMERICAN BAPTIST AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN CLERGY TO MENTOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN ON THE PATH TO ORDINATION

Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett

American Baptist Churches USA

King of Prussia, PA

There are a low number of African-American female pastors in the American Baptist Church (ABC-USA). However, this situation could change if experienced ordained women would consent to act as mentors to other women moving through the ordination process.

Many African-American women find it difficult to lead ABC-USA churches due to lack of support for their gender. Some male clergy, often in leadership roles, seem, when given a choice, to prefer a male over a woman in pastoral leadership. Attitudes within search committees and within congregations have negatively influenced the decision of whether to ordain a "called" woman into a position as pastor. Such resistance has caused some African-American clergywomen to become "bitter" as they struggle with strained relationships, frustrations, isolation, loneliness, and a poor professional self-image.

My Doctor of Ministry project serves as a blueprint for allowing women embittered by the difficulties they discover in being accepted into called ministry to express these feelings in a safe setting, and for engaging and encouraging American Baptist, African-American women clergy to mentor other African-American women who are pursuing

ordination. The conclusions from my project-thesis could help the ABC-USA Women in Ministry initiatives in these matters move forward with the development of an effective mentoring program that addresses the concerns of women of color.

Mentoring in an ABC-USA context can be an experience that will: 1) clarify the need for mentoring; 2) support mentors and protégés; 3) reinforce the biblical message; 4) clarify American Baptist beliefs and congregational culture; 5) strengthen American Baptist ordination practices; 6) establish clear mentoring covenants between mentors and those qualified to be ordained or on the path to ordination, and; 7) increase the number of women pastors of color in ABC-USA churches. The formation of stronger collegial relationships in ministry would be an added benefit. Thus, the results of effective mentoring could move African-American clergywomen to shift their attitudes from “bitter to better.”

DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Rosa M. Robinson, my grandmother and Pastors Elizabeth Birchett, and the Reverend Dr. Shirley Robinson Fountain. These exceptionally wise women inspired me to lead by example.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
My “Bitter to Better” Story	1
Hypothesis Statement.....	7
CHAPTER	
1 BIBLICAL FOUNDATION.....	9
How the Book of Ruth Relates to African-American Women Today	9
The Story of Ruth as Faith-Mentoring.....	15
A Mentor is a Guide.....	16
A Mentor is a Model.....	17
A Mentor is a Mediator.....	18
A Mentor is a Guarantor	19
Conclusions.....	20
Lesson 1: Mentoring Should Be Intentional	21
Lesson 2: Mentoring Should Create Discerners and Decision Makers	21
Lesson 3: Mentor Should Include Kindness to Newcomers.....	22
2 RESEARCH.....	23
What Research Did I Use?.....	23
Savage and Presnell's Narrative Approach	24
Methods Used to Conduct my Research.....	28
Faith-Mentoring Approach.	31
3 COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	36
Recruitment of and Planning with the Advisory Committee.....	37
Recruitment of the Participants.....	39
Planning of the Project.....	41
Implementation of the Project.....	43
How I Used the Narrative Model.....	52
What are the Obstacles to Mentorship?	53
Continuing Challenges of Mentorship	55
Support Her.....	56
Some Final Thoughts on “Engaging Mentors”	56
4 EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT.....	57
Advisory Committee Responses	57
Participants’ Feedback.....	60
Pre-Survey.....	61
Post-Survey	62
Pre-and-Post Survey Conclusions.....	64
Self-Evaluation	66
Conclusions.....	68

CONCLUSION.....	69
APPENDIXES.....	74
A – "Engaging Mentors" Booklet Cover – Saturday, March 17, 2012.....	74
B – Engaging Mentors (Pre-Survey Questions).....	75
C – Engaging Mentors (Post-Survey Questions).....	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	77

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To every person who gave me something to light my pathway, I thank you for believing in me. To my family, especially my grandchildren, who are the next generation, my church, and to my friends and mentors. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving mother, Barbara O. Robinson, whose poetic words of encouragement filled me with tenacity. I am appreciative to my wonderful children, Larry Birchett, Jr. and Nija K. Birchett, for being there for me throughout my ministry and profession. The two of you have been my greatest cheerleaders.

I am so thankful to my professors at Drew Theology School for their mentorship, especially Dr. David Lawrence, throughout my thesis project. Also, I give special thanks to Reverend Dr. Rena Hunter for advocating me along the pathway.

INTRODUCTION

My “Bitter to Better” Story

Initially, I had gone through the ABC-USA and Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA) ordination process at the historic Calvary Baptist in Chester, Pennsylvania. While concurrently serving God and people in the community, I continued to pursue professional training as a doctoral student at Drew Theological School. However, like many African-American women, I found that the journey into the ministry or pastorate was not without a struggle. I had personal set-backs and did not have as much access as I would have liked to skillful or seasoned female mentors who could have helped me with professional development and discernment. I can only image how different it would have been for me if I had intentional mentoring relationships with those who truly valued me as a partner in ministry.

About one year after finishing at Palmer Theological Seminary, one of the New Jersey executive ministers recommended me for my first interim pastoral call. I was a licensed ABC-USA minister and not yet ordained at the time. Coming from serving twenty plus years in a church and community that fostered diversity, I was glad to be the first African-American assistant pastor at a Euro-American Baptist church in the northeast. I was the interim pastor of a small church located in a neighborhood that was in transition. I served while the senior female pastor, who was contemplating retirement, was away. It was exciting to be paid to do what I loved: ministry. After only six months of gladly serving the Lord’s people, the senior pastor resumed her position. Her return came as a shock to some of the people in the congregation. I had hoped that one day I

would be able to become the church's pastor. I had grown to love the congregation and they had grown to love me, and the parting brought with it a great deal of grief. In addition, there were other issues. First, in the Baptist tradition, each church is autonomous. It is the congregation that calls and ordains a pastor. This did not happen for me because the pastor resumed her position when she returned from a sabbatical. In the best interest of the congregation, only one solo/senior pastor can lead in the church. Secondly, the pastor of the church eventually retired the next year, and the pastoral position was given to a friend.

The transition for me was not easy. I returned to my former church in New Jersey and sat in the pews. I could have used a trusted mentor or mentoring team to give me supportive care at that point. I needed to find my way through the grief of leaving a congregation. I also needed to better understand the politics surrounding the call system. Some wise questions and better counsel would have helped me find my way through a very difficult and confusing time. At the same time licensed female ministers that did not have the same call were doubtful of the ordination process and watched to see if the process would benefit women like me. They asked me whether I, a female, was called to be a senior pastor. They tried to discourage me from receiving ordination as an American Baptist minister. The reality was that God had proven to them by my persistence, conviction and service that I could successfully function in a pastoral capacity.

All the same, many women are still without encouraging support and they need more than one female or male mentor. They not only have difficulty in the ordination process, but lack the practice to sharpen their leadership skill set. Sharper leadership

skills in turn could enhance the training they receive to help them find and sustain rewarding pastoral opportunities.

Biased search committees and committees located in patriarchal regions, districts or conferences are hesitant to hire and ordain females. As a result, many women become refugees. They leave ministry all together or move from church to church as they seek to have their call affirmed. Unfortunately these behaviors may lead to strained relationships, unsuccessful attempts to be chosen for future pastoral positions, bitterness, frustration, isolation, loneliness, and a poor professional self-image.

Many female clergy might say there is a bias against their preaching, teaching and leadership styles, thus creating a glass ceiling in ministry. A glass ceiling is “an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially for women and members of minorities.”¹ Denominational bias and societal prejudice tend to stifle strong women of color. Living in silence creates an unhealthy state and fosters unhealthy competition, and this causes a “survival of the fittest” mentality.

Relationships that play a central role in mentoring are a dominant theme in the biblical narrative. Throughout the Bible, partnering paves the way for setting the captives free. While I believe that ordained ministry is still an uphill journey for all women, I also believe that for African-American women clergy it takes joint partnerships and mentorships to overcome obstacles and be successful on that journey.

The sad truth is that resilient African-American females are misunderstood and often labeled as bitter.

¹Erin McKean, ed., *Concise Oxford American Dictionary* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 380.

Alice Walker's definitions of a womanist draw a mosaic picture of the attitudes that women clergy need to embrace in order to help women who want to be pastors. Her definitions give women seeking ordination the mindset to make their powerful voices known. Among them, I found that the following definitions connect best with my project. Womanist "usually refers to ... courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one." It is also needful for mentors to be "committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, male and female".²

The most powerful words for combat I heard from a progressive mentor were: "Do not be bitter, be better!"³ I will refer to the coined phrase, "bitter to better," throughout the paper. Better is someone who responds *positively* to an unfortunate situation and thinks about what she can learn from her mistakes and/or the unfortunate situation. She is less anxious and defensive about the situation and allows her missteps to be learning opportunities. Bitter, on the other hand, is someone who reacts *negatively* to a difficult situation and builds up stress, resentment, anger, and animosity instead of learning from the situation.⁴

Even though the number of women graduating from seminary is increasing, the number of ordained American Baptist African-American women is much lower than the number of African-American men, Euro-American men and other non-minority women.⁵

² Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi.

³ This statement came from Raymond H. Baylor, Sr., my former pastor of 20 years.

⁴ In a telephone conversation in December 2011 with my project advisor Dr. R. Dandridge Collins, author of *Trauma Zone*.

⁵ Holly V. Bean, "Women in Ministry: Where Are We Now?" *Ministers Council Task Force on Women in Ministry, American Baptist Churches USA*, <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/WIM%20Resources>

To keep an open mind, there are numerous factors that impede their progress towards ordination: Sexism, inadequate training, societal prejudice, and church tradition, including the institutional bias and male pastor bias against women. Clearly not every woman who attends seminary seeks to be ordained or prepares to be a pastor. But I want to promote more resilient clergywomen to become mentors in relationships with God and gifted women moving on the path that request encouragement and ministry support from other females. If not, women become stifled, discouraged and/or bitter and abandon their sense of call in the face of gatekeepers, opposition or indifference.

According to the American Baptist Churches USA Ministers Council's analysis on Women in Ministry, there was a female pastor represented in each region but a low percentage of female pastors ordained in general. The American Baptist Women in Ministry and Minister's Council task force is seeking to address the problem.

The mentor model could help motivate peers to change attitudes and equip clergywomen by addressing sensitive issues related to the mystery and anxiety associated with ordained ministry.

Mentoring is "a developmental partnership through which a person shares knowledge, skills, and information from a perspective to foster the personal and professional growth in others."⁶ Ordained mentors also will experience personal growth by sharpening their own mentoring skills. According to Sondra Higgins Mattaei, there are specific attributes associated with mentors: "A Faith Mentor is a co-creator with God

/documents/MCWIMTFreport2011.pdf (accessed January 30, 2013).

⁶Amanda Stone, "Mentoring Program Manual," *University of South Carolina College of Mass Communications and Information Studies Mentor Program*, <http://cmcismmentorprogram.wordpress.com/mentoring-program-manual/definition-of-mentoring/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

who, as a living representative of God's grace, participates in the relational, vocational and spiritual growth of other persons.”⁷ The process has three dimensions: relational, incarnational and contextual. In the relational dimension, faith mentors are persons in relationship with God and with their peer mentors as co-creators. In the incarnational dimension, faith-mentoring involves embodiment and discernment. It is the witness of persons with creative minds and loving hearts in physical bodies that practice the presence of God. Finally, in the contextual dimension, faith mentors participate in the relational, vocational, and spiritual growth of other persons. The context in which this growth occurs is multifaceted. Participants bring a variety of life experiences cultural and ethnic differences, as well as their own unique personalities to the relationship.⁸

Mentoring is not new to the ABC-USA. Some American Baptist Churches foster informal mentoring programs. However, the result of such informal programs are an abundance of women, licensed but not ordained, who often experience limitations in their vocational growth. Formal mentor programs can help women of color sharpen and make effective use of their gifts. Following a structured mentoring program is a better way to cultivate reciprocal relationships that encourage, enliven and energize. Women of color clergy pursuing the pastorate need to thrive not just survive in ministry.

When I executed this professional project I was not an ordained associate pastor. However, I have been ordained for more than a year now. My passion is to empower clergy women leaders in the ABC-USA as women move through the seminary-to-

⁷ Sondra Higgins Matthaei, *Faith Matters: Faith –Mentoring in the Faith Community* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), 23.

⁸Emily McGinley, e-mail message to A. P. Birchett, October 3, 2011.

vocation phase in the ordination process. I have sought to be faithful to my call, so I believe the journeys of other women of color are also significant. Bringing clergywomen together to discuss and advocate for mentoring African-American women seeking ordination will make them more effective pastoral leaders through training and development. I have given a significant part of my life to this project in order to give a powerful voice to women and to address the blockage that hinders called women from a better opportunity to serve in the pastorate. Exposing the struggle creates a reality that will bring about more respect and self-dignity for all. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Our separate struggles are really one."⁹

Hypothesis Statement

If ordained women are engaged to serve as mentors in a formal setting they will be better at mentoring and therefore better able to prepare other clergy women of color, particularly African-American women through the ordination process allowing them to use their gifts. Having an expert mentor is one way to help to take the mystery and anxiety out of the ordination process for women of color. Providing experienced ordained women would change their attitudes towards mentoring and in turn encourage them to act as mentors to other called women pursuing ordination. Mentoring cultivates reciprocal relationships that encourage, enliven and energize women of color in ministry. This peer to peer relationship would first require a conversation with women who value and trust one another to share their "bitter to better" stories to move them forward.

⁹The SEIU Blog by SEIU Communications, "*Telegram from King to César Chávez dated September 19, 1966,*" <http://www.seiu.org/2013/04/dr-martin-luther-kings-legacy-human-dignity-and-re.php> (accessed May 20, 2013).

... But the traveler needs a map, however poor it may be, to find his or her way. Michael Christensen's map for theological reflection on spiritual pilgrimage and ministry involves the theologian's mystical apprehension of divine revelation, discerned through intuition centered on the heart, faithfully applied in following the vision of three streams from the divine Source—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—realized in Worship, Community, and Mission.¹⁰

In considering this map concept I thought of the women in my faith tradition and their stories. I thought about how they were without authentic and effective mentors alongside them in their ministry journey. I seek clergywomen who would be mentors and set the path for other women on their way before ordination. Without mentoring relationships these women would be bitter instead of better. They would be standing alone at the crossroads. We need to remember that a crossroad is a marker for us to remember. It is a sacred place where God helped us to discern which way to go -- either move forward or wait patiently while standing on holy ground that will eventually change our direction without lowering standards.

As a result, I seek to demonstrate the positive impact of mentorship for African-American women who are on the path to being ordained.

¹⁰ Michael J. Christensen and Carl E. Savage, *Equipping the Saints: Mobilizing Laity for Ministry* (Nashville: Abington, 2000), 161.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

There are many rich examples of mentorship in the Hebrew Bible as well as examples of how faith-mentoring works through the lives and cultures of people. In Scripture the word “mentor” is not used. However, exegetical sources provide a variety of synonyms: elder, discipler, and teacher. The Greek term “meno” means “enduring relationship.”¹ A protégé is a disciple, believer follower, and student or learner. For this chapter, I will focus on the book of Ruth, incorporating lessons and examples drawn from the reciprocal and cross-cultural relationship between Naomi and Ruth.²

How the Book of Ruth Relates to African-American Women Today

In the Torah, women were the property of men and had few if any rights or voice. In the book of Ruth we learn that there “was a famine in the land of Judah” (Ruth 1:1-5). “Because of that famine, Naomi’s husband moved the family from Bethlehem (‘House of Bread’) to stay in Moab.”³

¹ Ann Palmer Bradley, “Mentoring: Following the Example of Christ,” *International Christian Community for Teacher Education Journal* 4, no. 2 (2009), <http://ictejournal.org/issues/v4i2/v4i2-bradley/> (accessed September 15, 2012).

² All scriptural citations will be from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Biblical references will follow after the quotation in parentheses (e.g., Ruth 1:16).

³ F. F. Bruce and H. L. Ellison, eds., *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1979), 343.

Because of a male-dominated vocation, such as ministry, African-American women in ministry are also in the midst of a famine – a famine of compensated leadership positions (i.e., pastors, executive directors). In the 21st century women are still hearing the same old line, “We’ve decided we are not ready to call a woman.” Thus, the call goes unfulfilled and gifts are lost to the American Baptist Church USA.

Ruth has major biblical significance to African-American clergywomen because they can readily identify with her core strengths as well as with the difficulties of her ethnicity. Farmer observes, “Ruth is an admirable character from an ethnic group that was despised and rejected by those who considered themselves to be the ‘people of God’.”⁴ Ruth was a Moabite. Today she would be considered a foreigner, and possibly an illegal immigrant. African-American clergywomen can relate to her for two reasons.

First, many African-American women in ministry, though called to serve humanity, feel rejected or shunned by congregations led mostly by male pastors. The church is supposed to be a safe place where worshipers may use their gifts and hear the Word about Christ the liberator. Most Black churches are predominately made up of African-American women who come to release their bitterness, uncertainties, frustration, vulnerabilities, and voice so that they may gain strength in an ever-increasingly troubled culture and society.

Secondly, some clergywomen apply for leadership positions as advocates for all people and are rejected by biased search committees. The truth is that while everyone has different experiences, many have felt unjust treatment, and some African-American

⁴ Kathleen A. Robertson Farmer, et al., *The New Interpreter's Bible: Volume II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 892.

women in ministry are embittered as a result of their suffering. When they become bitter, they cannot fulfill the plan God has for them. Focusing on the bitterness is a deterrent to our spiritual growth.

The loss and death of Naomi's husband and two sons caused heartbreak that led to disillusionment. Not only had Naomi become disillusioned, but she also believed the LORD has singled her out for misery. She said, "No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me" (Ruth 1:13b). Naomi was bitter towards the God of Israel whom she believed was responsible for "her loss of offspring, as well as the possibility of future offspring."⁵ In her initial understanding of El Shaddai, the God who is more than enough, she was living a full life.⁶ However, once she left Moab as a widow and went back home to Bethlehem, she confessed to her community that "God has decided to deal with her harshly by rendering her empty".⁷ She became bitter. The name Naomi means pleasant, so she literally changed her name to Mara, which means bitter.⁸ She said, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty..." (Ruth1:20-21a). The Hebrew word Naomi uses for bitter is the same word used in several Old Testament scriptures by people who believed that the Lord had dealt harshly with them or that God was not involved in their

⁵ Nancy R. Bowen, "Ruth," in *Theological Bible Commentary*, ed. Gail R. O'Day and David L. Petersen (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 2009), 98.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

lives.⁹ Similarly, African-American women in ministry can internalize bitterness when they “bump their heads” on the glass ceilings of our churches. This is especially true when other women refuse to offer a helping hand.

Naomi and Ruth, like so many African-American women, were single, struggling, and heads of households. Naomi and Ruth were without a supportive male (a husband or son) in the home. When both of them went to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:19), Ruth the Moabite woman trusted the Hebrew woman Naomi for her insights and knowledge of a culture that treated women without supportive males as invisible.¹⁰ Most African-American women experience a similar type of suffering. They know what it is like to see their families incur financial hardship. They watch their families suffer Black on Black crime, imprisonment, and/or health related illnesses. All the while they bear these things without supportive males. We cannot adequately hear from the Holy Spirit until we release the bitterness.

Together Naomi and Ruth overcame societal threats and obstacles at a time when they had no rights and no husbands or sons. For African American women in ministry, overcoming hindrances and competition is especially possible if they understand the importance of female mentoring and come forward to assume that role for others. There is a clear need for ordained women to function as mentors, women who are Spirit-anointed and who serve as servant leaders on minister councils and search committees.

⁹ “Mara,” *Bible Study Tools*, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?q=mar&rc=LEX&rc2=&ps=10&s=References> (accessed May 23, 2013).

¹⁰ Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth: New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 54.

However, as mentioned earlier, there is a famine of mentors in the land. African-American women in ministry need to look for strong women who have successfully navigated the waters of the corporate church.

When Ruth and Naomi entered Bethlehem, “The whole town was stirred, because of them...” (1:19b). The Hebrew for “stirred” (Garah) paints a picture of a disturbed city in an uproar¹¹ over two unfamiliar women who have traveled together some 30 to 60 miles from Moab to Bethlehem. Why was the town in an uproar? First of all, Ruth and Naomi were outcast because they were widows. Second, Moabites like Ruth were descendants of Lot and perceived to be outsiders who are given the special privilege of gleaning the fields.

Renita Weems says, “Naomi overheard their whispers, and her depression edged into bitterness”.¹² The whispers belonged to the women who said, “Is this Naomi?” (Ruth 1:19c). Even though Naomi was bitter, it does not mean that all was lost.

Panthakan Phanon speaks of the meaning of the word, “hesed,” which “means goodness or kindness”.¹³ She discusses a concept called “double hesed,” whereby God blesses Naomi “in such a way that she does not expect and hope for”.¹⁴ Naomi complains that God has made her life miserable, but as the story progresses we discover that God not only blesses Naomi but blesses her more than she can envision. Several scholars have discussed how Naomi’s journey went from a good life, originally in Bethlehem until the

¹¹ “Garah,” *Bible Study Tools*, Hebrew Lexicon, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?q=garah&rc=LEX&rc2=&ps=10&s=References> (accessed May 23, 2013).

¹² Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away* (San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988), 29.

¹³ Panthakan Phanon, “Double *Hesed* of God in Naomi’s life (Ruth1:19-22),” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 13, no. 1 (2010): 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

famine, to another good life in Moab, and then to a *bitter* life when she was forced to return to Bethlehem. They point out that the book of Ruth ends with God's grace and mercy, which is shown through the birth of King David, an ancestor of the Messiah. Ruth, a gentile, came to the aid of an Israelite, illustrating that God can use whomever comes to further the Kingdom of God. The story of Ruth and Naomi shows that bitterness and goodness can work together to bring about the Lord's grace and mercy.

Many seminarians and non-ordained women go through a Mara season. They go off to seminary excited and expectant, just as Naomi went off to Moab, but return to seminary or churches without a position or placement. To hear women of color who graduate from seminary tell it, they rarely are allowed to assume leadership roles like solo pastor. Although educated, many women are not fully aware of how church politics and life's hardships can cause them to have repeated ministry setbacks that in turn may contribute to bitterness or feelings of emptiness. Being called is one thing but placement in an ordained position is another. It usually takes longer for a female than a male pastor to be called to a church.¹⁵ Financial pressures also increase the risk of women accepting other part-time work, which might put seminary women on a different path.

Seminary helps women seeking ordination and placement. But seminary graduates can have fears about going to a new church and a new community, and these fears might keep them from pursuing the pastorate or responding to search committees. They may not know how to ask the right questions, such as "What is the search committee looking for?" or "What is the search committee asking for?" Secondly, they

¹⁵ Patricia M. Y. Chang, "In Search of a Pulpit: Sex Differences in the Transition from Seminary Training to the First Parish Job," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (December 1997): 617.

may have a fear of being a financial burden to the church if they ask for adequate compensation for ministry or even ask for any compensation at all. Thirdly, they also may be afraid that they do not have the qualifications and/or talent to succeed as a pastor. They need help in understanding how their questions, fears, and suffering can help bring about God's grace and mercy.

The Story of Ruth as Faith-Mentoring

Foundational to this study is the belief that mentoring in the book of Ruth (1:8-22; 3:1, 11) is relational and intentional. Naomi trusted her decision to return to Bethlehem with Ruth, whose Hebrew name (Ruwth) means "friendship" (a companion or a female friend).¹⁶ Ruth trusted in her own discernment of God (1:16-18) and allowed her bitter mentor Naomi to direct her in living in a new culture and community (1:22).

Ruth, like today's seminary woman, is a protégé, someone who is teachable and loyal (hesed). As a protégé, Ruth was willing to submit to the mentoring process.

Naomi was the wise one, the mentor. She is like today's female African-American pastors and teachers who guide seminary students and other women preparing for ordination. They must be able to assist women who on the path to ministry not internalize their own pain and bitterness as they "bump their heads" on the glass ceilings of our churches.

Naomi and Ruth worked as a team. Women in ministry can also learn to value each other's gifts and uniqueness. Sondra Higgins Matthaei notes that "A faith mentor is

¹⁶ "Ruwth," *Bible Study Tools*, Hebrew Lexicon, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/ruwth.html> (accessed July 8, 2013).

a co-creator with God who, as a living representative of God's grace, participates in the relational, vocational, and spiritual growth of other persons.”¹⁷ She adds that faith-mentoring has four roles: Guide, Model, Mediator, and Guarantor.¹⁸

A Mentor is a Guide

According to Matthaei, “A guide is a person who journeys through life with another, pointing out landmarks, modeling alternatives, supporting choices, and interpreting life events.”¹⁹

Naomi challenged Ruth and Orpah to make their own choices (Ruth1:8-13). This was not done out of malice, but out of concern for their safety and future. It was a great risk for women to travel on the dangerous road between Moab and Bethlehem. Naomi’s witness must have had an impact on Ruth because Ruth left her family and familiar surroundings to relocate in Bethlehem (Ruth1:16-17) with Naomi. Naomi attended to Ruth, a Moabite, a descendent of Lot, to help her overcome obstacles and the rejections of her past.

Naomi’s struggle helped Ruth gain wisdom and insight. She allowed God to ameliorate her attitude (Ruth 1:21; 2:20). Widow Naomi valued and looked out for Ruth, as evidenced by her comment, “I need to seek some security for you so that it may be well with you (Ruth 3:1).” She mentored Ruth by guiding her through their relocation in Bethlehem and through the process of encouraging Boaz to consent to marry her. Ruth realized the value of their relationship, saying, “All that you tell me I will do” (Ruth 3:5).

¹⁷ Matthaei, 540.

¹⁸ Ibid., 541.

¹⁹ Ibid.

A Mentor is a Model

The second role of a faith mentor is model, which Matthaai defines as “a person who, by word, action, and presence, models a meaningful lifestyle, clarifies important life issues, and provides guidance for deepening spirituality in a caring and accepting environment.”²⁰

Naomi felt that she was left with nothing in Moab. She wished to have a better life in a place of solitude and strength, with her family in Bethlehem. Thus, her faith overshadowed her bitterness. She got up and did what needed to be done in order to survive. Orpah did not see herself in a different life, so she went back to her parents. However Ruth saw Naomi’s faith and strength, and this inspired her to go with her mother-in-law. Naomi was a model for Ruth.

Women of exceptional strength and ability in the Black community historically have taken the lead to struggle for freedom, education, and employment. Black female heads of household have struggled to raise their families for ages without a male and have served as models for the next generation. In ministry, Black women have struggled with bias and closed doors, but now a few role models have shoved the doors open for women to be ordained - and these women also are models.

²⁰ Ibid.

A Mentor is a Mediator

Matthaei explains that a mediator is “a person who through observation, discernment, and guidance provides others with an opportunity to clarify their relationship with God, to focus their direction, and to shape their witness.”²¹

Boaz was a wealthy man (goel), a “kinsman-redeemer” who could buy Naomi’s land back and carry on her deceased husband’s name (Ruth 2:20b). It was important for Boaz to help her because the “Old Testament makes no provision for a widow either to inherit or in any way to dispose of her husband’s property.”²² Ruth trusted Naomi’s insights and knowledge of the Jewish culture, a culture that mistreated women without a husband or son and regarded them as invisible. So Ruth loyally “went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her” (Ruth 3:6). Naomi had given Ruth the confidence to seek a husband in Boaz.

Female mentors like Naomi who give encouragement and have abilities, gifts and talents should be selected to mentor other African-American women in ministry. Those mentors exhibiting the qualities of wisdom and competence will in turn give an apprentice the impetus to expect of themselves more than mediocrity. According to authors Ridley and Johnson, “Even the most gifted protégé at times may lack confidence in some areas, performing only to the level of their modest expectations. This can all

²¹ Ibid., 543.

²² Hubbard, 54.

change when the mentor provides a vision of the apprentice as talented, competent, and capable of high-level achievement.”²³

A Mentor is a Guarantor

Finally, Matthaëi explains that a guarantor is, “a person who guarantees another person’s growth in a trusting relationship and accepting environment.”²⁴

The mentor and protégé must be willing to agree upon or to buy into the process. It costs something to invest in another’s life. The presence of God in or something unique about Naomi’s life inspired Ruth to sacrifice her family and faith to find a potential husband to provide for her welfare. African-American women in ministry need mentors to invest in them as they go through the process of ordination. Without such a mentor to invest in and inspire them, African-American women pursuing the ordination process will continue to suffer on their difficult journey.

Some men and women theologically believe, without malice, that women are not called to the pastorate. This obstacle more often than not stands in the path of African-American women in ministry. Thus there is a need for inspired mentors to encourage women to stay the course. Imagine the journey from Moab to Bethlehem and compare it to the journey from registration to graduation. Ruth might want to quit and go back to Moab just as a student may want to quit seminary before graduation. Naomi’s mentoring kept Ruth on track. Who will keep African-American women in ministry on track? They

²³ W. Brad Johnson and Charles Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring* (New York: St. Martin Press, 2004), 8.

²⁴ Matthaëi, 542.

need to look to the women who have successfully navigated the waters of the corporate church to guarantee their growth in ministry.

Conclusions

Women in ministry who share compassion for community should be encouraged to be mentors and utilize their gifts to strengthen others. Martha Moore-Keish points out that “God’s activity is visible only through the activity of the characters.”²⁵ In the book of Ruth, God’s presence is visible through the characters’ kind interactions. We find examples of kindness throughout, from Ruth’s behavior towards her mother-in-law to Boaz’s kindness in agreeing to marry Ruth. Ruth is depicted as a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:11), not a beautiful woman. She was a foreigner but was treated kindly by her new community.

Having a fruitful mentoring relationship requires exchanging of ideas, commonalities, information, and skills. Naomi and Ruth had to be decision makers in order to have a strategy to get Ruth married (Ruth 3:1-2). Naomi mentored her well and Ruth modified the directive Naomi gave her regarding her approach to Boaz.

A valuable mentoring bond can take place in real life during difficult situations over which we have no control. However, through that mentoring relationship we will find that there are a few things we can control and change - our actions and attitudes towards one another, life, and God.

²⁵ Martha L. Moore-Keish, “Between Text and Sermon: Ruth Two,” *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (2010):175.

I used the story of Ruth because it speaks to me of the power of relationships. For contemporary women leaders who might wish to be a faith mentor, the book has many simple lessons that can help create a new paradigm for denominations and churches based on biblical values. Below are three lessons that I learned during the course of the project.

Lesson 1: Mentoring Should Be Intentional

Naomi and Ruth were intentional about forming a relationship that lasted over time. Faith mentors today should also be intentional about forming long-term, mutual agreements to be in relationship with potential pastors. Mentors need to be a listening, unbiased presence to help other women understand their journey and themselves. In particular, they need to help some African-American women move from “bitter” attitudes to “better” attitudes as they seek ordination and move into a vocation.

Lesson 2: Mentoring Should Create Discerners and Decision Makers

Naomi mentors Ruth to pave the way for a new future in Judah. These two women from different cultures, with different experiences, and of different ages wisely chose to work together to solve issues to obtain a husband for Ruth and to bring Naomi’s husband’s property back into their family.

The experience of these two biblical women shows us that together we can work to solve problems and overcome challenges regarding ordination and life in ministry, even if we too are different culturally, have diverse experiences, and are of different ages.

Lesson 3: Mentoring Should Include Kindness to Newcomers

Naomi's actions as Ruth's guarantor came through the avenue of "hesed," which consisted of goodness and kindness. I believe that "hesed," or showing kindness and compassion, is the best method for mentoring. Such affirmation helps strengthen the other woman's focus and assures her that she is taking the "better" direction on her journey. It is empowering for an African-American woman seeking ordination and a vocation to know that someone senses the goodness in her and is willing to stand by her with kindness through tough times.

African-American women on the path to ordination and vocation often have ministry setbacks, difficulty finding a position as a solo pastor, and struggles with painful circumstances beyond their control due to tradition and societal prejudices. That is why the next generation of ABC-USA female leadership needs today's faith mentors to pass the torch to them so that they in turn can become Guides, Mentors, Mediators, and Guarantors.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH

What Research Did I Use?

The purpose of this project is to increase awareness regarding the importance of mentoring relationships. The project intentionally conveys new learning while promoting and advocating for increased numbers of African American clergy women to become mentors. The study sought to elevate awareness regarding the value of mentoring while affording participants a more favorable perspective on becoming a mentor.

My research focused on two approaches to the issues which I saw emerging from the theme of clergy mentoring clergy. These approaches are found in the following two works: The first approach is extracted from a book entitled, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for the Faith Community*. The authors, Carl Savage and William Presnell, offer new ways of thinking about personal narratives and how they impact our relationships.¹ The second approach considered was developed in *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community* by Sondra Higgins Matthaei. This approach offers keen insights about collecting the qualitative data for this project.²

¹ Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville, Kentucky: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008).

² Sondra Higgins Matthaei, *Faith Matters: Faith –Mentoring in the Faith Community* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996).

Savage and Presnell's Narrative Approach

The "Narrative Research Approach" is an innovative way of thinking about storytelling research methodologies in the 21st century for faith communities. In their book, Savage and Presnell speak of the power of stories. An early observation states: "We are in a real sense, our stories. Who we are, what we think, and how we act are all shaped by the many large and small stories that makes up the discourse embedded in our multi-sensory social experience."³ The authors are saying that our attitudes, actions and stories are connected to the community and diverse cultures that helped shape us to be who we are. In my ministry context in the black Baptist church, many churches have wall to wall women, especially African-American women ministers who are struggling with their identity as people of faith. They may be licensed ministers but many want to practice ordained ministry. They are frustrated not only about the ordination process but the lack of female models in senior pastoral roles and significant leadership positions in their churches. This project intends to pave the way to help women mentor women and benefit from renewed mentorship relationships. I believe we are not to remain in our past but might come to be better if we discern ourselves and others from our stories, ancestors and community.

The Narrative Research Approach "is intended to make research more unbiased, inclusive, and attentive to the uninterpreted meanings and truths latent in the stories."⁴ Savage and Presnell argue that eliminating biases is a small but important part of researching and findings facts. The authors propose a method that is useful to my project

³ Savage and Presnell, 25.

⁴ Ibid., 102.

where we make every effort to be watchful for people masking the truth or talking about truths that are concealed under other partial truths. In other words, for example, they say they love serving God at their home church, but they feel lonely or isolated at church, with unappreciated talents, cut off from many other women and from the men who control the means to access leadership roles. Such stories often go uninterpreted or interpreted incompletely. It would behoove me to plan to have a panel of affirming pastoral women participate in a planned round table discussion. The impetus would be for bitter women, some who are very bitter, to be able to release their feelings and share the stories in their ministry experience in a safe setting.

Enlarging this theme, the authors assert that “critical pastoral/theological reflection begins with reflection on contemporary *situations* confronted in the storied realities of ... ministry. Such reflection invites the pastoral theologian to raise questions about what God is doing in the situation, and how the faithful might join God’s transformative action.”⁵ The authors suggest that releasing feelings is not sufficient, but by adding guided reflection of people’s “bitter” stories, they may come to some new vision of God transforming their experience into a “better” direction. With this mindset my project will have a time for reflection with sisters sharing and interacting with one another. Also, caring pastors will make themselves available if they intend to mentor and help pave the way for other women to make better ministry choices and connections with churches that know their worth, producing a better situation.

Next ... is our resolve to listen to and reflect upon the multiple, intersecting personal and faith community stories of those who are a part of our ministry

⁵ Ibid., 52.

settings. These stories reveal how those who serve as church leaders ... identify themselves as people of God. Such identifications will clarify the resources of the Christian faith ... available for assessing situations involving ethical dilemmas, questions of morality, political power and process, psychological and sociological realities ... and ... concerns such as suffering, loss ... church structure, discipleship, and future hope.⁶

When we listen to people's stories, intensely personal yet often intersecting the community's stories too, Savage and Presnell say that we should commit ourselves to look for and seek to detect what is called forth from those who serve as leaders in the church, especially when they encounter stories of "political power and process ... suffering ... loss", the ethical treatment of one another, the structure of the church, and God's infusion of new hope for the future.

My project will give women in ministry the opportunity to tell stories of frustration, isolation and intimidation from the political systems in their pursuit of ministry and preaching opportunities at churches. These women may know they are called by God, gifted at preaching, speaking, leading, writing, educating, but lack the same opportunities their male counterparts have.

Yet, grateful for the ministry opportunities to serve, they claim no one can take away their call and identity as people of faith. The bottom line is that many African-American women who serve as pastors are suffering from not being valued, lack of support and compensation for their time. They lead churches that nobody wants at times and/or small churches located in isolated areas with no financial support. Women in ministry have suggested to me, "If I did not know who I am in Christ I could be bitter".

⁶ Ibid., 53.

The size of the church does not matter but the issue is a lack of respect and awareness of a need for change which still exists towards women in ministry in some black Baptist churches. Unless the people are taught Jesus' views on women and in the proper context of scripture, nothing may not change. God in scripture comes down on the side of women who are marginalized and treated with injustice, voices silenced, moving from church to church like refugees, humiliated, hidden, pushed aside and away from the power to care for and manage and express themselves.

That is where God is, and knowing that, it becomes clearer that if one wants to be part of God's transformative intentions, after hearing their stories, one must advocate for full participation of women, questioning a church structure that denies women equality with men in this regard. Until we become attentive to hear the truths being brought to the surface about women void of transformative encounters, they will continue to feel isolated and alone in a faith system not working in their favor. Women will continue to feel close to God and outnumber men in church and seminaries, but will continue to question why they should go to places where they cannot afford to practice ministry and pay back their loans, avoiding poverty too.

Using this research I intend to develop a plan for a half-day conference which will gather quality women who want to be associated with my project, discovering the challenges and satisfactions of mentoring, fully committed to supporting a transformation of a church structure that says it affirms women, but often has denied quality women opportunities to serve in ministry.

Methods Used to Conduct my Research

The authors' comments on both ethnographic and proactive methods are important pieces to my project. The Ethnographic Research method is the art of listening without minimizing your own story. This is how I believe an impartial listener working with women in ministry must be to avoid burying emerging voices of those caught in a crisis.

The Ethnographic Research method is best described by Savage and Presnell:

... the researcher becomes a 'participant observer' joining the faith community as a kenotic, or empty, listener. It is not that the researcher's ideas or experience are useless. It's that our own biased perceptions are likely to rush us towards hasty interpretations of the stories we are hearing unless we make an intentional effort to prevent it.⁷

Remaining open without judging these women provides the possibility for new learning, new ideas and new insights to emerge in the context of a faith community. "Those who study ministry situations tend to both see and interpret through the shady glass of their own experiences, thought forms, internalized cultural discourse, and faith group commitments. We have a tendency to miss or ignore others narratives influencing the situation of ministry."⁸ The intent is to avoid allowing personal experiences and their accompanying feelings, past or present, from interfering with listening to the women clergy sharing their diverse experiences as non-ordained women going through the process.

A researcher using the Proactive Narrative Research Method seeks to be unassuming and open to unpacking stories in the research ministry context. Relevant

⁷ Ibid., 108.

⁸ Ibid., 53.

stories of past, present, and future are encouraged. However, Savage and Presnell

suggest:

Here the researcher makes no pretense at objectivity, though every attempt is made to be open to the unfolding story of the research culture, and to avoid imposing an unfit or objectionable agenda upon it.... However, with the proactive methods the leader/researcher joins the culture proactively, with the intention of deliberately working toward an identified, agreed-upon agenda for change. The goal of proactive research is not only understanding but transformation.⁹

In my project, I believe that it is important to listen to women's bitter stories from the kenotic position of a "particular observer" in order to understand the culture of this faith community composed of women seeking ordained service in the church. I will present myself as open to the unfolding of new information from the stories of others, but I do also have an idea of a way to change the bitter culture and I am testing it to see if it provides a meaningful fit that can lead to a different outcome, namely "better". As a result, after hearing the stories, I will offer the faith community what I think to be an antidote to some of the painful aspects of women's stories –mentorship.

Savage and Presnell suggest that storytelling is both informative and transformative.¹⁰ Their concept of telling stories as a research method will be valuable in conducting my project. I would venture to say that as more people describe their stories of moving through the ordination process with and, for some, without a mentor, the participants will also be doing research as they listen, gathering data on whether a mentor would be a good resource for them, while others will be hearing the stories and using

⁹ Ibid., 109.

¹⁰ Ibid., 124.

them as helpful research on whether they should or should not become a mentor to someone who could use the support.

Savage and Presnell's research is also valuable and informative. Their approach facilitates empathic sensibilities that invite women to the table, unfolding and examining their bitter stories in dialogue with one another. The concept of the sharing of their stories helps African-American ministers and potential ministers discover how they might have more similarities than differences navigating their journey in ministry. Sharing stories will contribute to the development and strengthening of the participants' self-awareness, self-motivation, shared awareness and social skills to produce effective mentors who are empathetic. "When these unearthed meanings are validated in the understanding and faith of the community, they represent an opening for God's transforming power to take hold."¹¹

Savage and Presnell's narrative approach will improve the overall understanding of the African American women clergy's stories and their praxis of ministry. Where does this go, if anywhere at all? I believe this approach to research will reveal how important mentoring relationships are by exposing the struggles women face in the preparation for and practice of ministry, and how mentoring relationships may strengthen African American female clergy who have yet to be ordained or accept a call to pastor by providing coping skills to navigate through the ordination process.

I strongly believe the narrative method can serve to reconcile broken relationships between the sexes while strengthening African American women clergy. This approach to research might bring to the surface the anxieties, disparities and struggles that women

¹¹ Ibid., 70.

face in ministry. I intend to utilize this research to introduce a variety of voices into the conversation that have not been heard. I also want my project to encourage ordained women to break their silence by revealing their personal “bitter or better” stories specifically related to ordination.

Faith-Mentoring Approach

Sondra Higgins Matthaei is a Professor Emerita of Christian Religious Education at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. I used her book, *Faith Matters*, as part of my research. In it, Matthaei explains:

A faith mentor is a living representative of the love of God in both words and actions. As a living representative of God’s grace, a faith mentor has experienced God’s grace in her or his own life, and through grace-full living the mentor offers that grace to others.¹²

Matthaei describes faith-mentoring as being relational, incarnational, and contextual. Faith mentors are relational, which implies persons in relationship with God and their peers as co-creators.¹³ “From the first day of life, relationships are an integral part of the human growth process. We begin to learn who we are in relation to primary caregivers.”¹⁴ When we learn who we are it helps us to become fulfilled in our calling and to move towards wholeness. Everyone benefits from rewarding relationships which provide us with a foundation of trust, which include relationships formed in seminary,

¹² Matthaei, *Faith Matters*, 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

church, at our workplace, and everyday friendships. God's ongoing work of creation enriches our lives, self-understandings and transforms our character.¹⁵

My project intends to offer more than model faith mentoring through listening. We will hope to develop well-meaning relationships and self-awareness as a result of the communal collaboration. We come to know ourselves through the stories and attitudes of others. Also, we will further offer the mentor's activity to help peers to think through a situation and come up with better options. Taking the time to develop friendships more broadly may help women overcome isolation and meaninglessness, assert their voices, and claim their identity as women called to be preachers and pastoral leaders. I believe a transformation may take place in their sharing "bitter to better" experiences in our round table discussions, empowering lasting relationships. Otherwise, holding on to bitterness can be a drawback for women in ministry.

In particular holding on to bitterness can actually hinder clergy women's ability to mirror the love of God and grace in their relationships. Faith mentors are encouraged to embrace God's expectation that they love and show kindness towards one another, and to work together resolving relational differences if any.

Secondly, Matthaëi states that "God's love is (sic) at work in human relationships creates the incarnational dimension of faith-mentoring."¹⁶ The incarnational aspect involves a faith mentor with embodiment and discernment. Faith mentors are to be transparent, and exemplify a life of selflessness and unconditional love for all God's people. It is understood that the love embodied in the mentoring relationship is a gift of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

God's grace and not of self. Discernment is an activity practicing the presence of God that is humbly inquiring of God. "One of the ways we begin to practice this constant awareness of God's presence in the world is simply to ask, How is God at work in this experience? What does God want me to do?"¹⁷ Faith mentors who practice the activity of discernment have a better insight into knowing what is God's will, and offering assistance to others seeking God's direction for their lives in the world.

My project involves embodiment and can use discernment. Those selected on my Advisory team must be caring peers who are committed to representing God's grace and love. We plan to share our lives, experiences and skills in affirming other women navigating pastoral ministry and/or the ordination process.

Thirdly, faith-mentoring in the contextual dimension is related to one who directs the growth of others. "A faith mentor participates in the growth of other people in a variety of settings or contexts that might be relational, vocational, or spiritual."¹⁸ Clergy women gain self-confidence from observing and following influential people who challenge them to grow. Matthaei says "Sometimes we are intentional about attempting to take on the qualities and characteristics of those people who have had significant influence on our lives. Breaking out of old patterns so we can try new behaviors and new ideas in the process of reshaping our identities requires an environment of acceptance."¹⁹

In the context of my project I hope a transformation will take place as the clergy women form mentoring relationships. The women working together on my Advisory

¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 27.

team will help shape relationships and participants will bring a variety of personalities, life experiences, education, information, and cultural differences to mentorship. “Faith mentors witness by their very lives to the grace they have been given.”²⁰ We value investing in African-American clergy women who are caring and learning about themselves by sharing our lives and taking on the attitudes of others. At the end of this project we can use the entire group’s feedback on how to be a mentor, and in the future develop an effective mentorship program that will come from women in ministry in the faith context where they serve.

I intend for my project to explore four different ways to mentor that come naturally to the faith mentor. It is important to recognize the importance of being a *guide*, one who points you in the right direction on the path in ministry.²¹ Be an influential *model* for others who may choose to follow their mentor’s spiritual practices, beliefs, and attitudes.²² The role of the *guarantor* must also be acknowledged in the mentoring process as one that stands with a mentee, being attentive and engaging in the ministry of presence so that the mentee realizes her own worth and value.²³ A faith mentor must also appreciate the role of *mediator*, helping people fulfill their dream and develop God-given gifts for discipleship.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 28.

²¹ Ibid., 52.

²² Ibid., 57.

²³ Ibid., 66.

²⁴ Ibid., 107.

Matthaei's approach reveals how being attentive and available while sharing common interest is crucial.²⁵ She suggests these traits contribute to the creation of a space for people to feel comfortable to be themselves and emotionally safe. Through sharing life's stories and faith experiences comes growth. Identifying crucial components, Matthaei's approach reminds both the mentor and the mentee that our lives are significantly impacted by our experiences including our spiritual communities. I want this project to intentionally reveal the root causes of bitterness in ministry while creating a circle of trusting relationships with others and God, contributing to a well-developed sense of self. Matthaei suggests a healthy sense of self is imperative to an effective mentoring relationship.

Matthaei's research emphasizes that effective mentoring relationships are intentional. In addition, she indicates the Faith-Mentoring approach asserts that faith mentors should encourage shared learning and good communications. I found Matthaei's relational emphasis, establishing trust, to be very effective in presenting the case for mentoring. There are many definitions of mentoring but Matthaei provides a definition of mentoring that we can relate to. Her perspective on being co-creators with God, while journeying with other women clergy in ministry practices enlightens and enlivens the process. Furthermore her work will be helpful in terms of introducing the role of a faith mentor, during the project discussions in the faith community. Matthaei's faith-mentoring approach relates to contemporary times and should prove useful for giving others a model for being a faith mentor and maintaining healthy mentoring relationships.

²⁵ Ibid., 68.

CHAPTER 3

COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

My purpose in developing my project, “Engaging Mentors” was to create an atmosphere where a conversation might take place among clergywomen with powerful voices willing to speak to the hearts and minds of African-American women considering seeking ordination. I believed women could benefit from having someone willing to walk alongside them during a frustrating, yet rewarding journey. I was concerned about whether clergy women who had shattered the stained glass ceiling would “give back” by establishing effective and formal mentoring relationships, and how many would actually do so.

When I started my project, I was aware of no other study of its kind. I started by asking questions. What is a mentor like? How does one advocate for more African-American women clergy mentors in the American Baptist Churches (ABC-USA), and where does one recruit? I thought about my own journey has taken over 20 years to become an African-American ordained woman clergy. What would a faith-mentor like Naomi and her relationship with a contemporary Ruth look like for women of color seeking to become ordained clergy?

Recruitment of and Planning with the Advisory Committee

My first formal act within my project was the recruitment of an Advisory Committee. I realized I wanted this team to be comprised of experienced women in ministry who had the potential to be self-motivated and inspirational role models. I wanted women who were not only pastors, but also mentors, preachers, professors, authors, chaplains, board members, coaches and counselors. I knew that each of these roles already exists within our pool of seasoned African-American, American Baptist women clergy.

I had the conviction that God is clearing the way for more female African-American clergy to assume effective pastoral and leadership roles in our denomination and the seasoned mentors to support them. The lack of formal mentoring relationships may be a major reason why the numbers of ordained African-American women are so low, but from my research I have learned that sexism, tradition, biased search committees, congregational preferences, and, in my opinion, inadequate seminary mentoring also contribute to the low numbers.

I also believe African-American women blessed to have extensive years of pastoral experience need to reach back. Their participation as mentors could lay the foundation for increasing the number of ordained women clergy and the number of advocates sensitive to the issues and difficulties of African-American women seeking to be ordained in American Baptist churches.

I felt directed by God the Holy Spirit to contact the American Baptist Churches USA, Women in Ministry (ABWIM) office, and it's Director, the Rev. Patricia Hernandez, who was exceedingly helpful to me in organizing and implementing my

project. Through her influence and contacts, I met other women in ministry who were supportive as well. When Rev. Hernandez shared ABWIM goals for the upcoming years, I felt further clarity as I approached my own work. She graciously agreed to serve on my Advisory Committee and allowed me to work out of her office, if needed. In conversation with her, I clarified the importance of focusing on peer-to-peer relationships and the low numbers of African-American women achieving ordination.

In addition to Rev. Hernandez, I recruited five other women: three ordained, one pursuing ordination, and one lay woman. Each supported mentoring models that would encourage African-American women who felt called to ministry. They were: Sister Donna Jenkins, Minister Yolanda E. Johnson, Pastor Myra Rouse, Rev. Cherlynn D. Smith, and Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins. All together these women and I had over 150 years of combined vocational and pastoral ministry experience. I also invited one clergy male, the Rev. Dr. R. Dandridge Collins (PA) to serve as a consultant to the project.

My next step was to get a solid commitment to have our first convened meeting of the Advisory Committee, where I might propose a plan of action (agenda) to the members on the team. Usually, for pastors, I have found Mondays and Tuesdays to work if you are trying to connect a group together. I considered using as a scheduling tool (www.doodle.com), on which each person can mark their availability. Once we agreed to a date the planned agenda was to have a dialogue to ascertain the details of the project, purpose, outcome, assignments and to gain mutual support. After the group read my prospectus that outlined the proposed plan for the Doctor of Ministry project, I proceeded to respond to their questions on the project. Gaining their support, I worked closely with each person, which was a very rewarding learning experience. Since Rev. Hernandez

lived in Michigan, we arranged our meetings for those times when she would be in the Pennsylvania area. Her steady support provided the visibility and credibility I needed within my denomination.

The Advisory Committee agreed that the project event, “Engaging Mentors,” would be held on March 17, 2012 at the American Baptist Mission Center. In the agenda meetings we discussed how the Advisory Committee would contribute to the project, making a commitment for the duration of the 2-3 months period, and to meet for seven agenda meetings. They worked closely with me on the research, to locate information, interpret the project in the faith-mentoring context, and assumed to work on designated assignments (i.e. journal keeping, designing a mentor model, learning goals, recruiting participants, developing pre-and post-evaluation instruments, leading round table presentations, budgetary matters, and project logistics). Although, we knew who would be working on what aspects of the project, we also agreed to be flexible as the project unfolded. Each meeting had it specified agenda topics. We discussed our “bitter to better” stories, faith mentoring, and awareness of mentoring in the ministry context for women. Our meetings were primarily held at the ABC-USA Mission Center in King of Prussia, PA. We had numerous conference call meetings and worked around the challenge of our busy schedules.

Recruitment of the Participants

Using the American Baptist Office of Women in Ministry, we made phone calls, circulated advertisements, emails and dispersed letters with Rev. Hernandez’s and my signatures that invited all ordained American Baptist women clergy and others in the tri-

state area of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware to attend the March 17, 2012 conference at the American Baptist Mission Center in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The location provided an environment in which female pastors and clergy could feel uninhibited, safe, and free to grow personally and professionally.

The process was well organized. Members of the Advisory Committee circulated information to all tri-state clergy and interested lay women in the computerized data base, and the Advisory team promoted the event at their local churches. In addition, I conducted informal phone calls to respond to interest from both ordained and lay women from other faiths. Through many meetings, phone calls, meals and visits to homes and churches, we met the recruitment goals of the project.

The mailings and other contacts conveyed to the faith community that we wanted to have a conversation about mentoring and wished to engage clergy women to consider becoming mentors. In addition, we hoped that after attending “Engaging Mentors,” they would become advocates for mentoring. We provided American Baptist executive ministers of local churches in the region with professional letters, colorful flyers, and information about the Drew doctoral project requirements. We also forwarded them an agenda containing a list of the agreed learning goals: 1) Increasing the knowledge regarding effective mentoring; 2) Understanding the reciprocal benefits of peer to peer mentoring relationships; 3) Recognizing the responsibility of mentors; and 4) Ways how they can contribute to the candidate’s project by working with ABWIM advocating for African-American expert mentors. The communication was clearly focused on what they could expect from the sessions and what they could bring into the project on mentoring.

We invited over 100 ordained women to the event. Thirty-seven women registered. Twelve ordained clergy women (not including the Advisory team) attended, as did 12 other women who were either licensed or lay persons attended the session. The demographics of the participants were as follows: They were between the ages of 35 and 65, all American Baptist, ordained with pastoral experience and/or seminary trained African-American, Latino American, Asia American and Native American women, United States citizens, and residents of the tri-state area.

Planning of the Project

“Engaging Mentors,” hosted by ABWIM in partnership with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, whose Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, graciously offered to sponsor the conference breakfast and luncheon. Pastor Myra Rouse, the only non-American Baptist on the committee, took responsibility for printing the agendas.

To further enhance the project, I contacted Dr. Henry Mitchell, who granted us permission to use information, the photo and name of his late wife, Rev. Dr. Ella Pearson Mitchell. They ministered together for more than sixty years. We honored her legacy as a mentor to other women in ministry.

The Advisory Committee agreed that Rev. Patricia Hernandez, Rev. Betty Wright-Wriggins and I would open the conference by sharing our “bitter to better” stories. Telling the stories will help pave the way for other clergy women to release their bitterness and reveal their better stories.

We also established that the primary presenters and their topics would be:

--Elder Myra Rouse, Assistant Pastor of Instruction at Christian Fellowship

Evangelistic Church is to present on Naomi and Ruth;

--the Rev. Cherylynn Smith, Associate Pastor of Worship at Enon Tabernacle

Baptist Church is to present on Elizabeth and Mary; and

--the Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins, Associate Minister at Bethlehem Baptist

Church is to present on Vashti.

Each of these presenters agreed to prepare a handout for the participants and to facilitate a discussion for 30 to 45 minutes. They were to utilize the skills of coaching and mentoring to motivate the participants to share their own stories and to advocate for their peers to be a mentor or seek a mentor. The intention was to show that coaching and mentoring sharpened potential mentor leadership skills: 1) Conflict resolution is a good skill to negotiate a win-win solution. 2) Being assertive is about having self-respect and not seeing yourself better or less than people. 3) Developing effective listening skills may help a person to hear better for direction, details, or insights. Also, the intent was to share mentoring models to help participants develop skills and to improve relationships by learning from biblical and contemporary examples in terms of the dynamics of Faith-Mentoring.

The plan was to use the biblical and contemporary stories to further demonstrate for the mentors how to use effective mentoring and interactive skill sets (i.e. listening, assertiveness and conflict resolution).

The Rev. Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins agreed to honor the women clergy during the luncheon. Rev. Marilyn Turner graciously consented to present the attending clergywomen with a pin.

During the planning, we also decided to incorporate a guided dance by praise dancers, “Visions of Christ,” a group of gifted young African-American women from the Philadelphia Baptist Church.

In addition, we asked Tina Scott, the proprietor of “Bride of Christ” women clergy robes, to present a mini fashion show at the luncheon, and invited Paul Lewis to offer his professional photography services.

The project purpose was to increase the awareness of mentoring and advocacy for more ordained African-American women. We planned to have a round table discussion to listen to the women participants share ministry stories while observing if there was an interest towards being a mentor or mentoring. Before and after the conference the Advisory Committee selected Yolanda Johnson and Donna Jenkins to distribute and report on the finding from pre-and-post surveys at the conference.

After luncheon, we anticipated that women may leave the conference due to having to prepare and resume their pastoral preparations at church on the next day. In the final hour we planned to conclude the conversation of sisters sharing their stories in hope to capture any concerns, to encourage an ongoing peer to peer mentoring connection that elicit deep gratitude and reverence.

Implementation of the Project

On the day of the conference, Saturday, March 17 at the Mission Center the women were greeted at the registration table to exchange information. The participants were presented 13 questions in a pre-survey to measure the participants’ awareness and attitudes towards mentoring. They also did receive a small thank you gift. Following the

delicious continental breakfast at 8:00 am, we had a time to get acquainted. It took a simple conversation to get started; reflecting on the significance of being a mentor and the question “Am I looking to be mentored?”

Prior to the general session we distributed a colorful brochure that stated “Engaging Mentors,” and in the tradition of great mentors had on its cover a picture of the late Rev. Dr. Ella P. Mitchell and contained the schedule.¹ Rev. Patricia Hernandez opened the session with prayer and welcome. She shared her own “bitter to better” story in ministry. I recalled her saying that it was 20 years since she graduated from seminary but she still remembered the first search committee she ever met. The process moved quickly from the interview to the preaching at the church, “even before they decided whether to present me as a candidate – no time wasted in a neutral pulpit”. After the preaching she was recommended as a candidate. She “left that Sunday on fire with the imminent fulfillment of my call to ministry” simply having to wait for a call to set up the candidate’s Sunday. When she got the call from the chair of the search committee, “he paused, my heart pulsated. He stuttered. My stomach sunk ‘Well’, he wavered, ‘We have decided we are not yet ready to call a woman.’ Then Rev. Hernandez transitioned from her story to give the following remarks, “Why Are We Here?” She began:

We at American Baptist Women in Ministry are here to address that imbalance in the use of gifts and that injustice in the barring of call as we work towards full utilization of all God’s gifts and the full inclusion of all whom God has called into ministry. We seek the full participation and full partnership of women and men in ministry in which both women and men are able to fully utilize their God-given gifts and fully live out their God-given call.

¹ A copy of the surveys and conference program can be found in the Appendices.

Next, the Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins shared a powerful story about her mentor, the late Rev. Dr. Ella P. Mitchell's (1918-2008) late-in-life ordination journey. The Rev. Wright-Riggins detailed how Rev. Dr. Ella Mitchell influenced her own life and how much she appreciated Rev. Dr. Mitchell's mentoring. She reiterated that Dr. Ella was not only a mentor but a pioneer, preacher, professor, and author. Dr. Ella was the first woman Dean of Sisters at Chapel at Spelman College; and taught at the American Baptist Seminary of the West and at the School of Theology at Claremont.

Then I welcomed the group, briefly presented my personal story of movement through the ordination process, introduced my project, gave definitions of a faith-mentor and bitter-to-better, provided rules for sharing, and advised the participants that data gathered through discussions and surveys would be shared anonymously with my Advisory Committee and used to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree.

In my power point presentation, I informed the participants that we were here to have a conversation, to listen to each other's stories and talk about issues surrounding women in ministry in our faith community. The narrative of concern is particularly for addressing the issues behind why there are such low numbers of African American pastoral women leaders and ordained clergy women in the American Baptist churches. Throughout the day we took the opportunity to encourage and gain mutual support for peer mentoring and offer to affirm these women who might have the slightest tone of anger in their voices describing a former mentor, pastor, committee, and experience connected with the concern for the ministry context.²

² Savage, *Narrative Research*, 71

First, we showed another power-point slide to convey information, “Where Are We Now”? Rev. Hernandez mentioned that the ABWIM are here to support Paulette. Sadly we are not home but further away than 20 years ago. We estimate seminaries are made of 50 percent or more of women. She attended Colgate Rochester Seminary where presently 75 percent of enrollees are women. She referred to an American Baptist Churches Information System (ABCIS) August 2010 report for all ABC churches combined that women represent 9.8% of all pastors including bi-vocational, interim and co-pastors. The percentage increases to 12.1% if we added assistant or associate pastors. Within the 12.1%, it is estimated that only 10% of the women are African-Americans or other women of color.³

Second, the presenter asked “What is a Mentor”? The presenter wrote on newsprint as the women brained stormed. Some of the responses from the women were as followed: A mentor is a coach, teacher, Christ teaching the disciples, guide, advocate for protégés, someone to maximize the grace of God in others, walks alongside a person, and etc. A definition of a faith-mentor was then given to the participants to reflect on. Then the presenter asked for feedback on “What are the benefits of mentoring”? The responses are as follows: 1) It allows us to witness our own personal and professional growth; 2) learn new skills and information; 3) have shared experiences; 4) supportive peer relationships; and 5) the opportunity to give back.

Thirdly, we gathered the participants into a group to share their narratives. For most women talking is intuitive yet others were encouraged to not bury their voices. We

³ Holly Vincent Bean, “Women in Ministry: Where Are We Now?” *Ministers Council Task Force on Women in Ministry, American Baptist Churches USA*, <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/WIM%20Resources/documents/MCWIMTFreport2011.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2013).

explained this study and will not share specifics of what has been said with others outside this group and without permission. We created a safe space for confidentiality and emotional sharing by stating the sister sharing rules as follows: 1) We will listen to each other; 2) We will respect the information that is shared; 3) We will try to stay on the topic at hand; 4) We will speak from our own experience, using “I statements”; and 5) The task is to share our individual experiences, not to convert others, or to be right/correct, but to be open to a variety of perspectives in order that a larger picture can be seen.

Fourthly, we had a round table discussion and the women in ministry were asked, “What ministry challenges are causing you to be bitter, if any”? And how would you reframe your bitter challenge to see it in a better way? There were other issues related to women of color specifically, African-American women in ministry. Many expressed tones of anger but stated they had a better understanding of how women, especially black women, are treated and overlooked in the faith community. Critical issues related to being female in church leadership were discussed, as well as an awareness of the need for multiple mentors.

Other common themes surfaced from the storytelling: first generation of clergywomen, gender, competition, criticism for their preaching styles, theology that was considered different from men, less compensation than men, self-care, non-acceptance as authoritative decision makers of congregations or boards, conflicts with the role of first lady, and bias. Several of these topics brought watery eyes about their “Better to Bitter” experiences, but others stifled their feelings only to release them later in the day, during the dance to move forward. I observed some women were quiet and others said they were never bitter.

One woman said “God is too good to be bitter”. The women gasped when another woman stated that she disliked the disrespect women face being in the pulpit. She also was traumatized by the police being called to a Virginia church because a woman was in the pulpit trying to preach. Another woman with tears in her eyes shared “there is no bitter feeling, but I have become disillusioned with working in the church,” adding “I am hesitant to continue with ordained ministry.” She was thinking women do not share the same clear, earth shattering call men experience. Another woman stated she got over her hurt but had to change churches in order to get the support she needed in ministry. She said, “I feel God’s will is at work even though we do not see God at work. God has the last word.” Another participant stated, “I am not bitter as much as feeling uncomfortable about some male pastor’s feelings towards women in ministry.”

Then, almost as if to summarize all that was being shared, a woman shared that although she is ordained, her pastor does not value her as much as the men. “I feel anger due to my belief he really does not believe a women like me should be a senior pastor of a church. I do not have the same support and opportunities as my male counterparts.” She seemed to have lost hope to say “Having served faithfully for years, where do I go from here”? She feels no church will consider hiring her without her male pastor’s good recommendations.

Further More issues surfaced during the day as other stories were shared: we have a lack of female role models; we are overloaded with work yet they are not valued by men; we lack a clear direction or road map for being an effective pastor or leader; we feel discrimination towards women in ministry; and we fear not being able to practice ministry because of intimidation from church leadership.

Subsequently, the round table discussions as planned transitioned into hearing three powerful presentations on mentoring. We designed the presentation to enhance mentor skillsets using biblical role models such as Elizabeth and Mary, Vashti and particularly Naomi from the story of Ruth. We also emphasized the importance of sharing, caring, and sharpening the relational skills of assertiveness, hearing vs. listening, and conflict resolution.

The first presentation by Pastor Rouse addressed the key points in the book of Ruth on forming intentional relationships, discernment and assertiveness. She featured how Naomi modeled faith-mentoring for Ruth who functioned out of love for Naomi with intent to follow her example. Naomi, displaying the role of guide, encouraged Ruth's assertiveness in the community on how to speak up when in uncomfortable situations. Assertiveness was defined as ~~is~~ saying what you mean and meaning what you say. Ruth, in the midst of conflict, was able to navigate through a new system of doing things in a culture different from her own.

One female participant acknowledged that lacking assertiveness is one factor why she is not more self-assured to voice her views and theology. Another woman shared her lack of ability to say no to leadership fearing deterioration in the relationship with her pastor.

The women took risks. Orpha takes a bold move to go back to her people. Ruth takes a bold step to go with Naomi to live with new people. Naomi takes a bold move to go back home with anything to show for it. And "No" is a powerful word most clergy women have difficulty asserting.

Rev. Smith, the second presenter, spoke on the topic of Elizabeth and Mary and put emphasis on the difference between actively listening and hearing. She shared how to listen when facing perplexing times, walking together to support one another through uncertainties about their adulthood and destiny.

Being present with someone else caged by their stories is to defer our own agendas in order they might be freed of bitterness. Mary emotionally runs to Elizabeth, where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. Mentoring takes place within a relationship that practices unbiased listening and awareness so that transformation and transparency can take place.

The women honed into the biblical narrative as Rev. Smith shared thoughts on *reach her, teach her and release her*. *Reach her* is related to the role of a guarantor to be available as one who shares commonalities and is sensitive to need. *Teach her* is related to the model role as a mentor who motivates by walking alongside the peer towards ordination, pastoring, or leading in ministry. *Release her* is the role of a mediator who connects to create a relationship that is mutually beneficial so they both can grow. Therefore she conveyed to the women the frustrations of the call and preparation of ministry. One woman stated “I get it when it comes to when comes to helping other women go to the next level in their mission for God.” Another woman stated how applying the three *reach, teach, release* points would make it easier to mentor addressing the sensitive issues and challenges of ordination in a positive way.

The third presenter, Rev. Wright-Riggins addressed pros and cons how to approach a conflicting situation using the book of Esther (1:12). We looked to empower the women in ministry to reflect on the different way Vashti managed her conflict.

Conflict resolution is a skill that a person uses to try to negotiate a win-win relationship. Using a biblical model Betty talked about Queen Vashti and made reference to how she paves the way for Esther. Firstly, it is important that we know in conflict resolution situation the goal is to have a win/win solution. In a mentoring situation we must take responsibility for who we select as a mentor, our actions and choices. Great ancestors and women have paved the way for people at the expense of their finances, family, health and even death. I believe we can learn from Vashti's bitter experience for the better, in the opposing example of two women who risked it all, her position, for what she believed. She refused to follow the king's command that would have required her to dishonor her position and name. She took a great risk and was replaced, though she did pave the way for Esther. The difference is Esther had a mentor, Mordecai, who instructed her how to approach the King.

Afternoon sessions were split into two groups, small and large. In the small group session, the prospective mentors dialogued and selected a group leader for the purpose of feedback at the later general presentation.

Then the entire group went to an hour luncheon hosted by American Baptist Home Mission Society. There was a pin ceremony and a group of next generation of young female from the Philadelphia Baptist church performed a dance. Before lunch ended the dancers taught everyone a ritual dance reflecting on transformation to the song *Moving Forward*. We kept moving in unison, bringing one step in front of the other to keep moving forward. Some women who shared in the dance were so elated they cried and called it a healing experience. One woman imaged the dance as a metaphor for transformation, describing mentoring as being like a process of personal and professional

growth. She said, “We choose to forgive our bitter attitudes and the people who hurt us, or not give in to the bitterness by treating people with grace and kindness. My life is better as I choose to move forward without the bitterness.” This spiritual formation showed the participants transitioning through the day, finding a healing presence from the bitter challenges that barriers can pose to a better way of being together in the faith community.

The participants had ample time to give feedback and reflect on their insights regarding the mentoring relationships of the biblical models. The round table discussions and workshops were led by ordained women on the Advisory Committee, specifically those gifted women clergy with ten or more years of pastoral experience. There were 3 women who led the discussions for 30-45 minutes each, totaling 90-135 minutes. Prior to the closing remarks at the conference Yolanda and Donna distributed and collected a ten questions post-survey was distributed to measure, if the participants’ awareness and attitudes towards mentoring as a result of presentations and discussions on mentoring.

How I Used the Narrative Model

At the half-day conference, we opened up the sessions sharing stories about the ordination journey. Although there were brief moments of silence, the majority of clergy women shared their stories. It was obvious that some were bitter about their experiences. We validated their views by listening intently. They brought up questionable issues relating to ordination, as well as theological and practical traditions associated with the different regions in the ABC-USA. One woman commented she saw the value in having

the round table discussion with other sisters. She also gained support and encouragement needed for the ordination process.

My purpose at “Engaging Mentors” was not to make a presentation but to be present and listen as the women in ministry told their stories. At the start of the program two facilitators shared their “bitter to better” narratives. We used the narrative approach as an opportunity to share our “bitter to better” journey in the practice of ministry by forming into small groups and then later into large group.

During the three sessions, a facilitator led the discussions with each group. The Advisory team and I listened especially intently to their responses to the presenters questions.

We also captured their presentations and stories on secured video, but only with the participant’s permission. The facilitator’s stories were written and presented at the beginning. The women shared stories throughout the day.

We held the conference in a safe place so that the women felt safe to share their stories. We read a list of rules from a power-point and got the women to agree verbally to confidentiality, and that they would listen and not judge one another’s stories. We made it quite clear that we would not share their names and that information would not be shared with anyone, other than for the sake of the project.

What are the Obstacles to Mentorship?

During the Sisters sharing I observed the clergy women expressing their frustration because they understood the illegitimacy of the process before and after ordination. They know that after ordination, African Americans women in the ABC-

USA can expect obstacles in connecting with potential churches. One doubtful sister correctly stated that having a mentor does not guarantee ordination. Another said we appreciate the support of a mentor and possibly being recommended for a position, but we need to connect with those men and women who have the authority to make change and influence the placement of women of color in ordained positions. Otherwise, our gifts will not be used effectively in ministry.

Participants were told that the ABC-USA search and call or ordination process is being presently revised. Our purpose was not to give women false expectations of ordination or placement—that is not in the hands of faith-mentors. Nor do executive ministers in the ABC-USA have the power to force a local church to take a female, African-American pastor. Placement and ordination in the Baptist tradition belongs to the individual churches, and they are the ones who call a pastor. Several attendees noted this in comments similar to this one: “The need is great for effective female mentors and I am not sure if the concept of mentoring women works well for ordination is solidified in other Baptist organizations as demonstrated here today. I am from a Baptist church, and they do not currently ordain women.”

For those who did not understand the tradition or may come from other church traditions, we clarified the truth that Baptist churches operate autonomously. One woman voiced that in her church there are no female pastors. Another said we have one token female minister allowed on the pulpit. Others said our churches do not want a woman as pastor. Still another said she prefers not to go through the conflict to be a pastor since there are some Baptist churches and organizations like ABC-USA that will ordain women, while others show far less interest. These women remind us that in addition to

asserting the value to women of effective mentoring, our churches and congregations still need to understand that women can and do bring the presence of God as pastors, and that effective mentoring is only one way to support the task of educating and hiring women clergy women.

Continuing Challenges of Mentorship

The opportunity in hosting the project “Engaging Mentors” was to inspire African-American women to further research and to consider investing themselves through the formation of support groups that include effective mentoring programs.

Competition between women and women, men and women still continues because some churches and denominations do not ordain women. The participants’ feedback on reasons for this is manifold. Perhaps they are unwilling to mentor women, are closed-minded, do not hire male pastors who would accept female pastors, or think that women leaders are not compassionate enough. One scholarly woman said, there are also big biblical arguments that are debatable. The apostle Paul says women should not speak in church. Jesus did not have female disciples. In addition to theological and biblical drawbacks, many church committees are not familiar with the African-American experience. This may be true. They may treat African-Americans unfairly, have undefined rules and boundaries, or are simply too busy to try to understand the African-American experience. These are all things that women clergy may face on their journey toward ordination and in their leadership in churches.

Support Her

We indicated at the beginning and at the end of the day our intent to have a conversation. We hoped to meet the learning objective of creating favorable attitudes among ordained clergy toward mentoring women preparing for ordination. From observing the sisters sharing remarks, the participants agreed that it was important to mentor, but with a formal agreement in a safe place. There was also a group who could be great mentors to potential clergy but were reluctant to mentor other women. The constituents of this group did not know how to help because they had received little or no help during their own educational and ordination journeys.

Some Final Thoughts on Engaging Mentors

At the round table discussions the participants had the opportunity to make comments. Many of their remarks added something to my research, giving credence to the story. The stories made connections related to the concerns of African American female pastors regarding opportunities for increased ordained mentors. Some of the concerns are as follows: Listen for awareness of the need for a mentor, and understand that being a mentor would prepare them and other women for ordination and ministry; be honest about the pitfalls and uphill journeys, as well as of the people who oppose women clergy and issues related to ordination.

Hearing their stories I could see the value in having the group experience with other sisters for support and encouragement during the conference, though it was not always easy to hear so many express anger at their own negative experiences in pursuing ordination and a vocation in ministry. However, it became more satisfying when some

participants indicated that they now have a better understanding of how women, especially black women, tend to be treated and overlooked. Listening to and reflecting on the stories of African-American women allows for addressing sensitive issues and challenges in a positive way.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter will summarize feedback regarding my project, with data collected from three sources: (1) the Advisory Committee; (2) the female attendees, based on conversations and information collected from the pre-and post-surveys, and (3) my own self-evaluation.

Advisory Committee Responses

At the conclusion of my project, several questions were presented to the Advisory Committee on a variety of topics related to the execution of the project, its impact on participants, and my leadership throughout the process. What follows is a report on some of the responses.

General responses to the project as a whole were positive. One Advisory Committee member said, “Arlene Paulette’s topic provoked deep thought in our presentations and opportunities for dialogue, and asked powerful questions the women felt safe to answer.” Another member wrote, “This event brought awareness of the women in ministry by unearthing any bitterness through the presentation.” Still another commented, “The seminars were helpful to those in attendance,” while this comment sums up how many women felt about the project: “It was quite a successful day with positive feedback. While I was in line during a coffee break, one lady said, ‘I can hardly

wait to get back, because I do not want to miss a thing.’ I can see this as a viable resource for women seeking ordination.”

Observing the many obstacles some Advisory Committee members faced during the course of the project (family sickness, deaths, members’ resignations, and scheduling conflicts), one minister remarked, “Arlene Paulette remained focused and encouraged the Advisory Committee to understand the importance of the project, polishing the event to meet the learning needs and timeframes.”

When asked for their overall evaluation of the project and its impact on me, the Committee, and participants, one member stated:

I believe this is an excellent project to advocate for mentoring women of color in the ministry. Initially, I was doubtful primarily because of the nature of the project, from bitter to better. It is hard for women in most congregations to overcome the negative view of women in pastoral leadership. Some organizations I belong to historically have a view that women should not be preachers or pastors. Thus, dealing with a subject like this project can open a can of worms.

Another member further commented that “the vision God has given to the Candidate is phenomenal.” A minister’s wife on the Advisory Committee stated, “The impact it [the project] is making on her is stretching her and giving her a willingness to learn new ideas. Personally my world was enriched ... by her prospectus and vision for women in ministry. She remains inclusive, transparent and authentic through the process,” while a pastor on the Advisory Committee said, “The candidate continued to be enthusiastic concerning the project. I believe the project is needed and will help Women in Ministry move towards ordination and full time ministry.”

Regarding my leadership, Advisory Committee members said that during the phases of the project, I was focused, listened to advice, sought to change what did not

work, and remained enthusiastic. One observed that “the candidate possessed humility as well as the ability to lead women, and was a knowledgeable mentor model for the participants.”

In terms of the impact of their participation in the project, several Advisory Committee members commented that being on the committee was a rewarding experience that had brought about spiritual growth for them. In one member’s opinion,

this project has made an impact on each person on the Advisory Committee in different ways, all of which are positive. It has caused personal growth for me as an ordained clergy in that it has caused me to realize my own responsibility to mentor other women who are seeking ordination or just need another clergy woman to support them in their journey.

When asked if I had demonstrated the potential benefits of the project to attendees—both women in ministry and prospective candidates for ordination--all Advisory Committee members were very positive in their feedback. In particular, the Rev. Patricia Hernandez, National Director of ABWIM, remarked that “the ‘Engaging Mentors’ workshop ... was well-attended and well-received. The topic was timely and the need great. The most positive aspect of this project is that it definitely addresses a need related to the ABC-USA WIM.”

I believe one of the most challenging assessments of me came from a mentor on the Advisory Committee. She felt that the women not involved in vocational ministry could not relate to some of the questions asked during the discussions. She observed that “‘Engaging Mentors’ was a good event and that the presentation was excellent.” However, she felt “the questions related to ordination and pastoral ministry,” and some of the women attending had not yet committed themselves to making the move to prepare

for pastoral ministry. Beyond this, responses from participants later in this chapter will speak to their sense of the value of the experience.

All the Advisory Committee members gave a resounding “Yes” when asked if I had successfully educated them about the project. A typical response by way of explanation was: “I observed her excellence in making sure we understood the initiatives and goals of the project.... Arlene Paulette remained true to the vision.... She was accessible, viable, yet firm when needed. She used conference calls, one on one meetings, visitations, group meeting, voicemail, email, to ensure we understood our task.”

Overall, I am pleased with the feedback from the Advisory Committee responses. I believe it was all provided in the spirit of love and with the desire to make the project excellent. I plan to incorporate many of the suggestions and ideas as I move forward in life and ministry.

Participants' Feedback

At the beginning of the conference, a Pre-Survey was distributed to the participants and collected prior to the introductory session. Near the end of the afternoon, after all presentations were made, a Post-Survey was also given to participants, seeking their responses about the day's events. Following the completion of the Post-Survey, a discussion was held with participants regarding their responses to the surveys. During that discussion, I arranged for a scribe to take notes of as many comments as possible. The responses to the surveys and the notes of participant comments form the basis for my

report of participants' feedback. I have not included each response, but have focused on what I feel are representative comments.

Pre-Survey

The majority of participants stated that they did not have a formal mentoring relationship and failed to acquire a mentor because they did not know how to go about negotiating for one and/or did not know what skills they needed.

Similarly, when asked if they felt it would be biased to mentor only women of color who were aspiring to be ordained, the majority of participants responded, "No".

These answers did not surprise me because the entire project was designed for ordained African-American women to consider being mentors and for African-American women still in the ordination process to receive information and understand the benefits of having a mentor. As an aside, I wish the question about bias could have been worded better.

One response did surprise me, though. All the participants gave a resounding "No" when asked whether they felt mentoring needed to be structured rather than natural. Most felt that mentoring should be natural rather than structured. I found myself wishing that this question might have been more clearly worded too, and I was concerned that perhaps they did not understand my vision of structure. I recall hoping that when the conference was over they would understand that a structured mentoring program is better than a natural one where there can be many open variables.

I also noted that the majority of participants responded, "No" to when asked whether they considered it disillusioning when women of color who are experiencing

difficulty moving to the next level in ordained ministry are encouraged to consider having a mentor. My scribe heard one woman comment: "... in dealing with the issues one must have a change of attitude for a better ordination and placement system." Another woman was reported to say that "the majority of the participants are not in positions of authority in their churches." During discussion of this matter, my scribe wrote that "their anger is towards the disparities but they are hurting and need help to find a supportive mentor."

Post-Survey

A Post-Survey was given to assess the participants' attitudes on mentoring at the end of the conference and the discussion followed the completion of the survey. This process clearly reminded me that African-American women add value to the faith community and come with different experiences.

During the discussion, my scribe wrote that one woman commented, "Our powerful stories reveal the natural ability to be resilient, to think outside the box and overcome obstacles in life and ministry." This was very encouraging:

Initially, one woman had commented that "she did not fully understand why the emphasis was on African American women," while another "expressed her initial disagreement to focus on one ethnic group." However, after the post-survey conversation, she said understood fully the project thesis after hearing the statistics and the presentations of stories. Another participant used this familiar analogy; "I am in agreement that 'it takes a village....' It also will take a village to change mindsets. If only more women would affirm other women things might change. If only women will

work together to continue supporting and encouraging one another.” Another woman was heard to say, “I thought about how important Paulette’s topic is and ... intend to participate in transitioning in the faith community.”

When responding to the survey statement that “Participating in the ‘Engaging Mentors’ development training has made me aware of the value of women of color and what they can contribute,” the majority of participants responded, “Yes.” My scribe wrote of that when commenting of this statement, most participants seemed to agree with a woman who said “it is ‘better’ for women to have a mentor as they journey through ordination, placement, and a vocation in ministry.”

A statement on the survey addressed to participants who were considering becoming mentors said, “My mentoring skills are sharper as the result of participating in this training.” The majority of participants responded “Yes.”

When responding to a statement seeking to assess whether they felt that through mentoring they could enlarge the pool of African-American women well prepared for church service and thus influence the direction of the ABC-USA, the majority of participants responded, “Yes.” One participant said that, “Her challenge is to mentor in a network with other ordained women in the ABC-USA.” My scribe also wrote that several women commented, “they were aware of the issues and willing to mentor formally and/or meet mentees on a regular basis,” recognizing that some women may still be so embittered by their past or present ministry experiences that they will be resistant to mentoring.

Finally, the majority of participants responded “Yes” to the statement, “As a mentor of African-American women through the ordination process it would not be

difficult to address sensitive issues and challenges in an affirming manner.” My scribe reported that one woman, anticipating a struggle, said the “only challenge from a theological perspective is the debate, when going before the council to defend the ordination paper,” while another shared that “her ministry experiences have been limited but if more African-American female pastors were to serve on minister councils or boards it could be a benefit to all churches.” One last woman was quoted as saying she “found it beneficial to have good mentoring relationships in the local church where the process in ordained ministry actually begins.” This sentiment was echoed by a scribe who captured conversation which reminded everyone that “some black Baptist churches are traditionally known for negatively impacting called women (i.e. biases, low ordination rate, no preaching opportunities, appointments, and lower salaries).”

Pre-and Post- Survey Conclusions

The Pre-and Post-Survey responses revealed that, through the project, the participants’ attitudes toward the mentoring had changed. The majority of the group understood the project mission to be advocating for African-American women clergy becoming mentors and the importance of women pursuing ordination associating with effective mentors. Speaking for the majority, one participant commented, that “the Candidate’s project was engaging and the presentations were excellent to listen to especially connecting stories, which were helpful to our growth and understanding the call, and purpose for mentoring, in particular, to help African-American women on the path towards ordination.” One licensed woman stated, “Paulette’s project gave me more clarity of the issues to better prepare myself for ordination and to face ministry in general.” Another woman further

commented that she “would be very interested in attending future sessions,” and one other woman pursuing ordination stated “Paulette’s project was an encouragement to not only me, a black woman, but all women. When her project is finished Paulette should keep it going, perhaps to help start a mentoring program to advocate for women of color in ministry.”

Most participants changed their mindset towards mentoring as result of the project, either that they were more open to becoming a mentor or being mentored. The participants agreed that women, and African-American women in particular, could benefit from more access to expert mentors while going through the ordination process. Although mentoring alone does not guarantee a person a call, an ordination or placement, but a faith mentor can help in sharpening their skills. By the close of the day, most participants appeared to agree that during the mentoring process mentees will grow and learn how to deal better with the challenges and address the sensitive issues associated with navigating through the difficulties many African-American women face on the path to ministry. It was clear throughout the day that participants knew very well those difficulties. My scribe recorded this sad assertion from one such woman, “She will opt not to deal with the drama associated with ordination.”

However, many African-American women in ministry view themselves as resilient as well as bitter, and many understand the social justice issues and necessity for African-American women to be heard and affirmed on their ministry journey, and that mentoring can be helpful and rewarding both to those who mentor and those who are supported by mentoring.

Self-Evaluation

Working with American Baptist women in ministry on my Advisory Committee was a pleasure. This community of women provided me with support, encouragement, and direction. I especially benefited from having two mentors on the team who had shattered the stained glass ceiling in my faith community: Rev. Patricia Hernandez and Rev. Betty Wright-Riggins. In some ways their presence on my Advisory Committee was a real challenge, since I saw them as the experts and struggled with the impulse to give some of my authority over to them, but I did take charge. In looking back, they pushed me to go beyond my limitations and expectations and their mentoring helped me push the team to meet the project criteria and objectives, which made me a better leader.

Likewise, the other women on the Advisory team were encouraging and equipping leaders as well as thoughtful individuals. They provided their expertise, experience, and constant feedback on what direction to take. This included next steps, even if we did not agree on some of the specifics. It was important to my project that I remained engaged and open to feedback, but when necessary I was able to assert my own authority.

Because the Committee consisted of ordained, very strong, effective leaders in their own right, it was a challenge for me to lead them to stay on point with some of the learning objectives I had identified.

I like that I assigned the guest speakers and determined what they would present, assuring that the women would hear a multiplicity of voices, not just my own. When things went well and the participants interacted with the speakers and each other, I had time to listen and make observations.

At times I followed the Advisory Committee's advice and made modifications to the structure of the project. For example, I showed flexibility by allowing those on my Advisory Committee and other ministers to bring their mentees to the conference to observe. I also substituted a "spiritual formation" dance presentation for a psychological presentation I would have preferred.

Among the personal characteristics that were highlighted by others' evaluations are that I am a diligent worker and stayed focused on my objectives, that I had good organization, planning, and follow up with the Advisory team, that I modeled what a mentor should be, and I possessed knowledge, passion, compassion, leadership, humility, and the ability to communicate vision. I concur with these assessments and was pleased to have them confirmed.

Someone spoke to me about my taking more ownership of my work on the project, but looking back, I feel comfortable in saying that I took ownership. I like the way this project went, and its successful completion has helped me gain additional confidence.

I observed myself to be respectful of people's time and worth, though I do regret that we did not take more time to shape clearer questions for participant reflection and response.

With regard to the Advisory Committee, the collaboration was effective when everyone on the team met and worked the Prospectus. However, we needed to define mentoring better in the project. Looking back I feel there was not a clear enough definition of the words "faith mentor" and "faith-mentoring."

I also regret that I did not connect more often with my cohort or my Drew professors to reflect on any issues – positive or negative – while conducting the project. It helps to relieve any anxiety when you can reflect your concerns with someone able to give a better outlook or direction to the project which I could have used as a gauge to stay on track, reach targets or project objectives.

As I look back on the project as a whole, I realize that I could have taken more time to prepare and invited additional clergy and lay people with other skills to join my team (i.e. administrators, editors, and researchers) to improve the flow and effectiveness of the planning. Working collaboratively is both important and fruitful.

Conclusions

I am pleased with the work I have done and the positive outcome of my project. In the future, I plan to continue advocating for African-American Women in Ministry. I will develop curriculum to benefit those who are in the process of moving toward ordination and could benefit from mentoring. I will support the Minister's Council to find new ways to encourage, affirm and inspire African-American women in the ordination process. This has become a lifelong goal and I believe a worthwhile journey. I am going to reach backward to move others forward. Now I feel that I have a network of women who are willing to collaborate together to promote mentoring. This workshop has empowered women be who were bitter to become better.

CONCLUSION

“If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, all alone together women ought to be able to turn it right side up again.”¹

– Sojourner Truth

Is there a shortage of women in general and African American women in particular in leadership positions in American churches today? Has leadership taken the ostrich approach as if the shortage does not exist? These questions and certainly many others like these are swirling around in the minds of other clergywomen like me. During this project I have initiated a candid conversation with other clergywomen regarding the disparity between men and women clergy in leadership positions in the Baptist tradition.

The information gathered and the discussion, which resulted from the “Engaging Mentors” project, certainly seemed to suggest the need to address and correct this disparity. I believe open dialogue appraising the present situation is the key. This project paves the way for the kind of dialogue necessary to access the pathways for women of color to assume leadership roles, such as pastoring churches, proportionately to our male counterparts.

Engaging the topic of women clergy in ministry and leadership requires a three pronged approach. First of all, we should not have a problem with encouraging African-

¹ Illona Linthwaite, ed., *Ain't I A Woman: A Book of Women's Poetry from Around the World* (New York: Wings Book, 1987), 129.

American women clergy who want to mentor their peers, but may have challenges with how they mentor. Secondly, we will need to think of ways to change our attitudes regarding peer-to-peer mentoring relationships. Otherwise, we may maintain our old way of thinking (“I got mine and you get yours the best way you can”) or of being “too busy” doing ministry to find time for mentoring. Last but not least, we must admonish women clergy to actively seek multiple mentors rather than simply enduring struggles that arise from doing ministry alone. A mentoring relationship does not necessarily end with the interview, the ordination council, signatures on ordination certificates, or with the mentee’s name printed on a church sign. The novice pastor may benefit from good mentoring. We need to have a better conversation about how to effectively use and mentor women in ministry. We need to seek a better pathway to form leadership that promotes healthier churches for ordaining women, and perhaps get rid of practices that underestimate the value and purpose of women in ministry.

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, male or female; for all of you are one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28). The Galatians text affirms that gender does not matter for those truly called to serve God’s people. I believe “the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11), which is a statement containing no gender distinctions; therefore, I take it to mean that a woman is also a gift, possessing a power to pastor, preach, and educate equal to that of men.

I value investing in the lives of women. Working on this project over the last few years has deepened my commitment to mentoring and developing women in ministry. I am the beneficiary of great opportunities to engage in critical conversations with

American Baptist women in ministry. I learned that people's stories are their journeys. My project "Engaging Mentors" allowed women to come to the table and share their stories, and to unpack the issues in their lives that may make them bitter while embracing the strengths in their lives that make them better. In response to the critical questions asked of the participants at the round table discussion," I heard my sisters' voices come out of the silence.

When people do not dialogue, the bitterness usually does not go away. Bitterness is a fruit, and as such, it continues to grow until its root cause is removed. African-American women in ministry need to be in a nurturing mentoring relationship and a safe place where they can speak freely. Otherwise, we pretend that God's kingdom is not an organism of people with feelings, fortitude, and a future, but rather an organization. It is not my intent to negate the pastors, regional leaders, and executive ministers who are responsible for churches and the women who serve them. I am simply suggesting that forming mentoring relationships and supportive groups is a good way to offer a safe space in which to dialogue.

One method to develop a good mentoring program would be to adapt Sondra Higgins Matthaei's faith-mentors model of guide, model, mediator, and guarantor so that women on the path to ordination may become better equipped to work through the challenges and difficulties found in ordained ministry. This project was and is important to me because it has afforded me the opportunity to help bring healing to women in ministry.

At times the ordination process is likened to a frustrating and challenging dance that jerks licensed female ministers around, two steps forwards then two steps backward.

Forming mentoring support groups will enhance skills and improve relationships as well as promote healing. However, it may take a combination of female and male mentors, coaches, trainers, psychologists, clinical pastors, counselors, doctors, lawyers, librarians, scholars, and more to positively support women in ministry, allowing them to become more assertive by making their voices heard and their challenges known, forcing the ignorance that suppresses them to surface.

Personally, the project has helped me find my own voice, gain more confidence, and discover greater insights into my story. I learned that I am made whole through acts of kindness. When I reclaimed my healing and understood my past hurts, I gained a better attitude about ministry and realized that I was able to help others have a better experience navigating their ministerial journeys. Therefore, this project has given me an opportunity to see myself as a mentor. It caused me to think deeper about developing relationships through support groups and professional training for women in ministry. The value of being a faith-mentor is not only to inspire other women before and after ordained ministry, but to grow oneself in the process. I found healing in helping others not just to survive, but to succeed in ministry. I can help people to recognize the pitfalls, so that they may avoid them, appreciating the steps they need to take on their journey. I have developed an affinity for having authentic people around me who value my worth. Nothing can take the place of a family and healthy relationships. I would encourage other clergywomen to choose both relationships and churches that promote healthy mind, body, and spirit.

Finally, as a result of the project, I gained greater insights about myself and learned to know my worth. I now know that through me, people can experience the love

and kindness of God. Incarnating the presence of God on earth magnifies the gospel message.

This project has afforded many benefits, I have been recruited by the American Baptist USA Minister's Council for Support of Women in Ministry to work on the various teams addressing disparity issues while advocating for women in ministry. I plan to publish an article on the project in the ABWIM newsletter. In addition, it was recommended that I share my dissertation at upcoming meetings such as the American Baptist Biennial ABWIM, American Baptist related seminaries and gatherings, the American Baptist Women in Ministry Action Learning Team, women's forums at the historic Calvary Baptist church in Chester, and other churches and denominations in the faith community.

Looking forward and prepared to navigate the next steps, I earnestly believe that Christ has called women out, releasing them to address spiritual oppression and practical matters through faith-mentoring. The lyrics to *Moving Forward* by co-writers Ricardo Sanchez and Israel Houghton resonate within me. I believe that clergywomen around the globe can expect to face better days.

Oh, hey, what a moment You have brought me to!
Such a freedom I have found in You
You're the healer who makes all things new, yeah, yeah, yeah

You make all things new
Yes, You make all things new and I will follow You forward
You make all things new
Yes, You make all things new and I will follow You forward²

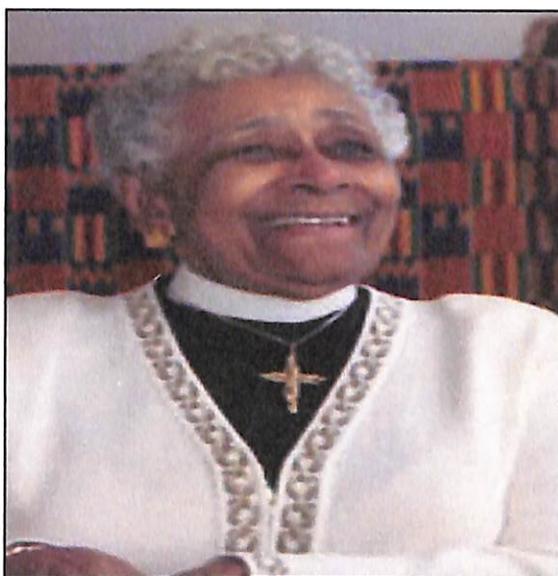
² The interview with Houghton on how he and Richard Sanchez came to write "*Moving Forward*," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axaKz5NI-ng> (accessed March 13, 2013).

APPENDIX A

A Doctor of Ministry Project conducted by A. Paulette Birchett

“ENGAGING MENTORS”

**In the tradition of great mentors such as
the late, great Ella P. Mitchell**



Rev. Dr. Ella P. Mitchell

**Pioneer, Preacher, Professor, Author
and Mentor**

When: Saturday, March 17, 2012

**Where: American Baptist Mission Center
588 North Gulph Road, King of Prussia, PA**

Time: 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM

Hosted by American Baptist Women in Ministry

APPENDIX B

Engaging Mentors (Pre-Survey Questions)

Please answer the following questions in the left column either: Yes or No.

1. I have interest in participating in a structural program for mentors.
2. Attending mentoring/coaching workshop, I do have a strong sense to advocate for women of color in the ordination process.
3. It is important as a mentor to have clarity in the mentoring relationship.
4. Aspiring women of color need a trained mentor through the ordination process.
5. Would it be biased to mentor only women of color aspiring to be ordained?
6. Mentoring women of color who tend to have difficulty in moving to the next level in ordained ministry is disillusioning.
7. As an ordained minister I would reach back to invest my time and gift in mentoring women of color to help them navigate through the ordination process.
8. Mentoring is enhanced when it comes natural and not in a structured format.
9. It is essential to utilize ordained clergy (American Baptist) so that you can gain knowledge and be at ease with going through the ordination process.
10. As an ordained clergy my church does not validate the ordination of women.
11. There would be more opportunities for placement of African-American women if there were a structured mentoring process.
12. As an ordained female clergy I am too busy for mentoring relationships at present but possibly in the future.
13. As a mentor of African-American women through the ordination process it would be difficult to address sensitive issues and challenges in a positive way.

Name (Optional) _____

APPENDIX C

Engaging Mentors (Post-Survey Questions)

Please answer the following questions in the left column either: __Yes or __No.

1. My mentoring skills are sharper as the result of participating in this training.
2. Mentoring African-American aspiring to be ordained would be enjoyable and challenging.
3. Attending this mentoring/coaching workshop, I have a strong sense to advocate for women of color in the ordination process.
4. Mentoring serves as an opportunity to increase the influence to network with a pool of African-American women in the American Baptist churches USA.
5. I would invest the time to devote to the relationship in mentoring aspiring women of color in the ordination process.
6. It is important as a mentor to have clarity in the mentoring relationship.
7. Mentoring is one way of addressing the sensitive issues and challenges that can be identified with the experience of ordination of women of color.
8. Participating in the mentor development training has made me *more* aware of the resiliency of women of color and what they can contribute.
9. It is better for African-American women in the ordination process to have a trained mentor to help them prepare for ordination, placement and different ministerial roles in the church.
10. Mentoring in a structured situation will enable ordained women of color to mentor women of color better.
11. As a mentor of African-American women through the ordination process it would be difficult to address sensitive issues and challenges in an affirming manner.

Name (Optional) _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, Marian E. and Linda Goss. *Talk that Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.
- Bean, Holly V. "American Baptist Women in Ministry Today: A Picture of Change and Resistance," *Minister Magazine* 35, no.1 (Spring 2012): 7-9.
- _____, et al. "Women in Ministry: Where Are We Now?" *Ministers Council Task Force on Women in Ministry, American Baptist Churches USA* <http://www.ministerscouncil.org/WIM%20Resources/documents/MCWIMTFreport2011.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2013).
- Birnbaum, Toby and Hershey H. Friedman. "The Story of Ruth and Boaz: A Paradigm for Today's CEO." *John Ben Shepperd Journal of Practical Leadership* 6, no.1 (July 2012): 1-8.
- Bowen, Nancy. *Theological Bible Commentary*, ed. by Gail R. O'Day and David L. Petersen. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster, 2009.
- Bradley, Ann Palmer. "Mentoring: Following the Example of Christ." *ICCTE Journal* 4, no. 2 (2009), <http://icctejournal.org/issues/v4i2/v4i2-bradley/> (accessed September 15, 2012).
- Brown, Raymond Edward. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood, New Jersey: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Bruce F. F. and H. L. Ellison, eds. *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1979.
- Cannon, Katie Geneva. *Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- Carpenter, Delores C. *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen*. St Louis: Chalice Press, 2001.
- Chang, Patricia M. Y. "In Search of a Pulpit: Sex Differences in the Transition from Seminary Training to the First Parish Job." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (December 1997): 614-627.
- Coholl, Kirkpatrick G. and Bruce S. Cooper. "Educating American Baptist Pastors: A National Survey of Church Leaders." *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 19, no 1 (2010): 27-55.

- Collins, R. Dandridge. *Trauma Zone*. Wheaton Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.
- Cone, James H. and Gayraud S. Wilmore. *Black Theology: A Documentary History. Vol. 2, 1980-1992*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.
- Cushman, David. "Diversity in American Baptist Churches and the United States." *The Christian Citizen: Voices for Biblical Justice*, Vol. 2, (2009): 3. A copy of the document may be found on the website for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies http://www.abhms.org/resources/christian_citizen/docs/CC2009_2.pdf (accessed January 30, 2013).
- Engstrom, Ted W. and Norman B. Roher. *The Fine Art of Mentoring: Passing On To Others What God Has Given To You*. Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1989.
- Farmer, Kathleen A. Robertson. "The Book of Ruth." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*. 2:889-946. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Fowler, Mark Allen. *Mentoring into Vocation: Touchstones for the Journey*. Nashville, Tennessee: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the United Methodist Church, 2006.
- Hale, Cynthia L. *I'm a Piece of Work: Sisters Shaped by God*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 2010.
- Hubbard, Robert. *The Book of Ruth: New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988.
- James, Carolyn Custis. *The Gospel of Ruth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008.
- Johnson, W. Brad and Charles Ridley. *The Elements of Mentoring*. New York: St. Martin Press, 2004.
- Johnson, W. Brad and Peter F. Wilson. "Core Virtues for the Practice of Mentoring." *Journal of Psychology* 29 (2001): 121-130.
- Jones, Kirk Byron. "King had a mentor in Chester." *Delaware County Daily Times*, January 16, 1989, Opinion and Commentary section. http://www.oldchesterpa.com/famous_king_jr_martin_luther.htm (accessed January 30, 2013).
- King, Martin L., Jr. *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: New Market Press, 1984.
- LaRue, Cleophus J. *This Is My Story: Testimonies and Sermons of Black Women in Ministry*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

- Lehman, Edward C, ed. "Women's Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies." *Pulpit and Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership* <http://pulpitandpew.org/sites/all/themes/pulpitandpew/files/Lehman.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2013).
- Linthwaite, Illona, ed. *Ain't I A Woman: A Book of Women's Poetry from Around The World*. New York: Wings Books, 1993.
- Mamiya, Lawrence H. "River of Struggle, River of Freedom: Trends among Black Churches and Black Pastoral Leadership." *Pulpit and Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership* <http://pulpitandpew.org/node/839> (accessed January 30, 2013).
- Mamiya, Lawrence H. and C. Eric Lincoln. *The Black Church in the African-American Experience*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Mantler, Gordon Keith. "*Black, Brown, and Poor: Martin Luther King Jr. the Poor Peoples Campaign and its legacies*." Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2008. http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/587/D_Mantler_Gordon_a_200805.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed July 6, 2013).
- Maring, Norman H. and Hudson S. Winthrop. *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*. Valley Forge: Pennsylvania, Judson Press, 1991.
- Matthaei, Sondra Higgins. "Faith-Mentoring in the Classroom," *Religious Education* 86, no. 4 (July 1991): 540-549.
- _____. *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996.
- McKean, Erin. *Concise Oxford American Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- McKenzie, Vashti M. *Not Without A Struggle: Leadership Development for African American Women in Ministry*. New York: Penguin Group, 2002.
- _____. *Strength in the Struggle: Leadership: Leadership Development for Women*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001.
- McMickle, Marvin A. "Challenging Gender Discrimination in the Church." *Minister Magazine* 34:2 (Summer 2011): 23-25.
- Mild, Mary L, ed. *Calling an American Baptist Minister*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 2005.
- Mitchell, Ella Pearson. *Those Preaching Women: Volumes 1-4*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Judson Press, 1996.

- Mitchell, Henry H. *The History of the Black Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Moore, Rickie D. "The Prophet as Mentor: A Crucial Facet of the Biblical Presentations of Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 2 (2007): 155-172.
- Moore-Keish, Martha L. "Between Text and Sermon: Ruth Two." *Interpretation* 64, no. 2 (2010): 174-175.
- Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, ed. *Women's Commentary*. Expanded ed. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998.
- Obama, Michelle. "Transcript: Michelle Obama's Convention Speech." *National Public Radio*, <http://www.npr.org/2012/09/04/160578836/transcript-michelle-obamas-convention-speech> (accessed March 12, 2013).
- Phanon, Panthakan. "Double *Hesed* of God in Naomi's life (Ruth1:19-22)." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 13, no. 1 (2010): 20-39.
- Pickler, Karen, ed. "Women Word: American Baptist Women in Ministry, Fall 2010." American Baptist Churches USA <http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/womeninministry.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2013).
- "Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Church: Adopted by the Ministerial Leadership Commission and the Ministers Council." American Baptist Churches USA http://www.abc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Ordination_Stds.pdf (accessed January 30, 2013).
- Savage, Carl and William Presnell (sic), *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville, Kentucky: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008.
- Serrat, Olivier. "Coaching and Mentoring," *Knowledge Solutions* 54 (July 2009):1-5.
- Smith, Christine A. *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 2013.
- "Strategic Priorities for 2011-2015." American Baptist Women in Ministry, *American Baptist Churches USA* http://www.abc-usa.org/what_we_believe/abc-organizations/abwim/strategic-priorities-for-2011-2015 (accessed January 30, 2013).

- Stone, Amanda. "Mentoring Program Manual." *University of South Carolina College of Mass Communications and Information Studies Mentor Program*, <http://cmcismentorprogram.wordpress.com/mentoring-program-manual/definition-of-mentoring/> (accessed May 1, 2013).
- "The Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson." *The Ministers Council, American Baptist Church USA* <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/DeboraJacksonBio2012.aspx> (accessed September 28, 2012).
- Tribble, Jeffrey L. *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger Bible Dictionary*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1979.
- Vamosh, Miriam Feinberg. *Women at the Time of the Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2008.
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.
- Weems, Renita J. *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey through Silence and Doubt*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.
- _____. *Just A Sister Away*. San Diego: LuraMedia, 1988.
- Westfield, N. Lynne. *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001.
- Wolfe, James Owen. *American Baptist Women in Pastoral Ministry: A Contemporary Survey*. South Bend, Indiana: Cloverdale Books, 2007.
- Woodard, Marsha Brown. *I Was Tired Today*. Dallas, Texas: Brown Bridges Press, 2011.
- Zikmund, Barbara Brown, et. al. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

VITA

PERSONAL DATA

Full Name: Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett

Place and Date of Birth: Richmond, Virginia - Born on March 5, 1956

Parents Names: Herman E. and Barbara O. Robinson

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

	<u>School (Name and Address)</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date</u>
Secondary:	John Bartram High School 67 th Elmwood Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19143	Diploma	1974
Collegiate:	Temple University Fox School of Business 1801 Liacouras Walk Philadelphia, PA 19122-6083	Bachelors of Business	1995
Graduate:	Temple University 501 Carnell Hall 1803 North Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19122-6095	Masters of Education	1996
	Palmer Theological Seminary (Formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) 588 N Gulph Road King of Prussia, PA 19406	Masters of Divinity	2008
	Drew Theology School 36 Madison Avenue Madison, New Jersey 07940	Doctor of Ministry	2013

I understand that the Drew University Library may make this document available to scholars and other Libraries.

Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett
Signature

Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett
Arlene Paulette Robinson Birchett
October 11, 2013
Date-